

Personal & Social Development

I will focus on Lauryn Hill's track and video 'Doo Wop (That Thing)' to present a lesson that explores sexism and gender.¹ This is to encourage the students to explore the ways these issues affect their self-esteem, identity and relationships and to develop their critical media literacy in relation to sex and gender. Educational anthropologist Marc Lamont Hill makes the case for Hip-Hop Based Education (HHBE) to be used not simply as a method to aid traditional school objectives, such as literacy, or even attendance and engagement, but also as a method to explore youth identity formation.² Hill states, 'youth often consume and produce hip-hop culture in way that reorganize their conceptions of themselves and the world around them.'³ In light of this, it is useful to examine the theme of gender through a medium that directly informs the student's identity development, in order for them to explore, critique and evaluate gender dynamics presented by their own culture. The track offers ample close reading in the form of figures of speech ('he was 'bout the Benjamins) as well as literary conventions (allusion to the bible: 'the sin that did Jezebel in'). The lesson will be structured as follows: a brief introduction to the topic and key ideas; conversations in small groups so that the students can close read the texts and explore their idea; and, finally, an open discussion for the whole class, allowing the students to lead the direction of the topics and share what they have discussed. Drawing from Hill's 'Hip-Hop Lit', the room should be arranged so that the students are sat in a circle facing each other 'to encourage a feeling of community [and] facilitate storytelling.'⁴

Objectives:

- Discuss the terms "gender" and "stereotypes", encouraging the students to offer examples from their own experiences and society at large.
- Close read different stereotypes presented within the track/video, i.e.:
 - How are women and men presented (dresses, hair, accessories, posture)? What does this say about expectations of femininity and masculinity?

¹ Lauryn Hill, 'Doo Wop (That Thing)' from *The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill* (Ruffhouse, 1998).

² Marc Lamont Hill, *Beats, Rhymes, and Classroom Life: Hip-Hop Pedagogy and the Politics of Identity* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2009)

³ Hill, *Beats, Rhymes, and Classroom Life*, 120

⁴ Hill, *Beats, Rhymes, and Classroom Life*, 23

- 'Hair weaves', 'Fake nails' – expectation for women to look certain ways (make-up, hair, nails etc.)
 - 'When you give it up so easy you ain't even foolin' him' – what does it mean for girls to express sexuality?
 - How does the opening frame present the way female gender representation has changed?
 - 'The pretty face men claiming that they big men' – expectations for boys to be strong and masculine, not 'pretty'.
- How are stereotypes detrimental personally and socially? How do they affect the way people treat each other? What does it do to self-esteem?
 - Introduce themes of respect, violence and consent. How does the track present sex and relationships?
 - 'Baby girl, respect is just a minimum', 'the punk, domestic violence men' – respecting each other and having respect for your own bodies as young men and women.
 - Critique the track: what is significant about the track being produced by a woman? What is done well/could be better?
 - Explore the media's role on gender stereotypes and identity.

Companion text: *Hip Hop Beyond Beats and Rhymes*, dir. Bryon Hurt (PBS Indies, 2006)

Bibliography:

Hill, Lauryn, 'Doo Wop (That Thing)' from *The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill* (Ruffhouse, 1998).

Hill, Marc Lamont, *Beats, Rhymes, and Classroom Life: Hip-Hop Pedagogy and the Politics of Identity* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2009)

Track:

Yo, remember back on the boogie when cats used to harmonize like
 Yo, my men and my women
 Don't forget about the dean, sirat al-mustaqim
 Yo, it's about a thing
 If ya feel real good wave your hands in the air
 And lick two shots in the atmosphere!
 It's been three weeks since you were looking for your friend
 The one you let hit it and never called you again
 'Member when he told you he was 'bout the Benjamins?
 You act like you ain't hear him, then give him a little trim
 To begin, how you think you're really gon' pretend
 Like you wasn't down and you called him again?
 Plus, when you give it up so easy you ain't even foolin' him
 If you did it then, then you'd probably fuck again
 Talking out your neck, sayin' you're a Christian
 A Muslim, sleeping with the gin
 Now that was the sin that did Jezebel in

Who you gon' tell when the repercussions spin?
Showing off your ass cause you're thinkin' it's a trend
Girlfriend, let me break it down for you again
You know I only say it cause I'm truly genuine
Don't be a hard rock when you really are a gem
Baby girl, respect is just a minimum
Niggas fucked up and you still defending 'em
Now, Lauryn is only human
Don't think I haven't been through the same predicament
Let it sit inside your head like a million women in Philly, Penn
It's silly when girls sell their souls because it's in
Look at where you be in, hair weaves like Europeans
Fake nails done by Koreans
Come again, come again, come again, my friend come again
Guys you know you'd better watch out
Some girls, some girls are only about
That thing, that thing, that thing
That thing, that thing, that thing
The second verse is dedicated to the men
More concerned with his rims and his Timbs than his women
Him and his men, come in the club like hooligans
Don't care who they offend, poppin' yang (Like you got yen!)
Let's stop pretend, the ones that pack pistols by they waist men
Cristal by the case men, still in they mother's basement
The pretty face men claiming that they be the big men
Need to take care of they three or four kids
And they face a court case when the child support late
Money taking and heart breaking, now you wonder why women hate men
The sleepy, silent men
The punk, domestic violence men
Quick to shoot the semen, stop acting like boys and be men
How you gonna win, when you ain't right within?(x3)
Come again, come again, come again, come again
Watch out, watch out
Look out, look out (x4)
Girls you know you'd better watch out
Some guys, some guys are only about
That thing, that thing, that thing
That thing, that thing, that thing
Guys you know you'd better watch out
Some girls, some girls are only about
That thing, that thing, that thing
That thing, that thing, that thing
Girls you know you'd better watch out
Some guys, some guys are only about
That thing, that thing, that thing