**Worksheet: Minding the Music**

**PART ONE: Finding the Format**

Most American Broadway song material follows a format of AABA. Let’s look at “Edelweiss,” from *The Sound of Music*. Sing the lines and mark them as A or B.

Edelweiss, Edelweiss, every morning you greet me. (A)

Small and white, clean and bright, you look happy to meet me. (A)

Blossom of snow may you bloom and grow, bloom and grow forever. (B)

Edelweiss, Edelweiss, bless my homeland forever. (A)

This song follows an AABA format, although you’ll notice that the second line changes a little at the end. This helps the second A transition into the B (bridge). Some people refer to this slightly altered section as A1, or A-prime, but for our purposes, we’ll call it the second A.

Not every song has A and B sections that are only one line long; many have A and B sections with multiple lines each. Though AABA is a musical division and not always related to lyrics, an AABA structure often functions as follows:

A: Establish the main idea of the song, the character’s point of view.

A: Add information about the idea.

B: A new idea enters or new information is received.

A: Returning to the main idea, which is different in light of the B section.

Your song may have other parts besides AABA, such as an introduction, a verse, or two bridges. Special endings (codas) are common in musical theatre. Not every single song is going to follow the AABA pattern, but many do, so it’s a good place to start when thinking about song structure.

**Instructions:** Following the format of the example below, write out your lyrics, dividing your song into its parts. Then answer the following questions:  
  
1) What does this structure investigation reveal to you? How are the musical divisions shaping the journey of the song? Does it follow the AABA journey listed above? If so, how? If not, what does it do instead?

**PART TWO: Reading the Markings**

Besides the notes and words, there is a lot of information to be found on a page of music. There are markings and words (some of them in Italian) that give instructions and guidance about speed, volume, pauses, and other interpretive choices. Even if you don’t read music, understanding musical markings will help you navigate a song.

**Instructions:**

What follows is a list of some common musical markings and definitions, and a piece of music showing an example of each. Start at the top of the music and follow the numbers to work your way down the list. Next, look at your music and see if you can find any of these same markings or new ones. If you find new ones, look them up and write down their definition. Finally, answer the question:

2) What clues about your character do the musical markings give you? What do the musical markings tell you about what they’re experiencing, how they’re processing or communicating, etc.?

1. In a musical score, each song is given a number.
2. This is the title of the song. The name of the show is sometimes written underneath.
3. Composer and lyricist names go here.
4. This is the line of dialogue that begins the song. Here, the Kitchen Maid gives the cue.
5. There are three systems on this page. System one shows the piano part only (this is the introduction to the song). Systems two and three show the singer’s line, also.
6. This is the key signature and the time signature. This song uses 3/4 time, which is like a waltz. Another common time signature is 4/4, which is like a march.
7. The word “Freely” gives information about the musical feeling of the song.
8. Songs are divided into measures, or bars. The lines on each side are called bar lines. This is one measure of music.
9. This pair of diagonal lines is sometimes referred to as “railroad tracks.” The official name for this is *caesura*, and it means to pause.
10. This symbol is sometimes referred to as a “birdseye,” but the official name is *fermata*. It means to hold, or stay on this note for a little while.
11. These are repeat signs. Whatever is between these signs is what gets repeated.
12. The term “Safety” means that there is no limit to the number of times this measure can be repeated. In this case, the material would repeat until the Kitchen Maid was ready to say her line, then the song would continue. Sometimes, repeated bars are called a “vamp.”
13. This is a bar (or measure) number. Conductors or music directors will say, “start at bar 5.”
14. Moderato is a tempo instruction from the composer. It’s an Italian word meaning medium, not too fast, not too slow. This is a change from the earlier instruction, “Freely.”
15. The name of the character singing is given just above the starting notes.
16. These curved lines are phrase markings, and they indicate that the notes underneath should be played or sung smoothly, with connection.
17. These two letters, *mf*, are an abbreviation for *mezzo forte*, an Italian phrase that means medium loud. (*Forte* means loud.) There are other letters throughout the music, such as *p* and *mp*, which are abbreviations for *piano* and *mezzo piano*. (*Piano* means soft.) These are called dynamic markings, and they range from *pp* (very soft) to *ff* (very loud).
18. These are two types of rests. A rest is a period of silence.
19. Sometimes there are rehearsal letters instead of measure numbers. The conductor might say, “start at letter A.”
20. “With more confidence” is an acting instruction from the composer and lyricist.
21. *Rit.* is an abbreviation for the Italian word *ritardando*, which means to slow down a little bit.
22. *A tempo* occurs after a slow down. It means to return to the regular speed of the song (in this case, *moderato*). 

**PART THREE: Assessing the Accompaniment**

In musicals, the accompaniment often serves as a sort of subtext. Listen to your song’s accompaniment and answer the following questions:

3) How would you describe the accompaniment? What does it sound like? What does it feel like? Does it seem in alignment with the melodic and lyrical content, or is there contrast?

4) Are there any large musical shifts? (Changes in tempo, for example.) Often these shifts indicate a new idea or a shift in tone. What do these shifts mean in your song?

5) How is the music directing you from the page?

Your Name

“I Know Things Now”

*Into the Woods*

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| --- | --- |
| Intro | Mother said, 'straight ahead'  Not to delay, or be misled  I should have heeded her advice  But he seemed so nice |
| A | And he showed me things, many beautiful things  That I hadn't thought to explore  They were off my path, so I never had dared  I had been so careful, I never had cared  And he made me feel excited..  Well, excited and scared |
| A’ | When he said, 'Come in,' with that sickening grin  How could I know what was in store?  Once his teeth were bared, though, I really got scared  Well, excited and scared... |
| B | But he drew me close, and he swallowed me down  Down a dark, slimy path  Where lie secrets that I never want to know  And when everything familiar seemed to disappear forever  At the end of the path was Granny once again  So we wait in the dark, until someone sets us free  And we're brought into the light  And we're back at the start |
| A | And I know things now, many valuable things  That I hadn't known before  Do not put your faith in a cape and a hood  They will not protect you the way that they should  And take extra care with strangers  Even flowers have their dangers  And though scary is exciting  Nice is different than good |
| Coda | Now I know, don't be scared  Granny is right, just be prepared  Isn't it nice to know a lot?  And a little bit not |

**Questions:**1) What does this structure investigation reveal to you? How are the musical divisions shaping the journey of the song? Does it follow the AABA journey listed above? If so, how? If not, what does it do instead?

2) What clues about your character do the musical markings give you?

3) How would you describe the accompaniment? What does it sound like? What does it feel like? Does it seem in alignment with the melodic and lyrical content, or is there contrast?

4) Are there any large musical shifts? (Changes in tempo, for example.) Often these shifts indicate a new idea or a shift in tone. What do these shifts mean in your song?

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**New Musical Markings:**

Marking – definition.