

Steps to  
**Successful  
Reading:  
Nonfiction**

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# ON-LINE RESEARCH ARTICLE

## 3

### “RAP”

(by Robert Bowman, from *Encarta Online Encyclopedia*)

<i>Learning Strategy:</i>	Finding Context Clues
<i>Reading Skill:</i>	Making Generalizations
<i>Test-Taking Strategy:</i>	Understanding Main Idea and Details

### ***Setting the Scene***

Undoubtedly, most of your students will be familiar with rap music, although some may not. You may want to bring in a recording or listen through the Web in class to a couple of different rap practitioners. As you introduce the lesson on rap music, engage the students in a discussion about their reactions to it, why they like it, why they don't like it, what artists they favor, which they do not. Ask them to talk about the message that rap music gives to them. What part of American culture does it reflect to them? Ask them to discuss what they know about the history of rap music or what details they know about the life of various rappers. As you discuss, be sure to share your own thoughts about rap music.

### ***Introducing the Skill***

This lesson builds on the information learned in Lesson 1 on main idea and supporting details. In this lesson, students will be learning to identify context clues, and they will be learning to look for and make generalizations. Both of these skills are key to understanding better what they read.

The entry from the *Encarta Online Encyclopedia* is not easy reading. Let students know, however, that when they do on-line

research, this is the level of reading that they will encounter. Encourage students to skim the selection before they read it to identify the boldfaced words that they may not know. You may want to preview these words in more depth to help their reading go smoothly. Explain to students that this process of skimming for unfamiliar words may be a good way to get started when they read any on-line research article.

Students will also be looking for and making generalizations. This instruction will help them recognize a generalization and decide if it is valid or faulty based on evidence from the text and evidence from their own experience. Emphasize that students' experience is a very important part of their reading. It helps them to decide if things ring true or not—and it is this experience that ultimately helps them build their knowledge base. Be sure to carry this model forward in future lessons and in other subject areas so that students will continue to understand and make generalizations.



## STEP 2: READ IT

*This article from Encarta Online Encyclopedia is intended to give information and background about rap music. If you were doing a report on rap music, the on-line encyclopedia is one of the first places you would look to get information. You will note that this entry is full of facts that include where rap began and how it has taken hold in American culture. You will also learn about some of the people who first made rap popular. This article was written by Robert M. Bowman, Assistant Professor of Music at York University in England. He won a Grammy award in 1995 for Best Album Notes for The Complete Stax/Volt Soul Singles, Volume 3: 1972–1975.*

Rap, genre of rhythm-and-blues music (R&B) that consists of rhythmic vocals **declaimed** \_\_\_\_\_ over musical accompaniment. The accompaniment generally consists of electronic drum beats combined with *samples* (digitally isolated sound bites) from other musical recordings. The first rap recording  
5 was made in 1979 and the genre rose to **prominence** \_\_\_\_\_ in the United States in the mid-1980s. Although the term *rap* is often used **interchangeably** \_\_\_\_\_ with *hip-hop*, the **latter** \_\_\_\_\_ term encompasses the subculture that rap music is simply one part of. The term *hip-hop* **derives** \_\_\_\_\_ from one of the earliest phrases used in rap, and  
10 can be found on the **seminal** \_\_\_\_\_ recording “Rapper’s Delight” (1979) by Sugarhill Gang. In addition to rap music, the hip-hop subculture also **comprises** \_\_\_\_\_ other forms of expression, including break dancing and **graffiti** \_\_\_\_\_ art as well as a unique slang vocabulary and fashion sense.

15 Rap originated in the mid-1970s in the South Bronx area of New York City. The rise of rap in many ways parallels the birth of rock and roll in the 1950s (see *Rock Music: Rock and Roll*): Both originated within the African American community and both were initially recorded by small, independent record labels and musicians, a few of whom began performing it. For rock and roll it was a  
20 white American from Mississippi, Elvis Presley, who broke into the *Billboard* magazine popular music charts. For rap it was a white group from New York, the Beastie Boys. Their release “(You Gotta) Fight for Your Right (To Party!)” (1986) was one of the first two rap records to reach the *Billboard* top-ten list of popular



hits. The other significant early rap recording to reach the top ten, “Walk This  
25 Way” (1986), was a **collaboration** \_\_\_\_\_ of the black rap group  
Run-DMC and the white **hard-rock** \_\_\_\_\_ band Aerosmith. Soon  
after 1986, the use of samples and declaimed vocal styles became widespread in  
the popular music of both black and white performers, significantly altering  
previous notions of what constitutes a **legitimate** \_\_\_\_\_ song,  
30 composition, or musical instrument.

