

# PERFORMANCE TRADITIONS

The evolution of oral traditions and musical expression, including the Blues, Spirituals, Preaching, Comedy, Spoken Word Poetry, and Hip Hop, is a story about creative language use as a tool for survival, liberation, and belonging in African American culture.



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## KEY CONCEPTS



**Blues Music** Blues music is a Black American art form strongly associated with the Deep South of the United States; however its roots are even deeper. Many of the contributing elements of Blues music – spirituals, work songs, field hollers, shouts, chants, and rhymed simple narrative ballads – can be traced back to the African continent. Many historians say Blues music as a genre first emerged in the late 1860s. Blues music was reflective of the harsh realities of the time: vigilante justice ruled and African Americans were under the constant threat of lynching.

**Musical Traditions of Enslaved Africans** To cope with the harsh realities of slavery, many enslaved Africans developed rich musical traditions, including spirituals, work songs, and field songs. These songs helped them endure both physical hardship and emotional pain by providing rhythm for labor, offering hope, and creating a sense of community. Music also served as a means of celebration, a way to share cultural values, and a tool for secretly passing messages—especially important since enslaved people were prohibited from reading or writing before emancipation.

*"My Blues didn't come out no book. My Blues come from Rossi Johnson, people like my grandfather, my grandmother, my father, because they come up in all this and they hand it on down to me. My grandmother used to tell us all the time, 'Son, Mississippi was the Blues.'"*

*-Terry 'Harmonica' Bean, musician*





*"Music was that coded way, or that methodology, that they used to get the message across for hundreds of miles. They would sing one song and that one song would transmit, but everybody in the enslaved community knew that that one song meant that we're going to meet down in the bush arbor late at night."*

*-Mary D. Williams, performing historian*

## EXTRA STUFF



### Coded Language\*

*Coded language* is a way people say things with hidden meanings, using symbols or phrases only certain groups understand. It's been especially important for marginalized communities, like African Americans, to share messages and push back against injustice without drawing unwanted attention. This kind of communication helps people stay connected and safe when speaking openly could be risky. Coded language was used by supporters of the Underground Railroad (see examples [here](#) and [here](#)), and there are many examples of coded lyrics in songs that were used to communicate with the enslaved in their efforts to become free ([examples](#)). During the civil rights movement, activists used coded language to talk about plans and rally support without tipping off the authorities. Coded language also shows up in music, books, and performances where artists hide messages that speak to their community but go unnoticed by outsiders. Hip Hop music is a great example of this (read more [here](#) and [here](#)). For a modern example of a performance layered with coded language and social commentary, history lessons and personal experiences, consider [Kendrick Lamar's performance](#) during the halftime of Super Bowl LIX, analyzed in-depth by writer Nettrice Gaskins [here](#).

\*The phrase *coded language* is also often used to describe a subtle way members of the public, media, and politicians make derogatory remarks about race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation and religion in the US. For example, using the word "thug" to describe a young Black man.

*Black music develops as this kind of musical communication system for enslaved black folks, as much about the beating of the drums or the pounding of the hands as it is the use of the voice.*

*-Mark Anthony Neal, professor of Black popular culture*

[This article](#) with accompanying videos, from the National Park Service, explores how enslaved people used various instruments to communication messages.



## Work Songs and Field Calls

Enslaved Africans in America maintained many artistic traditions, including singing work songs—a practice that remained important even after slavery ended. While doing tough, repetitive jobs like farming, cutting wood, or building railroads, they used these songs to stay in rhythm, pass the time, and ease the burden of their labor.

These songs continued to be used through Reconstruction. Despite the promise of freedom, many Black Americans dealt with brutal conditions, especially in sharecropping, which was barely an improvement over slavery.

Over time, the messages in work songs started to shape the Blues. Those who left the South for jobs took these musical traditions with them. Read lyrics from some of these songs and how they fit into the timeline of African American music [here](#) and [here](#).



