

American Music History & Listening

Student Workbook

Listening prompts, projects, and response sheets

Name: _____

Period: _____

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How to Use This Workbook

This workbook is your companion for the entire course. Each unit has a project with clear directions, listening prompts to guide your thinking, and space for your responses. Here is what you need to know:

- Listen with purpose. Every prompt asks you to describe something specific in the sound.
- Use evidence from the music. Instead of saying "I like it," explain what you hear and why it matters.
- Write concisely. Most responses should be 4–6 sentences. Quality over quantity.
- Build on earlier skills. Each unit adds a new layer to your listening toolkit.

The Listening Progression

Throughout the year, you will develop four core listening skills:

- **Describe** — Name specific musical features: tempo, instrumentation, dynamics, texture, melody.
- **Analyze** — Explain how those features affect the mood, energy, or meaning of the music.
- **Contextualize** — Connect the music to its time, place, audience, or purpose (starting Unit 3).
- **Evaluate** — Make a judgment using a clear criterion, not just personal taste (starting Unit 6).

UNIT 1

Listening Methods Check

Directions

1. You will hear 2 short excerpts chosen by your teacher. Each one will play at least twice.
2. For each excerpt, write:
 - 3 things you hear
 - 1 sentence explaining how those details affect the mood, energy, or meaning
 - 1 interpretation sentence: "This music seems to communicate ___ because ___."
3. Choose one of the two excerpts and turn your notes into a short response of 5–6 sentences.
4. End with 2 reflection sentences:
 - Which musical detail helped you the most?
 - What is one thing you still need to get better at when listening?
5. Final product: one response sheet or a 1-minute audio response if your teacher gives that option.

Listening Prompts

- *What do you hear first?*
- *What musical details stand out the most?*
- *How do the sound choices shape the mood or energy?*
- *What seems to be the point of this excerpt?*
- *Which detail best supports your interpretation?*

Your Response

UNIT 2

Roots Map Exhibit

Directions

1. In a group of 3 or 4, listen to 3 class excerpts from the Foundations unit.
2. Create a Roots Map on one poster, one slide, or one sheet of chart paper.
3. For each excerpt, include:
 - the title or label your teacher gives you
 - 2 things you hear
 - 1 short interpretation of what the music seems designed to do
4. Add 2 arrows or connections showing a shared sound trait between excerpts.
Examples: repeated rhythm, call-and-response, group singing, strong pulse, layered voices.
5. Be ready to give a 1-minute gallery walk explanation of your map.
6. Final product: one group map plus a short spoken explanation.

Listening Prompts

- *What is one sound in this excerpt you would recognize quickly if you heard it again?*
- *Where do you hear group participation?*
- *What makes this feel communal, formal, personal, or functional?*
- *Which two excerpts share the clearest musical trait?*
- *What seems to be the job of this music?*

Your Response

UNIT 3

Seminar + Evidence Response

Directions

1. Before the seminar, listen to 2 assigned excerpts and study 1 class source (image, poster, quote, or short reading).
2. On your prep sheet, write:
 - 1 claim answering the seminar question
 - 2 musical details from the excerpts
 - 1 context point from the class source
3. During the seminar, speak at least 2 times. Each time, use evidence from the music or the source.
4. After the seminar, write one paragraph of 6–8 sentences answering the question again.
5. Your paragraph must include:
 - a clear claim
 - at least 2 listening details
 - 1 context connection
 - 1 interpretation
6. Final product: seminar prep sheet + one paragraph.

Listening Prompts

- *What in the sound tells you who this music might have been for?*
- *How does repetition, instrumentation, or vocal style connect to the setting?*
- *What does the class source show about where or why this music was used?*
- *Which excerpt feels most connected to community function?*
- *How does the setting change what the listener is supposed to do?*

Your Response

UNIT 4

1920s Radio Show

Directions

1. In a group of 3 or 4, create a 3–4 minute radio show set in the 1920s.
2. Choose 3 short excerpts from class listening. Include at least:
 - 1 blues or jazz example
 - 1 other popular music example from the unit
3. Your script must include:
 - a short show opening
 - one sound detail for each excerpt
 - one interpretation for each excerpt
 - one context link for each excerpt (migration, club culture, radio, recording, city life, dance craze)
4. End with a short closing sentence connecting the three tracks.
5. You may perform live or record it. Keep it simple.
6. Final product: one group script plus the short performance or recording.

Listening Prompts

- *What should the listener notice first in this excerpt?*
- *What part of the sound makes people want to dance, listen closely, or remember the tune?*
- *What setting fits this music best?*
- *How does the source card help explain the sound?*
- *What do these songs show about how listening changed in the 1920s?*

Your Response

UNIT 5

Industry vs. Innovation Debate

Directions

1. Work in a team of 3 or 4.
2. Respond to this question: For the music in this unit, what had the bigger effect on the final sound and success of a song — industry pressures or musical innovation?
3. Use 2 excerpts from the unit and 1–2 class sources to support your side.
4. Each student must prepare:
 - one musical detail
 - one context point
 - one response to the other side
5. During the debate: each person speaks once in the opening round, each person speaks once in rebuttal.
6. After the debate, write a short 5–6 sentence verdict explaining which factor mattered more.
7. Final product: team prep sheet + individual verdict.

