These lessons were created as part of a long-standing CSO school partnership program offered from 1998–2015.

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Exploring the Elements of Music

This lesson will explore four fundamental concepts of music: **tempo**, **dynamics**, **texture**, and **mood**. Students will focus on these four concepts while listening to several musical selections. As a result, students will sharpen their listening skills, become familiar with musical works, and identify these concepts in the music as they listen.

**Assessment Strategies**

In this lesson, students should be able to successfully do the following:
- Identify basic musical elements such as tempo, dynamics, mood, and texture in varying orchestral pieces of music;
- Show familiarity with three to four pieces of music that are representative of different styles and/or time periods.

**Learning Standards**

This lesson uses Common Core and National Core Arts Anchor Standards. You can find more information about the standards featured in this lesson on page 4.
PREPARATION

In advance of the lesson choose three to four contrasting pieces of music. Suggested repertoire is listed in the sidebar.

TEACHING STEPS

1. **Discuss** the terms: tempo, dynamics, texture, and mood.

2. Tell students that they will **listen** to three or four different pieces of music and that for each piece they will have to determine the tempo, dynamics, texture, and mood.

3. **Play** approximately one minute of each piece, directing students to **focus** on tempo and dynamics. As the students listen, ask them to **complete** the Listening Table worksheet (located on page 6 of this document).

4. **Listen** again and **focus** on texture and mood.

5. **Listen** once again and **complete** any missing sections.

   Listening to a piece at least three times will help students to hone their listening and identify additional detail in the music. Steps 3, 4 and 5 can be done all in one session or spread out over several days.

6. Once the table is completed, have students **compare and contrast** what they heard. Students can share with a partner or with the whole class.

## Suggested repertoire*

**Bach** *Air on the G String from Suite No. III, BWV 1068*

**Mozart** *Symphony No. 25 in G Minor, K. 183, I. Allegro con brio*

**Berlioz** *Symphonie fantastique, Op. 14, IV. “Marche au supplice”*

**Bernstein** *Overture to On the Town*

*Click on the links above to listen to these examples on Spotify. A free account is required to listen.*
Extensions:

A. A week after the first lesson, hand out the students’ completed tables and play one of the four pieces of music. Can the students guess which piece is being played by looking at their chart?

B. Fill out a chart for four different pieces of music of your choice, without providing titles. Distribute your completed chart to the students. Play the new pieces one at a time and ask students to fill in the titles based on what they see in the chart.
VOCABULARY

**Tempo**: the speed at which a passage of music is played.

**Dynamics**: how loudly or softly the music is played.

**Texture**: the interaction of melodies and harmonies within a song. Texture in music can be thin or thick: thin texture has few differing musical parts and thick texture has many differing musical parts.

**Mood**: the feeling or emotion that is expressed through the music.

LEARNING STANDARDS

Common Core Anchor Standards

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.2](#)
Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.4](#)
Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.5](#)
Make strategic use of digital media and visual displays of data to express information and enhance understanding of presentations.

National Core Arts Anchor Standards

**Anchor Standard 7** Perceive and analyze artistic work.

**Anchor Standard 9** Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work.
ASSESSMENT

- Examine students’ Listening Table worksheet for accuracy and understanding of musical elements
- Through a guided discussion comparing and contrasting each piece, observe students’ understanding of musical elements
- Extension: observe students’ ability to differentiate between musical elements after revisiting the works featured in original lesson, and by examining students’ response to new musical works.
### Listening Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Piece</th>
<th>Tempo</th>
<th>Dynamics</th>
<th>Mood</th>
<th>Texture</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bach</strong> <em>Air on the G String from Suite No. III, BWV 1068</em></td>
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