

Listening Activity: 'A Change is Gonna Come' by Sam Cooke

Which of the following instruments feature in this song? (Circle your answers)

flute	trumpet	gong	violin
French horn	castanets	timpani	harp
piano	drum kit	clarinet	cello

Compare 'A Change is Gonna Come' with 'Strange Fruit'.

Musical	A Change is Gonna Come	Strange Fruit
Instrumentation		
Tempo Steady beat/free tempo?		
Tonality Major or minor key?		
What is the song about?		
What emotion/mood is being portrayed?		

Which song did you prefer? Give your reasons why.

Listening Activity Answers

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Compare 'A Change is Gonna Come' with 'Strange Fruit'.

Musical	A Change is Gonna Come	Strange Fruit
Instrumentation	Heavily orchestrated; high strings in the intro with a timpani roll; prominent French horns in first verse, along with more brass; pizzicato double bass; drum kit throughout; strings more prominent in verse 2; male vocals.	Opening and ending have traditional big band instrumentation (horns, drum kit, double bass, piano, saxophones); singing is accompanied by piano, pizzicato double bass, and saxophone or muted horns.
Tempo Steady beat/free tempo?	Steady beat; slightly faster than 'Strange Fruit'.	Slow tempo; some sections have a steady beat, some have a free tempo.
Tonality Major or minor key?	Major key – more uplifting.	Minor key – gives a dark feel.
What is the song about?	About the unfairness of how black people are being treated but talks about how change is coming.	About the lynching of black people in the southern states.
What emotion/mood is being portrayed?	Upbeat and hopeful – like 'I Know Where I've Been' from Hairspray.	Very serious; isolated and sinister.