

Musical form

Read the following information and answer the questions on page 18.

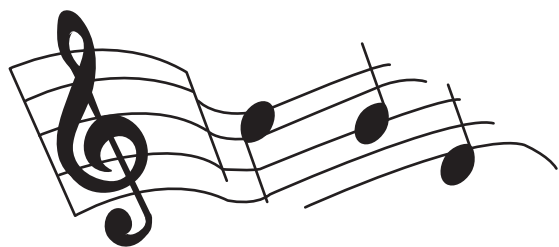
Lots of music follows a set pattern. The composer simply fills in the pattern with his or her own musical material. The 'set pattern' is called a musical form or structure. Here is a list of some common musical forms:

- **Rondo or ritornello form** – If each different musical idea were given a letter, starting at 'A', then a Rondo would have the following pattern: **A B A C A D A E A**
Example: Mozart, *Horn Concerto 2*, third movement.
- **Binary form** – A composer uses two sections but only one main tune. In the first section, the tune starts in one key and works its way to a new key (often the fifth of the scale). In the second section, the composer uses the same tune, starting in the new key and working back to the home key, usually passing through other keys on the way. Although binary form only uses one main tune, it is usually labelled **A B** (although **A1 A2** may be a better description).
Example: Bach, *Orchestral Suite 1* (some sections are in ternary form).
- **Ternary form** – This is in three sections following the pattern **A B A**. Sections **A** and **B** are completely different pieces of music. The first section (**A**) returns at the end. Sections **A** and **B** will usually contrast in a number of ways. They may be in different keys, one may be major and the other minor, the tempo may be different and also the dynamics. The rhythms and the style of playing (*legato/staccato*) may also be contrasted.
Example: Mozart, *Symphony 41*, third movement.

Musical material

Some music is like a discussion. The main musical material is the topic that is being discussed. Each instrument is a different voice in the discussion. The voices can be loud or quiet, high or low, calm or aggressive, and so on. Sometimes, the music uses overlapping ideas, like two people talking at the same time; sometimes one voice is used alone. Other voices provide the accompaniment while the main voice speaks. Sometimes the voices answer one another, rather like an argument. Many symphonies have a first movement that is like this.

Sometimes, the composer wants to express a feeling or feelings through music, such as love, tenderness, anger or aggression. Alternatively, the music may demonstrate some sort of (fast or slow) movement; it may be graceful, delicate, heavy or ponderous. It often helps to think of the mood that the composer is trying to create.



Often, the composer will simply repeat the musical material so that the listener can get to know it well. Often, the composer repeats the musical material but with changes, some of which are obvious and easy to hear, but sometimes the changes are subtle and more difficult to spot. It is worth remembering that, in the past, the only time a person heard music was when it was played live. It may have been the *only* time the music was heard. Today we have recordings, so we can hear music as many times as we wish.

Questions

- 1 Describe some of the ways that instruments are like voices in a musical discussion.

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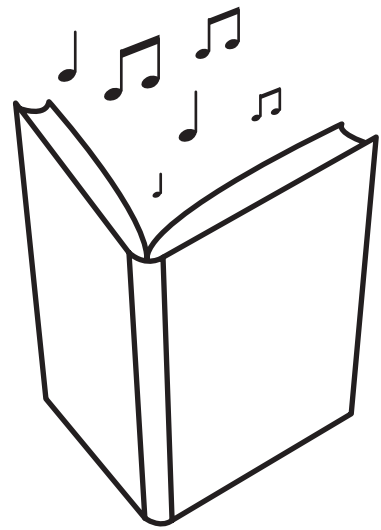
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- 2 Make a list of atmospheres, moods, emotions or actions that a composer may try to illustrate using music.

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- 3 Explain why some composers simply repeat a section of music without any changes at all.

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- 4 Name three musical patterns which are common in music and explain them in letter form.

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