

Starting with Style

Using hip-hop as a text to promote literacy development

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Session Overview

1. Hip-hop is a central text for Black males' literacy development (esp. outside of school)
2. Hip-Hop-based instruction is the same as any good instruction - employs *engaging, research-based instructional practices* that gives attention to the *instructional core* - student, teacher, content and the larger cultural contexts in which learning occurs.
3. Good Hip-hop-based literacy instruction goes further. It:
 - a. Embraces a *hustling aesthetic* (e.g. we gotta get this done...)
 - b. Connects students to communities of practice,
 - c. Encourages students to struggle through challenges,
 - d. Is grounded in African and uniquely urban aesthetics of call-and-response, rhythmically driven, and aural
 - e. Performative (e.g. meant to be put on display - spoken, rapped, videoed)
4. Hip-hop-based literacy development *SHOULD* be critical literacy development

Additional Resources:

Irby, D. (2006) "Do the Knowledge": A Standards Based Hip-Hop Learning Guide. Distributed by Art Sanctuary and the Fels Foundation: Philadelphia, PA.

Available at:

<https://uic.academia.edu/DecoteauIrby>

He Say She Say by Lupe Fiasco

I can't, I won't, I can't, I won't
Let you leave
I don't know what you want
You want more from me?

She said to him
"I want you to be a father
He's your little boy and you don't even bother
Like "brother" without the R
And he's starting to harbor
Cool and food for thought
But for you he's a starver
Starting to use red markers on his work
His teacher say they know he's much smarter
But he's hurt
Used to hand his homework in first
Like he was the classroom starter
Burst to tears
Let them know she see us
Now he's fighting in class
Got a note last week that say he might not pass
Ask me if his daddy was sick of us
Cause you ain't never pick him up
You see what his problem is?
He don't know where his poppa is
No positive male role model
To play football and build railroad models
It's making a hole you've been digging it
Cause you ain't been kicking it
Since he was old enough to hold bottles
Wasn't supposed to get introduced to that
He don't deserve to get used to that
Now I ain't asking you for money or to come back to me
Some days it ain't sunny but it ain't so hard
Just breaks my heart
When I try to provide and he say 'Mommy that ain't your job'
To be a man, I try to make him understand
That I'm his number one fan
But it's like he born from the stands
You know the world is out to get him, so why don't you give him a chance?"

So he said to him
"I want you to be a father

I'm your little boy and you don't even bother
Like "brother" without the R
And I'm starting to harbor
Cool and food for thought
But for you I'm a starver
Starting to use red markers on my work
My teacher say they know I'm much smarter
But I'm hurt
I used to hand my homework in first
Like I was the classroom starter
Burst to tears
Let them know he see us
Now I'm fighting in class
Got a note last week that say I might not pass
Kids ask me if my daddy is sick of us
Cause you ain't never pick me up
You see what my problem is?
That I don't know where my poppa is
No positive male role model
To play football and build railroad models
It's making a hole you've been digging it
Cause you ain't been kicking it
Since I was old enough to hold bottles
Wasn't supposed to get introduced to that
I don't deserve to get used to that
Now I ain't asking you for money or to come back to me
Some days it ain't sunny but it ain't so hard
Just breaks my heart
When my momma try to provide and I tell her "That ain't your job"
To be a man, she try to make me understand
That she my number one fan
But its like you born from the stands
You know the world is out to get me, why don't you give me a chance?"

Kick Push by Lupe Fiasco

[Intro]

Uh, what up ya'll
Soundtrack what's poppin' baby
Ya'll ain't know I go by the name of Lupe Fiasco
Representin' that 1st & 15 (Yea)
And this one right here
I dedicate this one right here
To all my homies out there grindin' (ya know what I'm saying)
Legally and Illegally (Ha)

You know what I'm talkin' 'bout
So, check it out

[Verse 1]

First got it when he was six
Didn't know any tricks
Matter fact
First time he got on it he slipped
Landed on his hip and bust his lip
For a week he had to talk with a lisp
Like this
Now we could end the story right here
But shorty didn't quit it was something in the air (Yea)
He said it was somethin' so appealing
He couldn't fight the feelin'
Somethin' about it
He knew he couldn't doubt it
Couldn't understand it
Brand it, since his first kickflip he land it (Uh)
Labeled a misfit, abandoned
Ca-kunk, ca-kunk, kunk
His neighbors couldn't stand it, so
He was banished to the park
Started in the morning wouldn't stop till after dark (Yea)
When they said it's getting late in here
Said "I'm sorry young man there's no skating here"

[Chorus]

