

Hip-Hop literature lesson plan: Discourses of love between Gangster Rap and Conscious Rap.

This lesson is a High School literature class based around the theme of love. The purpose of this lesson follows Mark Lamont Hill's premise of the usefulness of Hip Hop Based Education (HHBE) 'in contributing to more favourable learning environments and outcomes', which could be helpful in the pupils learning of complexities of deciphering literature in its various forms.<sup>1</sup> Love is the chosen theme because it is a discourse which is widely relatable and understandable to pupils, arguably more so than other themes such as the 'Roots of Hip Hop' or 'Politics'.<sup>2</sup> Also, understanding the problems with labelling a genre such as Hip-Hop using Daniel Chandler's problem with defining genre.<sup>3</sup> The Roots featuring Erykah Badu and Eve – 'You Got Me' is used as an example of Conscious Rap and Jay-Z – 'Song Cry' as an example of Gangster Rap, both addressing the discourse of love and relationships.<sup>4</sup>

The learning objectives for this lesson are to:

- Compare and contrast how the discourse of love and relationships are conveyed in both Gangster Rap and Conscious Rap.
- Be able to understand the differences in style and culture between these two sub-genres and have the ability to explore the issues of identifying genre using Daniel Chandler's theory.<sup>5</sup>

To achieve these objectives, a systematic yet interactive sequence of tasks will be performed:

- The classroom will be set in a group formation of a maximum of six pupils per table.
- As a warm-up task, the pupils will take one minute to write their own short definition of love on a piece of paper placed at each seat before the lesson. Pupils' definition will be posted on the board at the front of the class and then return to their seats.

<sup>1</sup> Mark Lamont Hill, *Beats, Rhymes, and Classroom Life: Hip Hop Pedagogy and the Politics of Identity* (London: Teachers College Press, 2009) p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Mark Lamont Hill, *Beats, Rhymes, and Classroom Life*, p.22.

<sup>3</sup> Daniel Chandler, 'An Introduction to Genre Theory', [http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/Documents/intgenre/chandler\\_genre\\_theory.pdf](http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/Documents/intgenre/chandler_genre_theory.pdf) (date accessed: 12/03/2017) pp. 1-6.

<sup>4</sup> Tariq Trotter, Amhir Thompson, Scott Storch and Jill Scott (1999). *The Roots feat. Erykah Badu and Eve, 'You Got Me'*, [https://play.google.com/music/preview/Tbzton7gjq7cmtkfg4qjty6wnqi?lyrics=1&utm\\_source=google&utm\\_medium=search&utm\\_campaign=lyrics&pcampaignid=kp-lyrics](https://play.google.com/music/preview/Tbzton7gjq7cmtkfg4qjty6wnqi?lyrics=1&utm_source=google&utm_medium=search&utm_campaign=lyrics&pcampaignid=kp-lyrics), New York: MCA/Geffen (date accessed: 10/03/2017) and Shawn Carter, Douglas Gibbs, R. Johnson (2001) *Jay-Z, 'Song Cry'*, [https://play.google.com/music/preview/Tdwjzwau4ohhmdtalbcijg77zou?lyrics=1&utm\\_source=google&utm\\_medium=search&utm\\_campaign=lyrics&pcampaignid=kp-lyrics](https://play.google.com/music/preview/Tdwjzwau4ohhmdtalbcijg77zou?lyrics=1&utm_source=google&utm_medium=search&utm_campaign=lyrics&pcampaignid=kp-lyrics), Roc-A-Fella Records (date accessed: 10/03/2017)

<sup>5</sup> Daniel Chandler, 'Genre', pp. 1-6.

- The learning objectives will be presented alongside some discussion about the various definitions of love that have been conveyed by the pupils. Context will be given as to the distinctions between Gangster Rap and Conscious Rap alongside Chandler's theory of genre definition.<sup>6</sup>
- Ten minutes will be taken for the pupils to read the two case studies in silence. Three minutes will be used to quietly discuss the texts in their groups.
- Separated into groups 'A' ('You Got Me') and groups 'B' ('Song Cry'), pupils must take fifteen minutes to write a short story adaptation of the assigned rap song.
- The following questions for discussion and conclusion are: What are the differences and/or similarities in style, narrative and resolution? How does it become difficult to define Hip-Hop as a rigid genre?

