

Assignment 7: Rhyme Scheme and Flow Analysis

The most important, technical part of rap is the *flow*, a combination of rhythm and rhymes. For a complete illustration, please refer to the books [How to Rap](#) and [How to Rap 2](#). Here is a great video that deconstructs rap flow:



In this assignment, you will deconstruct and analyze two pieces of flow from two different rappers and make a comparison. Let's see how to do flow analysis. Rhythm is the foundation and the most indispensable element of rap. To analyze rhythm, we introduce an analytical tool called the *flow diagram* (see below).

1	2	3	4
Let me freak the	funk , obso-	lete is the	punk that talks
more junk than	Sanford sells.	I jet pro-	pel at a
rate that compli-	cate their mental	state as I	invade their
masquerade .	They couldn't	fade with a	clipper . . .

A typical *section*, or *paragraph* of a rap flow consists of 4 bars (usually 4 sentences), and each bar consists of 4 beats. If we lay out the flow aligning the lyrics with its beat and bars, we get a flow diagram as depicted in the picture above. In addition, in this flow diagram, the syllables that fell directly under the downbeat are in bold type. Listen to this section as the rap flow here:



As for the rhymes, there are many rhymes-highlighted videos on YouTube, as all the sample videos below. Identifying rhyme patterns requires an active listening process that locates the words and syllables rhyming in a flow, and notates them using different colors to distinguish. Please watch and listen to the videos below for rhyme identification:





In this assignment, you will combine the flow diagram and rhyme patterns, to perform a

complete flow analysis in light of *rhyming with the beat*. Please choose any two songs from the above 4 videos, and pick one 4-bar section from each song to do a flow analysis. For example, I chose the songs MF DOOM - *Meat Grinder* and Kendrick Lamar - *Rigamortis*, and my flow analysis on chosen sections are as follows:

"

||_ The worst |hated God (who) per|petrated |odd favors (layback, internal rhymes)
De||monstrated |in the per|forated |Rod Lavers (compound rhymes)

||_|_|_|_|_| (use of rests)
In all ||quad |flavors, |Lord |save us (punchline, entendre)

"

And I'ma ||be here for a |while, just buckle |up before the |ride (alliteration on "b")
Or knuckle ||up if you can |fight, we always |making 'em duck or |die (multisyllable rhymes)
A suit and ||tie is suita|ble and us|ual in sui|cide

(alliteration on "s", rhythmic change from 16th to triplets)

CS||| just might in|vestigate this |fucking para|site (rhyme the whole verse with the end rhyme)

"

To keep the sentences intact, instead of aligning beats in the matrix form (flow diagram), I use "|" to denote the downbeat placement. To annotate the bars, I use "||" to denote the first downbeat at each bar. The syllables that fell under the downbeat are concatenated immediately after the delineator "|"; if laid back, the blank "_" is used to notate the rest. You don't have to use the same notation as I did. You are free to lay out the flow in ways you're comfortable with as long as the downbeat is marked. My habit is to listen to the flow with natural layback so it's fine if your flow diagram doesn't align with my analysis.

As for the given 4 songs, Eminem - *Lose Yourself* and Black Star - *Re: Definition* are demonstrations of "tidy flows" -- consistent rhyme patterns emphasized on the downbeat of punchy boom-bap beats. The highly structured flow both rhythmically and rhyme-wise should be pretty comfortable to analyze, and pleasant to listen to -- the flows are self-revealing, easy to understand, and highly memorable. The most prominent difference between the two pieces is that, *Lose Yourself* is accented on the first and third beats, which sounds more urgent and nervous, as the marches; *Re: Definition* is accented on the second and fourth beat, which is more black-music oriented and emphasizes more on the end rhymes.

The last two songs are slightly complex in terms of flow analysis. MF DOOM - *Meat Grinder* and Kendrick Lamar - *Rigamortis* don't have clear drum patterns. This leaves more room for the rappers to arrange their flows, but also makes it difficult to keep both the MC and

the listener in check with the beat. As the flow is not restricted by the kick-snare mode anymore, the lyrics flow more freely across the beat and bars, which gives rise to more rhythmically uneven, syncopated flows.

The flow structure of the last two songs is largely maintained by dense rhymes. The well-organized internal rhymes, multi-syllable rhymes, structurally well-aligned end rhymes, and alliteration make the flow smooth and compact, conditioned on a lack of constant drum beat check-in.

Assignment: Please choose any two songs from the above 4 rhyme-highlighted videos, and pick one 4-bar section from each song to do a flow analysis. In other words, you need to do two 4-bar section analyses as in the example given above. Your chosen samples can't overlap with the given examples. After locating the downbeat and highlighting the rhymes, please analyze the rhythmic and rhyme schemes used in the flow. If possible, also address the *functionality* of the flow and rhyme schemes in lyrical delivery in combination with the content tools such as imagery, simile, metaphor, analogy, slang, entendre, punchline, etc. (use [Genius](#) to look up the lyrics). Besides, what differences did you notice when analyzing the two sections rapped and designed by different rappers? Do their verses encode their signatures? You may cite other works of the artists to support your arguments. Minimum 400 words in total.