



WECOMPOSE KS4 RESOURCE PACK



2025-2026

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The Commission Brief (KS4)

Welcome and thank you for being part of Music In The Round's 'We Compose' project for 2025/2026!

This project brings professional musicians and composers into your classroom to support your KS4 students as they develop composition skills with you.

The Commission

This year's commission is for your students to compose a brand-new piece of music for Clarinet Quintet. We are anticipating that most students would like to use this as one of their GCSE composition pieces and therefore will need to work independently. Each piece can be up to 3 minutes in length and be written in any style that the students like.

A professional Clarinet Quintet will launch the project with a presented concert, where they will perform four different pieces for this ensemble (clarinet, 2 violins, viola, cello), which could be used as inspiration for the student's own pieces.

Professional composers will also visit your school throughout the project to help support your students in their composition work. At the end of the project, a professional Quintet will workshop your students' pieces and record them for use in their portfolios.

Timeline of the project



October 2025 Teachers' INSET session

Led by Patrick Bailey, Ellen Sargen and John Webb, this one-day training session is designed to bring teachers together for a practical workshop on teaching composition with KS4. Expect new ideas that will help you engage students of mixed abilities.

November 2025 Introductory concert

The Consone Quartet or the Phaedra Ensemble will perform an introductory concert for your students, introducing them to the instruments and key repertoire.

November 2025 - March 2026 Workshops with composers

Your school will be partnered with a professional composer. Over the course of three in-school visits, they will support your students to write pieces for Clarinet Quintet. In between visits, we expect your students will keep working on their compositions in class.

March-April 2026 Deadline for scores

Send us your scores or DAW files and we will make these up into a set of parts for the Clarinet Quintet. Please send notated scores as mxml files and DAW files as midi and mxml files.

April-July 2026 Culmination day

At the end of the project, a professional Clarinet Quintet will workshop then record your students' compositions in a culmination event at a local venue in your region. We will record each composition during the event.

Video resources linked in this pack:



- Introduction for GCSE students
- Composing inspiration used in the Key Repertoire:
 1. Brahms: Clarinet Quintet Op.115
 2. Coleridge-Taylor: Clarinet Quintet Op.10
 3. Kendall: Vera
 4. Bruce: Gumboots
- Further composition techniques
 1. Melody
 2. Harmony
 3. Texture
 4. Rhythm & Metre
 5. Modulation
- Idiomatic writing
 6. Writing for Clarinet
 7. Writing for Clarinet Quintet
 8. Writing for String Quartet

Planning the project – progress checklist

After the INSET session

Please fill in the online Student Composer Diary with the students' first names and any accessibility requirements. This is an important tool for the project to run successfully. Please request this in an alternative format if needed.

Before the Introductory Concert

Introduce some tools for composition using our Melody and Harmony videos (with supporting resources in the Student Resource Pack). As a class, or as a challenge for each student, write a simple 4-8 bar melody or harmonic progression and bring this with you to the Introductory Concert. This is a chance to practice ways of composing, before students begin their WeCompose piece. We will develop one students' work with some audience participation during the Introductory Concert. Make sure the class brings some idea of how you would like it played, or which instrument you want to play it. Do you want it played fast/slow, low/high, scary/upbeat?

After the Introductory Concert

We recommend spending at least two more lessons as a class getting familiar with the Key Repertoire and the Clarinet Quintet through our video resources:

- Use our Listening Guide on page 49 to revisit the Key Repertoire pieces so that students can take ownership of similar composition techniques in their own pieces. Watch our short videos about each of the Key Repertoire videos to learn more about these pieces and the techniques used.
- Watch our video on 'Writing for Clarinet Quintet'. There are also videos on 'Melody' 'Harmony' 'Texture' 'Rhythm & Metre' and 'Modulation'. Remember that you and the students should come back to these films to help at different points in the project.

Before the first composer visit

- It is important that your students define a mood / story / energy for their piece before they start. You will have been thinking about these in relation to the Key Repertoire. Start thinking about this now and ask each student to fill out the 'Initial Questionnaire' in their 'Student Composer Diary' (see page 5)

and make a plan for their piece using the activities in this pack. This will help your students make musical decisions throughout their entire project!

- Choose a route into the composition process (see below) and aim to have spent a lesson on one of these activities. It is unlikely the whole class will use the same route as their starting point as this will be dictated by their ideas for the mood, energy or story of their piece.
- Students should use the 'Student Resource Pack' to help them keep track of the decisions they make.

Start with writing melodies/
ostinatos, on page 11

Start with Rhythm and
Texture, on page 36

Start with harmony, on
page 23

By the second visit...

Students have chosen a title or an emotion / mood for their piece, which has informed how their melody/harmonies have developed. Progress could look like:

- Students have developed melodic ideas that have a distinctive mood / energy / story using 1 or more techniques (pages 6-7, 11-). They have a short section completed. They have also filled out the Harmony pages in their Student Resource Pack. Activities on pages 38-42 might be useful before the third visit.
- Or, students have developed a strong melodic idea and have harmonised it, informed by the mood / energy / story they planned for their piece (pages 38-). They have started to think about the accompaniment which has a defined rhythmic character and the student has started to organise this into the quintet texture or has filled out the texture pages in their Student Resource Pack. Activities on pages 20- might be helpful before the third visit (Developing your melody).

- Having started composing harmonic progressions informed by the mood / energy / story for their piece, students have now created a melody from their initial progressions (pages 19-). Their melody and harmony has been organised into a defined texture which enhances their mood / energy / story, or the student has filled out the Texture pages in their Student Resource Pack (pages 36-).
- Students have planned the harmonic progression for a large portion of their piece (necessarily thinking about structure and form). This is inspired by the mood / energy / story for their piece and they have begun organising their harmonic ideas into the quintet texture with a defined rhythmic character. Activities on pages 20- might be helpful before the third visit (Developing your melody).

Before the third composer visit

Aim that all students are well underway with developing their melodic, harmonic and textural ideas. All sections should be roughly sketched out and students have started to think more about writing idiomatically. Use our 'Idiomatic writing tips' on page 45; are the parts in the correct range for the instruments? Can the students write some dynamics, or indications about techniques? How do these additions enhance the mood/ energy of the piece? Does the piece reflect the mood and genre they are writing in? If they chose a title, does it still fit the piece?

After the third composer visit

Make a plan for what will be workshopped on the culmination day. If the students will be ready by then to submit their full piece (1 minute to 3 minutes) that's great. If not, perhaps you could submit a single section or discuss with us what would be most beneficial. Review the checklist on page 48 in final lessons.

At the score deadline

Upload your scores, or other materials (such as DAW files) to the Submission Folder. Please send any scores in mxml format, so we can open them in MuseScore or Sibelius. Please send any DAW files with their midi and mp3 exports, in case we have different software to you! Guides will be supplied for this process.

Ensure the student names and titles are on the score and the file names.

Before the 1st composer visit: Initial Questionnaire

Below are a series of questions for your students to consider before they start composing their piece. Spending time answering these questions will help provide content for your students' GCSE composition programme notes/commentaries should they need to provide one. More importantly, it will help them to plan their piece and focus their ideas before they start composing.

When your students are composing, they can also reflect on their answers to these questions. This will help them determine whether the musical choices they are making fit with their original intentions or not, and ultimately help them to create a more cohesive composition.

ACTION

Please ask your students to fill these questions out in the 'Initial Questionnaire' in the online Student Composer Diary.

1. What is the inspiration for your piece?
E.g. a memory or experience, a painting, the walk of a prisoner through a crowd of angry, fearsome onlookers...
2. Who is the intended audience and/or occasion for your piece?
E.g. a wedding ceremony, audience for contemporary music, children's concert
3. What mood/genre would best describe your idea?
E.g. sadness, anger, horror, romance/romantic, pop, classical, contemporary
4. What are your musical aims for the piece?
E.g. to write a tuneful piece that grows to a climax, to try composing in different time signatures, to explore use of dissonant harmony...
5. Did any of the set works inspire you? What was it about that piece you particularly liked?
6. What other pieces of music are you going to listen to, to help inform your piece?
7. How do you intend to compose for this piece?
E.g. compose ideas on your instrument and then translate these onto Sibelius, use Garageband or another DAW, try ideas out with other musicians in class...

A note on... ...pitch

Students will need to choose a collection of pitches for their composition. The pitches they choose should reflect the mood they want to express with their music.

Students might want to choose a particular major / minor scale (tonal music), a particular mode (modal music), or they may want to make up their own pitch sets (atonal music).

Encourage them to explore the different sound-worlds in various scales / modes / pitch sets. The table below gives some examples that the students might consider using. This table is also in their Student Resource Pack.

