



HIP HOP MODULE

LEARNING RESOURCES KIT

AUSTRALIAN
MUSIC
VAULT

HIP HOP MODULE

Victorian Curriculum Links

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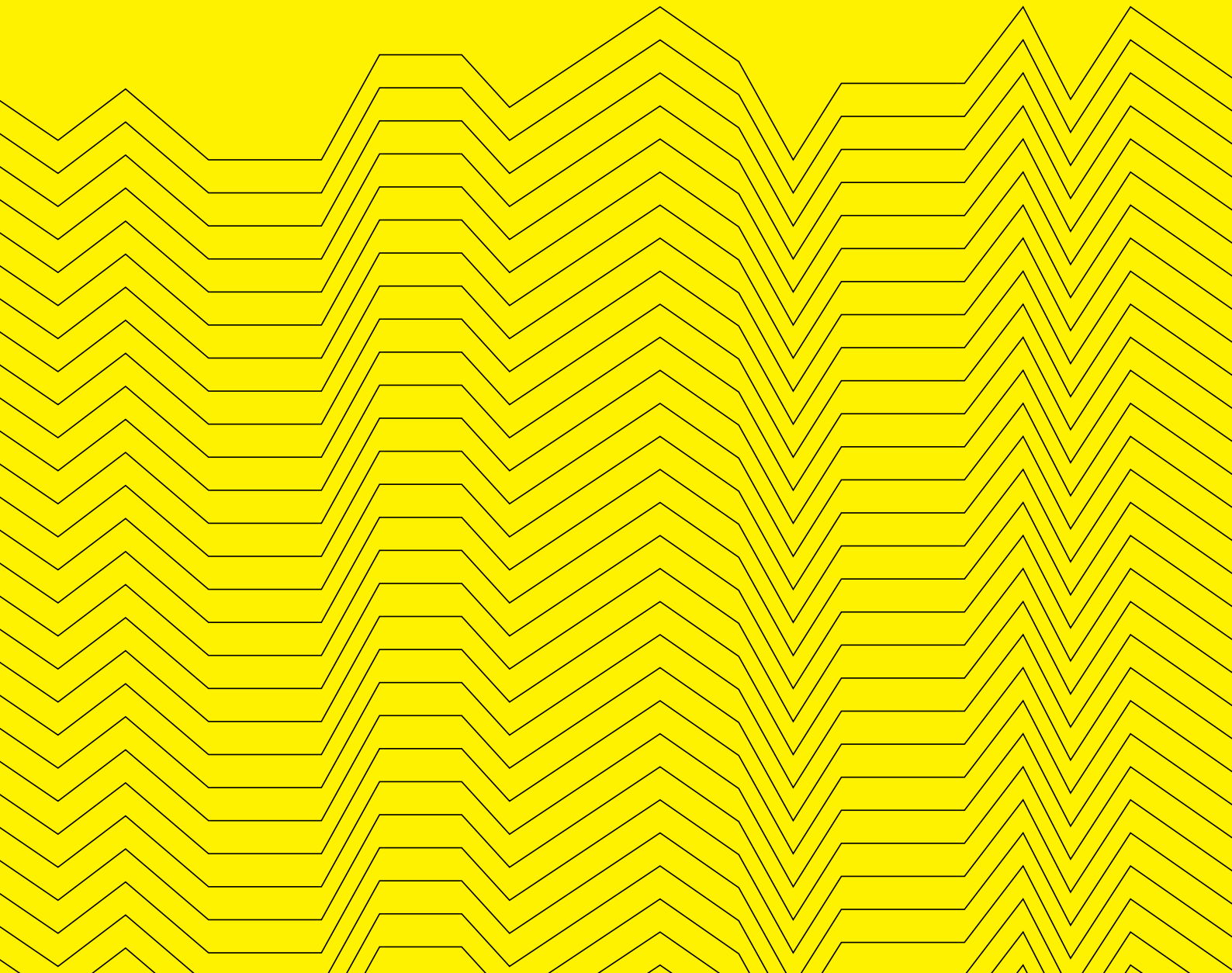


