

Rap: Exploring Rhythm and Lyrics

In this unit, we will be listening to and creating our own rap songs. But what is rap?

Rap is the speaking or chanting of lyrics. It can be performed a capella (without musical accompaniment/backing) or over a beat. Rap usually takes the form of couplets, which are pairs of lines which typically rhyme and were of the same length. Often rap can have quite a quick tempo (speed) and it takes real skill to be able to keep in time, remember all the lyrics, and enunciate clearly so that the audience can hear what you are saying.

There are many different types of rap, but hip-hop is the style often most associated with rap. Different parts of the world have developed variations in style. For instance, in the U.K., Grime and Drill are popular forms of rap.



The Origins of Rap



It is thought that the origins of rap come from musicians in West Africa called griots who would tell stories rhythmically over a drum beat and other instruments. It also has a background in jazz and blues, with some parts of blues being rapped as far back as the 1920s.

Jazz poetry became popular in the 1950s. This was where poets performed in a way which tried to represent jazz instruments and sounds. Boxer Muhammad Ali would incorporate rap-like elements into his pre-match trash talks and, outside of his boxing, his political poetry. Some of the music by classical and operatic composers contain spoken words. Operas like 'The Pirates of Penzance' (1879) are written as patter song, songs which are spoken to a very quick tempo. Singing

playground games which are chanted are also thought to be an influence on rap.

The first "proper" raps began in the 1970s when DJs would play disco records and rap the lyrics over the singing.

Our Listening



Rapper's
Delight by the
Sugarhill Gang



U Can't Touch
This by M.C.
Hammer



Walk This Way by
Run DMC
featuring
Aerosmith



Lose Yourself by
Eminem



Where is the
Love? by the
Black Eyed Peas



Superheroes by
Stormzy

Timeline of Rap



The Sugarhill Gang - 1979



MC Hammer - 1990



Eminem - 2002

Run DMC - 1986



The Black Eyed Peas - 2003



Stormzy - 2020



Rhyme Schemes and Repetition

The majority of all songs have a rhyme scheme. This is where couplets (pairs) or groups of lines **rhyme** together. This is important as it makes the song catchy and easy to remember.

Four lines long.

Adventure seeker on an empty street.
Just an alley creeper, light on his feet.
A young fighter screaming, with no time for doubt,
With the pain and anger can't see a way out.

Two lines long.

"It ain't much I'm asking," I heard him say.
"Gotta find me a future; move out of my way."



Pulse and Rhythm



Pulse is the heartbeat of the music.



Rhythm is when long and short notes are joined together.

Song Structure

Lots of pop songs tend to follow this order:

