

HEALTH

Object or Subject? Women and Hip-Hop

Related Subjects:

Media Literacy
Language Arts
Social Studies

Objectives:

- o Analyze the role women have played in the evolution of Hip-Hop
- o Critically examine how women are portrayed in Hip-Hop lyrics and videos

Materials:

“Hip-Hop Fridays: Big Booty Hoes (and other whack Rap video images),” by Ife Oshun (download the article from the Web site)

Introduction:

This lesson is intended to prompt discussions about women in Hip-Hop by charting the evolutionary role they've played, and by examining how they've been portrayed (and continue to be portrayed) in lyrics and music videos. Women have always played an important role in the development of Hip-Hop (for example, Sylvia Robinson produced Sugar Hill Gang's “Rapper's Delight”, one of the first Hip-Hop mega hits) and they continue to wield tremendous influence on the music and culture. In addition to exploring this history, students should also examine how portrayals of women in Hip-Hop affect their own behaviors and attitudes.

Activity:

Have students read Ife Oshun's article about the images of women in Hip-Hop and discuss. Do they agree with her position that “the preponderance of women's exposed flesh in Rap media is about more than showing skin and selling sex. It's about power.” What does she mean by this? Who controls the images of women being put out through mainstream Hip-Hop? Have your students examine lyrics by 50 Cent or Snoop Dog to find references to women.

- o How are women portrayed?
- o How are they represented in their music videos?
- o What effect does this have on youth male attitudes and behaviors towards females?
- o Are there male artists who are treating women with respect in their lyrics and videos?

Oshun also talks about the impact on female artists. She points out that they're being marketed around sex and sensuality instead of their lyrical skills. Have your students discuss these aspects as well. Do they agree with this observation? If they were record executives, how would they market female artists?

Production activity:

Have students, either individually or in small groups, create a timeline that focuses on women in Hip-Hop. Have them start at the beginning and identify prominent female artists. When did the first female artist break in? How was she received? What was distinctive about her music or presentation?



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Some of the early artists students can explore include:

- o Sequence (1980)
- o Roxanne Shante (1984)
- o Salt-N-Pepa (1985)
- o MC Lyte (1987)
- o Monie Love (1988)
- o Queen Latifah (1989)
- o Sister Souljah (1992)
- o Lauryn Hill (1996)

Students should then jump to present day female artists. Who are some of the current stars? What is their message? What images are used in their marketing campaigns? How do they differ from the early female Hip-Hop stars? What other ways are women impacting Hip-Hop besides music?