Rap music originated as a cross-cultural product. Most of its important early  
practitioners—including Kool Herc, D.J. Hollywood, and Afrika Bambaataa—  
were either first- or second- generation Americans of Caribbean ancestry. Herc  
35 and Hollywood are both credited with introducing the Jamaican style of cutting  
and mixing into the musical culture of the South Bronx. By most accounts Herc  
was the first **DJ** \_\_\_\_\_ to buy two copies of the same record for just  
a 15-second *break* (rhythmic instrumental segment) in the middle. By mixing  
back and forth between the two copies he was able to double, triple, or indefi-  
40 nitely extend the break. In so doing, Herc effectively deconstructed and recon-  
structed so-called found sound, using the **turntable** \_\_\_\_\_ as a  
musical instrument.

While he was cutting with two turntables, Herc would also perform with the  
microphone in Jamaican toasting style—joking, boasting, and using myriad in-  
45 group references. Herc’s musical parties eventually gained **notoriety**  
\_\_\_\_\_ and were often documented on cassette tapes that were  
recorded with the relatively new **boombox** \_\_\_\_\_, or blaster, tech-  
nology. Taped **duplicates** \_\_\_\_\_ of these parties rapidly made their  
way through the Bronx, Brooklyn, and uptown Manhattan, **spawning**  
50 \_\_\_\_\_ a number of similar DJ acts. Among the new breed of DJs was  
Afrika Bambaataa, the first important Black Muslim in rap. (The Muslim pres-  
ence would become very influential in the late 1980s.) Bambaataa often engaged  
in sound-system battles with Herc, similar to the so-called cutting contests in  
jazz a generation earlier. The sound system competitions were held at city parks,  
55 where **hot-wired** \_\_\_\_\_ street lamps supplied electricity, or at local  
clubs. Bambaataa sometimes mixed sounds from rock-music recordings and



television shows into the standard **funk** \_\_\_\_\_ and **disco** \_\_\_\_\_ fare that Herc and most of his followers relied upon. By using rock records, Bambaataa extended rap beyond the immediate reference  
60 points of contemporary black youth culture. By the 1990s any sound source was considered **fair game** \_\_\_\_\_ and rap artists borrowed sounds from such **disparate** \_\_\_\_\_ sources as Israeli folk music, bebop jazz records, and television news broadcasts.

In 1976 Grandmaster Flash introduced the technique of quick mixing, in  
65 which **sound bites** \_\_\_\_\_ as short as one or two seconds are combined for a **collage** \_\_\_\_\_ effect. Quick mixing paralleled the rapid-editing style of television advertising used at the time. Shortly after Flash introduced quick mixing, his partner Grandmaster Melle Mel composed the first extended stories in rhymed rap. Up to this point, most of the words heard over  
70 the work of disc jockeys such as Herc, Bambaataa, and Flash had been improvised phrases and expressions. In 1978 DJ Grand Wizard Theodore introduced the technique of scratching to produce rhythmic patterns.

Since the mid-1980s rap music has greatly influenced both black and white  
75 culture in North America. Much of the slang hip-hop culture, including such terms as *dis*, *fly*, *def*, *chill*, and *wack*, have become standard parts of the vocabulary of a significant number of young people of various ethnic origins. Many rap enthusiasts **assert** \_\_\_\_\_ that rap functions as a voice for a community without access to the **mainstream** \_\_\_\_\_ media. According to  
80 **advocates** \_\_\_\_\_, rap serves to **engender** \_\_\_\_\_ self-pride, self-help, and self-improvement, communicating a positive and fulfilling sense of black history that is largely absent from other American institutions. . . . Gangsta rap has also been severely criticized for lyrics that many people interpret as glorifying the most violent and *misogynist* (woman-hating) imagery in the  
85 history of popular music. The style's popularity with middle-class whites has been attacked as vicarious thrill-seeking of the most insidious sort. Defenders of gangsta rap argue that no matter who is listening to the music, the raps are justified because they accurately **portray** \_\_\_\_\_ life in inner-city America.





## STEP 3: ASSESS IT

### Check Your Purpose

Go back to your answers to the question **Why am I reading this?** What reasons did you come up with before you read? Did you find the answers you were looking for? What new information did you discover from your reading that you didn't write down before you read?

