Songs from Musical Theatre

Type of Musical

Rock Opera - A more modern style. These normally include songs in rock/pop styles and more contemporary story lines.
E.g. Jesus Christ Superstar, Hair

Book Musical - Usually from the first half of the 20th century. The music is normally influenced by classical/jazz music.
E.g. West Side Story, Oklahoma!

Jukebox Musical - A collection of already popular songs made into a musical.
E.g. We Will Rock You, Mamma Mia

Type of Song

Character Solo - Musical monologues. A single character either explaining how they are feeling, what they are thinking, or adding information to the plot.

Chorus Numbers - These are normally the big memorable songs, involving a large part of the cast.

Duet - Interactions between two characters. Duets are often cliché romantic songs.

Context

What is the musical's story?

Where does this song fit within the plot?

Influence of Popular Music

Rock/ Pop

Rock Drumbeat - Bass drum on 1 & 3, snare on 2 & 4.

Instruments - Uses modern rock/pop instrumentation. Drumkit, electric guitars, keyboards, synthesisers etc

Jazz

Jazz Harmony/"Jazz Chords" - These are chords that have had other notes added to them to make them sound different; brighter, darker, discordant, etc. They might be heard on a single instrument, or across a section of instruments.

Swing - This is where rhythms are given a slight 'skipping' feel instead of being played completely straight on the beat.

Instruments - Brass, saxes etc.

What is 'Popular Music'? A style or styles of music that are currently popular with the general public, and is propagated by the mass media.

Eras & Composers

The "Roaring Twenties" & 1930s

Motion Pictures began, but didn't really pose a threat to the stage.

Richard Rogers & Lorenz Hart
George Gershwin
Jerome Kern

Lady Be Good, Funny Face, Show Boat, The Beggar's Opera, Of Thee I Sing, Porgy and Bess

The "Goldern Age" (1943 to 1968)

Rogers & Hammerstein
Leonard Bernstein
Irving Berlin
Cole Porter

Oklahoma!, Carousel, South Pacific, The Sound of Music, Kiss Me, Kate, Guys and Dolls, My Fair Lady, West Side Story, Fiddler on the Roof, Hello Dolly!

1970s - Present Day

Rock Musicals come into being with *Hair*. Both story and music takes a more contemporary turn.

Claude-Michel Schonberg & Alain Boiblil
Andrew Lloyd Webber
Disney

Hair, Jesus Christ Superstar, Grease, A Chorus Line, Cabaret, Chicago, Evita,Les Miserables, Miss Saigon, The Phantom of the Opera, The Lion King, Little Shop of Horrors, Blood Brothers, Mamma Mia!

Musical Elements

Structure/Form - What is the structure of the song?
Are there repeating parts? verses? choruses? etc

Tonality - Major or Minor? How does this effect the song's "message"?

Instrumentation - Is it for a reason? Is it trying to suggest a style or setting?

Texture - What is the texture? Does it change? Why? Does a solo become a chorus number>

Lyrics - What are they singing?
What does it tell us?
Do they use slang?
How is it meant to be taken; sarcastically, sincerely etc?
Is there a "Hook"?

Vocal Style - Is there an accent? Is it 'Operatic'? Are there sections of dialog instead of singing?

Modulation - Does the song go up or down in key? By how much? What effect does it have on the listener?

Tempo - What mood/style does the tempo suggest? Does it change, if so, why?

Time Signature