

"Blood" Worship



SHAKESPEARE
NORTH
PLAYHOUSE



Contents

1. [Introduction](#)
2. [Hip Hop and Shakespeare](#)
3. [What is Hip Hop?](#)
4. [DJ Kool Herc and Coke La Rock](#)
5. [Afrika Bambaataa](#)
6. [Grandmaster Flash](#)
7. [DJing and Early Music Technology](#)
8. [MCing](#)
9. [Breaking](#)
10. [Graffiti](#)
11. [Knowledge or Knowledge of Self](#)
12. [Lesson One Quiz](#)
13. [Lesson Two—Iambic Pentameter](#)
14. [Sonnet 18](#)
15. [Lesson Two—Rapping](#)
16. [Lesson Three](#)
17. [Lesson Four](#)
18. [Lesson Five](#)
19. [What's Next?](#)
20. [Lesson One Plan](#)
21. [Lesson One Hip Hop Shakespeare Quiz Handout](#)
22. [Lesson Two Plan](#)
23. [Sonnet 18 Handout](#)
24. [Lesson Three Plan](#)
25. [Lesson Four Plan](#)
26. [Lesson Five Plan](#)
27. [Credits](#)



Introduction

By Charlie Staunton

Human beings are story tellers. The idea of story is in everything we use, see and do every single day. From the adverts we see on social media or the view out the window when we are riding the bus; to the films we watch in the cinema or the cartoons on TV; to the music that we sing along with in the car or in the shower. Each and every single one of these can be traced back to a human with a desire to tell a story. To express themselves, and to share that expression with others.

It is reasonable to think that this will have been the case for as long as humans have had the development of language and communication. If you were able to journey back to the time of cavemen sitting around fires you would hear stories being passed around the flames. And just as the variety of the human species is fantastically different and wonderful as you travel around this big lump of space rock we all call home, the forms those stories take also change from place to place, people to people, culture to culture. At the core of this variation is the thing that connects all of us; the desire to communicate and share our lived experiences with others.

Sometimes that takes the form of poetry. Sometimes that takes the form of plays. Sometimes that takes the form of music. It is this idea of expressing your experiences and sharing them that forms the basis of the 31,000 words project (a reference to the 31,000 words in Shakespeare's canon).

In 2023, it will be the 400th anniversary of the publication of Shakespeare's First Folio. This folio basically collected up all the different work that Shakespeare had created over the years and published them together in one big book.

2023 will also be the 50th anniversary of the immensely varied and popular genre of music called Hip Hop. 50 years since August 11th 1973 and DJ Kool Herc's immortalised cutting & mixing of the percussion break down of a James Brown record, signalling the birth of Hip Hop.

These two artistic styles are what we are going to use as the creative stimulus for the 31,000 words project. Over the next 6 weeks we are going to learn about Shakespeare and Hip Hop, both their similarities and differences. Using what we have learnt, we are going to work in groups to form a creative response combining elements from both styles to share with our group at the end of the 6 weeks which could end up looking something like this trailer for the project: [Welcome To The 31,000 Words Project.](#)

[See a video of Spoken Word Artist Charlie Staunton saying this introduction](#)



Hip Hop & Shakespeare

Shakespeare has an image problem. He's been a victim of bad marketing.
Ask your students the following questions:

Who is Shakespeare?

Who was his audience?

What was it like in the country when he was writing?

Noting down the answers that the students give at this point makes it useful to point out that stereotypes of Shakespeare still exist. Despite the fact that the information is out there, many people will respond with answers such as, 'He was someone posh and well educated at university, probably like oxford or Cambridge', or 'He was rich and powerful and awfully civilized and well-to-do'.

In reality, these things couldn't be further from the truth. Shakespeare didn't attend university at all! I think in many ways the misconception around his identity stems from the idea that someone who is seemingly uneducated couldn't possibly have written as much as he did on such a consistently genius level.

When it comes to the historical context of the time that he was living in, it is important not to forget that the majority of the people watching Shakespeare's plays were illiterate. This sometimes included the actors who would be performing the plays and poems! Some of the time they learnt their lines by ear, meaning they had to hear them out loud and then memorize them! Historians are pretty sure that they would learn by a mixture of sight and sound - hearing the play being read by the author, and then copying out their own parts, still, it's likely that young apprentice actors may have been hired illiterate, but would very quickly have to learn how to read and write, in order to keep their jobs.

Your students may know some of Shakespeare plays already. Overall he is credited with writing or contributing to 39 plays, 154 sonnets (which are a type of poem), several long narrative poems and a few other verses.

[Here is a useful PowerPoint to accompany the first part of this lesson.](#) Please download the file for best access.

"Blood" Words

Shakespeare was the people's poet of his day. He was looking to tell stories and connect with people - a fundamental trait of the human experience and something we all do every single day. He wanted to try and connect with as many people as possible. It isn't too wild to think that if he had been born in this day & age he would have become a rapper or Hip Hop artist himself – The Notorious B.A.R.D!

Our idea of the past doesn't always give the exact truth of what it was like, but those of you who are/were fans of *Horrible Histories* might know a bit better. If you're not a fan of *Horrible Histories* already it's a great way to learn about the realities and grisly details of history in a fun and interesting way. You can find the books in any good library or booksellers or you can watch the sketch show that was adapted from the books on YouTube or BBC iPlayer.

We all learnt the rhyme about Henry VIII's wives without ever having any serious discussion of what it must have been like for women to live in a society so sexist and unjust that a man had the power of life and death over his wife. These were incredibly brutal and unjust times (not that today is not), when Kings massacred the poor at will, disease ravaged and hygiene was 200 years away from being invented.

Shakespeare was writing stories for ordinary people, as well as for royalty and nobility. He took old stories and reworked them to make them exciting and resonate with the general members of the audience that would be watching the plays in his day. Yes, rich people also watched his work, (often sitting in the comfortable seats), but the majority of his work was aimed at ordinary people. You could say that Shakespeare was a master of remixing the past to make it relevant to the present. This is a trait that can also be found in the genre of music that is Hip Hop.



"3000" WORDS

What is Hip Hop?

Can you name any Hip Hop artists?

Where does Hip Hop come from?