Many decades past Reconstruction, these songs continued to be used, especially in the highly segregated prisons of the South. Through the [Lomax archive](#), you can listen to hundreds of songs recorded in prisons in the mid-20th century.

For a rare visual document of these songs, take a look at [this film](#) created by Pete and Toshi Seeger, their son Daniel, and folklorist Bruce Jackson.

**“Mississippi” Fred McDowell** (1924-1987) appears performing in the film - the segment is from a film called [Blues Maker](#). Fred McDowell was a native of Tennessee. He began playing guitar as a teenager and performing not long after, but it was not until after he moved to Como, Mississippi - “Hill Country” - and was recorded by Alan Lomax that he came to be known more broadly. He was one of the first people to gain recognition for playing in the hill country blues style, identified by its “simple harmonies, percussive motifs, and a steady boogie built around guitar riffs and percussion patterns.” To learn more about his life and that era, check out the documentary [Shake ‘em On Down](#).



Explore this short read from Medium about [Black History’s Influence on Modern Music — Slave & Early Coded Resistance Songs](#)

The [Timeline of African American Music](#), led by Dr. Portia K. Maultsby, is an interactive website that traces 400 years of evolving genres, styles, and influential artists

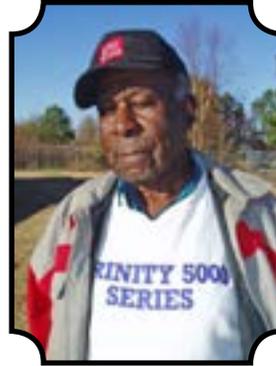
From Acousticmusic.org, an article on [The Blues](#)

and from the radio station WFMT, [Signifyin’ in Song: How the Sounds of Slavery Changed Music Forever](#)

## ☆ FEATURED PERFORMERS ☆



**Terry "Harmonica" Bean** was a professional baseball player before he became known worldwide as a Blues man. [Read more about his story.](#)



**"Cadillac" John Nolden** got his start as a vocalist performing gospel music with his four brothers, later playing the Blues with his brother and then taking it up full-time in his mid-40s. [Read more about him.](#)

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

### PRE-VIEWING

1. Beyond entertainment, what purposes do you think music plays for cultural groups? Why does music exist?
2. When you think about "African American Music," what comes to mind?

### POST-VIEWING

1. What are some of the ways that coded language has functioned as a form of resistance among marginalized communities?
2. How did Blues music function as an expression of the circumstances that descendants of enslaved Africans faced?
3. Can you think of certain songs/lyrics that you think convey an important message for a community?

## KEY CONCEPTS



**Performance as Social Justice Work** Art has the ability to raise awareness, encourage dialogue, and inspire collective action to challenge the status quo and promote social justice. Performance can offer a raw, emotional connection to issues like human rights, police brutality, and racial and gender equality.

**Call and Response** Historically, traditions of call and response emerged in various regions of the world. Various African traditions such as public discussions of civic matters, religious rituals, and vocal and instrumental musical expression were maintained by Africans and their descendants throughout different parts of the world. Today in the United States, call and response remains a central component of communal interaction and shared experiences in church, in all kinds of music, in education, and in the pursuit of social justice.

*"You can reach people with performance in a way that you can't reach them with an academic article. I'm using this language that I'm using on purpose. It's about African-American resistance, it's about African-American identity, African-American history and culture: it's an ongoing experience."*

*-Elaine Richardson, educator and musician*



*"I think the biggest thing about Black performance traditions, for many Black artists, it is literally an extension of themselves in the world. I think for many white audiences, Black performances are simply entertainment. And so the use of language is seen as entertaining, right? Outside of the entertainment realm, Black language gets judged on very mainstream, white, middle-class values."*

*-Mark Anthony Neal, professor of Black popular culture*



## EXTRA STUFF

### Engagement Through Performance

Elaine Richardson and Mary D. Williams are using performance in creative ways to engage and educate audiences. Williams uses call and response, creating a communal experience for the audience while they listen to the history of traditional songs in the Black community.