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<sup>6</sup> Daniel Chandler, 'Genre', pp. 1-6.

## Appendix A

**The Roots feat. Erykah Badu and Eve – ‘You Got Me’ (MCA/Geffen Records, 1999)<sup>7</sup>**

If you were worried 'bout where  
I been or who I saw or  
What club I went to with my homies  
Baby don't worry you know that you got me

If you were worried 'bout where  
I been or who I saw or  
What club I went to with my homies  
Baby don't worry you know that you got me

Somebody told me that this planet was small  
We use to live in the same building on the same floor  
And never met before  
Until I'm overseas on tour  
And peep this Ethiopian queen from Philly  
Taking classes abroad  
She studying film and photo flash focus record  
Said she workin' on a flick and  
Could my click do the score?  
She said she loved my show in Paris  
At Elysee Montmartre  
And that I stepped off the stage  
And took a piece of her heart  
We knew from the start that  
Things fall apart, intentions shatter  
She like that shit don't matter  
When I get home get at her  
Through letter, phone, whatever  
Let's link, let's get together  
Shit you think not, think the Thought went home and forgot

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<sup>7</sup> Tariq Trotter, Amhir Thompson, Scott Storch and Jill Scott (1999). *The Roots feat. Erykah Badu and Eve, ‘You Got Me’*.

Time passed, we back in Philly now she up in my spot  
Tellin' me the things I'm tellin' her is makin' her hot  
Startin' buildin' with her constantly round the clock  
Now she in my world like hip-hop  
And keep tellin me

If you were worried 'bout where  
I been or who I saw or  
What club I went to with my homies  
Baby don't worry you know that you got me

If you were worried 'bout where  
I been or who I saw or  
What club I went to with my homies  
Baby don't worry you know that you got me

Yo, I'm the type that's always catchin' a flight  
And sometimes I gotta be out at the height of the night  
And that's when she flip and get on some 'ol  
Another lonely night  
Seems like I'm on the side you only loving your mic  
I know you gotta get that paper daddy keep that shit tight  
But yo I need some sort of love in my life, you dig me  
While politicin' with my sister from New York City  
She said she know this ball player and he think I'm pretty  
Psych, I'm playin' boo, you know it's just wit you I'm stayin' boo  
And when cats be poppin' game I don't hear what they sayin' boo  
When you out there in the world, I'm still your girl  
With all my classes I don't have the time for life's thrills  
So when you sweatin' on stage think of me when you rhyme  
And don't be listenin' to your homies they be leavin' you blind

Yeah, so what you sayin I can trust you?  
Is you crazy, you my king for real

But sometimes relationships get ill

No doubt

If you were worried 'bout where

I been or who I saw or

What club I went to with my homies

Baby don't worry you know that you got me

If you were worried 'bout where

I been or who I saw or

What club I went to with my homies

Baby don't worry you know that you got me

That snake could be that chick

And that rat could be that cool cat

That's whispering "she tryin to play you for the fool Black"

If something's on your chest then let it be known

See I'm not your every five minutes all on the phone

And on the topic of trust, it's just a matter of fact

That people bite back and fracture what's intact

And they'll forever be I ain't on some "oh I'm a celebrity"

