

## Some tips for writing a successful 'applied terms' paper in Music 101

### PREPARATION FOR WRITING THE PAPER:

1. Find a song (or other piece of music) that you like very much (because you will have to listen to it many times).

2. Listen once or twice closely without writing anything to get a feel of the overall shape of the song form, the melody, the harmony, the rhythm and how those elements seem to go together.

3. Listen again and write down the names of all the instruments that you hear. If you have access to liner notes, the instruments are usually listed inside. You will need to know which instruments are doing what so that you may describe musical events that you notice.

3. Listen again, this time stopping at various points during the music to write down an outline of the form of the song. (TIP: to make your life easier, you will also want to write down the times where the formal breaks occur so that you can easily return to spots for closer analysis.) In the case of most songs, you will want to note the verses, choruses, a bridge section (usually sounds like a key change that wraps back into a chorus section). You will also want to note if there seems to be an introduction to the song -- a short piece of music that you would hear before the verse starts. Sometimes the introduction comes back at the end. If this happens in your song, make a note of it. Generally, when this happens you may label the two parts as "Intro" and "Outro." But you will want to make sure that you note any musical (or lyrical) differences in the two sections. Conversely, if the music is exactly the same, note that as well.

4. Sometimes songs might start with the chorus. If you notice this, then don't be afraid to write it. But, you will want to make sure you have evaluated the entire song before making this decision to label as such. Remember, context is everything.

5. Next you will want to analyze the lyrics (if your chosen work has lyrics). Often the most obvious clues about form are found here. You will want to carefully note how the music and the lyrics go together. Is there anything special that is happening musically to emphasize the words? Does the music simply repeat with each new verse or chorus? Is there a dramatic arc to the entire song? Are the lyrics telling a story with a beginning, middle and end or do they seem to paint scenes, or express emotions? A combination of any of these ideas? Be specific.

## NOW YOU ARE READY TO WRITE THE PAPER

1. You should start your paper with an opening paragraph that states the name of the song you chose to write about and the name of the artist and if the song was written by the performers or by someone else. Also, you might mention why you chose this particular song and what you find interesting about it.

2. Next you should begin by describing the form that you have so diligently charted out before beginning to write. You may refer to a chart that you are handing in with the paper, but it should be separate from the overall page count of the paper. By describing the form, I mean you should say what the overall form of the song is, like: ““Foggy Mountain Flapjack” is a simple verse chorus form with a short introduction by the triangle player. The lyrics tell a story about a young chef working his way through divinity school by making pancakes in diners all across Appalachia. The song is homophonic etc...”

3. For the guts of the paper, you should write about each section of the song, briefly describing how the music and lyrics go together. What do you notice about the rhythm, the melody, the harmony? Do there seem to be many chord changes? Does the music sound static, unmoving, repetitive? What effect does this have on the listener and how does it fit the overall mood of the song and its lyrics? Do you believe that the song ‘works?’ Repeat this kind of analysis for each section of the song, keeping in mind the overall form. If a section repeats exactly, note this, but you do not have to re-describe the section as you have already done.

4. The goal here is to hand in **NO LESS THAN TWO (2) FULL PAGES OF WRITING**. Again, if you want to include a chart, make sure it is well organized and on a separate piece of paper stapled **BEHIND** your writing—the chart does not count toward your two pages of writing. The same goes for the lyrics. If you find it necessary to include the lyrics of your song with what you hand in, this should also be on a separate page and does not count toward your two pages. You will also want to review Unit One in the text (pp. 3-55) to brush up on your musical vocabulary. In any case, you should (when using a music vocab word) check this section of the book to make sure you are using terms correctly.

### LASTLY

5. Your paper will be graded on whether or not it makes sense. This is not a contest to see how many music vocab words you can sprinkle into a paper. A few musical vocab words used correctly is worth more than a dozen misused. So, keep it simple and show me what you have learned this semester.

EMAIL ME if you have questions in the process of writing this paper. I will do my best to steer you in the right direction.