So we Kick, Push Kick, Push Kick, Push Kick, Push Coast
And away he rolled just a rebel to the world with no place to go
So we Kick, Push Kick, Push Kick, Push Kick, Push Coast
So come and skate with me, just a rebel looking for a place to be
So let's Kick, and Push, and Coast

[Verse 2]

Uh, uh ,uh
My man got a lil older became a better roller (yea)
No helmet, hellbent on killin' himself, was what his momma said
But he was feelin' himself
Got a lil more swagger in his style
Met his girlfriend, she was clappin' in the crowd
Love is what was happening to him now, uh
He said I would marry you but I'm engaged to these aerials and variials
And I don't think this board is strong enough to carry 2
She said bow I weigh 120 pounds, now

Lemme make one thing clear
I don't need to ride yours I got mine right here
So she took him to a spot
He didn't know about
Somewhere in the apartment parking lot, she said
I don't normally take dates in here
Security came and said "I'm sorry there's no skating here"

[Chorus]

[Verse 3]

Yea uh, yea, yea
Before he knew he had a crew
That weren't no punk
In they Spitfire shirts and SB Dunks
They would Push, till they couldn't skate no more
Office building, lobbies weren't safe no more
And it wasn't like they weren't getting chased no more
Just the freedom is better than breathing they said (they said)
And they escape route, they used to escape out
When things got crazy they needed to break out (they'd head)
To any place with stairs, any good grinds the world was theirs, uh
And they four wheels would take them there
Till the cops came and said "There's no skating here"

Hurt Me Soul by Lupe Fiasco

Now I ain't tryna be the greatest
I used to hate hip-hop... yup, because the women degraded
But Too \$hort made me laugh, like a hypocrite I played it
A hypocrite I stated, though I only recited half
Omittin the word "bitch," cursin I wouldn't say it
Me and dog couldn't relate, til a bitch I dated
Forgive my favorite word for hers and hers alike
But I learnt it from a song I heard and sorta liked
Yeah, for the icin, glamorized drug dealin was appealin
But the block club kept it from in front of our buildin
Gangsta rap-based filmings became the buildin blocks
For children with leakin ceilings catchin drippins with pots
Coupled with compositions from Pac, Nas's "It Was Written"
In the mix with my realities and feelings
Living conditions, religion, ignorant wisdom and artistic vision
I began to jot, tap the world and listen, it drop

My mom can't feed me, my boyfriend beats me

I have sex for money, the hood don't love me
The cops wanna kill me, this nonsense built me
And I got noooo place to gooo
They bomb my village, they call us killers
Took me off they welfare, can't afford they health care
My teacher won't teach me, my master beats me
And it huuurts meee sooooul

I had a ghetto boy bop, a Jay-Z boycott
'Cause he said that he never prayed to God, he prayed to Gotti
I'm thinkin godly, God guard me from the ungodly
But by my 30th watchin of "Streets is Watchin"
I was back to givin props again and that was botherin
By this uncomfortable as a untouchable touchin you
The theme songs that niggas hustle to seem wrong but these songs was comin true
And it was all becoming cool
I found a condom on the ground that Johns would cum into and thought
What constitutes a prostitute is the pursuit of profit then they drop it
The homie in a suit pat her on the butt, then rock it
It seems I was seein the same scene adopted
Prevalent in different things with the witnesses indifferent to stop it
They said don't knock it, mind ya business
His business isn't mine and that nigga pimpin got it

They took my daughter, we ain't got no water
I can't get hired, they cross on fire
We all got suspended, I just got sentenced
So I got noooo place to gooo
They threw down my gang sign, I ain't got no hang time
They talk about my sneakers, poisoned our leader
My father ain't seen me, turn off my TV
'Cause it huuurts meee sooooul

So through the Grim Reaper sickle sharpening
Macintosh marketing
Oil field augering
Brazilian adolescent disarmament
Israeli occupation
Islamic martyrdom, precise
Yeah, laser guided targeting
Oil for food bartering, and terrorist organization harborin
Sand camouflage army men
CCF sponsorin, world conquerin, telephone monitorin
Louis Vuitton modelin, pornographic actress honorin
String theory ponderin, bulimic vomitin

Catholic priest fondlin, pre-emptive bombin and Osama and no bombin them
They breakin in my car again, deforestation and overloggin and
Hennessy and Hypnotic swallowin, hydroponic coughin and
All the world's ills, sittin on chrome 24-inch wheels, like that

They say I'm infected, this is why I injected
I had it aborted, we got deported
My laptop got spyware, they say that I can't lie here
But I got noooo place to gooo
I can't stop eatin, my best friend's leavin
My pastor touched me, I love this country
I lost my earpiece, I hope y'all hear me
'Cause it huuurts meee sooooul