

The AABA song structure in musical theatre

Handout

An AABA song is structured into four parts. The parts could be long or short, or unequal, but typically:

8 bars - first A
8 bars - second A
8 bars - B-section
8 bars - final A

The 2nd and 3rd A-sections repeat material from the first A-section. For example, the first line of each the A's lyric might repeat; or perhaps the last line of the stanza might repeat.

The B-section provides contrast; usually a different feel, or tempo, or key, or time signature.

AABA is a refrain. It might have an introduction and/or verse before it. It might have a verse before AND after it:

Verse 1
Refrain (the AABA part)
Verse 2
Refrain (repetition of AABA)

Most typically AABA has an intro before it, and some tag after it.

Intro
Refrain
Coda/tag/dance, etc.

The AABA structure of *Somewhere Over the Rainbow*

Note the repeated material in the first line of each of the A's.

First A

Somewhere over the rainbow
Way up high
There's a land that I heard of
Once in a lullaby.

Second A

Somewhere over the rainbow
Skies are blue
And the dreams that you dare to dream
Really do come true.

B-section

Some day I'll wish upon a star
And wake up where the clouds are far behind me
Where troubles melt like lemon drops
Away above the chimney tops
That's where you'll find me.

Third A

Somewhere over the rainbow
Bluebirds fly.
Birds fly over the rainbow.
Why, then, oh why can't I?

The AABA structure of *Bewitched, Bothered and Bewildered*

Note the repeated material in the **last** line of each of the A's.

First A

Bewitched, Bothered, and Bewildered
I'm wild again, beguiled again
A simpering, whimpering
Child again.
Bewitched, bothered, and bewildered.

Second A

Couldn't sleep, wouldn't sleep.
Love came and told me
Shouldn't sleep.
Bewitched, bothered, and bewildered.

B-section

I lost my heart, but what of it?
She is cold, I agree.
She might laugh, but I love it,
Although the laugh's on me.

Third A

I'll sing to her, bring spring to her
And long for the day when
I'll cling to her.
Bewitched, bothered, and bewildered.