

PROJECT ONE DOT

# Listening and Appraising

'... a musical experience needs three human beings at least. It requires a composer, a performer, and a listener; and unless these three take part together there is no musical experience.'

**Benjamin Britten**

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**Friday Afternoons**



**SNAPE  
MALTINGS**

# Overview

Benjamin Britten spoke about musical experiences requiring three human beings: **composer, performer and listener**. So far we have explored performing and composing, now let's dig deeper into the skills of listening and appraising.

The following **Discussion Prompts** are designed to encourage the students to listen carefully to the songs they've learnt, and start to think about how each song captures the mood of the seasons. This is not an exhaustive list of questions, but a starting point, and other observations and thoughts will inevitably develop as the students respond to the music.

# Overview

The **Teachers Notes** section on page 55 offers some suggestions and possible answers to the questions, although it is worth remembering that there is no definitive *one* answer when listening and appraising, **everyone's response to music will be slightly different**, and the important thing is to try and encourage students to consider **why and how** the music makes them respond the way they do.

For example, the statement

“The music makes me feel sad”

is not in itself listening and appraising – it is the start of the process as music has generated an emotional response.

The listening and appraising part is achieved by guiding the students to consider things like:

“why might this be?”

“what has the composer done to make me feel this way?”

“do I feel sad for the whole song, or just in parts?”

# Overview

## Teacher Skill Development

- How to listen to and appraise a piece of music

## Assessment

- Students can provide responses to the music they hear, some of which will be richly descriptive and imaginative
- Students can describe what is happening musically, picking out important musical features to varying levels of complexity
- Students can use musical vocabulary when comparing & contrasting pieces of music

## National Curriculum Mapping

- Play and perform in solo and ensemble contexts, using their voices increasing control and expression
- Listen with attention to detail & recall sounds with increasing aural memory reflect on interrelated dimensions, especially pitch, duration, **dynamics**, tempo, structure & appropriate musical notations
- Use and understand staff and other musical notations
- Appreciate and understand a range of high-quality recorded music drawn from different traditions and from great composers and musicians

# Discussion Prompts

## TOP TIP

Adding a visual stimulus like pictures of weather may help more students generate creative responses to the music

### The Little Girl of Rain

- Listen to the piano accompaniment. How does this part suggest the idea of rainfall? Is this a gentle shower or a heavy downpour? Is the rain steady or intermittent?
- What about the tempo of the song? Is it slow or fast? How does this affect the mood of the song?
- Is this a quiet song or something louder? Look again at the words of the song. Are there any clues here as to whether the song should be performed in a loud energetic style or something more subdued?
- What about the **melody**? Does this suggest a bright, optimistic, joyful song or something more haunting?

# Discussion Prompts

## Snow

- Think about snow falling and the mood it creates. It is gentle and falls more slowly and softly compared to rainfall. It also falls silently and creates a new ‘smoother’ landscape where all sharp edges and corners have been rounded. It is also something of an alien landscape reduced to one colour – a white monochrome.
- How does the song capture the feeling of snow falling?
- What mood does this create?
- Notice how the first three phrases each start on a higher note. What might this suggest?
- Listen to the short piano phrase of high notes played on the piano following the words “*The moonlit miracle all night*”. What does this suggest?
- Notice how the final line of the song is slowed down by singing notes of a longer duration. [“*With the answered prayer of snow*” is the same tune as the earlier line “*Drops the blessing of the snow*”, but the note values are longer]. What might this suggest?

# Discussion Prompts

## Cuckoo

- What do you notice about the **dynamics** of this song? Look at the vocal score and find all the instructions that indicate dynamics. *pp, ppp, mf, poco piu f, dim.*
- A class research activity could be to find out what these Italian terms mean.
- How does the change in dynamics throughout the song support the telling of the ‘story’?
- In the middle of the song, the cuckoo sings “*In June, I change my tune*”. How does the **melody** change at this point?
- How does the ‘Cuckoo’ **ostinato** support the mood of the song?
- What effect does repeating the song have?

# Discussion Prompts

## Fast Car

- What is this song about? Wanting a fast sports car to drive away on a summer holiday to exotic far away place? Or could it be about escaping generally, going to a place of anonymity?
- How would you describe the overall mood of the song?
- How does the piano accompaniment support the idea of a thrilling journey in a fast machine?
- How does the mood of the song change slightly in the middle section [bars 35-46] beginning “*maybe to the sea...*”?



## **Contact**

[fridayafternoonsmusic.co.uk](http://fridayafternoonsmusic.co.uk)

[fridayafternoons@snapemaltings.co.uk](mailto:fridayafternoons@snapemaltings.co.uk)

Snape Maltings

Snape Maltings Concert Hall

Snape, Saxmundham

Suffolk IP17 1SP

[snapemaltings.co.uk](http://snapemaltings.co.uk)