You can also download our Common Scales Sheet to help students quickly identify the triads associated with these keys: <https://musicintheround.co.uk/resources/common-scales-sheet/>

Scale	Example	Mood
Major	C major: C, D, E, F, G, A, B, (C)	Happy, uplifting
Minor	D minor: - D, E, F, G, A, Bb, C, (D)	Sad, more reflective
Harmonic Minor	D harmonic minor - D, E, F, G, A, Bb, C#, (D)	Scary, haunting
Aeolian Mode	C, D, Eb, F, G, Ab, Bb, (C)	Melancholic, emotional. Used in rock an pop.
Whole Tone	C, D, E, F#, G#, A#	Dreamy
Blues	D, F, G, G#, A, C, (D)	Jazzy
Chromatic	All of the pitches!	Free-falling, exciting
Major Pentatonic	D, E, F#, A, B	Joyful, used a lot in folk music
Minor Pentatonic	D, E, F, A, C	Used in rock and folk music
Phrygian Mode	C, Db, Eb, F, G, Ab, Bb, (C)	Middle Eastern, Spanish, flamenco feel
Lydian Mode	C, D, E, F#, G, A, B, (C)	A more dreamy, exotic and futuristic feel

...tempo

Watch our video on Rhythm and Metre to start off classroom conversations about tempo. One of the first decisions your students can make about their piece is what tempo it should be. The tempo of a piece is directly related to the expression of the piece and composers often use descriptive words, along with a bpm marking, to give musicians a really clear idea about what the music is about. The words below are found in the Student Resource Pack, but you can encourage students to come up with their own words to express the feeling or energy in their music.



adagio (slow)	allegro (fast)	pesante (heavy)	scherzando (playful,
agitato (agitated)	energico (energetic)	presto (fast)	joking)
andante (at a walking pace)	forza (force)	prestissimo (as fast as possible)	tranquillo (calm)
animato (animated, lively)	leggiero (light or nimble)	risoluto (bold, strong)	triste, tristamente (sad, sorrowful)

...rhythm

Challenge your students to think about what sorts of rhythms express the mood they want to create with their music.

Explore the Key Repertoire in these films to learn about how these composers use rhythm (amongst other musical elements) to achieve particular moods or a particular energy in their music: <https://musicintheround.co.uk/wecompose-2025-2026-key-stage-4-resource-hub/>

Here's some different ways in which composers use rhythm:

- Create lilting or dance-like figures using dotted rhythms
- Blur the sense of strict pulse using crochet triplets or syncopation
- Create the feeling that energy is building by using rhythms that divide the beat further and further (e.g. quaver rhythms might develop into triplet or semiquaver rhythms)
- Create the feeling that energy is decreasing by using rhythms that gradually use fewer and fewer subdivisions (e.g. semiquaver rhythms might develop into quaver or crochet rhythms)
- Compose patterns of repeating rhythms and ostinatos to create a driving energy
- Compose phrases that use a few different rhythms within them to create a conversational statement from a solo instrument
- Compose phrases that use minimal rhythms within them to create a memorable or striking statement (perhaps making a feature of rests too)
- Use similar rhythms across a texture to create a sense of landscape or mass
- Use different rhythms with a solo instrument to the rest of the ensemble to emphasise a statement from an instrument

You might like to use the opening of the second movement of Brahms's Clarinet Quintet as an example:

Adagio

Clarinet *p dolce*

Violin 1 *con sordini*
p dolce

Violin 2 *con sordini* 3
p

Viola *con sordini* 3
p

Violoncello *con sordini* 3
n

Challenge

Why not start the whole composition process with rhythm? Pick 3 different moments from your Composition Plan and compose a 16-20 beat rhythm that expresses the mood or energy in this section. Use the ideas above as stimuli and the rhythm pages in the Student Resource Pack. Afterwards, use the activities in 'Texture: composing for clarinet quintet' on page 36 to develop these ideas.

Planning the piece

For your students, having a sense of what they want to do with their compositions, (e.g. trying to convey a message, idea or feeling) will really help them organise their thoughts and give purpose to their musical choices.

We're not suggesting the students should plan every bar or few seconds of their piece, but instead create a good framework that they can return to throughout their composition process. This framework will then be the basis for a more coherent process when experimenting and composing in the future.

ACTION

Students can find the questions below in their Student Resource Pack. This piece of work is something you should encourage them to come back to every time they compose. Importantly though, students should not think of this as a set of rules. Students can edit their answers at any time in the composing process (as their music may take them somewhere they didn't expect). Additionally, you may want to teach intervention lessons at various points in the process (for example on 'Rhythm and Metre' or 'Modulation') and students may edit their answers at this point, too.

Ask your students to consider the following questions and write down their initial thoughts and ideas.

1. How many sections will your piece have?

E.g. think about whether something changes in the story, mood, or expression of your piece and whether each of these is a different section.

2. Describe each section using one sentence.

E.g. what happens in this section or what words describe the mood/ energy in this section?

3. In bullet points, what musical elements will you use to help you achieve the imagery, mood or expression in each section? NB: Here are some things for your students to think about before they write anything down:

- What tempo (speed) will each section be? E.g. extremely fast, lethargic, peaceful
- What kind of rhythms will this section use? Will all of the sections be using similar rhythms?
- What kind of texture will this section have? E.g. melody and accompaniment, lots of imitation, counter melody
- Will this section use a particular scale?
- What sort of chords will you use to make this section? E.g. triads, extended chords, dissonant chords

ACTION

Use our Composition Cards to aid conversations about musical elements. These give some prompts for thinking through different choices composers can make about texture and the way different ideas interact, harmony, and some initial ways ideas might map onto different instruments.



Below is an example of how a student might answer these questions. Let's imagine they are planning to create a piece of music inspired by the image below.



1. How many sections will your piece have?

E.g. think about whether something changes in the story, mood, or expression of your piece and whether each of these is a different section.

2. Describe each section using one sentence. (Add more rows if you need).

E.g. what happens in this section or what words describe the mood/ energy in this section?

Looking at this image, we see elements of mystery, danger and adventure. That immediately informs the mood of the music we are going to write. From looking at this image, the story we'd like to tell is:

SECTION 1) A perilous ocean, full of danger...

SECTION 2) A fleet of Viking ships, battle against the waves throughout the night...

SECTION 3) Until a glimmer of light appears as the sun rises to calm the ocean at the start of a new day.

3. For each section, what musical elements will you use to help you achieve the imagery, mood or expression?

In the above 3 sections, you can see that our musical story has a start, middle and end. You can even imagine how each of those 3 sections would sound different. Now, we're able to go into more detail for each section, thinking musically about how they might sound:

ACTION

Remember, here's some things to think about before you write anything down....

- What tempo (speed) will each section be?
- What kind of rhythms will this section use?
- What kind of texture will this section have?
- Will this section use a particular scale?
- What sort of chords will you use to make this section?



1. A perilous ocean, full of danger...
 - The music is loud and fast from the start.
 - Dotted rhythms convey the lurching of the waves.
 - Perhaps use the Lydian mode because of its dissonant quality and ambiguity.
 - Dissonant chordal clashes to represent the waves crashing.
 - Diminished scales.
 - Harmonies based on minor chords.

2. A fleet of Viking ships...
 - A main theme, heroic and bold to represent the ships.
 - Uses different rhythms to the sea, with longer durations to convey the size of the ship.
 - Use imitation to represent there being more than one ship.
 - Experiment with dynamics as ships get closer.
 - Keep the dissonant chordal clashes as waves crash onto the ships.

3. Until a glimmer of light appears...
 - A short motif to represent sunlight.
 - Experiment with this in a sequence, rising to represent the sun rising.
 - Dissonance becomes less and less as the ocean calms.
 - There is a modulation into a brighter, warmer key.
 - Dynamics are softer and rhythms less frantic.

Of course, none of this is set in stone, but it does provide a starting point to experiment with musical ideas. We could now start composing for some of these ideas above using the instruments we play and sketch the notation on paper before thinking about how this can be applied to the clarinet quintet.

As we continue the composition process and experiment with different musical ideas, we can constantly refer back to this planning document and ensure our choices are within the framework we have created.

Now challenge your students to create a planning document / framework for their piece.

ACTIVITES FOR MELODY

Melodic ideas can be presented in several different ways in a piece of music. For example, there are long melodies made up of several different phrases:



Or very short melodic motifs, that can be experimented with throughout a piece, for example:



There are so many ways you might come up with the initial ideas for a melody, particularly after choosing a scale for your piece. In the next section our activities focus on starting with rhythm. Check out our videos on Melody and Harmony to see some other ways you might come up with ideas for melody.

Video resource: Composing Techniques | Melody

There are a few examples of how to compose and develop a melody on the short film that accompanies this resource:

<https://musicintheround.co.uk/resources/composing-techniques-melody/>

Below are a few more activities for you to try with your class to support them in composing melodies.



IDEA ONE: Create a melody using words and rhythm (beginner students)

Step 1:

Ask your students to write a short sentence (max 10 words) to describe what their piece is going to be about. For example:

A Viking's journey across a perilous ocean through the night

Prisoners marching towards freedom

A dance anthem for strings

Teacher Tip:

Using words is just one way of generating interesting rhythms, and this activity can be a playful way to explore this. Of course, there are a myriad of other ways you can generate rhythms, including through different clapping games. You can then use Step 5 onwards of this activity to complete your melody.

Step 2:

Now decide on the tempo for your melody. When choosing this, remember to think about the mood you're trying to create through your music. For example, do you want a fast, frantic melody, or one that is slower, more melancholic.

Step 3:

Now, students should try saying their sentence in rhythm, over a pulse at the tempo they previously decided. When doing this, encourage the students to experiment with the time signature for their sentence too. For example, is the rhythm for the sentence they are creating going to fit over a regular 4 beats per bar pattern, or have a more flowing 3 beats feel to it?

Here are 2 example rhythms using the same sentence:

♩ = 60

A vi-king's jour-ney a-cross a pe-ri-lous o-ccean through the night.

♩ = 180

A vi-king's jour-ney a-cross. a pe-ri-lous o-ccean through the night.