Here are a couple of our featured artists talking about Hip Hop and what it means to them:

[DJ Olabean](#)

[Nikki Blaze](#)

Hip Hop is the latest manifestation of an unbroken chain of African oral traditions tracing back to the Griots (or bards) of the Medieval African Empires.

The Griot was a troubadour equivalent to the European minstrels or bards of the time. The Griot would know everything that was going on. They were a living archive of the people's traditions and their talents commanded universal admiration. These talents came from long years of study and hard work under the instruction of a teacher who was usually a relative. They told tales of births, deaths, marriages, hunts, battles, affairs and many other things! They essentially served as history books, preserving ancient stories and traditions through song. Speech was believed to have power in its capacity to recreate history and relationships, very much like the stories told by Shakespeare.

As people were transported - often against their will - from Africa to the Americas, they took their culture with them. These oral story telling and musical traditions evolved into gospel, blues, jazz, funk and reggae, and from these came Hip Hop.

The term Hip Hop itself comes from two places. The word 'hip' derives from the word 'hipi' which is from the Wolof Language spoken in Western Africa and it means 'to open ones eyes and see'. The term 'hop' is from the English, signifying movement. So put together Hip Hop is about becoming aware and moving with that awareness or knowledge. It is a term of enlightenment.

The pioneers of Hip Hop music and culture began building the movement on the foundations of these traditions, fully aware of the heritage and using it to construct the five elements of Hip Hop which are:

- DJing
- MCing
- Breaking
- Graffiti
- Knowledge

The founding fathers of Hip Hop are generally considered to be:

DJ Kool Herc, Coke La Rock, Afrika Bambaataa and Grandmaster Flash.



"3000" WORDS

DJ Kool Herc & Coke La Rock

DJ Kool Herc is considered to be the founding father of Hip Hop. He moved from Jamaica to the Bronx with his family and in 1973 hosted a party with his sister called the 'Back to School Jam' in the recreation room of their apartment building at 1520 Sedgwick Avenue. This historical party is recognised for launching the Hip Hop movement.



DJ Kool Herc also introduced the 'breakbeat' technique for DJing. This is a mixing practice that he adapted from Jamaican Dub music. Kool Herc liked to play funk, soul, and other genres with percussive sections. He would use a pair of turntables and would play two copies of the same record and then switch between them to extend the percussion section. This percussion section was known as the break. It was the section of the song that just contained the drum beat. Kool Herc named this breakbeat style of juggling 'The Merry-Go-Round' and it was this breakbeat DJing that quickly gave rise to Hip Hop music, rapping and breaking.

La Rock was a friend and musical partner of DJ Kool Herc. La Rock performed alongside Kool Herc for his first party to celebrate Herc's sister Cindy's birthday in 1973. At this party and several parties afterward, La Rock had no stage name and performed out of sight from the audience, so no one knew who was doing the rapping. His original raps were shout-outs to his friends before the actual poetry emerged in his lyrics. He originated phrases such as "You rock and you don't stop" and "Hotel, motel, you don't tell, we won't tell"

La Rock's raps were always purely improvisational, unlike those of later 70s-era rap groups who wrote down and rehearsed their lyrics, such as Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five. La Rock's raps (which were very similar to the Jamaican tradition of "toasting") would, as with much else at Kool Herc's parties in the mid-1970s, serve as a basic model for other Hip Hop artists that would come onto the Bronx music scene by the end of the decade.





Afrika Bambaataa

Another influential figure of Hip Hop to emerge from New York City was Afrika Bambaataa, also known as "The Godfather." Bambaataa was a pioneering DJ and music producer who organised block parties in the Bronx during the late 1970s. He was also a visionary who helped guide the city's youth away from gang life, drugs, and violence. He formed Universal Zulu Nation, a music-oriented organisation that encourages peace and unity through the expressions of Hip Hop culture. Members introduced urban youth to DJing, breaking, rapping, and visual art. Soon after, Bambaataa categorised these forms of expression as the "four elements" of Hip Hop. To this day, Zulu Nation continues to spread Hip Hop culture throughout the world.

In 1982, Afrika Bambaataa and the Soul Sonic Force released "Planet Rock," one of the most influential early Hip Hop songs. Instead of rapping over funk beats, Bambaataa created an electronic sound by sampling Kraftwerk and using the Roland TR-808 drum machine. The song helped popularize the TR-808, which became a staple of Hip Hop music.





Grandmaster Flash

Grandmaster Flash is another innovative DJ from the Bronx, New York City. He was the first DJ to manipulate records in a backward, forward or counterclockwise motion. He also invented distinct DJing techniques such as the backspin, cutting, punch phrasing, and scratching.

Grandmaster Flash also organised a group called Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five in 1976. The group became widely acknowledged as one of the most influential Hip Hop acts. They delivered a unique style by trading off lyrics between four rappers and blending them with Flash's unrivaled DJ skills. Flash would also perform acrobatic DJing skills by manipulating vinyl with his fingers, toes, elbows, and objects.

Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five had several influential songs. However, their most prominent song was "The Message." This critical hit further solidified rap as a genre and put rappers at the forefront for the first time. The powerful lyrics also detailed the grim realities of life in the ghetto, which was a significant shift from the traditional rhythmic chants of early Hip Hop.

In 2007, Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five made history again. The group became the first Hip Hop act inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.





DJing and Early Music Technology

The early 1980s was a vital turning point for Hip Hop and music production. Synthesizers, samplers, and drum machines became cheaper and more accessible. Roland's iconic TR-808 drum machine became the weapon of choice. Instead of relying on DJ breakbeats, music producers could now program original drum patterns. The TR-808 also became a cornerstone of Hip Hop for its powerful bass drum sound.

Sampling technology also emerged during the 1980s. DJs experimented with early samplers such as the Linn 9000, E-mu SP-1200, and the Akai MPC60. They used these samplers to piece together breaks in songs rather than using turntables. Samplers also allowed producers to perform, rearrange sections, sequence arrangements, edit, and mix music in new ways. These production methods were an early form of remixing.

Over time sampling technology advanced. A new generation of samplers such as the AKAI S900 provided increased memory, higher sampling rates, better editing capabilities, and more. Music producers experimented with techniques such as layering sounds, looping, sequencing elaborate arrangements and adding effects.