Elaine Richardson shares her personal narrative, performing through the different voices that reflect, for example, herself when young and that of her Jamaican grandmother, to celebrate her lived experience and connect with the humanity of audience members. These forms of expression not only affirm their realities but also help inform and engage wider audiences, encouraging empathy and awareness. (ctnd.)



Additionally, artistic performance can unite people around common goals. Throughout history, songs have been central to social movements—from civil rights anthems to modern protest music that echoes today’s challenges.

Mark Anthony Neal discusses a number of Black music artists whose voices reflect the social change - or need for change- of their time. Learn more through the links below.



[Bessie Smith](#), [Ella Fitzgerald](#), [Mahalia Jackson](#), [Otis Redding](#), [James Brown](#), and [Aretha Franklin](#).

### THE ENDURING POWER OF MUSIC

Discussing the impact of Sam Cooke’s song *A Change Is Gonna Come*, Mary D. Williams says, “by crossing over to white stations, he’s literally testifying to the fact of how African Americans are treated.” The most successful Black artists, such as The Ink Spots, Nat King Cole, and Fats Domino (the top selling artist of the 1950s after Elvis Presley), had been able to “cross over” to appeal to White audiences as well as Black audiences. Sam Cooke, however, heralded an era in which Black artists would begin to project a greater awareness of social conditions and the mistreatment of African Americans into mainstream American culture. Cooke’s beautifully performed original composition “A Change is Gonna Come,” recorded only days before his untimely death, would become an anthem of the civil rights movement and continues to be used to celebrate the Black experience and demand social justice today. Former President Obama paraphrased Cooke during his victory speech before thousands in Chicago’s Grant Park in 2008, declaring that “it’s been a long time coming, but tonight [...] change has come to America.”



Sam Cooke originally rose to prominence as a gospel singer and cautiously made the transition to secular music. Aretha Franklin was another singer who learned her skills in the gospel tradition and moved into performing popular music. She soon became a powerful figure in the civil rights movement, often performing at protests and marches at the behest of the Reverend Dr Martin Luther King, Jr. Her interpretation of “Respect,” a song originally written from the point of view of a man, became in her rendition a powerful demand for women and people of color to be treated with the respect that they deserve. Throughout most of the twentieth century, African American recording

artists were rarely treated with respect. Their original work was routinely credited to the white producers who recorded them, thus depriving them of publishing royalties. Record companies routinely cheated them of the royalties that they were legally entitled to, and popular white artists like Pat Boone and Georgia Gibbs would produce mainstream White versions of Black artist’s songs, stealing entire arrangements without giving credit and spoiling the chances those Black Artist’s songs would “cross over.” Record companies funneled Black



music into “race records” and tended to produce separate (ctnd.) materials intended for either Black or White audiences. Nevertheless, the vitality and creativity of African American performance and musical tradition would lay a foundation for popular culture not only in America but throughout the World, inspiring generations of other great artists. It is not possible to imagine The Beatles without the influence of Black girl singing groups, nor The Rolling Stones and countless other British Invasion bands without the influence of Black American Blues.

## ☆ FEATURED PERFORMERS ☆



**Mary D. Williams** grew up in rural North Carolina and credits a middle school teacher with encouraging her to sing. [Read more about her story.](#)



**Elaine “Dr. E.” Richardson** is a professor of Literacy Studies as well as an author and performer. Read more about her [here](#) and [here](#).



Library of Congress Civil Rights History Project: [Music in the Civil Rights Movement](#)

Check out a playlist of 20th century music in the call & response tradition via the [Black Music Project](#)

A discussion of the differences between Otis’ Redding’s “Respect” and the Staple Singers’ “Respect Yourself”: [Soul Music in the Civil Rights Era: Respecting Self and Others](#)

From JSTOR Daily, [Race, Rock, and Breaking Barriers](#)

Discover highlights and artifacts from the Smithsonian’s collections on African American musical history [Spotlight on African American Music](#)

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

### PRE-VIEWING

1. Are there Black artists or musicians that you associate with the Civil Rights movement? Who and why?
2. Do you think art and music influences culture or is it more the other way around? Why do you think so?

