

# SONG ANALYSIS ASSIGNMENT - 02.1

<https://youtu.be/GkboveyuAXc?t=23>

"Isn't She Lovely" - Stevie Wonder

<https://open.spotify.com/track/3vqjZUIT3rEmLaYKDBfb4Q?si=vJe98MaNS-OuZBpo-PVfHw>

Pick a song from the **OFFICIAL LIST ONLY** that was recorded (and released) during the **1970s, 80s, and 90s**. Complete the information for the "**Song Analysis**" and create a "**Listening Guide**".

## **\*\*Information to include in your "Song Analysis"**

- **Songwriter** (may be different from the performer, but could be the same).
- **Performer/Artist** of the selected recording.
- **Year the song was recorded & released.** (Recording year may differ from the release year)
- Identify the overall **Form** of your song: simple verse, simple verse-chorus, contrasting verse-chorus, AABA (possibly compound AABA), compound ABA, (or one of these forms 'modified'; if so describe the modification and why the 'modification' label is necessary) etc. *-your song should fit at least one of these overall Form Labels* **Review for these forms may be found in the Introduction Module.**

## 00.01a - Musical Terminology

**Terminology will play an important role during the course of the semester. You may want to refer back to or bookmark this page for quick reference.**

From the text *What's That Sound?*:

**Beat(s)** – A regular rhythmic pulse in music is called a “beat.” Beats are organized into “measures” or “bars” to create “meter.” (ex. 4/4, 3/4, 2/4 ... 6/8, 9/8, 12/8, etc.)

**Roman numerals** – used by music theorists to identify chords within a key. The chord based on the first note of the scale in a major key is labeled “I,” while the chord built on the fifth note of the same scale is labeled “V.” Some theorists use upper-case Roman numerals for major chords and lower-case numerals for minor-chords. Thus, the chord built on the first note of a minor key is “i.” Once one learns the way chords are formed in major and minor keys, the Roman numerals help to generalize how the chords work in any major key or in any minor key.

**Chords** – A chord is a combination of three or more notes played simultaneously. A limited number of such combinations make up the majority of chords heard in rock music. Musicians classify these combinations, using such terms as “major,” “minor,” “dominant seventh,” “Minor seventh,” among others.

**Key** – Most rock songs are in a specific key. This refers to the fact that all of the notes in the song bear a subordinate relationship to some central note. The actual note that is central is identified using a note name (A, Bb, F#) and the way in which the other notes relate to that central note is identified using terms such as “major” or “minor.” When musicians refer to the key of D major, for instance, they mean that the note D is the central note and that the other notes relate to it in a specific way that we hear as major.

**Scale** – In the simplest sense, a scale merely takes the notes that are available for use in any given key and puts them in order, starting and ending on the most important note.

**Rhythm** – In the broadest sense, the word “rhythm” refers to the organized patterning of the temporal dimension in music. More specifically, we can refer to a rhythmic figure in the music, which is usually a short segment with a clearly defined profile of some kind.

**Rhythm section** – An instrumental ensemble that accompanies vocal and instrumental soloists. Instruments in the rhythm section may vary. In rock, the ensemble commonly comprises drum kit, electric bass, and several guitars. Keyboard instruments may also be used in a rhythm section. Although all of these instruments may also perform in a “lead” role, when they provide accompaniment, they are part of the rhythm section.

**Riff** – A riff is a short and distinctive melodic figure. A riff is not a complete melody, but it may be employed as part of a melody, either vocally or instrumentally. A riff may also be used anywhere in the accompaniment, often as part of a repeated pattern, but not necessarily. “Riff” and “lick” are often synonymous.

## 00.01b - Musical Terminology (FORM)

**Terminology will play an important role during the course of the semester. You may want to refer back to or bookmark this page for quick reference.**

From the text *What's That Sound?*:

## **[FORM]**

**Bar** – Musicians often count out a song, saying “1, 2, 3, 4.” This is a bar of music, and the numbers represent beats. These bars usually have the same number of beats in them throughout a song (though not always). The term “Bar” is synonymous with “measure.” See also, “meter.”

**Measure** – see “bar.”

**Phrase** – A short passage of music; often in rock music, phrases are four measures in length (sometimes eight measures). A phrase is akin to a sentence in spoken language and divides the music into units that make it easier to comprehend. Vocal phrases often correspond to obvious points of division and articulation in the lyrics being sung.

**Introduction** – An introduction is a section of a song that precedes the start of the first verse or chorus (when the chorus appears before the verse). Introductions are frequently instrumental, but may also contain singing. Some musicians refer to this section as the “intro.”

**Interlude** – An interlude is a brief instrumental passage in a song that separates the other sections (verse, bridge, or chorus) from one another. Frequently the musical material of such interludes is drawn from the Introduction.

