

**Hip Hop in the 1970s-1990s**

**Hip-Hop History in the 1970s**

Hip hop culture, music, and lifestyle began in the Bronx, NYC.

- The South Bronx was a poor neighborhood isolated from the rest of New York.
- Hip-hop pioneers like Afrika Bambaataa, Grandmaster Flash, and Grandmaster Caz started DJing at parties (first in the parks and later in clubs) across the Bronx.

**Afrika Bambaataa**, former leader of the Black Spades, one of the most well-known and violent gangs in NY, formed the **Universal Zulu Nation**, a hip-hop awareness group that organized events for kids, many of whom were former gang members like Bambaataa. The group was an alternative to gang activity for many young people. Bambaataa also helped to define the four elements of hip-hop culture:

- **DJing** – The art of spinning records at a dance party, picking out songs in a crowd-pleasing sequence. Also the art of touching and moving records with your hands.
- **Breakdancing** – A style of dancing that includes gymnastic moves, head spins, and backspins. Young people who were into dancing to the breaks at Bronx parties started breakdancing.
- **Graffiti** – The first forms of subway graffiti were tags, or signatures of someone’s nickname or crew. It evolved into elaborate scripts, color effects, and shading.
- **MCing** – MC are initials for “master of ceremonies.” MCs originally hosted parties and introduced tracks to the dancing audience. Eventually the term was used to describe rappers. It comes out of the African-American oral tradition of using rhyming language to ridicule your friends or enemies in a clever way.
- [Some members of the community have since added a 5th element to the fundamentals of hip hop: activism.]

In the 1980s, the hip-hop scene expanded and entered the mainstream in the U.S..

**FILM: “The Hip Hop Years” (Part II)**

1. What impact did MTV have on hip hop in the mid-1980s?

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2. What set Public Enemy apart from rappers before them?

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3. What made West Coast rap different from the East Coast?

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4. What made the album *Straight Outta Compton* groundbreaking?

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5. Provide 2 pieces of evidence that show that rap became popular with a wider range of people:

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6. What were some of the criticisms made of hip hop in the early '90s?

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## East Coast vs. West Coast Rap

As we know, hip hop/rap began on the East Coast in the late 1970s. By the early 1980s, it had spread to other parts of the country. In the '80s and '90s, Compton, CA became closely associated with hip hop, in particular with a new style of rap, known as gangsta rap.

### **Public Enemy, "Fight the Power"**

Yet our best trained, best  
educated, best equipped, best  
prepared troops refuse to fight. As  
a matter of fact, it's safe to say  
that they would rather switch than  
fight

1989 the number another summer  
(get down)  
Sound of the funky drummer  
Music hitting your heart cause I  
know you got soul  
(Brothers and sisters, hey)  
Listen if you're missing y'all  
Swinging while I'm singing  
Giving whatcha getting  
Knowing what I know  
While the Black bands sweating  
And the rhythm rhymes rolling  
Got to give us what we want  
Gotta give us what we need  
Our freedom of speech is freedom  
or death  
We got to fight the powers that be  
Lemme hear you say  
Fight the power

[Hook]  
Fight the power

We've got to fight the powers that  
be

As the rhythm designed to bounce  
What counts is that the rhymes  
Designed to fill your mind  
Now that you've realized the  
pride's arrived  
We got to pump the stuff to make  
us tough  
From the heart  
It's a start, a work of art  
To revolutionize make a change  
nothing's strange  
People, people we are the same  
No we're not the same  
Cause we don't know the game  
What we need is awareness, we  
can't get careless  
You say what is this?  
My beloved let's get down to  
business  
Mental self defensive fitness  
(Yo) bum rush the show  
You gotta go for what you know  
Make everybody see, in order to  
fight the powers that be  
Lemme hear you say  
Fight the power

[Hook]  
Elvis was a hero to most  
But he never meant shit to me you  
see  
Straight up racist that sucker was  
Simple and plain  
Mother fuck him and John Wayne  
Cause I'm Black and I'm proud  
I'm ready and hyped plus I'm  
amped  
Most of my heroes don't appear  
on no stamps  
Sample a look back you look and  
find  
Nothing but rednecks for 400  
years if you check  
Don't worry be happy  
Was a number one jam  
Damn if I say it you can slap me  
right here  
(Get it) let's get this party started  
right  
Right on, c'mon  
What we got to say  
Power to the people no delay  
To make everybody see  
In order to fight the powers that  
be

[Hook]

1. What references does the song make to black history/culture?
2. What is the message/tone of the song?

## N.W.A., "Straight Outta Compton"

You are now about to witness the strength of street knowledge

Straight outta Compton,  
crazy motherfucker named Ice Cube  
From the gang called Niggas Wit Attitudes  
When I'm called off, I got a sawed-off  
Squeeze the trigger and bodies are hauled off  
You too boy if you fuck with me  
The police are gonna have to come and get me  
Off your ass, that's how I'm going out  
For the punk motherfuckers that's showing out  
Niggas start to mumble, they wanna rumble  
Mix em and cook em in a pot like gumbo  
Going off on the motherfucker like that  
With a gat that's pointed at your ass  
So give it up smooth  
Ain't no telling when I'm down for a jack move  
Here's a murder rap to keep y'all dancing  
With a crime record like Charles Manson  
AK-47 is the tool  
Don't make me act a motherfucking fool  
Me you can go toe to toe, no maybe  
I'm knocking niggas out the box, daily  
Yo weekly, monthly and yearly  
Until them dumb motherfuckers see clearly  
That I'm down with the capital C-P-T  
Boy, you can't fuck with me  
So when I'm in your neighborhood, you better duck  
Cause Ice Cube is crazy as fuck  
As I leave, believe I'm stomping  
But when I come back boy, I'm coming straight outta  
Compton

