

How do I revise for my Music A-Level?

There is no right or wrong way to revise, but it is good to know what you are doing and have a plan. One thing is for sure, you need to know the Set Works inside & out and so listen to them as much as possible. You also need to make sure that you don't revise what you already know just to make yourself feel better. You need to make sure that you cover the topics that you genuinely find hard or the set works that you maybe don't enjoy listening to. It is easy to listen to music we like and enjoy so be careful not to fall into this trap.

What resources should you have with you to revise?

1. Set Works to listen to
2. Anthology – annotated throughout the year and added to during revision
3. Notes from the exam board
4. Textbook/Revision Guide – although this is not essential if you have made notes throughout the course
5. Your own notes that you have made in addition to the notes in your anthology
6. Past Papers & Essays that you have completed during the course

Revision Techniques that you may like to try

1. Write an essay for each of the set works, focussing on different elements of music for each essay. The format of the Q6 is always going to be along the lines of:

“Evaluate Mozart's use of Melody, Harmony & Texture...etc etc.

Generate your own questions and then hand in to be marked – or peer assess with a partner.

2. Focus on one Element of music and go through the anthology considering not only how it used, but how it changes over time. Instrumentation is a good place to start and this will give you a clear idea of how approaches to instrumentation changed over the years. Some elements like Rhythm can be trickier to discuss in an exam, and so focussing on that will really help.
3. Make sure that for every Set Work you have a line of argument. So for Bach – *What features of the Cantata make it a great example of BAROQUE Vocal music?* Put this line of argument at the top of your revision notes or in the centre of a spider-diagram/mind-map and then start to add features to it.
4. Wider listening is something that never needs to end and every piece that you listen to can be referred to (as long as it is relevant). However it is important that for all 18 Set Works you have at least 2 Wider Listening examples. I will be adding a full list of suggestions to a future document and you also have ideas throughout your notes and in the anthology. Make sure that you can link the Wider listening to strong salient points – nothing vague.
5. I know I have already said it, but listen to the set works. One approach is just to have them on all the time in the background of your life. At the gym, on the way to school or when you are revising for your other subjects. Embrace them and listen to them. But also make sure that you listen to them alongside the actual score itself. You want to be able to visually see what is going on in the music.
6. In the exam you will be asked to comment on various different things. The more details you know about the pieces of music the better and the more you can then hear them when you listen the

better. The exam could easily ask you to comment on very specific things and so don't shy away from traditional revision where you actually learn the key facts. But remember, there is no point or need to remember bar numbers. Don't fill your head with trying to remember the smallest details, but moreover, remember the key features of the music.

7. Where possible listen out for things in the music and specifically listen out for things that you are not totally sure you can explain. These are the features that you should revise and cover in your preparation. We often pick out the things we know, so it is important to watch out for the other stuff.
8. Key Terms are crucial in the exam. We need to not only use them but use them frequently and in the right context. Spelling is also important and some words in music do have tricky spellings. Make sure that you read through the glossary in the back of the anthology and highlight all of the key words in your notes and handouts. The more words you know the more you can use them in the exam.
9. It is good to write out whole essays, but it is also good to prepare some introductions as part of your revision. These can include the key facts about the piece that help you to set the scene and also your line of argument. Prepare an intro and conclusion for every set work and you will be more than ready for the exam.
10. Where possible revise with friends and chat about the music. The more you talk about the music the more it will embed in your brain and the more you will be able to recall in the exam room. It is great to just chat about music freely and share ideas on wider listening and other key features. Failing this you might like to record yourself chatting over the music or just talk to your cat!
11. It is hard to revise for the dictation questions, but what you should do is practise using resources that are given to you. Listen to melodies and rhythms and have a go at writing them out. This is something that is easier to do in pairs and you can test each other on intervals at the same time.

There are so many things that you can do to revise, and it is important that you try them all. But it is also crucial that you take regular breaks and don't overdo it. The key thing for any exam is that you are fit and healthy and ready for it. The music exam does rely on you being on the ball and disciplined with your timing. You have control over the CD of extracts and you have to pace yourself throughout the exam. When you do revise, practice writing essays to a set time and make sure that you go in to the exam with the ability to move on from a question if you are not sure.

Hopefully those tips, ideas and approaches will help you in the lead up to the A-Level Music Exam.