Teacher Tip:

Students often place every word or syllable on a crotchet or quaver in this exercise. Try to avoid this if possible and encourage your students to experiment with rests, long notes for different syllables and dotted rhythms. You can lead a quick clapping game to create these new variations, ensuring your students practice the versions they particularly like, so that they will remember them. Ask your students to clap variations on their rhythms that:

- contain silence or rests
- use syncopation
- use dotted rhythm(s)
- use triplets
- use semiquavers
- use minims
- etc...

Step 5:

Once the student has decided on their rhythm, they now need to add pitches to the notes in order to create a melody. **Scales** and **modes** are collections of pitches that composers often use when composing melodies. Again, it's important that the choices the students make reflect the mood they want to create for the listener. To help with this, take a look at the table on page 6 which provides information on some different scales and modes, the pitches they use and the mood they can help create.

Teacher Tip:

You may find that students apply just one pitch to each of the notes in their rhythmic sentence. This is fine, but it's also possible to apply more than one pitch to a syllable, especially for notes of longer durations to create a melisma effect.

Here are 2 examples applying pitches from the aeolian mode to the rhythms above:

♩ = 60

A vi- king's jour-ney a - cross a pe-ri- lous o-cean through the night.

♩ = 180

A vi- king's jour-ney a - cross. a pe-ri- lous o-cean through the night.

More on metre...

- If your students want to experiment with time signature, but they are struggling with the activities above, try this experiment. Perhaps watch our video on this exercise here first:



- As invited in the video, ask your students to create a rhythm or melody that lasts for 16 to 20 beats (perhaps using the words they have written down in Step 1). However, ask them to do this without putting a time signature in. If you would like to do this as a computer exercise on notation software, download our 'No time signature MXML template' here: <https://musicintheround.co.uk/resources/mxml-template/> For example:



- Then, challenge students to copy their rhythm or melody out, applying 2 or 3 different time signatures to the rhythm they have created.

E.g.



- Listen back to each example (you may need to play this to them). How does that change in metre and time signature change the overall feel of the music?
- Extension: Students could try changing the time signature within the melody too. E.g. why not try alternating between 3/4 and 4/4? How does that change the feel of the music?
- NB When challenged to create an entire phrase worth of rhythm to a regular pulse, some students will create rhythms that do not adhere to regular metres. Their rhythms might be made up of 7 beats, or 11 beats, for example. If the students are happy with their rhythm, support them to find a metre that supports this rhythm. Perhaps an 11 beat rhythm alternates between a pattern of 4/4 - 3/4 - 4/4 for example. This can be incredibly exciting and could become a feature of the composition (though try to stick to this pattern if it's been set up!). Be warned though - this is incredibly difficult to achieve on DAWs - let your visiting composer know if this has become a barrier in a student piece.

IDEA TWO: Melodies and phrases from words (advanced students)

This section explains how ‘phrases’ and ‘melody’ relate to one another. There’s also an activity where your students can compose one long melody made up of several shorter phrases.

Step 1:

It’s important for your students to understand what a ‘phrase’ means in relation to a melody. We like to describe musical phrases in comparison to words and grammar; imagine individual words as individual musical notes, and a complete sentence as a complete melody.

A phrase in a sentence (for example “under the crashing waves of the ocean” or “through the wind and rain”) is a group of words that make sense together and express a definite idea, but is not a complete sentence on its own. So in music, a melodic phrase is a group of notes that make sense together and express a definite musical idea, but will take more than one phrase to complete the entire melody.

From here, we’re going to complete the activity following my examples. Once students have got to grips with the tasks, they can apply these steps to their own melodies.

Step 2:

Take a look at this sentence made up of 4 different phrases:

Under the crashing waves of the ocean,
Where creatures and corals lie,
There’s a world of awe and wonder,
For everyone to discover.

Teacher Tip:

Using words is just one way of generating interesting rhythms and using this activity can lead to some really interesting phrasing and metric structures. It might be a good activity to try if you are looking to get out of ABAC phrasing or question and answer structures. Of course, there are a myriad of ways you can generate interesting rhythms, including through different clapping games. You can use Step 5 onwards of this activity to complete your melody.

Like in the ‘beginner activity’, students now need to compose a rhythm for each of the phrases above, experimenting with tempo and time signature. Here’s 2 examples of just the first phrase, one in 4/4 time, one in 3/4.

♩ = 90

The image shows two musical staves. The top staff is in 4/4 time and the bottom staff is in 3/4 time. Both staves use a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (Bb). The melody for the first phrase 'Under the crashing waves of the ocean' is written on both staves. The notes are: Under (quarter), the (quarter), cra- (quarter), shing (quarter), waves (quarter), of (quarter), the (quarter), o- (quarter), cean. (quarter). The lyrics are written below the notes.

Step 3:

a) Ask students to write down the notes in their chosen scale / mode

Students can document their work in the Student Resource Pack .

b) Ask students to copy the note names into the left hand column of the table below

c) Ask students to work out the triads for each degree of their chosen scale and write these in the table.

		1. -----
		2. -----
		3. -----
		4. -----
		5. -----
		6. -----
		7. -----

Each note of the scale / mode has a special name:

1st note	Tonic
2nd note	Supertonic
3rd note	Mediant
4th note	Subdominant
5th note	Dominant
6th note	Submediant
7th note	Leading note

d) Challenge your students to label their chords with the correct name on the dotted lines.

Here's a completed example using the Aeolian mode:

C	C, E \flat , G	1. Tonic -----
D	D, F, A \flat	2. Supertonic -----
E \flat	E \flat , G, B \flat	3. Mediant -----
F	F, A \flat , C	4. Subdominant -----
G	G, B \flat , D	5. Dominant -----
A \flat	A \flat , C, E \flat	6. Submediant -----
B \flat	B \flat , D, F	7. Leading note -----

Step 5:

This table is a useful aid for the student when they are composing different phrases for their melody because the notes they choose to start and end each phrase can establish the key and make the melody sound ‘finished’ or like it ‘wants to go on’. For example, starting a melody using a note from the tonic triad will help establish the ‘home’ key. Similarly finishing the phrase using a note from the dominant triad will make the phrase sound ‘unfinished’.

In the below example, we’ve composed the first phrase by applying notes from the aeolian mode to one of the rhythms we composed above. Notice that we started the phrase on an Eb, which is taken from the tonic triad (C, Eb, G). This help establishes the home key for the melody.

Ask your students to compose the second phrase to this melody, again using notes from the aeolian mode. The melody still isn’t finished though, so can they make sure the phrase ends using a note from the dominant triad?

♩ = 90

Un - der the cra - shing waves of the o - cean.

Finish with a note from the dominant triad

Step 6:

You often find repetition of phrases or interval patterns in longer melodies. So now, ask your students to compose the 3rd phrase for my melody, but with some repetition from the first phrase:

♩ = 90

Un - der the cra - shing waves of the o - cean.

Finish with a note from the dominant triad

3rd phrase with some repetition from 1st phrase

Step 7:

Finally, ask your students to complete the melody by composing the 4th phrase. Remember that the melody ought to feel 'finished' here, so ending on a note from the tonic triad (C, Eb, G) will help achieve this.

♩ = 90

Un - der the cra - shing waves of the o - cean.

Finish with a note from the dominant triad

3rd phrase with some repetition from 1st phrase

finish with a note from the tonic triad

Step 8:

Following the steps from this activity, ask your students to create a longer melody made up of several different phrases for their own composition.

The students may need to create a sentence related to their piece that is made up of several different phrases in order to create rhythms. Alternatively, they could find a piece of poetry related to their piece that includes a sentence made up of several different phrases.

Teacher Tip:

This doesn't have to rhyme, it's a method of being able to create rhythms for our melodies in the following step.

Composing melodies from chords

Preparation (in advance or as a class)

In this activity students will work from chords to create melodies. We recommend that they have already done some work on harmony (see page 23).

Step 1:

Pick 4 chords and ask each student to write down the single notes that make up those chords. As always, the chords they choose should reflect the mood they want to create for their overall piece. For example:


Chord:	Am	C	F	G
Notes:	A, C, E	C, E, G	F, A, C	G, B, D

Step 2:

Ask students to pick one note from each of their chords. For example using the chords above, we have chosen the notes C, G, F and D.

Ask each student to play (or write down) each of their chosen notes on the first beat of their chosen metre. For example, in this example in 4/4:

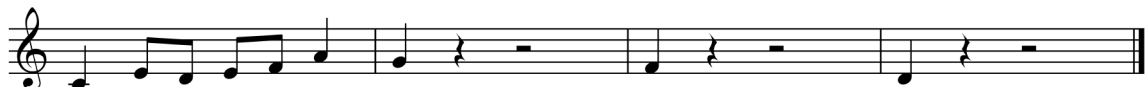
1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
C				G				F				D			



These will be the starting notes to the student's melody.

Step 3:

Ask students to add some passing notes to get from their 1st note to their 2nd note. For example:



Step 4:

Now ask students to add some passing notes to get from their 2nd note to their 3rd note. For example:



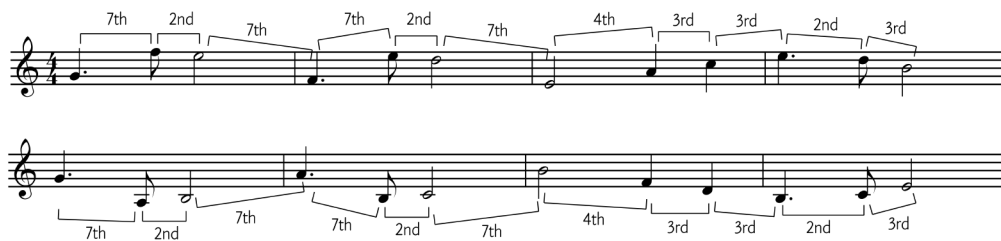
- Treat the melody as a sequence, repeating it but moving the whole melody up or down in pitch - how does this shift change the mood of the music?