Turntable and mixer technology also advanced. There was an increase of DJs scratching records to create new sounds and effects. The most influential turntable was the Technics SL-1200 due to its strong motor, durability, and fidelity.





MCing

In Hip Hop music, an MC, or Rapper, is a music artist and/or performer that creates and performs vocals for their own original material. An MC uses rhyming verses, pre-written or freestyled to introduce the DJ with whom they work, to keep the crowd entertained or to glorify themselves.

As Hip Hop progressed, the title MC acquired backronyms such as 'mic chanter', 'microphone controller', 'mic checker', 'music commentator', 'one who moves the crowd'. Some use this word interchangeably with the term rapper or emcee, while for others the term denotes conception and demonstration of the role indicative of skill and of connection to the wider culture.

MC can often be used as a term of distinction, referring to an artist with good performance skills. As Kool G Rap notes, "masters of ceremony, where the word M.C. comes from, means just keeping the party alive." Many people in Hip Hop including DJ Premier and KRS-One feel that James Brown was the first MC. James Brown had the lyrics, moves, and soul that greatly influenced a lot of rappers in Hip Hop and arguably even started the first MC rhyme.

Kool Herc was also responsible for the development of rapping, the rhythmic delivery of rhymes and wordplay performed by rappers or MCs. He would speak in rhythm and rhyme over instrumental parts of songs to hype the crowd. His style of lyrical chanting and rhythmic wordplay was an early form of rapping inspired by the Jamaican tradition of toasting. He would shout phrases like "B-Boys, B-Girls are you ready? Keep on steady", "This is the joint! Herc beat on the point", "To the beat y'all" and "You don't stop!"

Kool Herc also enlisted his friend Coke La Rock to control the mic at their parties. During one party, Coke La Rock dropped the line "There's not a man that can't be thrown, not a horse that can't be rode, a bull that can't be stopped, there's not a disco that I Coke La Rock can't rock." Many consider this verse as the first rap lyrics and Coke La Rock as the first MC of Hip Hop.

The Hip Hop group, A Tribe Called Quest, included this statement in the liner notes to their 1993 album *Midnight Marauders*:

"The use of the term MC when referring to a rhyming wordsmith originates from the dance halls of Jamaica. At each event, there would be a master of ceremonies who would introduce the different musical acts and would say a toast in style of a rhyme, directed at the audience and to the performers. He would also make announcements such as the schedule of other events or advertisements from local sponsors. The term MC continued to be used by the children of women who moved to New York City to work as maids in the 1970s. These MCs eventually created a new style of music called hip-hop based on the rhyming they used to do in Jamaica and the breakbeats used in records. MC has also recently been accepted to refer to all who engineer music."

"3000" WORDS

Breaking

Breaking is a style of street dance that originated among Black youths in New York City during the early 1970s. When DJ Kool Herc was throwing neighbourhood parties, he noticed young people would go off on the dance floor, moving with more sporadic and dynamic energy, whenever the break of the tracks he was playing would come in. The 'break' being the part of the song where all vocals and other instruments would drop out, only leaving the percussion section.

The break section of the song was where people danced the most. They would save their best dance moves for the break. They would form dancer circles & show off and this is where the term breaking comes from. Kool Herc named the people dancing to his music b-boys and b-girls which is short for break boys and break girls. Over time, breaking evolved and became a global subculture that transcended into the mainstream.

A practitioner of this dance is called a b-boy, b-girl, or breaker. Although the term "breakdance" is frequently used to refer to the dance, "b-boying" and "breaking" are the original terms. The majority of the pioneers and most notable practitioners prefer these original terms.

The dance spread worldwide due to popularity in the media, especially in regions such as South Korea, United Kingdom, Germany, France, Russia, and Japan. While diverse in the amount of variation available in the dance, b-boying consists of four kinds of movement: toprock, downrock, power moves, and freezes. B-boying is typically danced to Hip Hop, funk music, and especially breakbeats, although modern trends allow for much wider varieties of music along certain ranges of tempo and beat patterns.





Graffiti

Graffiti is an artform, a means of cultural expression. Like the other forms of Hip Hop, it also expresses resistance. Graffiti challenges, for example, mainstream notions of what counts as art, what counts as public space, and what counts as property, just as emceeing/DJing challenges what counts as music, and b-boying challenges what counts as dance.

Graffiti, unlike the other forms of Hip Hop, is more easily misunderstood because it is often done illegally and the artists are often secretive about their real identities. As such, it has not received the kind of positive mainstream recognition afforded to rappers, DJ's, and dancers. Some professionals in the art world have embraced graffiti, but that doesn't mean that the public at large understands and appreciates what graffiti is all about.

Graffiti has a long and proud history. The subculture surrounding graffiti has existed for several decades, and it's still going strong. The graffiti artists (or "writers" as they prefer to call themselves) are passionate, skilled, community-oriented, and socially conscious in ways that profoundly contradict the way they've been portrayed as common criminals and vandals.

What these kids did, however, was to find a way to express themselves creatively in a society that told them that they didn't have the talent or drive. They came from ghettos that many said were devoid of culture. Graffiti and Hip Hop in general proved the world wrong. The graffiti writers (and emcees, DJs, and breakers) proved that they could create something beautiful that required skill and dedication, something that contributed to the city even if people didn't always understand what it was all about. They expressed their identity in a society that tried to keep them anonymous, that tried to ignore social problems as if they didn't exist.



[Here's a video of 31000 Words Graffiti Writer Trik09 tagging the 31000 words logo.](#)



Knowledge or Knowledge of Self

The fifth and perhaps most important element of Hip Hop is Knowledge or knowledge of self. Afrika Bambaataa was massive in putting this concept of knowledge into word and action. It's about identity and ways to express identity. 'Knowing where YOU come from helps to show YOU where YOU are going', a quote from legendary MC KRS-One, which stands for Knowledge Reigns Supreme.

Hip Hop believes that people can take control of their lives through self knowledge and self expression, engaging the world with their history, values and ideas and adding intellectual muscle to the music, the move, the poetry and the art. Most importantly allowing for a shared experience of the world.

