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Black Thought

Tariq Trotter, also known as Black Thought, is a renowned musician and rapper. He is also known for the founding of the Roots, which perform every night on The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon. Trotter was raised a Muslim in “a middle-class enclave in the Northwestern area of Philadelphia.” Soon after his birth, his father was murdered. Trotter connects his challenging childhood to his skill and dedication towards hip-hop (Cooper, “The Roots’ Black Thought…”). His lyricism conveys his message and story by implementing a variety of word choice and word placement.

One thing that distinguishes a great rap artist from a regular rapper is their freestyle capability. Freestyle is when a DJ will play a backing-track and the artist will start to rap off of the top of their head. Although it is difficult to do, Black Thought is one of the best lyrical freestylers in the world. In his FLEX Freestyle, he starts out his freestyle with “Uh, I’m sorry for your loss It’s a body dead in the car and it’s prob’ly one of yours” (“Black Thought Freestyle”). Tariq alludes to things, doomed to fail when he says “writing all across the widow and the walls.” Then when he says “whether it was true or false, we shouldn’t have got involved,” he is conveying the message that even if something is doomed to fail, then you should avoid the situation. Tariq continues to say “I never thought you’d give me a reason to do this Cain and Abel, Jesus and Judas Caesar and Brutus, I see intruders, avert your eyes” (“Black Thought Freestyle”). This is him using his knowledge of history and the Bible to help tell his story.

Aside from freestyling, a rapper is most notably famous for the songs they produce. Tariq’s song, 9th vs. Thought, he is showing how the student and the study are both important for anthropology. The two elements that he compares, to the student and the study, is “9th Wonder’s beat and Black Thought’s verses.” Tariq starts by comparing the student to “a typical arrogant American” (“9th vs. Thought”). In the middle, there is an interlude that flips the perspective to the studied. Tariq switches from the lavish lifestyle in the first half, to a perspective of a harsh life in the second half.

Black Thought has been featured on many artists’ songs because of his exquisite lyricism. Some people try to imitate his style and word choice but all fail. Tariq is a one-of-a-kind M.C. He is my favorite rapper because of his music. He makes coming up with things to say seem way too easy. Overall, I view Black Thought as one of the few great lyrical rappers of all times because of how he uses words and his diction to portray them.

Works Cited

“BLACK THOUGHT FREESTYLE ON FLEX | #FREESTYLE087.” *Genius*, [www.genius.com/Black-thought-black-thought-freestyles-on-flex-freestyle087-lyrics](http://www.genius.com/Black-thought-black-thought-freestyles-on-flex-freestyle087-lyrics). Accessed 26 Sept. 2018.

Cooper, Barry Michael. “The Roots’ Black Thought on Philadelphia Style. And His Beard.” *The New York Times*, 1 Nov. 2017, [www.nytimes.com/2017/11/01/fashion/mens-style/black-thought-the-roots-jimmy-fallon-the-deuce.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/01/fashion/mens-style/black-thought-the-roots-jimmy-fallon-the-deuce.html). Accessed 26 Sept. 2018.

“9th vs. Thought.” *Genius*, [www.genius.com/Black-thought-9th-vs-thought-lyrics](http://www.genius.com/Black-thought-9th-vs-thought-lyrics). Accessed 26 Sept. 2018.

Freestyle: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=prmQgSpV3fA>

9th vs. Thought: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kVTyd1LCBTg>