- Use these ideas in combination - sequence the melody first, then on the second time, change some of the intervals. You could also change the rhythm for the moment you have changed the intervals, making it even more obvious to the listener that something has changed.

Set Two

- You could invert some or all of the original melody. You could keep the rhythms the same (for a true inversion) or change them to create new material.



- Some or all of the melody could be played backwards (retrograde).



- You could use these two ideas in combination.

Set Three

- Add some additional notes into a motif or melodic phrase, perhaps in the middle or at the end.



Anna Meredith, Tuggemo, Bar 35



Anna Meredith, Tuggemo, Bar 36

- Alternatively, take some notes away from a motif or melodic phrase (perhaps turning a 6-note motif into a

4-note motif).

Set Four

- Put the whole melody into a different instrument.
- Imitate the melody in a different instrument.

The image shows a musical score for a string quartet, specifically the first movement of Dmitri Shostakovich's Quartet No. 8 in C minor. The score is for Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, and Cello. The key signature is C minor (three flats) and the time signature is 2/2. The score consists of six measures. In the first measure, the Violin 1 part plays a 4-note motif: G4, A4, B4, C5. This motif is then imitated by the other instruments in subsequent measures: Violin 2 in the second measure, Viola in the third measure, and Cello in the fourth measure. The motif is also played by the Violin 1 in the fifth measure. The score includes various musical notations such as stems, beams, and slurs.

Dmitri Shostakovich, Quartet No.8 in C minor, Movement 2, Bars 62-68

- Put the melody in a different octave.
- Play the melody using a different playing technique or using different articulation.
- Use these ideas in combination.

Activity

Spend a lesson using the pages in the Student Resource Pack to create a 'bank of transformations' - either focusing on one set or picking and choosing between sets. Aim for each student to have created between 4-8 transformations before challenging them to combine techniques from different sets. Which ones do they like / dislike? Which ones are appropriate for their piece? Refer back to their plan to see if there are other ways they could continue working on their transformations.

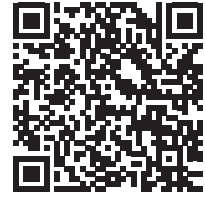
Creating contrast

Once your students have enough building blocks in place that their music has a distinctive character, you could use the listening guide to reflect on the musical features that give the music its character. Using this analysis, create a word bank or a list of words that describe the section. Then, challenge your students to write down (in another list or word bank) how they could contrast each of these features. Ask them to plan a contrasting section - which features do they want to stay the same, and which do they want to contrast.

HARMONY

Preparation

Our Video Resource: Composing Techniques | Harmony unpacks some of the vocabulary and theory in this section.



Composing and extending progressions: Creating chords using triads (beginners)

The video discusses consonant and dissonant harmony. Consonant harmonies have a more pleasing sound to the ear, where chords relate to a specific key or tonal centre. Dissonant harmonies have a harsher, clashing sound made up of chords that don't relate to a specific key. One way to create chords that produces a consonant sounding harmony is by triads that are related to a specific scale or mode.

Step 1:

First, make sure your students know what the key of their piece is. Write the numbers 1-7 in the left column of a grid. Next to each number, write the corresponding note for that scale, like this example in C major:

1	C
2	D
3	E
4	F
5	G
6	A
7	B

Students could also notate their scale on manuscript paper, or input it into notation software:



Step 2:

Now ask your students to build triads for each note in the scale and write them in the grid. Students could also note this on manuscript paper, and some students might be able to name the triads using chord symbols. There is support for labelling chords on page 16 of this pack.

1	C, E, G
2	D, F, A
3	E, G, B
4	F, A, C
5	G, B, D
6	A, C, E
7	B, D, F

C Dm Em F G Am B°

I ii iii IV V vi vii



Additional resources

There is a template for students to complete this activity in the Student Resource Pack. If you need to save some lesson time, you may find giving students a copy of our Common Scales Sheet which you'll find in the Resource Hub: <https://musicintheround.co.uk/resources/common-scales-sheet/>

Step 3:

Treating the grid like a painter treats a palette of paint, ask your students to organise their triads into chord progressions. Challenge each student to create 4-8 progressions each, documenting these in their Student Composer Pack.

C F Am G Dm F C G

I IV vi V ii IV I V

There isn't a rule on the order in which the chords should go, it's about experimenting, and the composer using their

ears to decide what they like the sound of. Some prompts however, might help in the classroom, including:

- Create a chord progression with 4 chords that starts on chord 1.
- Create a chord progression with 4 chords that ends on chord 5.
- Create a chord progression that ends on chord 6.
- Create a chord progression that includes chord 7 and chord 1.
- Create a chord progression that includes chord 2.
- Create a chord progression with 4 chords where no chords are repeated.
- Create a chord progression with 4 chords that sounds sombre / heroic / excited / hopeful / peaceful etc.

Step 4:

It is important to move the notes in the chord around to 're-voice' it. What this means is that instead of playing a triad in the order written above, we might move certain notes up or down an octave to ensure the music sounds smooth and doesn't jump around all the time.

To do this, ask your students to write their chord progressions in a new grid, like this:

G	C	E	D
E	A	C	B
C	F	A	G

Now get them to rearrange the notes in each triad so that the middle row only repeats notes, or moves by a step, like this:

G	C	C	B
E	F	E	D
C	A	A	G

Finally, choose either the top or bottom row and apply the same process, keeping the middle row as they've just made it, like this:

C	C	C	B
E	F	E	D
G	A	A	G

Step 7:

Once students have created a chord progression they are happy with, they now need to think about how this will be arranged on the clarinet quintet, assigning each row to an instrument. **By the end of this activity, students should aim to have individual instruments (particularly the inner parts) contain as few jumps as possible.** Our 'Writing for String Quartet' video has some advice on this. Next, students can think about the accompaniment rhythm - are the instruments holding long sustained notes, or applying a rhythm to them? Take a look at the 'Texture' section on page 43 for more guidance on this.

A note on harmonic planning

Encourage students to refer back to their Composition Plan. Can they compose a harmonic progression that expresses the mood in each section of their composition? Students may need further techniques to achieve this, including those documented below.



If your students are struggling...

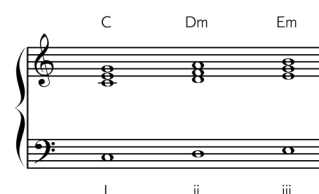
If your students are struggling to understand the theory behind chords (including building and extending triads), but you would like them to use their ears to make decisions about harmonic progressions, we have found this activity successful in previous years:

Step 1:

In the student's DAW or notation software, the teacher enters the triads built from the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd degrees of the students' chosen scale. Make sure to set up any key signatures in file before handing it over. E.g.

Step 2:

Ask the students to "continue the pattern" you started on their computer to create a total of 7 chords. They will now have a set of triads in their key.



Step 3:

Ask the students to make progressions of 4 or 8 chords by listening to different combinations on the computer one after the other, then copying and pasting these chords into a new order.

NB This method can be used for 7th and added 9th chords, too.

More on experimenting with harmony... (further beginner activities)

Sometimes we find students who have composed some quite consonant sounding harmony (perhaps just using triads built from their Tonic scale), but want to add some colour or tension to this. If the intermediate and advanced activities on harmony are too challenging, encourage them to explore through these alternative activities.

IDEA ONE

If your students have sketched out one or more harmonic progressions and are looking to add some harmonic colour...

Ask the student to choose a progression they have already sketched out. Next, in any of the middle chords (not the first or last chord in the progression) challenge the student to add a note to an existing triad. This note could:

- be a step higher or a step lower than one of the notes in the chord
- be a step higher or a step lower than one of the notes in the following chord
- belong to the scale or be a note from outside the scale

Remind your students to experiment with different sounds until they find something that they feel fits with a particular mood or expression they want to create in their piece.

IDEA TWO

If your students want to add some harmonic colour to a melody they have not yet harmonised...

Challenge the student to compose a drone by choosing just one note from the melody that they like the sound of when played along with the melody. Once the students have found a drone they are happy with, ask them to move to another pitch at some point during the melody. After moving to their second pitch, students can make one of three choices:

- Stay on this new pitch for the duration of the melody
- Move back to their original pitch (students must decide when this should happen)
- Make a further move to another new pitch

IDEA THREE

If your students want to add some more harmonic colour to a consonant melody they have already harmonised, they could try editing their progression in the following ways...

- Suspend one (or more) of their chords into the next bar for a couple of beats.
- Suspend a note from one chord into the beginning of the next chord
- Change one (or more) of their chords so that it is built from the note above the melody note (e.g. if the chosen melody note is C, build a triad on D: DFA). This melody note will become the 7th in the chord.
- Find a drone on one pitch that can be held underneath the entire phrase.

Remember to experiment and if they don't like it, change it!

Extending the harmonic palette: extended chords

In order to make chords sound more interesting, composers add extra notes to them to create 'extended chords.' In the exercise below, students are going to build 7th and 9th chords based on the triads from the previous activity. Students might want to add these to their harmonic grids in the Student Composer Pack, treating these as options within their palette of chords to make harmonic progressions from.

