



## FEATURE

# How We Listen: The Evolution of Recorded Music Formats

Meets National Core Arts Standards 7, 9, and 11

## OBJECTIVES

- Perceive and analyze artistic work (*Re7*)
- Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work (*Re9*)
- Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding (*Cn11*)

## MATERIALS

- *Music Alive!* magazines (April 2017)
- *Music Alive!* Classroom Worksheet #6: All About the Article (download at [musicalive.com](http://musicalive.com))
- Computer or mobile device with Internet access

## START

1. Have the students read “How We Listen: The Evolution of Recorded Music Formats” on pages 6-9, then go over the following highlighted words. **[This reinforces comprehension and vocabulary.]**

**MAGNITUDE**—size or importance of something

**MINUSCULE**—very small

**UNADULTERATED**—not mixed with something

**RENDER**—to represent

**TOUT**—to praise the value of something in recommendation

2. Hand about copies of the All About the Article Worksheet. To reinforce understanding of analog and digital formats, have the students fill in the answers. Collect the worksheets and check them for accuracy.

## DEVELOP

- ▶ 1. Play Pink Floyd’s “Hey You” (Hear the Music playlist **track 2** on [musicalive.com](http://musicalive.com)).

### ASK

- Does this song begin in a major or minor key? (Minor—E minor.)
- What instruments are featured in the first verse? (Acoustic guitar and synthesizer.)
- How does the instrumentation change on the second verse? (Drums and bass come in, accenting a rhythm in unison.)
- What changes about the vocals in the second verse? (Vocal harmonies are added.)
- What instrument comes in at about two minutes into the song? (Electric guitar, playing a solo.)
- How does the instrumentation change after the solo? (Electric guitar drops out, with strumming on an acoustic guitar taking its place. Drums are a little less dramatic.)
- How would you describe the mood of the song? How does the feel of the music relate to the content of the lyrics? (Subjective.)
- Do you think this album was released in the vinyl or digital era, and why? (The song is taken out of the context of a concept album—a format that became

especially popular in the late ‘60s and through the ‘70s, when vinyl was at its peak popularity.)

- ▶ 2. Play Suzanne Vega’s “Tom’s Diner” (Hear the Music playlist **track 3** on [musicalive.com](http://musicalive.com)).

### ASK

- What is the time signature of the song? (4/4.)
- Is the key signature minor or major? (Minor—F# minor.)
- How many singers do you hear? (Just one.)
- Do you hear a lot of vibrato in the voice? (No.)
- What instruments do you hear at first? (Strings and electric bass.)
- Are there any percussion instruments? (No.)
- What instrument enters at 1:20? (Electric guitar.)
- What instrument enters at 2:09? (Cello.)
- What string technique is heard at 2:50? (Pizzicato—the strings are plucked rather than bowed.)
- Do you think this song was released in the vinyl or digital era? (The song was released in the digital era, and was used to create the first MP3.)

- ▶ 3. Play Beyoncé’s “Pray You Catch Me” (Hear the Music playlist **track 4** on [musicalive.com](http://musicalive.com)).

### ASK

- Is this song in a major or a minor key? (Minor—G# minor.)
- What’s the time signature? (4/4.)
- How would you describe the tempo? (Slow, at around 60 beats per minute.)
- Do the instruments sound electronic or acoustic? (Both—there are piano and strings, as well as synthesizers and drum sounds.)
- Can anyone identify the singer? (Beyoncé.)
- Does anyone know how this album was released—and what makes it different? (It’s a concept album—a group of songs about a central theme or story. More unusual, it’s a visual album; its streaming debut was accompanied by a one-hour film that aired on HBO.)

## CLOSE

1. Ask students to write short essays on the ways they like to hear and collect music. Here are some potential questions to get them started: Do you prefer to stream or download an album, or have a physical product like a CD or album in your hands—and why? Which do you think sounds better, vinyl or MP3s? Why?

## ASSESS

- Did the students read the article?
- Did they complete their All About the Article worksheets?
- Did they discuss the listening selections?
- Did they write their essays on recording formats?