

Dvořák: Symphony No. 9 “From the New World”

Student Handout

Dvorak’s New World Symphony ‘wove American roots music into his vast symphonic canvas.’ To learn more, you will read about the creation and impact of this work and then apply your new knowledge as you listen to the North Carolina Symphony perform this piece.

First, please **read** the short article [here](#). You may choose to listen to the radio version instead.

Take notes as you go

1. **What different voices or perspectives are included in this article?**
(For example: the composer, historians, musicians, or music critics.)
2. **How do these different opinions work together to help you understand the New World Symphony?** Do some opinions agree with each other, add new ideas, or explain the music in different ways? *Hint:* The article shares more than one person’s point of view—pay attention to **who is speaking** and **what they are saying**.
3. **What are the most important ideas or messages the author is trying to share about the New World Symphony?** Write one or two main points in your own words.
4. **After reading and learning about the New World Symphony, what do you notice when you listen that you might not have noticed before?** (Think about instruments, melodies, rhythms, mood, or cultural influences.)
5. **How does learning about the New World Symphony change the way you think about other music you hear—at school, at home, or in movies and games?** Does it help you listen more carefully or notice new details?
6. **How does the article show what has stayed the same and what has changed in America since the country was founded (250 years ago)?**

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Listening guide

In this recording from the North Carolina Symphony, you will hear a performance of Dvořák’s New World Symphony, featuring the following instruments: piccolo, flutes, oboes, English horn, clarinets, bassoons, horns, trumpets, trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion, and strings. Read the descriptions in the **left** column.

In the **middle** column, note specific musical observations. Be sure to incorporate appropriate vocabulary from class, such as dynamics, tempo, instrumentation, melody, harmony, or rhythm.

In the **right**, for each movement, write 1+ sentence with a personal response and 1+ question you are left with.

NC Symphony notes	Student observations	Student notes and questions
<p>I. Adagio - Allegro molto In the symphony’s first movement, a leaping motif sounded by the horns at the start of the Allegro molto section becomes a building block for adventurous exploration. A secondary theme set in a major key, first heard in the flute, introduces a pastoral contrast</p>		
<p>II. Largo The “New World” influences become more salient starting in the Largo second movement. Drawing on the melodies he learned from Burleigh, Dvořák crafted an original theme first presented as a solo for English horn. Later, with the addition of lyrics by William Arms Fisher, this melody became “Goin’ Home,” and the fact that it is frequently mistaken for an authentic spiritual proves how well Dvořák synthesized his source material.</p>		

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<p>III. Molto vivace The third movement fulfills the traditional function of a symphonic scherzo in the mold of Beethoven and Mendelssohn, while also tying the work together with quotations from the two preceding movements. According to Dvořák, a wedding scene from <i>The Song of Hiawatha</i> served as inspiration for this festive music.</p>		
<p>IV. Allegro con fuoco The finale, like the opening movement, blends European-leaning themes and techniques with glints of folk material, including flashbacks to some of the symphony’s earlier highlights. As the Czech composer duly acknowledged, “I should never have written the symphony ‘just so’ if I hadn’t seen America.”</p>		