Afrika Bambaataa was originally a gang leader who underwent a transformation that led to him founding the Hip Hop organisation Universal Zulu Nation. Their motto is 'Peace, Love, Unity and Having Fun' and their 'Infinity Lessons' emphasise community, peace, wisdom, freedom, justice, love, unity, responsibility, respect for others and yourself. Values which Shakespeare reaches towards and we would all still hope to aspire towards today.





Lesson One— Quiz

1. The 31000 words project involves which two artistic subjects? Hip Hop and Shakespeare.
2. In 2023 how many years has it been since Shakespeare's first folio was published? 400
3. What is the First Folio? Collection of Shakespeare's works published in one book.
4. How many years has it been since the founding of Hip Hop? 50 years
5. Where did Hip Hop start? At a party in the Bronx in New York City
6. Who is credited with starting Hip Hop? DJ Kool Herc
7. What did he do that was different? He played two of the same record and skipped between to repeat the break.
8. Who was Shakespeare writing for? Every day people and the nobility and royalty, part of his genius was his ability to reach out to many levels of society.
9. Most people in Shakespeare's time were illiterate. What does this mean? It means they couldn't read or write
10. Did Shakespeare go to university? No
11. How many plays is he credited with? At least 36. Some say 38/39 but 36 are in the First Folio.
12. How many sonnets? 154
13. What is a sonnet? A type of poem
14. What does the term Hip Hop define as? Hip means to open ones eyes, hop means to move, become aware and move with that awareness
15. What are the five elements of Hip Hop? DJing, MCing, Breaking, Graffiti and Knowledge
16. Who are considered to be the founding fathers of Hip Hop? DJ Kool Herc, Coke La Rock, Grandmaster Flash, Afrika Bambaataa
17. What is the name of the West African poets that inspired the music that eventually became Hip Hop? Griots
18. Name two early Hip Hop songs. 'The Message', 'Planet Rock'
19. Who started the Universal Zulu Nation? Afrika Bambaataa
20. What was their motto? 'Peace, Love, Unity and Having Fun'



Lesson Two

Recap

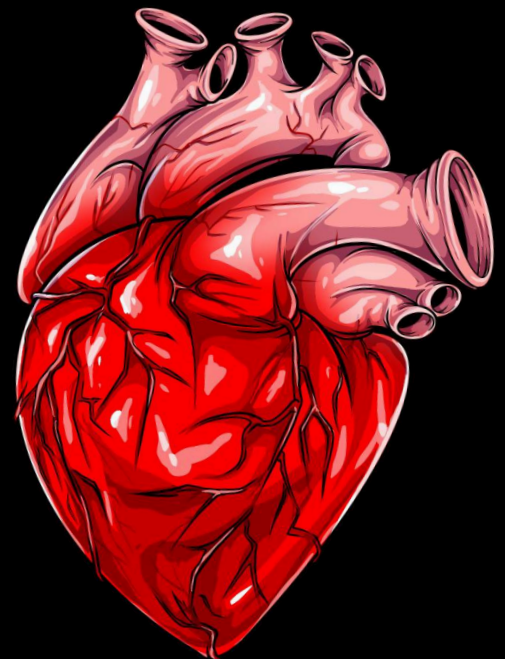
We have already touched on the poet and playwright William Shakespeare, had a mini history lesson to correct some common misconceptions about him and had a deep dive into the origins and fundamental teachings of the founding fathers of Hip Hop, what Hip Hop means and what its five elements are. We have spoken about the overall aims of the 31000 Words project and that it is about storytelling, expression and sharing truths and creations. We have said that Hip Hop and Shakespeare are both primary examples of these ideas in motion. In this lesson we are going to delve deeper into comparisons between the two art forms. We will be looking at the similarities in style and substance and attempting to take inspiration from them in order to start thinking about our own creative responses to the project as a whole.

Iambic Pentameter

In a line of poetry, an 'iamb' is a foot or beat consisting of an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable.

Or another way to think of it is a short syllable followed by a long syllable. For example, deLIGHT, the SUN, forLORN, one DAY, reLEASE. English is the perfect language for iambs because of the way the stressed and unstressed syllables work. Interestingly, the iamb sounds a little like a heartbeat.

- **At this point, demonstrate how the iamb sounds like a heartbeat by using body percussion (stamping feet, clapping, tapping your chest) and simultaneously repeating the unstressed and stressed examples above.**
- **Get the students to try this too, using their own examples.**



'Penta' means 'five', and 'metre' means 'a line of rhythmical poetry', so 'pentameter' means, 'in a line of rhythmical poetry, there will be 5 units'. What type of units? iambs!

Putting these two terms together, iambic pentameter is a line of poetic writing that consists of ten syllables in a specific pattern of an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable, or a short syllable followed by a long syllable.



Sonnet 18

By William Shakespeare

Iambic pentameter is a basic rhythm that's pleasing to the ear and closely resembles the rhythm of everyday speech, or a heartbeat. It's used frequently, in verse, poetry and even pop songs today. It was popularised by Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatists like Shakespeare. For playwrights, using iambic pentameter allows them to imitate everyday speech in verse. The rhythm gives a solid structure, while still allowing the text to flow like everyday speech.

Put simply, iambic pentameter is a type of poetry whose beat mirrors the rhythm of the English language. Shakespeare used iambic pentameter because it closely resembles the rhythm of everyday speech, and he no doubt wanted to imitate everyday speech in his plays to make his characters sound more human. Although he is famous for his plays now, in his own time he kept returning to his work as a poet and wrote 154 sonnets and 3 narrative poems.

Shakespeare primarily used iambic pentameter when writing sonnets. Below is one of Shakespeare's most famous sonnets, number 18. Read this aloud as a class and consider the rhythm.

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
And summer's lease hath all too short a date:
Sometimes too hot the eye of heaven shines,
And often is his gold complexion dimm'd;
And every fair from fair sometime declines,
By chance or nature's changing course untrimm'd;
But thy eternal summer shall not fade
Nor lose possession of that fair thou owest;
Nor shall Death brag thou wander'st in his shade,
When in eternal lines to time thou growest:
So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,
So long lives this and this gives life to thee.