### POST-VIEWING

1. How does call and response enhance the engagement between performers and audiences?
2. Do you think more meaning is conveyed through the content of lyrics or through the way the lyrics are delivered? What examples can you come up with?

## KEY CONCEPTS



**Black Oral Tradition** This refers to the storytelling and verbal art of African Americans (and Africans around the globe). It includes folktales, songs, and narratives that preserve history, values, and identity across generations. Preaching, testifying, spoken word poetry, singing, rapping, and the “dozens” are all examples of Black oral traditions.

**The Black Church** During the time of enslavement, African Americans’ spiritual beliefs and practices were central to the lives and communities they built within the white-controlled plantation system. In the 19th century many more Black churches began to form as African Americans looked for places to worship freely, build community leadership, and escape the discrimination present in white-controlled churches.

**Spoken Word Poetry** A literary art form that builds on ancient traditions and focuses on word play, storytelling, and social commentary, often emphasizing the rhythm and cadence of spoken language.

**The Dozens** A tradition of African American street rhyming: a back-and-forth game of insults and verbal combat. The Dozens may appear to be as simple as a playful exchange of “yo’ mama” jokes but is a longstanding form of social engagement with roots in traditional African ceremonial practices.

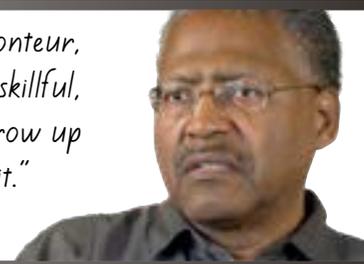


*“Without the oral tradition, you would have no Black church. Because it had been against the law to teach Africans how to read or write, the oral tradition and the aural/oral tradition were the sum and substance of Black church. Preaching, music, testimonies, folk tales, folk stories. The transmission from generation to generation orally, it’s a sine qua non when it comes to the Black church.”*

*-Reverend Jeremiah Wright, religious scholar*

*“So, you become a storyteller, you become a joke teller, you become a raconteur, all of those things, you become a signifier. You become very adept at very skillful, performed put downs and verbal corrections. I don’t need to say that if you grow up in that kind of language environment, you come to like it and appreciate it.”*

*-Arthur Spears, linguist*



## EXTRA STUFF

### BLACK ORAL TRADITION

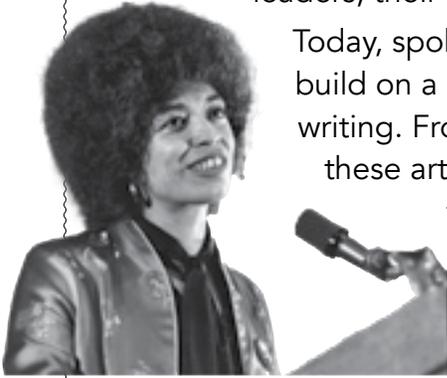
For many years, slavery and racism tried to silence African American voices. Telling stories out loud was a way for African Americans to maintain their cultural history and identity, stand (ctnd.)

up against unfair treatment, and fight for freedom. Through these stories, individuals were able to share their own experiences and point of view.

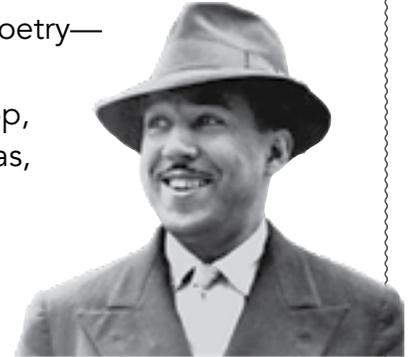
African American history is replete with powerful speakers who use the rhythm and emotion of language to create a shared experience with their audiences. From preachers to political leaders, their words have inspired and shaped history.

