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I wasn't able to attend class on Friday however beforehand I asked several classmates for assistance on my essay.

They helped me pick a topic and gave me pointers on the subtopics I should focus on. They were a huge help and allowed me to pick a topic I could really write about.

I cannot give a grade because I could not attend the workshop.

Cultural Myths Widely Associated With Music

What type of music do you listen to? An answer to this question may very well define your identity to many people. Music may paint a mental image of what sort of individual you are, what type of friends you have, what you like to do in your free time, and how you conduct yourself in public. Culture and music are directly associated as individual cultures often have developed their own type of music, which typically is affected by historic events. Music is a form of expression, a method of expressing feelings in a media that can be widely enjoyed by others. It has the power to invoke powerful emotions in the listener, emotions that the artist feels and transfers you. Music has always been an important part of my life because of this very power it has, being able to fill you with tears or screams of laughter. However, music suffers greatly from cultural myths stemming from how people misunderstand the genres of music because of their own bias. Hip-hop/rap, classical music, and country music are excellent examples of genres in which music is greatly misunderstood they are attributes with individuals or behavior that are divergent from the cultural standard.

The rap/hip-hop genre has in recent years gained a much wider audience base and yet despite all this, many still consider the genre widely inappropriate due to the language and direct message. I have personally experienced a clash with this bias, I commonly listen to rap music while driving or even doing working. In truth rap, and many other forms of music, are simply misunderstood and are not deeply looked into. The underlying message is typically deep but, uses unconventional methods. A perfect example is Jay-Z's song 99 problems, "In the second verse, Jay-Z describes being pulled over by a cop back in 1994. Professor Mason goes over that verse line by line, and holds it up against the Fourth Amendment, which protects against unreasonable searches and seizures."(Harris) This example serves two purposes, to demonstrate

the style of lyrics in this genre that are typically misunderstood and it shows the message that are often looked over in this style of music. The message in hip-hop/rap is often viewed as an encouragement to misbehave and a bad influence to a younger audience, often the typical listeners of this sort of music. The general appearance and demeanor of the artists that write and perform the music often serves as evidence supporting widely held stereotypes. Many artists attach themselves to a stereotype of a frightening individual, a criminal who has gone to jail, someone who doesn't care. While in some cases all of the traits mentioned applied, a great majority of artists are individuals who have gone to school and were great students. Many of the so called thugs that parents do not want their kids to listen to have become personal heroes of mine. They were able to be good students which they no doubt used to create their songs, find a genre of music that they could strive in, and dominate in that genre of music. Contrary to popular belief these artists are not neighborhood kids starting a bad in their garage and they are not drug dealers with nothing better to do, most of them at least. They are, in most cases, brilliant individuals who have made a name for themselves in a word crowded with people trying to do just the same. "[T]he current roster of hip-hop heavyweights includes a number of educated rappers who spent some time writing essays and research papers before penning radio-friendly couplets." (Green) As mentioned in the quote, many of the artists are far from what the stereotypes suggest and simply attach themselves with the stereotype. Although I am not attempting to become a musician, I still take inspiration from their lives. The question may arise, if these rappers are so brilliant then why do they not simply change their image? This is a simple question to answer, because they are quite happy with the image they have now. Their current image allows them to stand out in the mess of top hits that play today, without the stereotype their music wouldn't sell and the message they try to communicate wouldn't get out. By allowing the

stereotype of hip-hop/rap artists to attach to them, they gain a fan group and a constant audience. This allows them to produce music, which mainstream audiences may misinterpret, and have it appreciated by individual who look into the lyrics of the music and find the deeper meaning in the music. The reason mainstream audiences don't look into the deeper meaning of the music is because of the cultural myths attached to it and as a result, this holds back the genre from progressing.

