LISTEN LIKE A DRUMMER

A DETECTIVE SHEET FOR ANY RECORDING

Song / artist: _____

My name: _____ **Date:** _____

FIRST LISTEN • ENJOY THE SONG

Tap a steady pulse. Does the music feel calm, driving, bouncy, spacious or something else?

Three words for its feel: _____

SECOND LISTEN • FOLLOW THE DRUMS

☐ **Where is the beat?**

Can I keep tapping it through the whole song?

☐ **What repeats?**

Listen for bass drum, snare, cymbals or hand percussion.

☐ **What changes?**

Notice an entrance, a quieter section, a fill or the ending.

THIRD LISTEN • ASK A MUSICAL QUESTION

How do the drums help the singer, the melody or the bass? There is no single correct answer.

I noticed:

_____

_____

_____

_____

Try it in your next lesson: show Hugh one sound or moment you discovered.

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ANATOMY OF A SONG

HEAR THE SHAPE, THEN HELP THE BAND PLAY IT

Songs are built from sections. The drummer can make those sections easy to feel, even when the groove stays simple.

INTRO

Give everyone a clear beginning. Sometimes the kit waits.

↓

VERSE

Make room for the words and settle into the groove.

↓

CHORUS

Help the big idea lift: perhaps open the cymbal or play a stronger backbeat.

↓

BRIDGE

Notice a new mood, sound, harmony or rhythm.

↓

ENDING

Watch, listen and finish together - or leave a deliberate fade.

YOUR TURN: MAP A SONG YOU KNOW

Song: _____

Write its sections in order. Repeat a name when a section returns. Example: Intro → Verse → Chorus → Verse ...

Challenge: where does the drummer change something - and where do they stay steady?

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PLAY WITH OTHER PEOPLE

THE HABITS THAT MAKE EVERYONE WANT TO PLAY WITH YOU

A great band drummer makes the whole group sound good. Try one habit at a time at rehearsal.

1

COUNT IN CLEARLY

Set the tempo before anyone starts. Let everyone see and hear you.

2

BEFRIEND THE BASS

Hear when the bass notes land. Together you give the song a foundation.

3

MAKE SPACE

Listen to the voice or soloist. Sometimes the best fill is silence.

4

SHARE THE SHAPE

Use a change in sound or energy to help the band feel a new section.

5

RECOVER TOGETHER

If someone slips, keep the pulse and help them find their way back.

6

FINISH TOGETHER

Watch for a nod, a held note or a signal for the final hit.

BAND CHALLENGE

Play one verse and chorus with no fills. Can you still make the chorus feel different?

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MANY WORLDS OF RHYTHM

SEVEN STARTING POINTS FOR CURIOUS EARS

Each tradition contains many different rhythms and players. These recordings are doors into the music, not recipes for a single "correct" beat.

JAZZ SWING

United States

Art Blakey & The Jazz Messengers — “Moanin’”

Hear the ride and how the drummer answers the band.

FUNK

United States

The Meters — “Cissy Strut”

Hear short, syncopated notes around the bass.

REGGAE

Jamaica

Bob Marley & The Wailers — “Three Little Birds”

Hear how much space the groove leaves for the song.

SAMBA

Brazil

Novos Baianos — “Brasil Pandeiro”

Follow the interlocking hand percussion and voices.

BOSSA NOVA

Brazil

Stan Getz & João Gilberto — “The Girl from Ipanema”

Hear the very quiet drum-kit pulse beneath the guitar.

SALSA

Caribbean roots; New York scene

Willie Colón & Rubén Blades — “Plástico”

Find a repeating bell or percussion pattern.

AFROBEAT

Nigeria

Fela Kuti & Africa ’70 — “Water No Get Enemy”

Follow one layer, then switch to another.

Ask: what instruments and people make this rhythm work together?

Explore: Smithsonian Folkways • Braiding Rhythms lesson (click)

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DRUMMERS TO DISCOVER

EIGHT VOICES; EIGHT DIFFERENT WAYS TO MOVE MUSIC

Listen to one recording at a time. Try describing the player's choices before trying to copy them.

Meg White

The White Stripes — "Seven Nation Army"

Powerful simplicity: what changes when the chorus arrives?

Ringo Starr

The Beatles — "Come Together"

A drum part you could sing back. Which sound stands out?

Clyde Stubblefield

James Brown — "Funky Drummer"

A small, irresistible groove with a famous drum break.

Art Blakey

The Jazz Messengers — "Moanin'"

Hear the kit encourage and answer the musicians.

Sheila E.

Sheila E. — "The Glamorous Life"

Percussion as a lead voice, not only accompaniment.

Tony Allen

Fela Kuti — "Water No Get Enemy"

Hear how a layered groove can feel relaxed and alive.

Terri Lyne Carrington

Album: Money Jungle: Provocative in Blue

Jazz drums as a conversation; hear the dynamics.

Cindy Blackman Santana

Album: Give the Drummer Some

Move between rock, jazz and funk; notice the touch.

Which drummer surprised you most? Tell Hugh what you heard.

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PROTECT YOUR EARS

GOOD HEARING HELPS YOU ENJOY MUSIC FOR LIFE

Drums are exciting up close. A few easy habits can protect your hearing while you learn and play.

1

WEAR HEARING PROTECTION

Use well-fitting musician earplugs or over-ear hearing protectors when playing loud acoustic drums. Ask your teacher or parent to help you find a comfortable fit.

2

TURN DOWN WHAT YOU CONTROL

Keep backing tracks and headphones at a comfortable volume. You should not need to turn them up to compete with the drums.

3

TAKE QUIET BREAKS

Step away from loud sound during longer rehearsals. Softer practice can teach control, dynamics and touch.

4

SPEAK UP IF SOMETHING FEELS WRONG

Ringing, muffled hearing or pain after playing matters. Tell a parent or teacher; seek medical advice if you are worried.

A GOOD DRUMMER CAN PLAY AT MORE THAN ONE VOLUME.

Try a soft groove. Does it still feel strong? Your control is a musical skill.

Guidance: Musicians' Union • Hearing health for teachers and students (click)

Guidance: HSE • Sound Advice for music and entertainment (click)

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