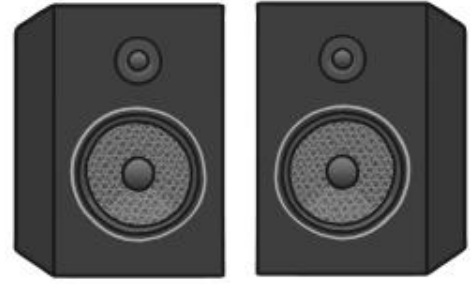




History of Rap



A decorative border at the top of the page features a series of musical notes and treble clefs on a white background. The notes are black and the clefs are black, creating a rhythmic pattern.

What Is Rap?

Rapping essentially involves the speaking or chanting of rhyming lyrics, often set to a beat.

The rhyming created by rappers is considered by many to be one of the most sophisticated styles of poetry.

These rhymes often address provocative subjects such as sex, violence and socio-political issues.

Where Did Rap Come From?

More than a century before rap exploded onto the American music scene, West African musicians were telling stories rhythmically, with just the beat of a drum for accompaniment. Meanwhile, folk artists from the Caribbean Islands were also telling stories in rhyme. These singing poets from Africa and the Caribbean lay the foundation for modern-day American rap music.



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Who Made Rap Famous?

Rapping first gained popularity in the U.S. in the 1970s as a kind of street art, especially among African American teenagers. But it wasn't until 1979, when the Sugarhill Gang released their hit, 'Rapper's Delight', that record producers took notice of this emerging musical genre. Others were quickly to follow suit. In the first generation of rap artists were Grandmaster Flash, Afrika Bambaataa and Kool Herc, all of whom initially made their name as DJs. Grandmaster Flash was the first rap artist to introduce social comment with his rap 'The Message'.



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Popular Rap Music

After this, numerous rap acts, including Run DMC and N.W.A., surfaced, and rap's audience began to grow. Before long, it was not just African American male artists who were performing rap music. By the 1980s, rap music diversified. Groups such as the Beastie Boys and Salt-n-Pepa were reaching the top of the charts.



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What Happened Next?

Rap continued to diversify throughout the 1980s. Run DMC stripped the backing down to thunderous beats and added rock guitars, before scoring a huge hit with their collaboration with Aerosmith on 'Walk This Way'. Meanwhile, The Beastie Boys mixed rap with their punk and metal music on their bestselling track 'Licence To Ill'.



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Rap in the 90s

By the 1990s, rap matured from an old-school-style – which was based on relatively simple lyrics – to a new-school-style, which was louder and included more complex lyrics. Artists such as The Notorious B.I.G., Snoop Dogg and Tupac ruled the charts during this time.



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Rivalry in Rap

One of the most influential figures in 90s rap music was ex-NWA member Dr Dre, co-founder of Death Row Records and producer of albums for Snoop Doggy Dog and Blackstreet. He represented rap on the west coast of the U.S.A. On the east coast, Sean Combs (a.k.a Puff Daddy) established Bad Boy records. Long standing rivalry between east and west were blamed for the violence which claimed the lives of legendary rap stars, Tupac Shakur and Notorious B.I.G.



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The Story Continues...

Outside of the Death Row / Bad Boy record labels, numerous acts continued to experiment with rap. The Fugees achieved massive popularity with their own blend of rap and soul, while New York artists The Wu-Tang Clan branched out. The Wu-Tang Clan were a direct influence on British rap acts like So Solid Crew. Women also fought back against rap's prevailing male culture, with Missy Elliot and Lil' Kim releasing albums of sassy hip hop records.

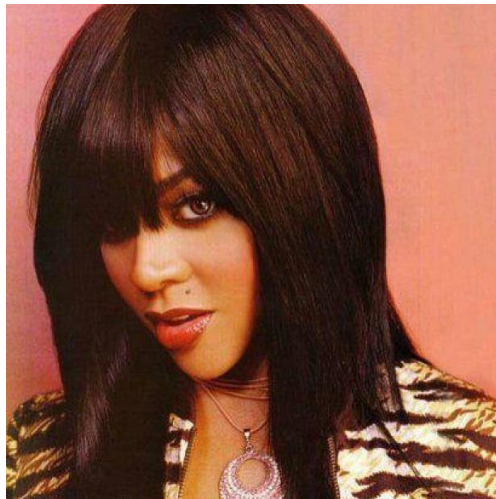


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Mainstream Rap

Eminem, alias Marshall Mathers, has aroused controversy and adulation in equal measure, but there is no denying his talents as a lyricist. His records, produced by Dr Dre, have become rap's biggest success since the days of the Beastie Boys. Eminem achieved huge mainstream success by winning an Oscar for Best Original Song.



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Rap Now

- Rap music is listened to by different people all over the world, and continues to grow and change.
- It has changed significantly from its origins, some people say for the worse. Lots of popular rap music of today is often criticised for glamorising crimes and substance abuse, as well as degrading women.

- However, some rap artists today produce 'conscientious hip hop'. Rapper Akala is a London rapper, poet and journalist. He produces rap with heavily researched facts and important messages. His lyrics often focus on social class struggle and political issues.



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