Lesson Two

When it comes to Hip Hop, one of the five elements, and perhaps the element mostly recognisable as Hip Hop, is rap. Some people say that rap stands as an acronym for rhythm and poetry. The word rap actually means striking a hard surface with a series of rapid audible blows to get attention, so while rhythm and poetry is a good description, the word comes from “rapping”, of quick loud blows. There is an undeniable logic behind the rhythm and poetry description. As rapping is delivering a poetic and rhyming flow of words and sentences with hammer-like rhythmic style. This is often referred to as a rappers flow. The description is ideal for it.

Can you see the overlap between Shakespeare’s use of iambic pentameter and the use of rap and flow in Hip Hop? They both use a delivery punctuated with stressed and unstressed syllables to create a rhythm and flow.

To further demonstrate this overlap, see how easy it is to adapt iambic pentameter to different beats.

Here is a video of Akala of The Hip Hop Shakespeare Company rapping Shakespeare’s Sonnet 18 over different beats (Click the link on the picture):

Give it a go for yourselves. Here are some examples of different beats. Try and read Shakespeare’s Sonnet 18 to different ones.

[Big L—Danger Zone Instrumental](#)

[Skepta—Autopsy Instrumental](#)

[Aitch—1989 Instrumental](#)

[AJ Tracey—Ladbroke Grove Instrumental](#)

[Hazey—Packs and Potions Instrumental](#)



Task

Now that you’ve had a go at using Shakespeare over Hip Hop beats, we are going to try and write our own lines of Shakespearean rap using iambic pentameter.

Individually, you must write four lines that introduce yourself and tell everyone a bit about you. Remember the rhythm of iambic pentameter. Da DUM da DUM da DUM da DUM da DUM. 5 sets of two. This means that each line must have how many syllables? 10. You can use your fingers to count! Then, when you have your four lines, share them with the class or in groups, or with the person sitting next to you.



Lesson Three

Intro

So we've learnt about Shakespeare and Hip Hop and how the two intersect and we've touched on writing our own lines about ourselves using iambic pentameter. In this lesson we are going to further explore writing and creative responses using rhythm and words.

Group Activity 1 – Rhyme Battle Challenge

Split the class into equal groups no more than 6 in each group.

Each group has 5 minutes to think of as many rhymes as they can for the words
EDUCATION, INSPIRE, CREATE (or other words)

When the time is up each team adds up how many they have for each word

The top two teams for each word come to the front – we're going to have a battle!

Each team has to make up a sentence and put the rhyming word at the end

We are looking for perfect rhymes.

3 seconds grace period for hesitation

No repetition

Counted off by audience if they hesitate or repeat – 5,4,3,2,1 – if they can't think of something else before zero they're out

One team wins when the other runs out of players/words

Individual activity

Rap Battle Shakespeare VS Dr Seuss

Choose one of the following characters:

(In this section please feel free to provide/replace characters of the particular play you may or may not be studying)

Othello, Iago, Romeo, Mercutio, Juliet, Macbeth, Lady Macbeth, Macduff, Miranda, Prospero, Caliban, Ariel etc

Once you have chosen your character, you have five minutes to write four lines of iambic pentameter, introducing yourself as your character as if you were facing off in a rap battle.

Partner up with someone else and write a response to each other's first four lines.



Lesson Four

Group Activity 2 — Group Poem Chocolate

Brainstorm/Mind Map around CHOCOLATE

Try and think of as many associated words as you can

Help them to write a chorus about chocolate then each member of the team or in 2/3/different combinations, writes verses about chocolate. Repeat Chorus in the middle and/or at the end.

Share poems with each other

This activity prepares them for the final creative response.

Introduction to final creative project

Groups are now Hip Hop collectives. Think of a name for your group inspired by characters from Shakespeare plays, the plays themselves, any of his other work and/or the information you have learnt about the origins of Hip Hop.

You are going to be dropping your first single of Shakespeare-inspired Hip Hop fusion. The single launch is going to be the final lesson of this project.

What you will be working on is the single itself, so this is going to involve writing a Hip Hop song. OR it could be that you are turning one of Shakespeare's plays into a Hip Hop musical – give us the opening number.

OR tell your own story taking on board Shakespearean and Hip Hop elements to create a freestyle performance of your choice.

Factors to include:

- A good beat
- Shakespeare references – this could be to Shakespeare in general, his life and work, characters or
- specific plays or sonnets
- Hip Hop references/influences
- Personal touches
- Iambic Pentameter - although feel free to experiment with flow
- Individual sections, whole group sections and smaller subgroup sections.
- Album artwork – graffiti inspired
- Dance moves or a dance break (if you wish to)



Lesson Four

You should work together to write and devise your performance. Structure it in the same way as you did for the chocolate rap/poem. Have a chorus or hook - a song hook is a short lyrical line or melodic phrase used to catch the listener's ear and make a song engaging. It's attention-grabbing, catchy, and makes the song memorable.

You should also include whole group sections, sub group sections and individual verses.

Here are some examples of how Shakespeare and Hip Hop can be interpreted together and combined:

[Blue Saint](#)

[Sabrina](#)

[TL](#)

Useful websites for writing, rap structure and beats/instrumentals:

www.rhymezone.com

www.thesaurus.com

www.flocabulary.com

www.dictionary.com

www.petelevin.com/shakespeare

www.shakespeareswords.com

[Free Beats & Instrumentals | Free Download | Backing Tracks \(20dollarbeats.com\)](#)



Lesson Five

In this lesson we are going to spend some time working on performance skills and sometime continuing to write and devise our final performance in our groups.

Performance Skills

As we have learnt, Shakespeare and Hip Hop are primarily about storytelling. Sharing our human experiences with others. Whether performing as a rapper in a Hip Hop collective, as a dancer in a ballet of Swan Lake or an actor in a Shakespeare play or in a movie, in order to effectively tell a good story we need to utilize performance skills.

Can you think of any examples of performance skills?