Step 1:

Revisit the triads created for a specific scale or mode from the previous activity, for example:

1	C, E, G
2	D, F, A
3	E, G, B
4	F, A, C
5	G, B, D
6	A, C, E
7	B, D, F

A musical staff showing the C major scale with triads and Roman numerals. The treble clef staff shows the notes C, D, E, F, G, A, B. The bass clef staff shows the notes C, D, E, F, G, A, B. Above the treble clef staff, the triads are labeled: C, Dm, Em, F, G, Am, B°. Below the bass clef staff, the Roman numerals are labeled: I, ii, iii, IV, V, vi, vii.

Step 2:

In order to create a 7th chord, the student needs to:

- Choose a chord from their series of triads.
- Know the notes that make up the associated scale for that chord. For example, if the chord is C major, the notes in a C major scale are C, D, E, F, G, A, B, C. If the chord is E minor, the notes in an E minor scale are E, F#, G, A, B, C, D, E.
- Add a note to the chord that is 7 notes up from the root note (lowest pitch) of the associated scale. For example, if our chord is C major, the root note for the scale is C and the 7th note up in the scale is B. That 7th chord with the added B now looks like this:

A musical staff showing the C major 7th chord. The treble clef staff shows the notes C, E, G, B. The bass clef staff shows the notes C, E, G, B. Above the treble clef staff, the chord is labeled: C^{maj7}.

Ask your students to create 7th chords for every triad from the previous activity, for example:

	Triad	7th
1	C, E, G	B
2	D, F, A	C
3	E, G, B	D
4	F, A, C	E
5	G, B, D	F
6	A, C, E	G
7	B, D, F	A

Musical notation showing seven chords: C^{maj7}, D^{m7}, E^{m7}, F^{maj7}, G⁷, A^{m7}, and B^{ø7}. The chords are written in a grand staff with treble and bass clefs. The bass line consists of single notes: C, D, E, F, G, A, B.

Step 3:

Similarly, to create a 9th chord students need to:

- Choose a chord from their series of triads.
- Know the notes that make up the associated scale for that chord. For example, if the chord is C major, the notes in a C major scale are C, D, E, F, G, A, B, C. If the chord is E minor, the notes in an E minor scale are E, F#, G, A, B, C, D, E.
- Add a note to the chord that is 9 notes up from the root note (lowest pitch) of the associated scale. For example, if our chord is C major, the root note for the scale is C and the 9th note up in the scale is D.

Musical notation for a C⁹ chord. The treble clef shows a C major triad (C, E, G) with a D note added above it. The bass clef shows a single C note.

Ask your students to create 9th chords for every triad from the previous activity, for example:

	Triad	7th	9th
1	C, E, G	B	D
2	D, F, A	C	E
3	E, G, B	D	F#
4	F, A, C	E	G
5	G, B, D	F	A
6	A, C, E	G	B
7	B, D, F	A	C#

The musical notation shows a chord progression in C major. The top staff contains the following chords: C⁹, Dm⁹, Em⁹, F⁹, G⁹, Am⁹, and B⁹. The bottom staff shows a bass line with notes: C, D, E, F, G, A, B.

More on 9th chords (and further harmonic colour)

This technique might help students start exploring non-diatonic harmony and is a great way to explore the different moods and colours that are possible in an extended progression. Notice that in a major key, the iii⁹ and the vii^o9 use notes from outside of the tonic key (in a minor key, the same will be true of ii⁹ and v⁹).

Students could alternatively restore the 9th on these chords to a diatonic degree of the tonic scale, to see if that better fits the mood they are after. This will become an added minor 9th (instead of a major 9th) and will create dissonance between the root and the 9th (which the students could further explore by inverting the chord so this interval becomes a minor second).

Teacher Tip:

Sometimes composers put 7ths and 9ths together in one chord, like in the Dm7add9 chord in the 5th bar of the example on the next page.

Step 4:

Challenge your students to create an 8-bar chord progression that features 7th and / or 9th chords. Adding extra notes into chords like this helps make chords sound more interesting. As in the previous activity, this is about experimenting and the composer working out what sounds good to them. Here's an example chord progression using extended chords:

C^{maj7} F⁹ Am⁷ C⁷ Dm^{7(add9)} F^{maj7} C⁹ G⁷

Step 5:

To experiment further, ask the students to try adding a few accidentals to some of their chords to see how that sounds. Some might work, some won't but again it's an opportunity to experiment and see what sounds good to the composer. Here's an example where we've applied a few accidentals to some of the notes in the above chord progression:

C⁷ Fm⁹ Ab^{maj7} C⁷ Dm^{7(add9)} F^{maj7} C^{9(b9)} G⁷

Teacher Tip:

If encouraging Step 5 in diatonic music, it makes most sense to ask for this experiment at the point where the student has already composed a harmonic progression. This is because adding accidentals in this way will introduce tensions in the harmony, which could be resolved or not in the next chord. Think carefully about how to voice the chords so that tensions are resolved within the same instrument.

Dissonant harmony (advanced)

For this activity we're going to look at how composers can create a dissonant sounding harmony by combining unrelated chords on top of one another.

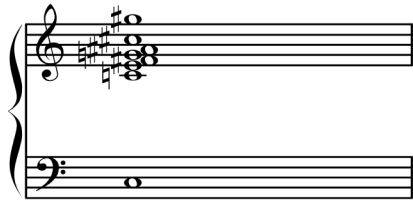
Step 1:

Choose two different chords that are unrelated to one another in terms of scale or key. For example a C chord and an F#9 chord:

C F#⁹

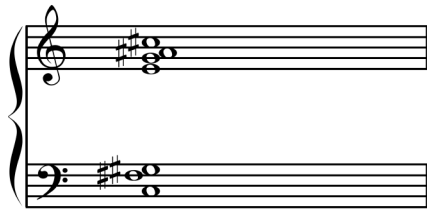
Step 2:

Now combine those 2 chords by playing them together:



Step 3:

Next, ask the students to re-arrange the chord experimenting with different voicings, for example:



You can create some really interesting chords experimenting in this way. Like with previous activities it's about being experimental and composers using their ears to create and decide upon harmonies that they like and work for the piece as a whole.

Teacher Tip:

Encourage students to be experimental but not for the sake of being experimental. Encourage them to use their ears, if they don't like the harmonies they're creating, change it.

Step 4:

The last step is for the student to consider how this harmony is presented in the music, for example as long notes, through rhythmic motifs or a combination of the two. Composers can create some really interesting chords and harmonies experimenting in this way.

Teacher Tip:

Take a listen to the opening of 'Dances of the Young Girls' section in composer Igor Stravinsky's 'Rite of Spring'. The dissonant harmony you can hear is created by combining two unrelated chords, E major and Eb7.

Modulation

These activities support our video on Modulation, which gives practical tips to help your students modulate keys in their composition. This won't be for everyone, but we hope this makes the process a little bit easier for students who want to modulate.

Step 1

Make sure your students know what the original key of their piece is. If they haven't done so already, make sure they have written out the pitches of this scale, and the triads that are built from those pitches. This activity is found on page 23 of this pack, and in the Student Resource Pack. Your students should have a completed table, like this:

C	C, E, G
D	D, F, A
E	E, G, B
F	F, A, C
G	G, B, D
A	A, C, E
B	B, D, F

NB There is support for labelling chords on page 16 of this pack, and in the Student Resource Pack.

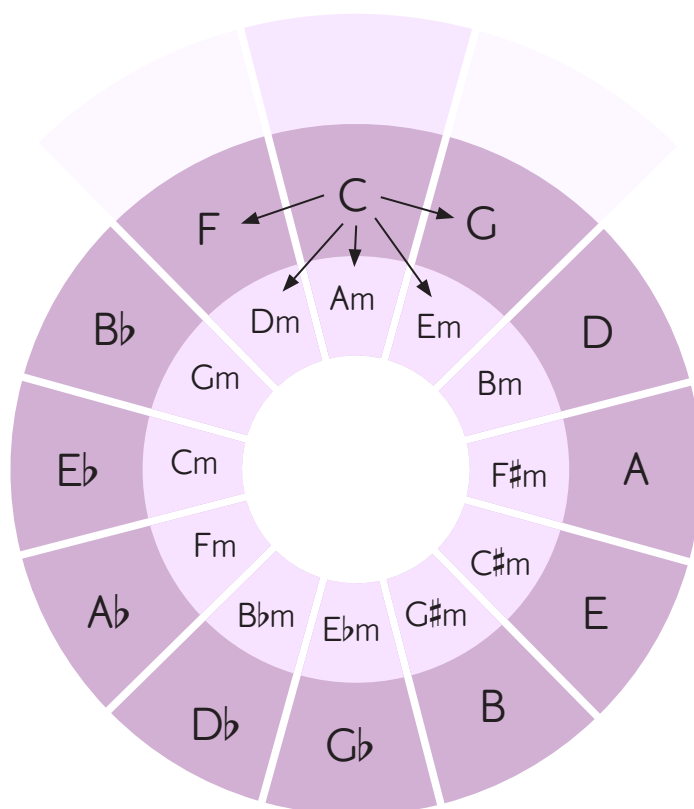
Step 2

Students now need to choose which key they are going to modulate to. It's common to modulate from the original key to one of its 5 closely related keys. On the circle of fifths, these can be found directly next to, or diagonally to, the original key (like in the diagram).

