

Sonata Form

The sonata form is an outgrowth and expansion of the ternary (A B A') form. The big difference is that each section uses the SAME material, but in obviously different ways. The purpose is to take a given set of materials, maintain them throughout the piece, but vary them enough to keep things interesting.

Remember that in the ternary form, the B section contrasts the A section. In the sonata form, the B section uses the SAME material as the A section, but it is in a DIFFERENT key and it is further modified in other ways. Also, in the sonata form, each section has TWO distinct ideas, called *themes*.

Sonata Form:

A section (called the Exposition)

- 1st theme: in the tonic key
- 2nd theme (contrasting idea): modulates to another key, usually the V
 - Establishes the key, presents the two themes and sets them forth on an adventure-- destabilization

B section (called the Development)

- 1st theme: in a different key--could be the V, but doesn't have to be AND is varied in some other way
- 2nd theme: in a different key and is varied in other ways, but cadences on a half cadence in the original tonic to set up a return to that tonic
 - Provides the "adventure" for the two themes as they explore new places--Unstable

A' section (called the Recapitulation)

- 1st theme: in the tonic
- 2nd theme: also in the tonic—doesn't modulate this time, and cadences on an authentic cadence IN THE TONIC
 - Reels-in the two themes and places them back in the "home" base of the tonic—return to stability

Sonata Assignment

Compose a melody that follows the sonata form. Refer to the fine accompanying example for inspiration(!).

Exposition Section (presents the themes, modulates away from the tonic):

- Two themes, four phrases total
 - 1st theme: two phrases, four measures each
 - 1st phrase: in the tonic, ends in a half cadence
 - 2nd phrase: modulates to the dominant (V) and ends in an authentic cadence in that new key
 - 2nd theme (contrasting idea): two phrases, four measures each
 - 1st phrase: in the dominant key, ends in a half cadence
 - 2nd phrase: in the same dominant key, ends in an authentic cadence

Development Section (puts the same themes in other key(s))

- Same two themes, two phrases total
 - 1st phrase (four measures) uses the 1st theme—varied and in a foreign key
 - 2nd phrase (four measures) uses the 2nd theme—varied and ends on a half cadence in the original tonic

Recapitulation Section (returns both themes to the tonic)

- Same two themes, four phrases total
 - 1st theme: two phrases, four measures each
 - 1st phrase: in the tonic, ends in a half cadence
 - 2nd phrase: stays in the tonic, ends in an authentic cadence
 - 2nd theme: two phrases, four measures each
 - 1st phrase: in the tonic, ends in a half cadence
 - 2nd phrase: stays in the tonic, ends in an authentic cadence