Today, spoken word performances—like rap and slam poetry—build on a long tradition of African American music and writing. From the blues and spirituals to jazz and hip-hop, these art forms have helped people express their ideas, feelings, and hopes for justice.

Listen to speeches, poetry, and interviews from some of history's most inspiring Black speakers on [Smithsonian Folkways](#).



Angela Davis



Langston Hughes

## BLACK PREACHING

The Black preaching tradition is a distinctive sermonic style typically characterized by some or all of the following: emotional delivery, call-and-response interaction with the congregation, a rich use of rhetorical devices, musicality, a connection to historical struggles, and a powerful emotional peak during the sermon. Black preachers come from varied educational backgrounds and church experiences, leading to diverse preaching styles.

Considered one of the greatest orators of all time, Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was able to connect with audiences of all different backgrounds through his words and delivery. Having studied King's speeches, linguist Walt Wolfram has pointed out how even with his formal education and national prominence, his manner of preaching conveyed authenticity regardless of audience. You can watch a short video of Wolfram discussing this idea [here](#).

In Performance Traditions, Reverend Dr. Otis Moss describes how some of the characteristics of Black preaching mentioned above (e.g. a connection to historical struggles, and a powerful emotional peak during the sermon) are present in prophetic Black preaching:

"Prophetic Black preaching is what I call blue-note gospel. The ability to be able to take the blues of life, to stare at tragedy and not fall into despair. And that's what's unique in Black preaching, there's a blues aesthetic to it where preaching out of other traditions reject the blues or act as if that the blues is not even around in your life. There is no lament, whatever. But we never end on lament. There's always the assurance of grace. And you cannot have the gospel unless you know the blues. Because Friday, Jesus on the cross, that's nothin' but the blues. But when you get to Sunday and resurrection, that's all shoutin' and gospel."



### What about "Whooping?"

Have you ever heard of this sermonic tradition? It is one of the more attention-grabbing styles of Black preaching that is often stereotyped or parodied in the media. Aretha Franklin's father, Reverend C.L. Franklin, was known to be of the whooping tradition. Azizi Powell, on her blog [pancocojams](https://pancocojams.com), gives a detailed overview of the tradition along with a video illustrating the elements she describes.



Dr. Dorinda Clark Cole

### A Light-hearted Review of Preaching Styles

Christian comedian @KevONStage and his brother @JsonFredericks collaborate in this video that parodies [10 Types of Black Preachers](#)



## ☆ FEATURED PERFORMERS ☆



**Tony Keith, Jr.** performs as "Tony da Poet," an award-winning Black U.S. American gay poet, spoken word artist, and Hip-Hop educational leader from Washington DC. [Learn more about him.](#)



**LeJuane "El'Ja" Bowens** is a motivational speaker, Spoken Word artist, author, and workshop facilitator who has performed in numerous slams and been featured across the United States. Read more about him [here](#) and [here](#).



**Dasan Ahanu** is a cultural organizer, artist, and scholar. In conjunction with creative arts, his academic work focuses on critical writing, creative writing, hip-hop, and popular culture. [Learn more.](#)



**East Bay Anointed Voices (EBAV)** is a powerhouse group of singers out of Oakland, CA, that has been performing across the country for over 20 years. [Check out more of their performances.](#)



**The Rev. Dr. Otis Moss, III**, is a preacher, poet, activist, author and filmmaker. His passion for African American culture and history combined with a deep appreciation for jazz and hip hop inform his message of hope and healing through a jazz narrative on American democracy. [Learn more here.](#)



Read an informative and concise two page essay about [The African American Oral Tradition and its Rhetorical Impact on American Popular Culture](#)

From Smithsonian Folkways, here is a brief look at African American Spoken Word: [Say It Loud](#).

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's archive, DocSouth, presents [An Introduction to the Church in the Southern Black Community](#)

Smithsonian Center for Folklife & Cultural Heritage Magazine: [Giving Voice: The Power of Words in African American Culture](#)

For an excellent read about the Dozens, check out this book authored by Elijah Wald – [Talking 'Bout Your Mama: The Dozens, Snaps, and the Deep Roots of Rap](#)

From the Louisiana Folklife website, Joyce Marie Jackson interviewed [four different preachers about their unique styles](#).