I deal with the real so if it's artificial let it be

I've seen people caught in love like whirlwinds

Listening to they squads and listening to girlfriends

That's exactly the point where they whole world ends

Lies come in, that's where that drama begins, she like

**Jay Z – ‘Song Cry’ (Roc-A-Fella Records, 2001)<sup>8</sup>**

The most incredible baby

Uhh, mmm, mmm, mmm, mmm

Yeah, yeah, uhh

I can't see 'em comin' down my eyes

So I gotta make the song cry

I can't see 'em comin' down my eyes

So I gotta make the song cry

Good dudes, I know you love me like cooked food

Even though a nigga got move like a crook move

We was together on the block since free lunch

We shoulda been together havin' [four] Seasons brunch

We used to use umbrellas to face the bad weather

So now we travel first class to change the forecast

Never in bunches, just me and you

I loved your point of view 'cause you held no punches

Still I left you for months on end

It's been months since I checked back in

Well somewhere in a small town, somewhere lockin' a mall down

Woodgrain, four and change, Armor All'd down

I can understand why you want a divorce now

Though I can't let you know it, pride won't let me show it

Pretend to be heroic, that's just one to grow with

But deep inside a nigga so sick

I can't see 'em comin down my eyes

So I gotta make the song cry

I can't see 'em comin down my eyes

So I gotta let the song cry

I can't see it comin down my eyes

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<sup>8</sup> Shawn Carter, Douglas Gibbs, R. Johnson (2001) *Jay-Z*, 'Song Cry'.

So I gotta make the song cry  
I can't see it comin down my eyes  
So I gotta make the song cry

On repeat, the CD of Big's "Me and My Bitch"  
Watchin' Bonnie and Clyde, pretendin' to be that shit  
Empty gun in your hand sayin, "Let me see that clip"  
Shoppin' sprees, pull out your Visa quick  
A nigga had very bad credit, you helped me lease that whip  
You helped me get the keys to that V dot 6  
We was so happy poor but when we got rich  
That's when our signals got crossed, and we got flipped  
Rather mine, I don't know what made me leave that shit  
Made me speed that quick, let me see - that's it  
It was the cheese helped them bitches get amnesia quick  
I used to cut up they buddies, now they sayin they love me  
Used to tell they friends I was ugly and wouldn't touch me  
Then I showed up in that dubbed out buggy  
And then they got fussy and they don't remember that  
And I don't remember you

I can't see it comin down my eyes  
So I gotta make the song cry  
I can't see it comin down my eyes  
So I gotta make the song cry  
Yeah I seen 'em comin down your eyes  
But I gotta make the song cry  
I can't see it comin down my eyes  
So I gotta make the song cry

A face of stone, was shocked on the other end of the phone  
Word back home is that you had a special friend  
So what was oh so special then?  
You have given away without getting' at me

That's your fault, how many times you forgiven me?  
How was I to know that you was plain sick of me?  
I know the way a nigga livin' was whack  
But you don't get a nigga back like that!  
Shit I'm a man with pride, you don't do shit like that  
You don't just pick up and leave and leave me sick like that  
You don't throw away what we had, just like that  
I was just fuckin them girls, I was gon' get right back  
They say you can't turn a bad girl good  
But once a good girl's goin' bad, she's gone forever  
And more forever  
Shit I gotta live with the fact I did you wrong forever

I can't see 'em comin down my eyes  
So I gotta make the song cry  
I can't see 'em comin down my eyes  
So I gotta let the song cry  
I know I seen 'em comin down your eyes  
But I gotta make the song cry  
I can't see 'em comin down my eyes  
So I gotta make the song cry

It's fucked up girl

Carter, Shawn., Gibbs, Douglas., Johnson, R., (2001) *Jay-Z, 'Song Cry'*

[https://play.google.com/music/preview/Tbzton7giq7cmtkfg4qjty6wnqi?lyrics=1&utm\\_source=google&utm\\_medium=search&utm\\_campaign=lyrics&pcampaignid=kp-lyrics](https://play.google.com/music/preview/Tbzton7giq7cmtkfg4qjty6wnqi?lyrics=1&utm_source=google&utm_medium=search&utm_campaign=lyrics&pcampaignid=kp-lyrics), Roc-A-Fella Records (date accessed: 10/03/2017.)

Chandler, Daniel., 'An Introduction to Genre Theory',

[http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/Documents/intgenre/chandler\\_genre\\_theory.pdf](http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/Documents/intgenre/chandler_genre_theory.pdf) (date accessed: 12/03/2017) pp. 1-15.

Hill, Mark Lamont., *Beats, Rhymes, and Classroom Life: Hip Hop Pedagogy and the Politics of Identity* (London: Teachers College Press, 2009) ch. 1-2.

Trotter, T., Thompson, A., Storch, S. and Scott, J. (1999). *The Roots feat. Erykah Badu and Eve, 'You Got Me'*,

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