Support your students to identify which five keys are closely related to their original key. Students can draw arrows on their own circle of fifths diagram in the Student Composer Pack.

Step 3

Support your students to listen to the sound-world of the five closely related keys, so they can make an informed decision about which one to modulate to. Their new key should reflect the mood they would like to express with their music.



Step 4:

Once your students have decided where they will modulate to, ask them to write down the names of the scale of their new key. If modulating to a minor key, write the note names of the natural minor (i.e. without the raised 7th) but don't forget about any other sharps or flats in the new scale. As before, ask your students to work out the triads from each note of the **new scale**. Put this into a table like the one below (which gives an example of C major modulating to E minor). Students can do this in their Student Resource Pack.

ORIGINAL KEY

C	C, E, G
D	D, F, A
E	E, G, B
F	F, A, C
G	G, B, D
A	A, C, E
B	B, D, F

MODULATION KEY

E	E, G, B
F#	F#, A, C
G	G, B, D
A	A, C, E
B	B, D, F#
C	C, E, G
D	D, F#, A

Step 5:

Ask your students to label the PIVOT chords. This means students need to identify the chords that are found in both the original key and the modulation key. Students could circle these in one colour or write them into a PIVOT CHORD table, like the one found in the Student Resource Pack.

Step 6:

Now ask your students to label the MODULATING CHORDS. This means students need to identify the chords that are only found within the modulation key. Students could circle these in a different colour or write them into a MODULATING CHORDS table, like the one found in the Student Resource Pack.

Your students should now have identified all of the PIVOT and MODULATING chords. For example:

PIVOT CHORDS

C, E, G
E, G, B
G, B, D
A, C, E

MODULATING CHORDS

F#, A, C
B, D, F#
D, F#, A

Step 7:

Now it's time to modulate. Ask your students to compose a 4-chord progression where:

1. the first chord is the TONIC of the original key
2. the second chord is a PIVOT chord
3. the third chord is a MODULATING chord
4. the fourth chord is the TONIC of the new key

E.g. here is an example of a modulation from C major to E minor

The image shows a musical score for a 4-chord progression. The top staff is a treble clef with a grand staff bracket on the left. The bottom staff is a bass clef. The progression is as follows:

Chord	Treble Clef Notes	Bass Clef Notes
C Major	G, E, C	C
A Major	E, C, A	A
B Major	F#, D, B	B
E Minor	B, G, E	E

Step 8

Students can now compose melodies and harmonic progressions using the notes of the new key!

Step 9

Students should re-voice the progressions they make, then arrange their chords into the clarinet quintet texture. If your students are working with triads, be aware that they may need to choose a note to double in the texture. We recommend doubling the tonic or the 5th of the chord, rather than the 3rd.

TEXTURE: COMPOSING FOR CLARINET QUINTET

Watch our video Composing Techniques | Composing for Clarinet Quintet to get familiar with the ways you can think about texture within this ensemble.



Students should always refer back to their Composition Plan when deciding how their musical ideas should be arranged into the clarinet quintet texture. This will help them decide what kind of textures they are interested in. They can start making these decisions right at the start of the composition process and we recommend the following class activity for getting started:

Step 1

Assuming the students have started their planning process, ask them to choose one section of their piece (perhaps the opening) and think of as many words as they can that relate to that section, then write them down. For example, this could be how they want to listener to feel, or any particular characteristics of the music. E.g. here's some words about a piece we want to write:

sighing swarm direction hypnotic
repetitive layers glissando dancing
uplifting club people movement
beat weave flying electronic

Step 2

Inspired by these words, choose a tempo and metre - clap this out or set up a metronome in your DAW / notation software.

Step 3

Either clapping out loud, or inputting midi into the computer using a keyboard (for this Step, choose 1 repeated note to play), devise a 2-bar rhythm inspired by your word bank. Keep experimenting until you have something that reflects the mood and energy you want to create.

Step 4

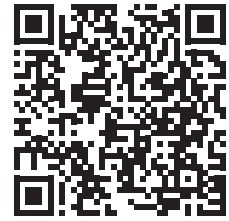
Ask your students the following questions:

- Which instrument plays this rhythm?
- Does it have a particular role - e.g. is it suited to a melody or bass line? Perhaps it's part of a denser, more complicated texture?
- How many bars does the same instrument play this rhythm for? A whole phrase? Longer?
- What happens at the same time as this rhythm? Which other instruments are playing? What role do they have?
- How is this instrument playing this rhythm? Loudly / softly? High in it's register / low in it's register? Pizzicato / arco?

While considering these questions, students can draw their ideas for texture (graphically or using music notation) onto this template (which is also enlarged in the Student Resource Pack, as well as given in full stave notation), or copy and paste / move things around in the DAW / notation software. Students may want to devise other rhythms as they answer some of the questions, and make sure they annotate decisions around playing technique.

Teacher Tip:

Use our Composition Cards to aid conversations about musical elements. These give some prompts for thinking through different choices composers can make about; texture and the way different ideas interact, harmony, and some initial ways ideas might map onto different instruments.



Clarinet in Bb

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Violoncello

Step 5

Give your students the following texture words, and ask them to label their work with any appropriate terms.

- Monophonic texture
- Homophonic texture
- Polyphonic texture
- Solo
- Soli (two or three instruments play the solo line)
- Melody
- Accompaniment
- Polyrhythms

Step 6

Assign pitches to each rhythm based on the scale / mode / pitch set you have chosen. Continue to compose out the texture using the activities below.

Monophonic textures

A monophonic texture is one single melody played by one instrument or by any number of instruments playing in unison (at the same time).

Related Video chapter



Step 1:

Ask students to choose or compose a short melody, for example:



Step 2:

To compose a monophonic texture for this melody using the clarinet quintet, the melody needs to be played by all the instruments at the same time. The notes don't all have to be at the same octave, so encourage students to consider the pitch range of each instrument before they apply the melody to it:



The score shows the melody from Step 1 being played in unison by five instruments: Clarinet (Cl.), Violin I (Vn. I), Violin II (Vn. II), Viola (Vla.), and Violoncello (Vc.). Each instrument has its own staff, and the melody is written in the same 3/4 time and B-flat major key signature. The notes are: Cl. (G4, A4, Bb4, C5, Bb4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4, Bb3), Vn. I (G5, A5, Bb5, C6, Bb5, A5, G5, F5, E5, D5, C5, Bb4), Vn. II (G4, A4, Bb4, C5, Bb4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4, Bb3), Vla. (G3, A3, Bb3, C4, Bb3, A3, G3, F3, E3, D3, C3, Bb2), Vc. (G3, A3, Bb3, C4, Bb3, A3, G3, F3, E3, D3, C3, Bb2).

Monophonic textures don't have any harmonic or rhythmic accompaniment, it is just one melody. Composers sometimes use this texture to make a statement, for example at the beginning or the end of a piece.

Homophonic textures

In homophonic textures all the instrumental parts move together in chords.

Step 1:

Ask students to choose or compose a short melody, for example:



Step 2:

We now need to create chords for every note of the melody. You can refer back to the 'Harmony' section (page 23) for how to create chords. Another way is to choose chords that have that melody note in it. For example, the first note in the above melody is F, so we could have an F minor chord as that features the notes F, Ab and C. Encourage the students to experiment with different chords and not always go to the most obvious. Notate each chord in a staff under the melody, for example:

B \flat Eb Eb B \flat A \flat B \flat Eb Cm A \flat B \flat Cm D $^{\circ}$ B \flat Fm^(add9) Eb B \flat

Teacher Tip:

Chords that feature each melodic note can be from simple chords like triads. However, encourage more advanced students to use extended chords, as explained in the 'Harmony' section earlier (pages 28-32). For example, our first note in the melody above is F. An example of an extended chord that includes this note could be a Gm7 chord as that uses note G, B \flat , D and F.

Step 3:

Now students need to re-voice their chords to help it sound more musical. See our tips on page 25 for this.

A musical score for a single instrument in 3/4 time. The melody is written in the upper staff, and the accompaniment is written in the lower staff. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat).

Step 4:

The final step is to apply this to the clarinet quintet. Encourage students to think how the melody part is going to stand out, perhaps through; dynamics, having more than one instrument play the melody, or by voicing it in a higher range than the accompaniment. Here's an example where we have applied the above melody and accompaniment to a clarinet quintet arrangement:

A musical score for a clarinet quintet arrangement in 3/4 time. The score is divided into five staves: Clarinet (Cl.), Violin I (Vn. I), Violin II (Vn. II), Viola (Vla.), and Violoncello (Vc.). The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The melody is primarily carried by the Clarinet and Violin I parts, while the other instruments provide accompaniment.

Melody & Accompaniment Textures

This is the video chapter related to Melody & Accompaniment.



Polyphonic textures

Polyphonic textures consist of 2 or more instrumental parts playing a melodic line at the same time, with each part being equally important. The notes in each part constantly weave in between one another. Follow these steps to compose a short section of polyphonic music:

Step 1:

Ask your students to compose a short 1 or 2 bar melody. Refer back to the 'Melody' section (page 11) of this resource for activities on how to do this. Here's an example melody:



Step 2:

Now ask the students to develop their short melody into a 4-bar melodic phrase for one of the instruments in the ensemble, for example:



Step 3:

To create polyphonic textures, we need to have two or more independent melodies being played at the same time. However, they can't be two random melodies together, it's important that they work together harmonically. A little trick composers often use in polyphonic music is imitation. This is where one instrument copies something that has just been played by another instrument.