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

### PRE-VIEWING

1. Did you grow up going to church? Do you remember the impact that the preachers, singers, or other speakers had on you?
2. Have you listened to or created Spoken Word Poetry? How does it differ from other types of poetry?
3. Are you or anyone in your family considered a storyteller or someone who is a performer with words? Do you consider it part of your heritage?

### POST-VIEWING

1. What do you consider the most admirable verbal skills demonstrated by the performers in this segment?
2. What are some of the language features shared by the performers in this segment?
3. How is the audience involved in Black performance? In the church? In Spoken Word Poetry?

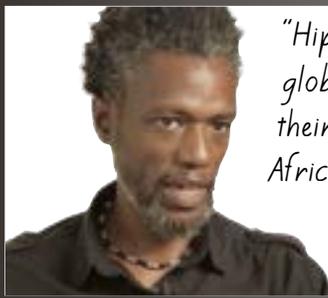
# KEY CONCEPTS



**Hip Hop** A genre that originated in the Bronx during the 1970s as a creative outlet for marginalized communities facing hardship. Centered on self-expression and originality, it blended music, dance, visual art, and storytelling in a unique way. Over time, it evolved into the global cultural movement we know today.

**Battle Rap** A competitive form of rapping where performers face off using boasts, insults, and clever wordplay combining elements of poetry, wit and bravado. The winner of the battle is determined by the audience.

**Rap Cypher** A session held among two or more lyricists in which they create spontaneous freestyle verse, often building on one another's contributions. Similarly, a dance cypher is a gathering of dancers in which they take turns showcasing their skills in an informal and spontaneous setting.



*"Hip Hop came out the ghetto and went into this thing that was then pushed all over the globe and people fell in love with it. And yeah, people brought their personal identities, their personal contexts to the work. But there's still this root language that is, rooted in African vernacular, art forms, style, everything. We ain't just talkin' about the words.*

*We're not just talkin' about the rhyme. We're talking about contour, everywhere."*  
-Keith 'Doctabarz' Cross, musician and scholar

*"The language involved just with the music we make, the easiest metaphor to use for it is: it's fluid. You put water in the glass, it's the glass. You put water on the floor, it's the floor. You put water in the cup, it's the cup. We can take these words in this English language- that's a broken language anyway- and break it again, for lack of better terms."*

-Quest MCCODY, rapper and lyricist



## EXTRA STUFF



Hip hoppers shout out to Gil Scott-Heron, the Watts Prophets, and the Last Poets as predecessors of Hip Hop Culture, but it is important to recognize their art as a movement all it's own, not merely "the connective tissue between the rap, hip-hop and spoken word genres they helped inspire."



Read more about their legacy [here](#) and [here](#) and check out these artists' websites: [Gil-Scott Heron](#) - - - [The Watts Prophets](#) - - - [The Last Poets](#)

### WHAT IS AN EMCEE/MC?

“As far as battle rap versus cyphers versus the booth, I look at these things as incubators. They’re just different places where you hone different sensibilities as an **emcee**.”  
- Doctabarz



Master of Ceremonies, Mic Controller, Move the Crowd...this [article](#) from the Hip Hop Golden Age website offers some history on and context about the term.

“You learn everything you can to be a dope **emcee**, and then you forget it all when you freestylin’ because it’s right on the spot, you know?”  
-Eternal the MC

### METACOGNITION

Keith “Doctabarz” Cross presented the research for his dissertation in traditional written form and also created a music video to share his findings with a broader audience, including members of and fans of Hip Hop Culture. You can watch “Metacognition” in its entirety on [his website](#). Through the lyrics of his song, Doctabarz explains that the practice of spontaneous lyrical improvisation has demonstrable effects on brain activity, that those with this experience show a consistent difference, as compared to those who have no experience with creating rhymes spontaneously, in the way they hear and respond to certain types of rhyme. As illustrated by the chart below, the test included pairs of words considered to be “full-rhyme,” “half-rhyme” and “non-rhyme.”

