

Music 2019 v1.2

Unit 2 high-level annotated sample response

August 2018

Examination — extended response

This sample has been compiled by the QCAA to assist and support teachers to match evidence in student responses to the characteristics described in the assessment objectives.

Assessment objectives

This assessment instrument is used to determine student achievement in the following objectives:

2. explain the use of music elements and concepts that represent identity in repertoire and music sources
4. analyse music to examine and consider the constituent parts and relationship between music elements, concepts and stylistic characteristics and the ways in which they represent musical identity
6. apply written literacy skills using music terminology relevant to genre/style, reference to the work, and language conventions, to communicate ideas and meaning relevant to the work
8. evaluate music to justify a viewpoint relating to cultural, political, social or personal identity in repertoire.

Note: Objectives 1, 3, 5, 7, 9 and 10 are not assessed in this instrument.

Task

Peter Sculthorpe's *Small Town* describes life in a country town in Australia. He explores the concepts of national, local and cultural identity in the music through masterful and imaginative use of music elements, concepts and compositional devices.

Explain how Sculthorpe uses music elements and concepts to represent life in an Australian country town in his work *Small Town*. Analyse the piece and evaluate how successfully Sculthorpe achieves this representation of national identity. Justify your viewpoint with evidence from the music.

Sample response

This is a high level response because:

The explanation of melody, duration, texture and timbre reveals a comprehensive knowledge and understanding of music elements.

The analysis of texture and duration is detailed and accurate and establishes how both elements work together to portray the quiet town at dawn.

The examination of melody, timbre and texture establishes the interconnectivity between music elements in order to convey the town's atmosphere as the day progresses.

The examination of tonality and duration establishes the interconnectivity between music elements to convey the emotion of an ANZAC ceremony. Statements made about the purpose of 6/8 rhythm, simple melody and thin texture demonstrating the town's inactivity are valid and reasoned and support the viewpoint. Statements made about the purpose of timbre in the B section emphasise the solemnity of an ANZAC ceremony and support the representation of Australian identity.

The application of music terminology is relevant to the style, and grammar, paragraphing

Sculthorpe's *Small Town* is a piece of contemporary music that is representative of Australian identity. Sculthorpe tells the moving story of a small Australian town through the skilful manipulation of musical elements and concepts. Events such as ANZAC Day and a festival can be heard throughout Sculthorpe's work creating a sense of the Australian identity of community, respect and remembrance.

Small Town is in a kind of extended binary form, with two distinct sections and an interlude evoking aspects of Australian identity. Normal life in the "small town" is represented by the melody in the slowly evolving A sections. Throughout the piece, slight changes in the A sections represent slow changes to the atmosphere in the town that enhance the portrayal of Australian identity.

In the introduction (bars 1–8) only chimes and the bass drum can be heard. The perfect 5th interval played slowly by the chimes symbolises church bells summoning the townspeople. In bar 5 strings enter with an Eb in the violins and a Gb in the cellos. In beat 4 of the 6/8 bar, timpani play an E natural, clashing with the Eb, creating an eerie sense of unease in the town's atmosphere. A thin texture here shows that the town is quiet, and the tones of unease can be imagined as the townspeople leave their homes to see why the church bells are ringing. An Eb octave is played with the E natural again signalling the transition to A1. This section is representative of everyday town life. The harp begins this section in Bb with a broken chord line of I, vi, ii, v. This 6/8 rhythm matched with the slow speed of the section () imitates the stride of a horse plodding through the town, perhaps pulling a carriage. The oboe enters at bar 12 with a simple melody. The small range symbolises the inactivity of the town. The thin texture in the A section, signifies a lack of activity in the town — perhaps it is early morning. The second A section from bars 29–46 is similar to the first, but a small change occurs with the melody beginning on solo cello. The small variances in the melody help evoke the slow rate of change in a country town. The main theme is played by solo cello with an oboe counter-melody starting in bar 36 which further supports the notion of gradual change.

Unlike the A sections which represent regular town life, the B sections and interludes signify town events or changes in atmosphere. Interlude 2 occurring between A2 and A3 has been shaped to build tension and indicates a change in the town's atmosphere. The addition of the tamtam

and sentence structure are clear and ideas are sequences and connected.

and vibraphone alters the timbre of the piece at the start of the interlude. The vibraphone sounds open fifths, bars 47 and 53 and octaves, bar 49–50 and 55–56 (reminiscent of the bell overtones in the opening) and the Tamtam roll (bars 53–61) serves to build suspense. The increase in range (the harp has arpeggios spread over 5 octaves — bars 47–48) and a polyphonic texture makes the town sound more active — perhaps the people are doing business or playing in the streets. Sporadic harmonics on the violin mimic the whistling of a young boy who is perhaps skipping down the main street, showing the safety and freedom in the town. A dissonant chord in bar 61 reveals a tense realisation, perhaps the coming of night in the town, and then the ‘morning’ returns in A3.

The B sections of *Small Town* are what make this piece representative of Australian identity. They portray the emotion and solemnity of an ANZAC ceremony. The first B section, the central section of the piece, introduces “The Last Post” in the key of C major and simple time signature of 4/8. Two trumpets are playing in canon with a bass drum roll that continues until 10. One trumpet is directed to play from off-stage, creating a muted sound. This emphasises the silence during an ANZAC service, suggesting that even a trumpeter from a service in a neighbouring village could be heard. At 9, the harp plays a piacere glissando using Cb, Db, Eb, Gb and Ab. This creates a jarring tonality against the trumpets building an uneasy tension. At 10 the strings enter with a B and C chord played simultaneously over each instrument creating dissonance and building tension. The section ends with one trumpet ending the ‘post’ with the strings playing a Db major and C major chord together, creating one last tense moment in the section. The B theme returns for a short period at the very end of the piece, but with only one trumpet playing the last post to finish. A tam-tam roll builds tension through a crescendo to the end of the piece, and strings enter on dissonant notes from a C chord and a B minor chord for the 3/4 section that begins the rallentando to the end. These elements work together creating an ending emphasising the Australian identity of the town — a sense of community support and due respect to the ANZACs. The dissonant and tense atmosphere created in sections B of *Small Town* can be seen as a different sort of remembrance than typical ANZAC ceremonies in this century. Perhaps this town is set in the time of a world war, and men from the town are called to service, leading to the loss of lives that will affect the generations of the town. Perhaps this is the reason why the piece ends on a lingering chord making it sound unfinished.

Sculthorpe’s *Small Town* is an excellent representation of Australian identity. The effective use of instrumentation, pitch, timbre and duration, conveys the strong sense of community in an Australian town and the audience will be able to imagine the atmosphere and the emotion felt by the people who live there.