

Worksheet for Analysis of Sheet Music

Prepare a written report on your assigned article by answering these questions about it.

A. FIRST READING: COLLECTING THE FACTS

- What is the title of this song? Does it have a subtitle?
- Is there an author listed? Are there references to any musicians associated with this piece of music? Is there a story associated with this song?
- Describe the artwork on the cover, listing some of the artistic details. Does the picture have symbolic meaning? How does it relate to the actual music inside?
- What is the “tone” of the artwork on the cover? (Is it serious, humorous, critical, sentimental, romantic, patriotic, something else?)
- List all the publishing information that appears on the cover or elsewhere. In what year was this piece of music published? in what city? by what publisher?

B. LISTENING TO THE MUSIC

- Play or listen to the melody. Is it familiar? Does it remind you of any other melodies? Would you describe it as simple or complex?
- Does the music evoke an emotional reaction? For example, does it produce a happy, sad, menacing, romantic, patriotic, or dramatic mood?
- Are there divisions of the song, such as verses and a chorus, where the melody changes? Describe any differences. Is one part more memorable? How and why?
- What instruments or voices is the music written for?
- Are there marks or symbols on any page that you do not recognize or understand? Name three ways you might learn what they are?

C. EXAMINING SHEET MUSIC AS A HISTORICAL ARTIFACT:

- Does the author’s spelling or word choice reflect the historical period? Explain. What do you learn about the topic or the time period from the song?
- Is it important to know the historical context in order to understand this song?
- Examining the lyrics as poetry, can you identify any typical poetic elements: rhyme, meter, alliteration, simile or metaphor, symbolism, tone?
- What do you think is the author’s purpose in writing this piece of music?
- In one word, describe the theme of this song. In 25 words or less, do the same.

D. PROJECT AND DISCUSSION IDEAS:

- Locate another song on this subject from the same historical period. How do the two songs differ? How are they the same? Which do you like better? Why?
- Locate a modern song on the same subject. In what ways are the two songs alike? How are they different?
- Locate another type of primary source (photograph, painting, news article, diary, political cartoon, advertisement, etc.) from the same period and describe what these two items together can teach you about that time of history.