

Tools needed: pen & paper for each student; blackboard/whiteboard in classroom; music streaming service of choice connected to speakers in classroom

- Everyone leaves classroom – go outside of building or sit in hallway. Everyone brings pen and paper.
- Set timer for 5 minutes – during this time, everyone (students and instructor) sits in silence and writes down every sound they hear.
  - Encourage detail (ex: how loud/soft is the sound? How long does it last? How would you describe what it sounds like to someone who didn't hear it?)
  - Challenge students to write as many different sounds as they can (ex: "I bet no one will write a longer list of sounds than I do".)
- Return to classroom.
- Students take 5 minutes to compare what they heard & wrote with a partner.
- Figure out who wrote the longest list and congratulate those people!
- Students call out some of what they heard, instructor writes them on the board.
- Instructor asks: "are these sounds music?" Collect answers verbally, discuss why/why not.
- Instructor asks: "what is music? What are three elements that something must have in order for it to be considered music?" Students take 5 minutes to work in pairs to write down at least three elements.
- Students call out answers, instructor writes them on the board (connects similar answers).
- One by one, instructor goes through each answer and plays an example of a song or piece of music that does *not* have that particular element, using Spotify/YouTube/music streaming service of choice.
  - Ex: in response to "music must have sound," play John Cage's 4'33".
  - Ex: "music must have melody," play taiko drumming.
  - Ex: "music must have steady beat," play opera recitative or alapana of a Carnatic kriti.
- Instructor asks again: "what is music?" Discuss. Encourage students to challenge their assumptions based on musical examples above. Emphasize that the definition of music is by nature subjective: music can be very different things for different individuals, groups, and societies.
- Based off of discussion, collectively arrive at a definition of music that includes as many different understandings of music as possible. Invite students to critique the definition you arrive at. Emphasize there is no static one-size-fits-all definition of music, and encourage students to revisit the definition you arrive at over the course of the semester.
  - In my class, we usually use some version of the definition from Shelemay's *Soundscape* textbook (2015, <https://www.norton.com/books/9780393918281>): sounds organized in ways meaningful to people in a certain time and place.