- Movement – Soft, gentle, heavy, light, quick slow. Hunched, upright, limping, energetic...
- Gesture – Signals with your hands / arms to show feelings. You may have something your character always does, e.g. wrings their hands to show tension.
- Facial expressions – Wide eyed, narrow eyed, raised eyebrows, troubled (permanent frown / down-turned mouth).
- Eye contact – Staring, glaring, fleeting. You may decide that your character always avoids eye contact with others to show they are uncomfortable.
- Voice – Pitch (high and squeaky, low and soft etc.). Volume (loud / soft etc.). You could decide that your character always speaks intensely or whispers. Tone (angry, pleasant, nervous).
- Presence - Stage presence refers to the certain charisma and charm that a theatre actor or performer possesses that draws in an audience and commands their full attention. Ways you can do this include: speaking with confidence, make eye contact with the audience, smile!
- Energy – every character or performance needs to be given energy. Telling a story is transactional and you are trying to translate that energy to the audience by giving it energy. What is your character's energy? Is it weak, strong, bubbly, heavy?

Exercises and Performance Games

We are going to undertake some exercises and performance games in order to practice and develop our performance skills.

Warm Up

The warmup is very important and should be done in some way shape or form before every performance and every rehearsal.



Lesson Five

What are the two (arguably three) things that we need to warm up before a performance?

Our bodies and our voice. We need to focus our minds too.

1,2,3 Game

Moving around the space.

When I say 1 – Jump (adaptable move – hands in the air)

When I say 2 – Clap

When I say 3 – Touch the floor – (Adaptable move – point at the ground)

Stop when I say STOP

Go when I say GO

Do this for a few rounds. Faster, slower, swap the meanings of different numbers around. Stop means go, go means stop etc.

Vocal Warm Up Exercises/Physical Stretches

Tongue Twisters—e.g. Silly Shakespeare Shabbily Shook his Sodden Shoes/ Happy Hippy Hoppers

Hesitation Hardly Helps Hospitalised Hippos

- Scales
- Hums
- Trills
- Lip Rolls
- Facial Massage and Stretch
- Vocal Fry
- All Body Stretch



Lesson Five

Performance Games – 30 minutes

Reactions

1. Organise the group into a standing circle.
2. One player stands in the middle of the circle.
3. A player from the circle comes into the middle and gives the centre player some news to react to.
4. The centre player then gives a reaction to the news and takes an opportunity to exit the stage.
5. The reaction might involve pleasure indifference, excitement, despair, anger, horror, joy or something else entirely. It should be spontaneous. The player who brought the news stays on and then another player jumps in with different news.

Benefits of the game: It starts getting players comfortable with saying the first thing that comes to mind. It gives them a chance to be funny in a short time frame.

Following

1. Divide the group into pairs and ask each pair to have a follower and a walker.
2. The walker is simply to walk about the space, the follower is to follow.
3. Initially the follower should play at avoiding being seen (although obviously both players know what's going on)
4. Now and again the walker can turn around suddenly, in which case the follower has to pretend to be doing something completely different.
5. Finally the walker turns around suddenly and catches the follower out. The next question is: 'Why are you following me?' The answer needs to be spontaneous. It should be improvised in the moment., allowing a dialogue to flow from there. What the follower must not do is deny that he or she has been following.
6. The exercise is run once and then everyone comes together and talks about what happened. There is an opportunity then to make a few points about how this kind of improvisation works best. For example it makes more sense for the follower to be candid and confessional. It creates a more interesting drama that way , and allows a relationship to develop. Nonsense answers or blanket denials tend not to lead anywhere.

Benefits of the game: It offers a way into improvisational/off-the-cuff thinking and encourages an understanding that improvisation relies on self disclosure.



Lesson Five

Two Rush In

Every sitcom ever written has a scene when someone – or some two – rush in and tell their friends about some extraordinary event they have just witnessed.

How to play:

- Request two volunteers to perform.
- Ask them to imagine that they have just seen something amazing. It probably happened in the corridor, on the street or on the bus.
- The two players are going to tell the story to the rest of the group. The best way to play the scene is not to plan the story but just to go for it. Encourage them to rush in and start talking very fast. Give them the first line. Something like: 'You won't believe what's just happened. We saw this extraordinary...'
- Then ask the other player to take it up:
'Elephant walking along the street. It had – '
'Ears as big as-'
'trees-'
- If necessary, point at each of the players alternately to direct the storytelling.
- It doesn't matter how fantastical the story is as long as they agree with and reinforce each other.
- Encourage them to come to an end when it feels like the story is complete.

Benefits of the game

- It helps players to feel comfortable with saying the first thing that comes to mind.
- It gives them a chance to be funny in a short time frame without pulling the improv into a comedy graveyard.
- It develops teamwork, Imagination, Storytelling skills.

Variations and Extensions

An alternative strategy would be to allow the players to plan in advance the core idea of the event they have witnessed, or an event idea given to them.



Lesson Five

Shoes Game

Chaotic, but hopefully managed chaos.

How to play:

Sit the group down in a circle.

Everyone takes off a shoe and holds it in the air.

The facilitator needs to introduce a well known tune or rhyming pattern that allows the game to be played.

Everyone sings the song.

At certain given words in the song – probably on the 'on' beat – players need to pass the shoe to their right and collect one from their left. The exercise is made more fun if on the other beats – the 'off' beats- the shoe is merely banged on the floor and not passed on.

The aim is to try and keep the game/song going without it all falling apart. If possible, up the tempo of the song as it goes on.

Benefits of the game: Teamwork, sense of rhythm, playfulness, physical coordination.



What's next?

So what happens next?

Thank you for taking part in the 31,000 Words Project. By the time you have got to this point in the resource your students should have created something wonderful inspired by what they have learnt about Shakespeare and Hip Hop!

We would love to hear about their work and encourage you to share it with us at Shakespeare North Playhouse.

You can contact us at hello@shakespearenorthplayhouse.co.uk - let us know what your students have been creating, and we can help you to share and display it as best we can.

In the meantime:

Get Writing.

Get Performing.

Share your work with Shakespeare North Playhouse.

Download the additional files for the Lesson Plans and Handouts separately [here](#).



