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Quick Compositions

Art museum

CC (visual arts)

L1

Choose a piece of abstract visual art and create a musical idea that depicts the visual elements of the piece of art with sound elements.

Auto-tune

MT

L2

Using a short audio recording of someone speaking, create a melody based on the inflection of the person's voice.

SUGGESTED LISTENING-

Steve Reich's *Different Trains* includes melodic material for string quartet derived from the inflections of a train announcer's voice.

Beat it

L2

Compose one beat of music (rhythm and pitch), then create several short compositions that all start with that same beat.

Copycat

L3

Compose a first line of a song in the style of a famous songwriter.

Cover song

CC (visual arts)

L1

Compose a musical phrase inspired by the cover art of a book.

Day at the zoo

MT

L1

Create a musical phrase inspired by an animal sound.

Variations

Insert here

L3

Alter an existing melody by inserting new instances of a given pitch or note value in various places.

Just a second

MT

L2

Use some kind of digital music player, or get a friend to help you, to randomly select a 1-3 second excerpt from an existing piece of music. Then borrow that one piece and develop new music around it.

New route

L2

Take the last moment of an existing piece and compose a piece that arrives at that last moment in a new way.

Mashup

L3

Find three pieces of music and cut the melody line up into separate pieces. Put all the pieces in a hat, and draw several measures. Compose a piece in which each of those measures appears in the order in which you drew them. You may choose to alter the pieces slightly to make them work, and you may choose to write short passages of new music in between your selected measures.

Measures of Mozart

L3

Take one measure at a time from a theme by Mozart or another classical composer and compose a new phrase for each measure. You may use each measure as the beginning, middle, or end of a new phrase.

SUGGESTED SOURCES FOR THEMES-
Mozart- Sonata in C, K. 545

Underscoring

Action sequence

I, MT

L1

Compose original music to underscore an action sequence from a movie. Try to have the energy of the music enhance the narrative and emotional energy of the scene.

Bedtime story

I

L1

Create an accompaniment for a bedtime story. You may choose an existing fairytale or create your own.

Some suggestions for fairytales are below-

The Elves and the Shoemaker (German)

The Emperor's New Clothes (Danish)

The Firebird (Russian)

The Fisherman and His Wife (German)

The Gingerbread Man (English)

The Golden Goose (German)

Jack and the Beanstalk (English)

The Little Match Girl (Danish)

Little Red Riding Hood (French)

The Musicians of Bremen (German)

My Lord Bag of Rice (Japanese)

The Nightingale (Danish)

The Princess and the Pea (Danish)

Rumpelstiltskin (German)

Sinbad the Sailor (Middle Eastern)

Shippeitaro (Japanese)

Straw Millionaire (Japanese)

The Ugly Duckling (Danish)

Campaign ad

CC (civics, history), GG, TX

L1

Create text and underscoring for a political campaign ad for a historical or fictional person running for elected office.

VARIATION- Create one positive ad and one negative ad

Fast forward

L2

Compose a piece that uses simple melodic and rhythmic elements performed at a very fast tempo.

Glacial pace

L2

Compose a piece in which significant change happens incredibly slowly.

Happy hunting

L1

Compose a piece that represents someone searching for something. The object of the search may or may not be a literal object.

NOTE- This prompt could also be used for songwriting.

Haunted music box

L2

Compose a piece in which a simple melody transforms into something terrifying, grotesque, or evil, then returns to its original state.

Highlight reel

CC (physical education), GG

L1

Compose a piece of music representing one or several aspects of a sporting event:

BASEBALL- at-bat, bases loaded, home run, strikeout, stolen base

BASKETBALL- foul shot, slam dunk, three-pointer

FOOTBALL- field goal, fumble, sack, tackle, touchdown

GOLF- bunker, hole in one, putt, tee shot

TRACK & FIELD- high jump, hurdles, javelin throw, long jump, pole vault, sprint

TRIATHLON- swim, bike, run

Songs

Dear Abby

L1

Compose a song in which someone is either seeking, giving, or responding to advice.

Double meaning

L1

Compose a song that makes use of a word that has both a literal and a symbolic meaning.

SUGGESTED WORDS- baggage, bloom, bomb, burn, cage, chain, dance, fire, fog, ice, key, knife, light, road, sea, spark, star

Famous last words

L1

Look up the last words of a real or fictional person and use them as the basis of an original song.

First line

L1

Compose a song based on the first line of a classic novel. (For suggested first lines, see listing under INSTRUMENTAL PIECES)

Ghost stories

L1

Compose a song from the perspective of a ghost or spirit.

Grown up song

L1

Use the title of a familiar children's song as the basis for a more serious, grown-up song.

Starters

37. 

38. 

39. 

40. 

41. 

42. 

43. 

44. 

45. 