

English Comp 2

April 5, 2020

Word Count:

## **Hip Hop Then and Now**

### **History and Social Impact**

Hip hop has been around for decades, but what drove me into talking about this specific genre is the fact that I have been listening to hip hop since I was just a toddler. I'm going to be going over mainly how hip hop started, and it's current state. Hip hop is important to our society because it really opened a new door for those who needed to get things off their heads, through a mic. Creativity and individuality is really what hip hop is all about, it's what makes the artists, themselves. It's what makes the enjoyability of listening to lyrics, excitement of hearing a beat drop. Ever since I was a toddler, I've been infatuated with rap music. It's what makes me so into music nowadays, I'm not myself without my headphones on any given day. Depending on one's given mood, you could play a song that caters to that specific, that's the real beauty behind hip hop. You can express yourself in endless ways.

Hip hop started in the suburbs of Bronx, NY towards the end of the 70s. At the time, violence and poverty had taken over the Bronx and the real individuals started producing beats with drums and what is now known as "808's", an instrument used throughout hip hop. One of the first artists to spark up the Hip hop scene was an individual by the name of DJ Kool Herc. He was a DJ who started the hip hop sound at local parties or events in the Bronx. Well known MCs (a rapper who acts as a crowd pleaser at live events) around the time were 2Pac, Biggie, Outkast, etc. These artists are still considered the top tier in the Hip hop world and are legends in the rap game. They all share the same kind of message, because they were all from neighborhoods with

a high poverty rate, so songs were mainly circled around the neighborhoods, what was going on in a day in the life. Lyrics were a huge part of early hip hop, in contrast to today's age, where lyrics are really looked over. Also, production in the late 70s was heavily limited due to the fact that technology isn't really affordable, or present as a matter of fact. Nowadays, technology is at an all time high, as it progresses by the day, and so does the production of music in general. Instrumentals are way more diverse, and the actual instruments in a hip hop track are endless.

Audiences in the current state of hip hop are very controversial. Since original hip hop started in the Bronx, NY, where the majority of people were hispanic and black, it is said by the older generation that hip hop is in fact, music for people of color. But since the early 2000s, the biggest controversy was an artist by the name of Eminem. He was the first white male to rap and make it to the top of the charts. The whole industry was in shock. Artists from Lil Wayne, 50 Cent, and The Game all paid their respects to Eminem, but all of them also admitted to him rapping better than the originators of hip hop themselves. Time went on, and the color controversy was put to rest when Eminem appeared on a song named "Forever", where he collabed with three other colored artists, which at the time, it hadn't been done before.

Hip hop tracks as mentioned before also started off with a very less focus on production, and more on the lyrics of a song. So having lyrical ability was a necessity into making a hip hop track, but over time, artists like Kanye West, Drake, Future, and Young Thug have revolutionised the state of hip hop by actually introducing "singing" or the ability to change notes of their voices multiple times throughout a track. The lyrical aspect is still present within a few artists, but mainly dominated by what is now referred to as "mumble rap".

### **Rules and Message**

To be fair, there aren't many rules in hip hop. But there is however, a message. True hip hop as mentioned before, always came with a backstory. Messages to listeners that look, you don't have to be dealing drugs or in a gang to make a rap track. If there's a true message in your lyrics, that's all listeners would want to hear. Whether it's about how to deal with certain feelings and emotions, how to go about certain situations, etc. Artists like Eminem are considered to be a hip hop legend mainly because of his storytelling in a particular song. On the track "Not afraid", Eminem's overall message to the youth was to never give up. Such rappers can have such an impact on a listener's life. Biggie Smalls, has been notorious for his huge appeal to storytelling. On tracks like "I got a story to tell" he mentions his experiences with a girl, something almost every male can relate to. And that's the whole idea, relatability in a song is huge for a listener, because that's what makes someone want to listen to a song over and over again.

### **Discourse Community**

The hip hop community is only growing by the day. Makes sense because hip hop is actually the biggest genre of music in the world. It surpassed "Rock" as the most popular genre of music in the US, by quite a huge margin as well, seventy-two percent to be exact. Newer artists that are making billboard hits such as DaBaby, Lil Tjay, Lil Baby, etc have carried on the tradition of traditional hip hop sound from their counterparts of Young Thug and Future as mentioned before. Majority of these songs all derive from one stem, generic "trap" beat and a similar flow can easily be distinguished throughout modern day hip hop. Hip hop artists nowadays really just focus on making a hit track to "blow" then up, or essentially get their name out there. And from there it's quite difficult for them to make another hit song because as mentioned before, it all sounds so generic. Very few old generation hip hop artists aren't really

impressed with the new generation and it makes quite sense because this newer era of rappers aren't really building upon the roots of where hip hop started. Artists like Dave East, Nas, J Cole, Kendrick Lamar are the ones that are quite respected in the rap game right now because of their lyrical ability and distinctive flow.

All in all, the current state of hip hop compared to when it first started, is different to say the least. However, that doesn't mean that the music will outdo itself, fortunately there are some artists out there currently who are sticking to their old roots and the newer generation will just keep moving the genre forward with their own twist to the rap game. It's up to us as the listeners to be able to adapt and move with time, and realize that there is still music out there that we will all enjoy.