Listening Prompts

- *What in the sound feels designed for broad audiences?*
- *What in the sound feels like musicians pushing past the usual style?*
- *What does the class source show about audience, venue, or market?*
- *Which musical change seems connected to business pressure?*
- *Which musical change seems connected to artistic experimentation?*

Your Response

UNIT 6

Curated Playlist + Liner Notes

Directions

1. Build a 4-song playlist around one clear theme (youth culture, protest, crossover, dancing, rebellion, polished vs. raw sound).
2. Choose:
 - 3 songs from Unit 6
 - 1 comparison song from an earlier unit
3. Create:
 - a playlist title
 - a short intro of 3–4 sentences
 - 2–3 sentences of liner notes for each song
4. In each song note, include:
 - one listening detail
 - one interpretation
 - one context connection
5. In your intro or ending, include:
 - one criteria-based judgment
 - one cross-era comparison
6. Final product: one page, one playlist card, or 4 slides.

Listening Prompts

- *What does this song do well by your chosen criterion?*
- *What sound details make this track feel of its era?*
- *How is this track similar to or different from your comparison song?*
- *What does your playlist suggest changed across eras?*
- *Which song best represents your theme, and why?*

Your Response

UNIT 7

Genre Jigsaw Exhibit

Directions

1. Your group will be assigned one scene or genre: funk/disco, punk, hip-hop origins, MTV pop, Latin growth, or Chicago House.
2. Create one exhibit card, poster, or slide that teaches the class:
 - what the scene sounds like
 - what social or industry context shaped it
 - what earlier music it connects to
 - what it does especially well
3. Use:
 - 2 excerpts from your scene
 - 1 earlier comparison track
4. Your exhibit must include:
 - 3 listening details
 - 1 context explanation
 - 1 cross-era comparison
 - 1 criteria-based judgment
5. During the gallery walk, each group member must explain one part of the exhibit.
6. Final product: one visual + short gallery talk.

Listening Prompts

- *What is the first sound marker that tells you this belongs to this scene?*
- *What earlier style can you still hear inside it?*
- *What changed because of technology, media, club culture, or audience?*
- *By the criterion of innovation or function, what does this scene do especially well?*
- *Which other exhibit in the room feels closest to yours, and why?*

Your Response

UNIT 8

Portfolio + Capstone

Directions

1. Build a small portfolio with 4 items:
 - 2 revised listening responses from earlier units
 - 1 project artifact from any unit
 - 1 new capstone response
2. Choose one capstone question:
 - What changed most in the way American music reached listeners?
 - Which musical idea lasted across eras even when the style changed?
 - How did technology or gatekeepers shape what got heard?
3. Use 2–3 songs from different units in your capstone.
4. Your capstone can be: a one-page response, a 4-slide deck, or a 2–3 minute recorded talk.
5. Your capstone must include:
 - 2–3 listening details
 - one context connection for each era
 - one cross-era comparison
 - one criteria-based judgment
6. Add a short reflection: What got better in your listening this year?
7. Final product: small portfolio folder + capstone.

Listening Prompts

- *What do these songs have in common underneath the style differences?*
- *What changed in production, distribution, or audience between these eras?*
- *Which song is most effective by your chosen criterion, and why?*
- *Where do you hear continuity, and where do you hear a real break?*
- *How does this capstone show growth from the way you listened in Unit 1?*

Your Response

REFERENCE

Listening Response Sheets

Use these sheets for weekly listening responses or any time your teacher asks you to respond to a listening excerpt.

Listening Response #1

Excerpt: _____

Date: _____

What I hear:

How it affects the music:

My interpretation:

Listening Response #2

Excerpt: _____

Date: _____

What I hear:

How it affects the music:

My interpretation:

Listening Response #3

Excerpt: _____

Date: _____

What I hear:

How it affects the music:

My interpretation:

Listening Response #4

Excerpt: _____

Date: _____

What I hear:

How it affects the music:

My interpretation:

REFERENCE**Reflection Pages**

Complete a reflection at the end of each unit. These help you track your growth as a listener throughout the year.

Unit 1 Reflection

What is one new thing I learned to hear in this unit?

Which listening skill did I use the most (Describe, Analyze, Contextualize, Evaluate)?

What is one thing I want to improve for the next unit?

Unit 2 Reflection

What is one new thing I learned to hear in this unit?

Which listening skill did I use the most (Describe, Analyze, Contextualize, Evaluate)?

What is one thing I want to improve for the next unit?

Unit 3 Reflection

What is one new thing I learned to hear in this unit?

Which listening skill did I use the most (Describe, Analyze, Contextualize, Evaluate)?

What is one thing I want to improve for the next unit?

Unit 4 Reflection

What is one new thing I learned to hear in this unit?

Which listening skill did I use the most (Describe, Analyze, Contextualize, Evaluate)?

What is one thing I want to improve for the next unit?

Unit 5 Reflection

What is one new thing I learned to hear in this unit?

Which listening skill did I use the most (Describe, Analyze, Contextualize, Evaluate)?

What is one thing I want to improve for the next unit?

Unit 6 Reflection

What is one new thing I learned to hear in this unit?

Which listening skill did I use the most (Describe, Analyze, Contextualize, Evaluate)?

What is one thing I want to improve for the next unit?

Unit 7 Reflection

What is one new thing I learned to hear in this unit?

Which listening skill did I use the most (Describe, Analyze, Contextualize, Evaluate)?

What is one thing I want to improve for the next unit?

Unit 8 Reflection

What is one new thing I learned to hear in this unit?

Which listening skill did I use the most (Describe, Analyze, Contextualize, Evaluate)?

What is one thing I want to improve for the next unit?

The goal is to help you hear music more clearly and explain what you hear.

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