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Decreasing Music Familiarity Increases Incorporation of Music Themes in a Generation Task

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Abstract: We examine whether the familiarity of thematic music affects the degree to which concepts associated with the music are activated after listening to the music and subsequently affect generation task performance. In two experiments, participants listened to one of two excerpts of war-themed music varying in familiarity either before or after completing Amabile's (1985) American Haiku task. Haikus were examined to determine the degree to which concepts associated with the music were affected by music familiarity. Experiment 1 demonstrated that associated music concepts for both familiar and unfamiliar music were included in the haiku at equal rates when the music was listened to prior to writing the haiku. Experiment 2 demonstrated that listening to moderately familiar rather than unfamiliar music before the haiku task resulted in more music associates being included. Explanations of how familiarity and other factors affect incorporation of war-themed music concepts into the haiku will be discussed.