

Nurture, Believe, Achieve, Succeed

KS4 Music Unit 1 – History of Rap Part 1

KS4 unit 1 – Overview

This Scheme of Learning introduces KS4 pupils to the history, musical features, and creative possibilities of rap music. Through practical music-making, listening activities, performance, and creative writing, pupils will explore the origins of hip-hop culture and develop their own rap compositions.

Students will learn about key pioneers of rap and hip-hop, including **DJ Kool Herc**, often recognised as one of the founders of hip-hop culture, and **The Sugarhill Gang**, whose hit *Rapper's Delight* brought rap music into the mainstream. Pupils will also investigate how rap music has evolved over time and its influence on popular culture.

Practical music lessons will focus on learning simple bass lines from well-known rap songs, including **Ice Ice Baby** by Vanilla Ice and **Gangsta's Paradise** by Coolio. Students will develop instrumental skills through repetition, ensemble performance, and exploration of rhythm and groove.

Through literacy links, pupils will learn about rhythm in language and explore the concept of **iambic pentameter**, comparing structured poetic rhythm with the rhythmic patterns used in rap lyrics. This will support understanding of pulse, metre, and word flow within music.

The unit culminates in pupils creating and performing their own raps inspired by **Empire State of Mind** by Jay-Z and Alicia Keys. Students will write lyrics celebrating their local area and community, describing places, people, landmarks, and experiences that are important to them.

By the end of the unit, pupils will have developed an understanding of the roots of rap music, learned to perform recognisable bass lines from iconic rap songs, explored links between poetry and rhythm, and created and performed their own original rap celebrating where they live. The project aims to build musical confidence, communication skills, creativity, and cultural awareness through an engaging and accessible exploration of rap music.

Skills	Knowledge	Suggested learning activities (including trips, activities)	Links to accreditation (KS4 and KS5 if appropriate)
• Musical Performance Skills – playing and maintaining simple bass lines, keeping a steady pulse, and performing as part of an ensemble. • Rhythm and Timing Skills – recognising, creating, and performing rhythmic patterns in both music and spoken rap. • Listening and Appraisal Skills – identifying key features of rap music and understanding the contributions of influential artists such as DJ Kool Herc and The Sugarhill Gang. • Creative Communication and	• An understanding of the origins of rap and hip-hop, including the role of pioneers such as DJ Kool Herc and the impact of early hip-hop culture on music and society. • Knowledge of influential rap artists and songs, including The Sugarhill Gang, Vanilla Ice, Coolio, and Jay-Z, and their contributions	Unit 1: What is Rap Music? • Introduction to hip-hop culture. • Listening to early rap recordings. • Learning about DJ Kool Herc and block parties. • Exploring the role of DJs, MCs, breakdancers, and graffiti artists. Unit 2: The Sugarhill Gang and Early Rap • Listening and responding to <i>Rapper's Delight</i>. • Exploring call-and-response activities. • Identifying rhyme patterns and repeated musical ideas. • Comparing early rap with modern rap music. Unit 3: Learning Rap Bass Lines • Introduction to bass and groove. • Performing the bass line from <i>Ice Ice Baby</i>. • Learning the bass riff from <i>Gangsta's Paradise</i>. • Ensemble playing and maintaining a steady pulse.	https://laser-awards.org.uk/laser/qualifications/units/download/15107292

Literacy Skills – using rhyme, rhythm, descriptive language, and elements of iambic pentameter to write original rap lyrics. • Confidence and Collaboration Skills – working with others to create, rehearse, and perform music while developing self-expression, teamwork, and performance confidence.	to the development of the genre. • Understanding of musical elements in rap music, including pulse, beat, rhythm, groove, bass lines, rhyme, and flow. • Knowledge of how poetry connects to music, including the use of rhyme, syllables, stress patterns, and the concept of iambic pentameter. • Understanding of how	Unit 4: Rhythm, Poetry and Iambic Pentameter • Exploring rhythm in spoken language. • Understanding syllables and stress patterns. • Introduction to iambic pentameter through accessible examples. • Creating rhythmic spoken-word phrases. Unit 5: Writing Our Own Local Area Rap • Listening to and analysing <i>Empire State of Mind</i>. • Discussing how artists celebrate places they know. • Creating word banks about the local area. • Writing verses about where we live, our community, and things that matter to us. Unit 6: Rehearsal and Performance • Refining lyrics and performance skills. • Combining spoken rap with backing tracks or live bass parts. • Performing original raps to peers. • Self-evaluation and celebration of achievements.	
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	songwriters use lyrics to express identity and celebrate places, explored through analysing <i>Empire State of Mind</i> and creating original raps about their own local area and community.		