Related Video chapter



To make the music more interesting, the imitations can have slight changes. For example, they could:

- Be played in a different octave
- Have ornamentation to create a fancy, decorated version of the original melody
- Use the same pitches as the original melody, but use notes that are of different durations

Ask your students to experiment using imitation in one or more of the other instrument parts based on something in the 4-bar melodic passage they composed in the previous step. This example shows the beginning of a polyphonic texture between the string parts:

The image shows a musical score for three instruments: Vln. 1, Vln. 2, and Vla. The Vln. 1 part has a melodic line starting with a circled phrase. The Vln. 2 part has a circled phrase that appears to be an imitation of the Vln. 1 phrase. The Vla. part has a circled phrase that is also an imitation of the Vln. 1 phrase. The score is in 4/4 time and features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes.

Step 4:

Now the students need to fill in the gaps, making sure that each instrument has their own melodic lines that are independent of one another. No single melody should take over the overall sound. It's also important for the composer to consider the key the piece is written in and / or the tonality they would like for this section of the piece when completing this step. For example:

The image shows a musical score for four instruments: Vln. 1, Vln. 2, Vla., and Vc. The Vln. 1 part has a melodic line. The Vln. 2 part has a melodic line that is independent of the Vln. 1 line. The Vla. part has a melodic line that is independent of the Vln. 1 and Vln. 2 lines. The Vc. part has a melodic line that is independent of the Vln. 1, Vln. 2, and Vla. lines. The score is in 4/4 time and features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes. The Vc. part is marked "pizz." (pizzicato).

Teacher Tip:

Students may find that in order for the imitations to work harmonically, they may need to change some of the pitches in the original melody.

More on texture...

Here's a list of statements that we've heard from students before, and what kind of textures they evoke from us:

I want to create a gentle, delicate texture using pizzicato strings that becomes heavier as the piece develops.

- Don't feel like the clarinet has to be 'in' the texture at all times. Students could take inspiration from Hannah Kendall's *Vera*, and introduce the clarinet in a new section, when the piece starts to become heavier. The contrast between the long, low notes on the clarinet against the pizzicato strings helps the texture feel heavier and like it's getting darker, too.

♩ = c. 120 (Playful)

Clarinet in Bb

Violin

Viola

Violoncello

I want to create a beautiful melody for the clarinet. The piece is about someone walking through a beautiful landscape.

- Here, the clarinet could open the whole piece with a melody which is accompanied by the strings. The 'melody role' could later be passed around the different instruments in the Quintet, or the ensemble could split into a melody, counter-melody, and accompaniment roles. Students could take inspiration from Johannes Brahms, who gives his opening melody to the clarinet and creates a gentle polyphonic texture for the string accompaniment which deliberately uses quite limited rhythms and is at a piano dynamic.

Adagio

Clarinet

Violin 1

Violin 2

Viola

Violoncello

I want to create a lively, energetic piece that builds and builds!

- This piece might use some very distinctive rhythms that give the piece a certain character. These rhythms

are probably heard over and over again throughout the piece. The rhythms might develop throughout the piece, or the composer might choose to develop other musical elements around this rhythm, for example by changing the harmony, or changing who plays the rhythm in the ensemble. Students might take inspiration from Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, who often gives the whole ensemble distinctive rhythmic moments in a homophonic texture.

Clarinet in A

Violin 1

Violin 2

Viola

Violoncello

Or, students might take inspiration from David Bruce who passes distinctive rhythms around the ensemble quickly one after the other!

Part 2

Dance 1. Angry, "with attitude"
 ♩ = 108

320 short, spikey, with military precision

Vn. I *ff*

Vn. II *ff*

Va. *ff*

Vc. *ff*

pizz. arco pizz. arco pizz.

I want to create a song, and arrange it for clarinet and strings!

- Here, the clarinet could be given the vocal line and the harmony instruments arranged into the string parts. Students could take inspiration from producer Bonobo's track Black Sands, where the clarinet is given a vocals-like tune.

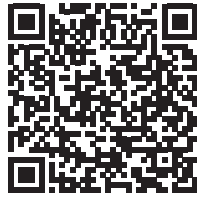
I want to create a fast, busy texture that is a bit chaotic.

- A polyphonic texture would work well for this. Perhaps different instruments in the ensemble are given different rhythms, creating a polyrhythmic texture. Students could take inspiration from David Bruce's Gumboots. In 'Part 2, Dance 2', he has composed three rhythms - 1 for the clarinet, 1 for Violin 1, and a third that the rest of the strings are playing in homophony.

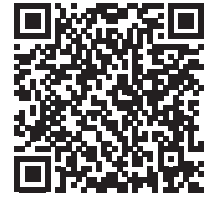
Students might be tempted to give the clarinet lots of solo lines and keep the other instruments in an accompanying role, but there's lots of ways to use it in the texture!

IDIOMATIC WRITING TIPS

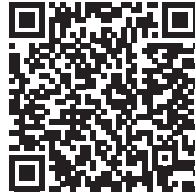
Composing Techniques |
Composing for Clarinet



Composing Techniques |
Composing for Clarinet Quintet



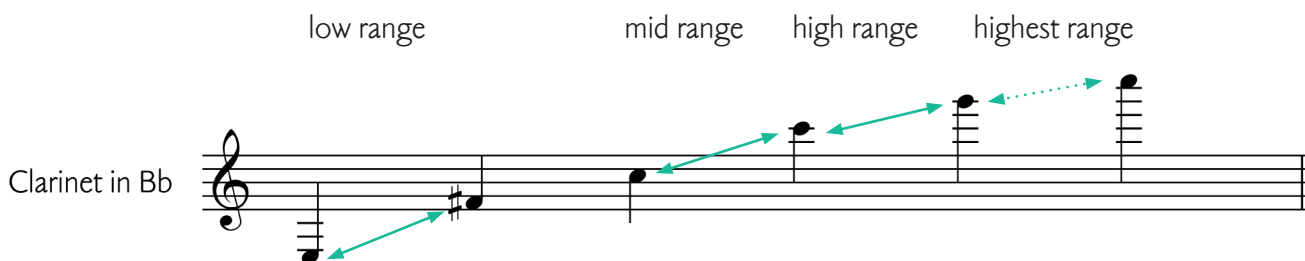
Composing Techniques |
Writing for the String Quartet



A clarinet quintet is made up of a string quartet (2 violins, a viola and a cello) plus a clarinet.

Writing for Clarinet

Although the clarinet family includes instruments of lots of shapes and sizes (including the bass clarinet and the soprano clarinet), the most common clarinet to write for is called the Bb clarinet. The clarinet is known for its distinctive sound in different parts of its register. Its low range has a gorgeous dark, rich quality. Its middle range is bright and lively. Writing for it in its upper range will make it stand out of any texture!



Writing for String Quartet

The string quartet covers a wide range of pitches from the cello being able to play very low, the violins being able to play very high, and the viola being the filling in the middle of this musical sandwich!

There are things that all the instruments in a string quartet can do, for example they can all play the strings with a bow (arco), or by plucking the strings with their fingers (pizzicato). Remember, each of the instruments in a string quartet has a unique sound quality and the decisions you make for how each of the instruments are used will affect the overall mood of the music.

The image shows a musical score for four instruments: Vln. 1, Vln. 2, Vla., and Vc. The score is divided into two sections: 'comfortable range' and 'extreme range'. In the 'extreme range' section, the notes for Vln. 1, Vln. 2, and Vla. are marked with '8va', indicating they are played an octave higher than written. The Vc. part also has a note in the extreme range. The notes are connected by a solid green line, and dashed green arrows point from the '8va' markings to the notes.

Try this!

Learning objectives: to identify / to analyse

Extension task:

Take a look at this music by some living composers who are writing music today. The composers have used the following techniques. Can your students correctly identify where they are used? Listen back to the Key Repertoire to hear them in the recordings.

- arpeggiated chord in the strings (the notes of the chord are played one after the other (sequentially), rather than at the same time).
- crescendo
- diminuendo
- pizzicato (where the strings are plucked with the fingers)
- portamento in the strings (slide from one note to the next)
- sul ponticello (at the bridge on a string instrument, creating a whispery sound)
- glissando in the clarinet
- tongued notes in the clarinet
- slurred notes in the clarinet

guitar style (bow in hand)
pizz.
mf
sim.

excerpt from MONTGOMERY, Jessie. 'Strum', bars 3-4

Violin I
ff
sul pont

Violin II
ff
sul pont

Viola
ff
sul pont

Violoncello
ff
sempre sul pont

excerpt from MEREDITH, Anna, 'Tuggemo', bars 89-92

Revisiting your piece

As students begin to complete the first draft of their pieces, it may be beneficial for them to go back to their planning document they made at the start of this resource and consider the following questions:

- Does the piece represent what they originally wanted it to be about?
- Is it suitable for the intended audience?
- Did the student meet their musical aims? If so, how? And if not, why not? There may be a perfectly good reason as to why not, but we think it's good practice for student's to explain why their musical decisions have gone away from how they originally planned.