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### Check Your Strategy

How did you do with uncovering clues about the meanings of the boldfaced words? Working with a small group or a partner, check your definitions against the definitions below and see how well you did. Remember to use the context clue strategy whenever you come across a word you do not know. Doublecheck the words in a dictionary so that you can see how they are pronounced.

**declaimed:** uttered or spoken

**prominence:** the state of being easily seen; famous, important

**interchangeably:** something that can be exchanged or substituted for another

**latter:** refers to the last thing just mentioned; in the article, *the latter* refers to *hip-hop*. People use the phrase *the latter* so they don't have to repeat the word that was just spoken or written.

**derives:** is taken or received from a source; comes from. In the article, the word *derives* means that the term *hip-hop* comes from an early rap song.

**seminal:** the source or the origin. When the article refers to "Rapper's Delight" as a seminal recording, it means that that song is the original, the first, the source of rap.

**comprises:** consists of or includes; is made up of

**graffiti:** art or words that are scratched onto a wall

**collaboration:** the act of working together toward a common goal

**hard-rock:** a subgenre of music that emerged in the 1960s focusing on thick layers of sound, loud volume levels, and virtuoso guitar solos

**legitimate:** conforming to standard rules or accepted standards





**DJ:** stands for Disc Jockey—a person who plays music and hosts music programs at a radio station or party

**turntable:** a rotating platform that plays a record album

**notoriety:** fame; the condition of being well-known or widely commented upon by the public

**boombox:** a radio and/or sound system with speakers often played very loudly

**duplicates:** doubles or copies

**spawning:** bringing forth, leading to

**hot-wired:** something that runs on electricity stolen from another source

**funk:** a variant of soul music that was influenced by rock. Many of the funk sounds were derived from African rhythms with long, improvised solos.

**disco:** another genre of rock with a simple beat, great for dance rhythms

**fair game:** anything goes, there are no rules that make something a “fair game.” In this article, it means that any sound source could be used.

**disparate:** unequal or unlike; having nothing in common

**sound bites:** short recordings of sound, often from a news event or program

**collage:** an assembly of different pieces of art or, in this case, sound, to make one picture or sound

**assert:** to say something positively or definitely

**mainstream:** something that is part of accepted popular culture; something everyone is familiar with

**advocates:** stands up for, supports publicly

**engender:** to cause to exist or happen

**portray:** show

### Test-Taking Strategy

On many standardized tests, you will be asked to recall the main idea and important supporting details from an article you read using a multiple-choice format as on page 39. In Lesson 1, you learned how to find the main idea and supporting details.

First, answer the multiple-choice questions on the next page to be sure that you understood the main idea and supporting details from the article. Then, create your own multiple-choice test with five more questions about the article. (Be sure you know the answers to the questions you ask!) Once you have created the test, trade papers with a partner and then fill in the answers. Then trade back and correct each other’s paper. Discuss any of the answers you got wrong and go back to the text to find the right answers.



Circle the correct answer for each of the questions below:

1. Rap is part of what genre?
  - a. classical music
  - b. rhythm and blues
  - c. jazz
  - d. hip-hop
2. Rap originated in what American city?
  - a. San Francisco, California
  - b. Brooklyn, New York
  - c. South Bronx, New York
  - d. Chicago, Illinois
3. Most of the first rap practitioners were of what ancestry?
  - a. African
  - b. Asian
  - c. Canadian
  - d. Caribbean
4. Quick mixing is
  - a. cooking to the beat of rap music
  - b. combining jazz and classical
  - c. combining one- or two-second sound bites to make a collage effect
  - d. using a turntable as a musical instrument
5. Gangsta rap has been criticized for
  - a. its offbeat rhythm
  - b. its violent and misogynist imagery
  - c. its popularity with middle-class whites
  - d. its accurate portrayal of life in inner-city America
6. The main idea of this article is
  - a. Rap began in 1979.
  - b. In 1976 Grandmaster Flash introduced the technique of quick mixing.
  - c. Early rap practitioners were Americans of Caribbean ancestry.
  - d. Rap music has greatly influenced culture in the United States.



#### **STEP 4: THINK ABOUT IT**

When you read nonfiction articles like the one you just read, it is useful to connect new information to what you already know. This way you can build your knowledge base and continue to add more information. Doing this can help you remember what you read. It can also help you better understand what you read.