Yo Ren  
(Whassup)  
Tell em where you from

Straight outta Compton, another crazy ass nigga  
More punks I smoke, yo my rep gets bigger  
I'm a bad motherfucker and you know this  
But the pussy-ass niggas won't show this  
But I don't give a fuck, I'mma make my snaps  
If not from the records, from jacking or craps  
Just like burglary, the definition is jacking  
And when I'm legally armed it's called packing  
Shoot a motherfucker in a minute  
I find a good piece of pussy and go up in it  
So if you're at a show in the front row

I'mma call you a bitch or dirty-ass ho  
You'll probably get mad like a bitch is supposed to  
But that shows me slut, you're composed to  
A crazy motherfucker from the street  
Attitude legit cause I'm tearing up shit  
MC Ren controls the automatic  
For any dumb motherfucker that starts static  
Not the right hand cause I'm the hand itself  
Every time I pull an AK off the shelf  
The security is maximum and that's a law  
R-E-N spells Ren but I'm raw  
See, cause I'm the motherfucking villain  
The definition is clear, you're the witness of a killing  
That's taking place without a clue  
And once you're on the scope, your ass is through  
Look, you might take it as a trip  
But a nigga like Ren is on a gangsta tip  
Straight outta Compton

Eazy is his name and the boy is coming...

...Straight outta Compton  
Is a brother that'll smother your mother  
And make your sister think I love her  
Dangerous motherfucker raising hell  
And if I ever get caught, I make bail  
See I don't give a fuck, that's the problem  
I see a motherfucking cop, I don't dodge him  
But I'm smart, lay low, creep a while  
And when I see a punk pass, I smile  
To me it's kinda funny, the attitude showing a nigga driving  
But don't know where the fuck he's going, just rolling  
Looking for the one they call Eazy  
But here's a flash, they'll never seize me  
Ruthless, never seen like a shadow in the dark  
Except when I unload  
You see a spark and jump over hesitation  
And hear the scream of the one who got the lead  
penetration  
Feel a little gust of wind and I'm jetting  
But leave a memory no one'll be forgetting  
So what about the bitch who got shot, fuck her  
You think I give a damn about a bitch, I ain't a sucker  
This is an autobiography of the E  
And if you ever fuck with me  
You'll get taken by a stupid dope brother who will smother  
Word to the motherfucker, straight outta Compton

Damn, that shit was dope

1. How does the song reflect what was going on in Compton at the time?

2. What is the message/tone of the song?

**VIDEOS: “Straight Outta Compton” and “Fight the Power”**

Compare/contrast the two songs & their videos. What are the similarities & differences?

Similarities	Differences

2 new styles of rap emerged in the early 1990s, gangsta rap and socially-conscious hip hop. Define the 2 terms:

**Gangsta Rap:** \_\_\_\_\_

VIDEO EXAMPLE: “Nuthin’ But a G Thang,” Dr. Dre feat. Snoop Dogg (1992)

Can you think of a contemporary example of gangsta rap or an artist who follows in this style?

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## Socially Conscious Hip Hop:

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### VIDEO EXAMPLE: Tupac's "Changes" (1992)

... I see no changes  
wake up in the morning and I ask myself  
Is life worth living should I blast myself?  
I'm tired of bein' poor and even worse I'm black  
My stomach hurts so I'm lookin' for a purse to snatch

Cops give a damn about a negro  
Pull the trigger kill a nigga he's a hero  
Give the crack to the kids who the hell cares  
One less hungry mouth on the welfare  
First ship 'em dope and let 'em deal the brothers  
Give 'em guns step back watch 'em kill each other  
It's time to fight back that's what Huey said  
Two shots in the dark now Huey's dead  
I got love for my brother but we can never go nowhere  
Unless we share with each other  
We gotta start makin' changes  
Learn to see me as a brother instead of two distant  
strangers  
And that's how it's supposed to be  
How can the Devil take a brother if he's close to me?  
I'd love to go back to when we played as kids...

...I see no changes all I see is racist faces  
Misplaced hate makes disgrace to races  
We under I wonder what it takes to make this

One better place, let's erase the wasted  
Take the evil out the people they'll be acting right  
'Cause both black and white is smokin' crack tonight  
And only time we chill is when we kill each other  
It takes skill to be real, time to heal each other  
And although it seems heaven sent  
We ain't ready, to see a black President, uhh  
It ain't a secret don't conceal the fact  
The penitentiary's packed, and it's filled with blacks  
But some things will never change  
Try to show another way but you stayin' in the dope  
game  
Now tell me what's a mother to do  
Bein' real don't appeal to the brother in you  
You gotta operate the easy way  
"I made a G today" But you made it in a sleazy way  
Sellin' crack to the kid. " I gotta get paid, "  
Well hey, well that's the way it is...

We gotta make a change  
It's time for us as a people to start makin' some changes.  
Let's change the way we eat, let's change the way we live  
And let's change the way we treat each other.  
You see the old way wasn't working so it's on us to do  
What we gotta do, to survive....

Can you think of a contemporary example of socially-conscious hip hop?

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