

Hip Hop (I)

Week 7 – Oct. 9, 2020

What is Hip Hop?

- It's more than just rap music.
- Music, Dance, Art
- At first, it looked like Hip Hop dance might end up being the most famous piece of Hip Hop culture. Only in the mid 1980s did Hip Hop music overtake the other two.

Hip Hop dance

Most famous form is break dancing, which evolved in the streets of NYC

Break dancing (1980s)

Break dancing in the NYC metro (present day)

Graffiti

Paintings done by semi-anonymous street artists, for free, on public parts of the urban environment.

Started out as a community practice, but eventually spread to the “fine art” world, most notably in the Haitian American artist Jean-Michel Basquiat.



Graffiti



Basquiat



Graffiti as Fine Art

Guardian Article on this subject

Graffiti

New York times article about the resurgence of Graffiti in Pandemic-stricken NYC

Hip Hop – Music

Hip Hop music evolved from many different things. A brief list:

1. “Spoken word” poetry

- For example, [The Last Poets](#)

2. Distinctive African-American forms of storytelling and comedy

- For example, [Rudy Ray Moore](#)

3. The culture of the 1970s South Bronx, especially its culture of street celebrations, which in turn inherit a lot from Jamaica.

- [Notorious BIG](#) improvising in the streets of NYC

4. Critique of the dominant culture.

Technologies of Hip Hop

The Turntable – record players wired together to blend different records together

- Grandmaster Flash

The Sampler – records little snippets (“samples”) from other music and enables the producer to put it all together into something new.

- Demonstration of how to use a sampler (modern)

Who Sampled Who

Knowing what samples are in what music is a big deal for Hip Hop fans.

See, e.g. “Who Sampled Who”

NYC – income inequality

NYC had suffered a number of financial crises in the 1970s. Led to, among other things, some VERY rich people in Manhattan and some VERY poor people in the Bronx.

NYC Subway ride in 1987

Bronx in 1980s NYC

Hip Hop Music – from party to the Record

Hip Hop was originally a party music, done live in the streets, or at public parties. It went on for hours and hours.

Eg. Busy Bee

Eventually, it became a commercial form, designed to be played on records. Two very different things.

Famous example of the first hip hop “record” is
The Sugar Hill Gang, Rapper’s Delight