Classical music is typically seen as music of the past, created without the assistance of technology and outdated for the modern world. The cultural myth can be easily seen, classical music is for the older generation and will soon die out. This belief is widely held by the 'newer' generation who prefer music that has been greatly edited, electronically modified, and differs greatly from the traditional sounds of instruments. "This is one of the real things that puts many listeners off, the idea that to be able to understand Harrison Birtwistle or Judith Weir, Pauline Oliveros or Howard Skempton, you need to have a working knowledge, and preferably a Ph.D, in music history from plainchant to Prokofiev, and/or you need to be part of a club of contemporary music groupies." (Service) This idea is what makes people believe that it will soon die out, the idea that classical music can be listened to only a select few, affects the average individual's opinion toward the genre before listening. In today's standard for music, the background instrumentals serve as support for the lyrics which provide the artists with base to work with. Many people attribute this as a small part of the song yet it is anything but, in fact it can be my favorite part of the song. The message the classical music provides the listener is in the instrumental music rather than being conveyed by lyrics which to me makes its far more effective. What the audience imagines, how they feel, and their reaction is left to the audience to decide. Unlike musical genres that include lyrics provide the audience with many of these details

leaving the audience imagining, feeling, and reacting based on the artists mindset. In a way it is like comparing a poem to a young adult's novel. The novel's story is clearly laid out and leaves the reader with only the task of imagining what it tell the reader to imagine however, a poem on the other hand needs to be analyzed and deeply explored to discover the message left by the author. However, the idea that this genre of music is dying off and will no longer be relevant is nothing more than a cultural myth is far from the truth and offends me personally. Classical music is part of what makes cinematic masterpieces like the Dark Knight Rises and Inception, without their soundtracks the movies would have been quite different from what they are now. "Forty-seven years after her death, Edith Piaf is soundtracking the biggest, darkest, most bombastic blockbuster of the summer. Composer Hans Zimmer has revealed that Inception's entire soundtrack, from the booming trombone theme to the strains of rising dread, originates from one of the chanteuse's most famous songs." (Michaels) The soundtrack in inception lays an emotional foundation for what is occurring on screen, something possible only because of the classical music genre. The cultural myth that classical music is irreverent in modern times and that it is near death is far from the truth, it is simply suffering from the misunderstanding of the modern generation as to its purpose, place, and audience.

Banjos and harmonicas or acoustic guitars and slow lyrics, some of the typical stereotypes held by the average person when they think of country music. The cultural myth associated with this genre is the sound of the music and the person who performs it. A popular example, although perhaps not the best, is Taylor Swift who just happens to be a favorite artist of mine. Her music originated as country and although she started as the typical stereotype, she altered her music and varied greatly from the stereotypical country music which has in turn made her into the popular star she is today. "Swift's easy mastery of such contemporary country tropes

suggested she'd quickly feel limited by the genre.” (Keith Harris) This shows that although her variation did introduce the idea that stereotypical country is not the only country music in the world, even she eventually moved past the style to allow herself greater expression. This cultural myth is difficult to really call a myth because the stereotypical country is the version of country that is so popular. Being so I would normally consider myself the opposite of a country music fan, the sounds and lyrics don't really interest me. Yet, artists like Taylor Swift have been a favorite of mine, long before they left the world of country music. “Too diverse to nail down.” (Country Weekly Staff) This is a perfect description of country music, the sound of country is far more diverse than what the popular standard is. What makes listening to country difficult for some people, myself included, is they associate the typical banjo, harmonica, or acoustic guitar music they may have heard from main stream country artists and applied the sound to the genre as a whole.

Hip-hop/rap, classical music, and country music are ideal examples of genres in which the music is greatly misunderstood due to a variety of factors. Each of the genres suffers from a different cultural myth but all result in the genre of music being limited in its progressive ability. While each myth is simply that, a myth, they are myths that are widely held and believed. It pains me greatly that these myths exist because music is a huge part of my life. I am almost always listening to music, yet I find myself missing great musical master pieces because I associate them with the cultural myths associated with them. The stereotypes people have about genres of music define how the modern culture views the various genres and thus is attributed as a cultural myth. While there are many arguments for why this is typically viewed as negative, they do serve as an identifier of our culture. It is for that reason I will most likely never forget the lyrics to *Let It Go*. Thus cultural myths will always be important to the culture of a people, they

will define that belief or what the culture strives to overcome. There are many aspects to of culture to which cultural myths apply to but, possibly none affect as large aspect of culture as the cultural myths attached to music.

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