Lesson One Plan

Session Topic: 31000 Words	Subject: Hip Hop and Shakespeare
Resources: 31000 words resource PDF to read or show video, quiz sheets, pens, paper	
Content / Activities (1 hour)	Learning Outcomes
Introduction (10 mins) Welcome to the project and the reading/video of the project introduction and opportunity for Q&A.	
Activity – 10 minutes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learning about Shakespeare. Using the PDF resource and accompanying videos, begin with a discussion about who, what, when, where questions to reveal and consider their knowledge of Shakespeare. After the discussion, continue with reading the PDF resource. Final discussion to see how the perceptions might have changed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learn about Shakespeare's origins and the historical context of the time he was writing. Learn about Hip Hop's origins. Learn about the founding fathers of Hip Hop. Learn about the 31000 words project and why we have decided to do it. Learn about the five elements of Hip Hop.
Development (20 minutes) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learning about Hip Hop. In the same manner as before using the pdf resource/accompanying videos begin with a discussion about who, what, when, where questions to reveal and consider their knowledge of Hip Hop. After the discussion continue with reading the PDF resource. Post discussion to see how the students perceptions might have changed. 	
Plenary (10 mins) Using the 31000 Words Lesson One Hip Hop Shakespeare Quiz on the following page, test retention of knowledge in this lesson.	
Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To introduce the 31000 words project as a whole. To challenge stereotypes of Hip Hop and Shakespeare. To introduce the parallels between Hip Hop and Shakespeare. To test knowledge learned of Shakespeare and Hip Hop. To begin thinking about how to combine Hip Hop and Shakespeare for a creative output. 	
SEN Pupils / Provision Target questioning; circulating to assist individuals; peer support; mixture of individual and group work; visual and auditory stimuli; colour overlays.	





Hip Hop Shakespeare Quiz

NAME: _____

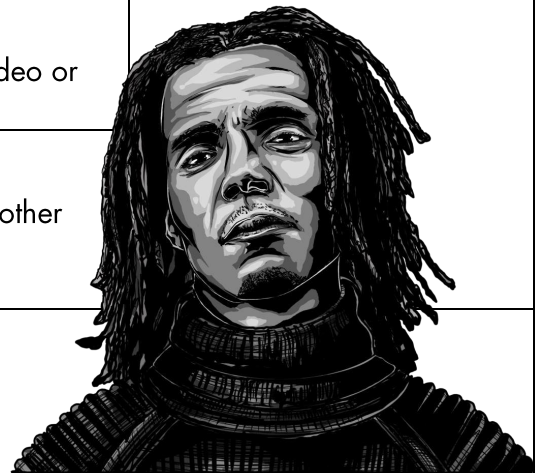
1. The 31000 words project involves which two artistic subjects?
2. In 2023 how many years has it been since Shakespeare's first folio was published?
3. What is a folio?
4. How many years has it been since the founding of Hip Hop?
5. Where did Hip Hop start?
6. Who is credited with starting Hip Hop?
7. What did he do that was different?
8. Who was Shakespeare writing for?
9. Most people in Shakespeare's time were illiterate. What does this mean?
10. Did Shakespeare go to university?
11. How many plays is he credited with?
12. How many sonnets?
13. What is a sonnet?
14. What does the term Hip Hop define as?
15. What are the five elements of Hip Hop?
16. Who are considered to be the founding fathers of Hip Hop?
17. What is the name of the West African poets that inspired the music that eventually became Hip Hop?
18. Name two early Hip Hop songs.
19. Who started the Universal Zulu Nation?
20. What was their motto?





Lesson Two Plan

Session Topic: 31000 Words	Subject: Hip Hop and Shakespeare
Resources: 31000 words resource PDF to read or show video, Sonnet 18 sheets, pens, paper.	
Content / Activities (1 hour)	Learning Outcomes
Introduction (10 mins) Recap the information that we learnt in Lesson One asking questions to the students to ascertain retention of knowledge.	
Activity – 20 minutes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Iambic Pentameter • Using the PDF resource and accompanying videos to inform the students of Iambic Pentameter • After the video/demonstration get the whole class to simulate how Iambic Pentameter sounds like a heart beat • Watch the video of Akala rapping Sonnet 18 to different beats • Using the different beats ask students to volunteer to read Sonnet 18 trying to match it to the beat 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cement knowledge of Hip Hop and Shakespeare • Understand and demonstrate the rhythm of Iambic Pentameter • Develop writing and performance skills through writing and reciting in Iambic Pentameter
Development (20 minutes) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing in Iambic Pentameter • Introduce the task as outlined in the PDF Resource • Give the students time to write their four lines of Iambic Pentameter about themselves • Give an example four lines of Iambic Pentameter either using the video or one you have written yourself. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn about different beats
Plenary (10 mins) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give the students the opportunity to share their four lines with each other • Give them an opportunity to wrap their own lines to the beat 	
Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To recap Lesson One • To learn about Iambic Pentameter • To write four lines of IP about ourselves and practice rapping it to different beats • To gain knowledge of different beats 	
SEN Pupils / Provision Target questioning; circulating to assist individuals; peer support; mixture of individual and group work; visual and auditory stimuli; colour overlays	





Sonnet 18

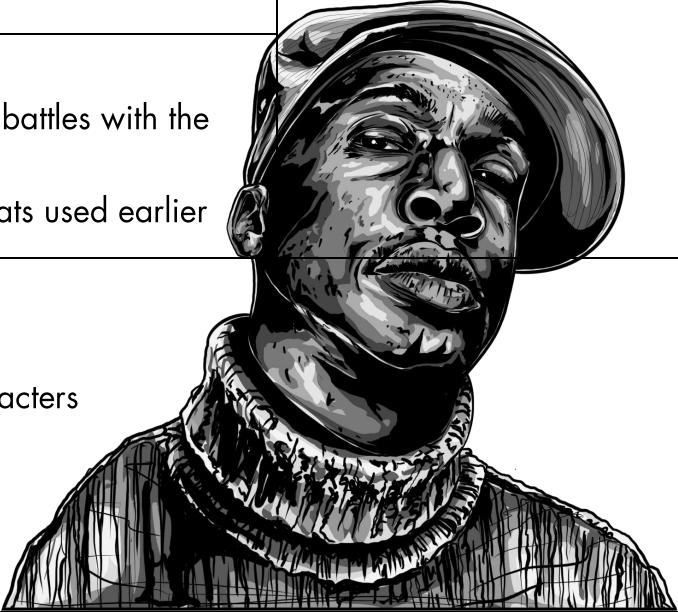
By William Shakespeare

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
And summer's lease hath all too short a date:
Sometimes too hot the eye of heaven shines,
And often is his gold complexion dimm'd;
And every fair from fair sometime declines,
By chance or nature's changing course untrimm'd;
But thy eternal summer shall not fade
Nor lose possession of that fair thou owest;
Nor shall Death brag thou wander'st in his shade,
When in eternal lines to time thou growest:
So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,
So long lives this and this gives life to thee.





