

Sample Hip-Hop Poetry Lesson Plan (Day #1)

- What *is* Poetry?
- Two overly technical and somewhat limited definitions of poetry:
 - Poetry is the combination of rhetorical and mnemonic structures in evocative language that elicits an emotional response, tells a story, and/or enlightens the reader. Usually broken up into lines and stanzas (*Me*).
 - Composition in verse or some comparable patterned arrangement of language in which the expression of feelings and ideas is given intensity by the use of distinctive style and rhythm (*OED*).
- What *is* Hip-Hop?
- Two technical and fairly broad definitions of hip-hop:
 - A youth subculture, originating amongst the Black and Hispanic populations of New York City, which comprises elements such as rap music, graffiti art, deejaying, and break-dancing, as well as distinctive codes of dress (*OED*).
 - The music associated with this subculture, characterized by freq. politically inspired or motivated raps, delivered above spare, electronic backing, and harsh rhythm tracks (*OED*).
- This series will be based on the intersection and collision of these four definitions and how they can be used to inspire new writing. We will discuss, we will write, we will recite, we will cipher, we will perform, and I will push you to use your understanding of this sub-genre of poetry by the hip-hop generation to compose your own wonderful poems. The goal is to deconstruct and add as many tools to your literary toolbox as possible. You always want to be aware of the tools at your disposal.

Hip-Hop Poem Deconstruction #1

“Emcee” by Terrance Hayes (*Hip Logic*, 5)

Connections: “Beat Street” – Grandmaster Flash, “Kings of Rock” – Run D.M.C.

See also: “The Message” – Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five

Discuss the emcees’ desire and responsibility on the microphone.

Hip-Hop Song Deconstruction #1

“Sing for the Moment” by Eminem

Connection: “Dream On” – Aerosmith

- Both share a connection with the griot tradition. Griots are members of a hereditary caste among the peoples of western Africa whose function are to keep an oral history of the tribe or village and to entertain with stories, poems, songs, dances, etc. that are written or improvised.

Daily Exercise #1

Consider your own connection to the griot tradition. What responsibilities do you owe to your own culture?

Consider *culture* in the broadest sense of the word (gender, geographic, ethnic, age group, etc.). Write a poem about your responsibility to that group.

Do you believe you have any responsibilities? What about other people in that group? Do they carry their responsibility? How has the responsibility in that group progressed? Consider your own position in the group.