Sometimes students can compose pieces that present a few problems or challenges. Below is a list of some of the most common ones we've found when visiting schools:

- **Too many ideas:** Encourage students to make the most of the material they compose and develop their ideas rather than have a collection of unconnected ideas in one piece.
- **Too much cut and paste:** Repetition of musical ideas is a common composition technique and should be encouraged. However, composers often develop something in the music when returning to a musical idea. For example, this could be playing the same section of music but with different instrumentation, voicing or dynamics.
- **Not playable:** This could be because students have selected notes out of the range of the instrument or it is unplayable because to the technical demands, for example playing melodies with extremely wide intervals at a very fast tempo or impossible chords in a string part.
- **Noodling melodies with no phrase structure:** Encourage students to give their melodies shape and direction, see the section on 'Melody' (page 11) to help with this.
- **Underdeveloped accompaniment:** Encourage students to give their accompaniment a distinctive character using rhythms they devised themselves or common accompaniment patterns.
- **Use of Instruments:** For this project the students are composing for clarinet quintet. However, this doesn't mean that every member of the quintet has to play throughout the whole piece.
- **Dynamics & Articulation:** Encourage students to think about the dynamics and articulation of the music they create. Providing detail for the musicians will greatly help their performance.
- **Transitioning between sections:** Encourage students to think about how they can transition from one section to the next, through modulations for example.

Your name:

Composer:

Title:

Date of composition:

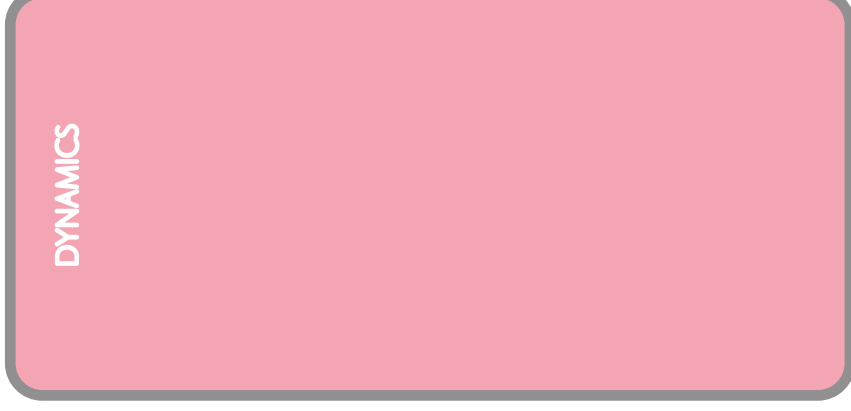
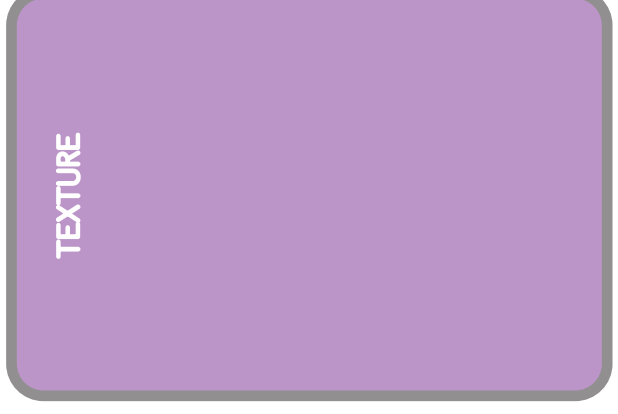
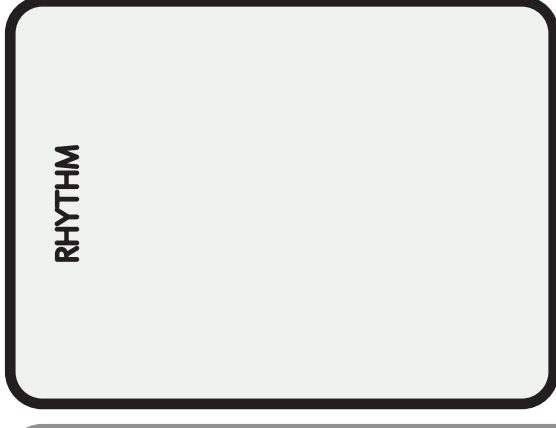
Instruments:

Start in the circle below. As you listen, note down any words that you would use to describe the music.

Then, think about the seven elements of music in the coloured circles. How do each of these elements help express the mood, or feeling of the music? If you're stuck, start by mapping your words from the circle below onto the different elements.

1. What words would you use to describe this piece?
Does it convey a particular mood or feeling?

2. How do these elements (tonality / tempo etc.) convey the mood or feeling of the piece? (Write your ideas under each heading)



Your name:

Composer:

Title:

Date of composition:

Instruments:

Start in the middle on the other side of the sheet. As you listen, note down any words that you would use to describe each of the eight elements of music in the coloured circles.

Work your way out. How do each of the features you note down help express the mood, or feeling of the music? You can then come back to this side and note down anything that feels important to you under each of these headings.

What can you discover about the context of this piece?

What inspired it? What circumstances was it written in? What pieces was it written to be similar -- or different -- to?

How were the different instruments used within this piece?

What do you like about this piece?

Try to be as specific as possible

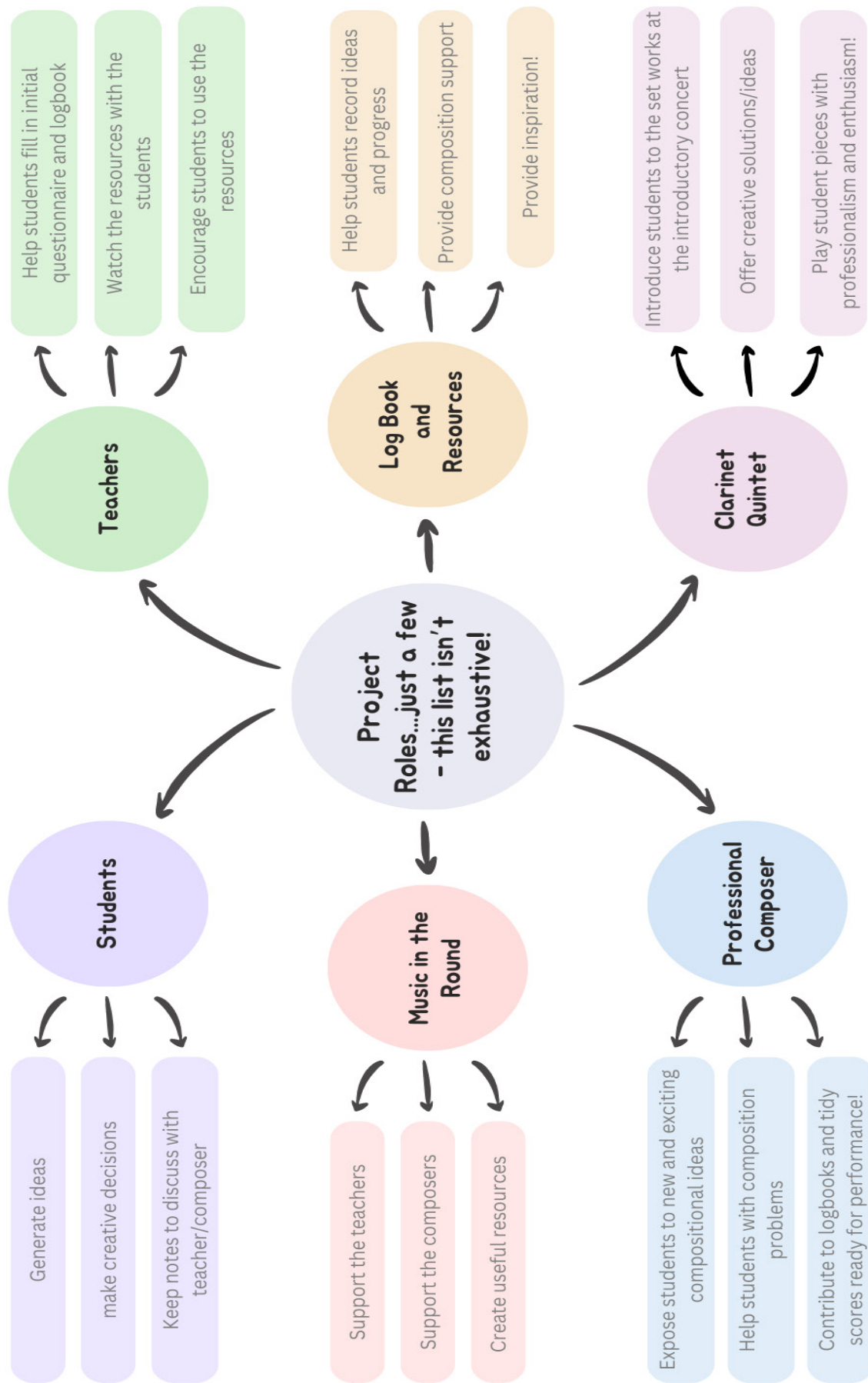
What do you dislike about this piece?

It's OK not to like it! Try to be as specific as possible

Did you notice any contrasting moments in the piece?

Overall, how does this music make you feel?

When you are composing, what could you take from this piece?



Contact details

If you'd like to be in touch with us about the contents of this pack or the project in general, please email us at wecompose@musicintheround.co.uk or call our office on 0114 2814660.

Music in the Round, 4th Floor, Sheffield Central Library, Surrey Street, Sheffield S1 1XZ

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Further resources

All of the resources for this project can be found at <https://musicintheround.co.uk/wecompose-2025-2026-key-stage-4-resource-hub/> or on our website musicintheround.co.uk.

To browse further resources relating to KS4 (or other Key Stages) please go to our website musicintheround.co.uk

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