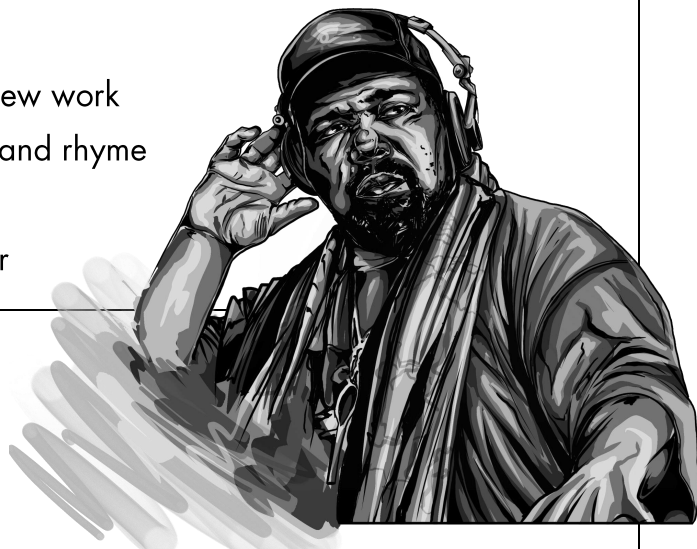
Lesson Three Plan

Session Topic: 31000 Words	Subject: Hip Hop and Shakespeare
Resources: 31000 words resource PDF to read or show video, pens, paper.	
Content / Activities (1 hour)	Learning Outcomes
Introduction (10 mins) Briefly recap information from Lesson One and Two, asking questions to test knowledge	
Activity – 10 minutes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rhyme Battle Challenge • Using the instructions in the PDF resource split class into groups • Give them a word and give them five minutes to think of as many rhymes as they can • The top two teams face off at the front of the class 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cement knowledge of Hip Hop and Shakespeare • Understand and demonstrate the rhythm of iambic Pentameter and develop writing skills by writing four lines
Development (20 minutes) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce the concept of a rap battle by playing the video and introducing the task outlined in the resource • Give the students 10 minutes to write their four lines of iambic Pentameter about the character of their choice • Give an example four lines of IP either written by you or using the video • Partner the students and give them ten minutes to write responses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop Shakespearean character knowledge by writing from their perspective • Develop and practice performance skills
Plenary (10 mins) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give the students the opportunity to share their rap battles with the class • They can also have try rapping their lines to the beats used earlier 	
Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To recap info from Lesson One and Two • To write four lines of iambic Pentameter about characters • To participate in a Shakespearean Rap Battle • To practice rapping to a beat using IP 	
SEN Pupils / Provision Target questioning; circulating to assist individuals; peer support; mixture of individual and groupwork; visual and auditory stimuli; colour overlays	




Lesson Four Plan

Session Topic: 31000 Words	Subject: Hip Hop and Shakespeare
Resources: 31000 words resource PDF to read or show video, pens, paper.	
Content / Activities (1 hour)	Learning Outcomes
Introduction (10 mins) Recap information from previous lessons and ask questions to test knowledge	
Activity – 20 minutes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chocolate Group Poem Using the instructions in PDF resource split class into groups Give them the word chocolate and give the groups five minutes to think of as many associated words as they can Help them to write a chorus about chocolate and give them time to write verses which can be recited individually in subgroups or as the whole group. Repeat the chorus in the middle and/or at the end. Share work with each other 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cement Knowledge of Hip Hop and Shakespeare Develop writing skills by writing a group poem Develop teamworking skills by working together to write group poem Develop and practice performance skills by sharing work Develop research skills and build on knowledge to lay foundations of final projects
Development (20 minutes) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> .Introduction to the final project Introduce the task as outlined in the PDF resource Give the students time to go away and discuss/research in their groups 	
Plenary (10 mins) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask the students to come back together and share a few of their ideas at this point 	
Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To recap info from previous lessons To utilise Iambic Pentameter and its rhythm to create new work To write a group poem about chocolate using rhythm and rhyme To begin final group project To practice rapping to a beat using Iambic Pentameter 	
SEN Pupils / Provision Target questioning; circulating to assist individuals; peer support; mixture of individual and groupwork; visual and auditory stimuli; colour overlays	





Lesson Five Plan

Session Topic: 31000 Words	Subject: Hip Hop and Shakespeare
Resources: 31000 words resource PDF to read or show video, quiz sheets, pens, paper	
Content / Activities (1 hour)	Learning Outcomes
Introduction (10 mins) Briefly recap information from previous lessons and ask questions to test knowledge	
Activity – 10 minutes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance Skills • Using PDF resource to support this, have a discussion with students about different performance skills and how they can utilise them 	Cement knowledge of Hip Hop and Shakespeare Develop performance skills by identifying different types Develop team working skills by working together to research and devise group project
Development (20 minutes) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Warm Up and Performance Games • Introduce the task as outline in the PDF Resource • Go through the warm up games explaining the importance of warming up before performance • Use one or two performance games (these games can be used as warm ups/starters for later lessons that are purely for devising/ rehearsal) 	Develop and practice performance skills and build on knowledge Develop knowledge and skills for warming up effectively, performance games and why they are important
Plenary (10 mins) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask the students to come back together and share a few of their ideas at this point 	
Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To recap info from previous lessons • To learn about performance skills and how best to use them • To learn about the importance of warming up • To learn warm up and performance games to enhance work • To continue to develop the final group project 	
SEN Pupils / Provision Target questioning; circulating to assist individuals; peer support; mixture of individual and groupwork; visual and auditory stimuli; colour overlays	



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