**Verse** - A verse is a section that most often features new lyrics with each repetition within a song, unlike a chorus, which tends to repeat the same lyrics with each recurrence. The verse is often used to tell a story or describe a situation. In an AABA form, the verse is the focal point of the song, and may also include a refrain. In a verse-chorus type form, the verse sets up the chorus, which is the focus of the song.

**Instrumental verse** – A verse section that repeats the music of the verse, without the singing and with an instrument soloing. Guitar, saxophone, and keyboard solos are common, though any instrument can solo in an instrumental verse.

**Chorus** – The chorus is usually the most important or easily remembered section of a song, containing the title and the catchiest musical material. Not all songs have a chorus, but when one is present, it is usually the focus of the song.

**Bridge** – The bridge is a section in a song that provides contrast to other, more salient sections of the same song, such as the verse or the chorus. While bridge sections can be quite interesting musically, they are almost never the focal section of a song.

**Coda** – Some songs contain an ending section called the “coda.” The coda often uses musical material from earlier in the song to provide an ending, which is sometimes a fade-out. Some musicians refer to the coda as an “outro,” paralleling the beginning section in a song, which is often called the “intro.”



**Formal diagram** – A formal diagram, provides an overview of the formal design of a song, or how the different parts of the song fit together to create what is often a familiar pattern. These familiar patterns are organized into the five song forms. Listening Guides in this course will contain *formal diagrams*.

**Simple verse form** - A simple verse form consists of a series of verses, all of which use the same underlying music. A simple verse form contains no chorus or bridge sections, though the verses may contain a refrain.

**Simple verse-chorus** – In simple verse-chorus form, the verse and chorus sections employ the same underlying musical material, though the lyrics and sung melodies of each section are different. The form consists of these verses and choruses presented in alternation, though more than one verse may occur before the chorus.

**Contrasting verse-chorus** – In contrasting verse-chorus form, the verse and chorus sections employ contrasting musical material. The form consists of these contrasting verses and choruses presented in alternation, though more than one verse may occur before the chorus.

**AABA form** - A song form that uses two verses (A A), a bridge (B) and a return to the verse (A) as its basic organizational pattern. Once the complete AABA pattern is presented, a song may repeat all of the pattern (full reprise) or only part of it (partial reprise). AABA form is strongly associated with the Tin Pan Alley popular song style, although it occurs frequently in rock music.

**Full reprise** – In an AABA form, playing once through the AABA structure often does not create a song that is long enough. When the entire AABA structure is repeated, this is called a “full reprise.” Some songs may use more than one repeat of the entire AABA structure.

**Partial reprise** – In an AABA form, playing once through the AABA structure often does not create a song that is long enough. When only a portion of AABA structure is repeated, this is called a “partial reprise.” Most partial reprises repeat the BA or the ABA section of the AABA structure.

**Compound AABA form** – In a compound AABA form, each A section contains at least one verse and a chorus section (these can be contrasting or not). After two presentations of this verse-chorus unit (A A), a contrasting bridge section occurs (B), followed by a return to some version of the verse-chorus pair (A). Sometimes this return can consist only of the chorus and repetitions of it.



**12-bar blues** – a structure that forms the musical basis for many verses, choruses, and even bridges in rock music. It can be divided into three 4-bar phrases. The lyrics to the first phrase are frequently repeated in the second phrase, with new lyrics appearing in the third phrase, creating a kind of question/question repeated/answer model as the words unfold. The twelve-bar blues also employs a specific arrangement of chords. In the history of rock, the twelve-bar blues is strongly associated with 1950s rock and rhythm & blues. Even when this structure arises in later rock, the reference to the 1950s is often clear.

**Doo-wop progression** – The doo-wop progression is a structure that can form the basis for verse, chorus, and bridge sections in rock music. It is a repeating pattern of four chords: I – vi – IV – V. In the key of C major, these chords would be C major – A minor – F major – G major. As per its name, the pattern was common in youth-oriented vocal harmony music during the 1950s, but was also employed widely after this period in a variety of contexts.

- Form does **not** refer to the 'format' or on which medium the song was released (ie., 12", vinyl, CD, digital, etc.)

## **\*\*Items to include in your "Listening Guide"**

- **Form segments** (Introduction, Verse, Chorus, Refrain, Bridge, Coda, etc.)
- **Lyrics:** \*You should only include the first few **lyrics** of each section; especially lyrics that relate or differentiate one section to/from another.

- **Instruments present** during each section of the song (especially if certain instruments are introduced or removed from certain sections of music).
- **Description** of what is going on in each section with regard to vocals and instrumental music.
- **Time-stamps** of each section (similar to the text listening guides & the example below).
- ***Do not*** include measure numbers! (mm.)
- ***Do not*** include letters next to the lyrics as in the instructor's example for "Stormy Monday Blues"

You may use the table creator feature in Canvas to make your guide line up in a grid. You may also use Excel, Word, or other programs that can create grids. Feel free to copy my template below, but fill in with your own information.