Table detailing the different types of rhyme listeners were exposed to in Cross’s study:

Full-rhyme	Prime Pair		Target
	SPEET	JEET	FREET
Half-rhyme	Prime Pair		Target
	SPEET	JEET	YEEK / YEEM
Non-rhyme	Prime Pair		Target
	SPEET	JEET	KWAZZ

Full: vowels match; consonants match

Half: vowels match; consonants differ, with matched voicing (favorable), or different voicing (unfavorable, circled)

Non: vowels differ; consonants differ

His research further theorized about how the experience of creative writing promotes self-directed learning, particularly within the context of a field of art and music that, for most of its existence, has had no institutional support (and continues to be delegitimized by many). Additionally, his work has illustrated the metacognitive demands required to achieve a level of expertise with spontaneous lyricism.

# ☆ FEATURED PERFORMERS ☆



**Microphone Phelps** was born to a writer and a musician, and started writing raps in elementary school on the prompting of his best friend. [Check out his bandcamp page.](#)



**MactheRealest** is a rapper and poet from Pontiac, MI, whose work tackles social justice and philosophy, delivered with wit and impressive technique. [Check out his bandcamp page.](#)



**Keith "Doctabarz" Cross** is a lyricist and scientist creating musical volumes dedicated to helping humanity to achieve and sustain individual, community and environmental wellbeing. [Learn more.](#)



**Eshod "Eternal the MC" Howard** was born and raised in Brooklyn, NY. His upbringing encouraged him to be an inspiration to his community through music and activism. [Learn more about him.](#)



**Quest MCCODY** is an incredibly versatile rapper who was in elementary school when he stood in front of a crowd and rapped a verse about reading and how important it was. [Check out his work.](#)



**DJ Nabs** is an internationally known DJ and record producer born in Durham, NC. He relocated to Atlanta, GA, in the late 1980's and began working with major names in hip hop and hosting a radio show called "In the Lab with DJ Nabs." [Learn more.](#)



For an interactive look at 5 words that illustrate rap's linguistic influence, check out [this New York Times Magazine feature.](#)

From Cymraeg to Haka to Inuktitut, read about some ways that [Hip Hop is influencing minority languages](#) and may be [helping endangered languages.](#)

A podcast on [How the brain of an improv performer works](#)

VOX Explainer on [Rapping, deconstructed: The best rhymer of all time](#)

[Exploring The Intersection Of Hip-Hop And Social Justice](#)  
[TEDx How Message Music Inspires Social Change](#)

From the Dallas Observer, here's more about [Hip Hop Cyphers.](#)

From the Kennedy Center, a thorough resource on [Hip Hop: A Culture of Vision and Voice](#)

The outdoor cypher in the film featured a group that's been connecting lyricists for 15+ years on NC State campus. Read more about [Cypher University here](#)

# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

## PRE-VIEWING

1. How is Hip Hop is part of American history? Why or why not?
2. Create two arguments, one arguing that rap lyrics are poetry and one arguing that they are not.

## POST-VIEWING

1. Where do you see the influence of Hip Hop in broader American or global culture?
2. What do you think of the notion that Hip Hop artists use the same literary devices (metaphor, imagery, double entendre, etc.) that traditional poets use? Should we consider Hip Hop as a part of American poetry?
3. We saw in the rap battle section skills that can be taken from that contexts into academic or professional situations? Have you had similar experience adapting skills into academic or professional situations from elsewhere?
4. William Shakespeare was known in his time as a writer who wrote about lewd, vulgar, or bawdy themes using highly inventive language (The Oxford English Dictionary credits him with over 1500 new words). Create two arguments, one arguing that today's Hip Hop artists are continuing Shakespeare's tradition and one arguing against this premise.