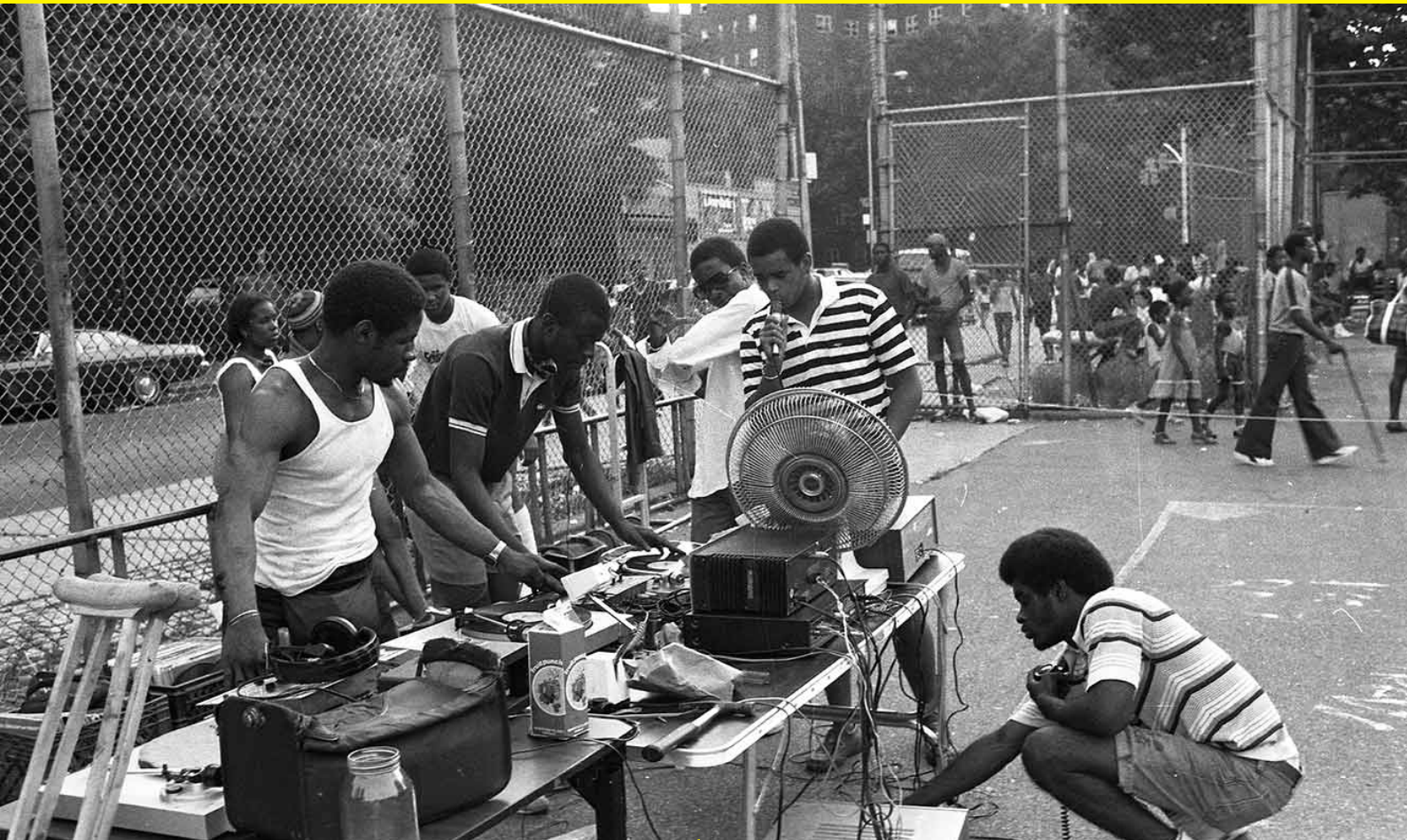
HIP HOP



LEARNING RESOURCE KIT
WRITTEN BY HIP HOP ARTIST MANTRA

PRE-VISIT





G Man – Park Jam in the Bronx. Photograph by Henry Chalfant

Since the early 1970's, hip hop has provided a platform for artists all over the world to express themselves, share their ideas and articulate their points of view. From block parties in The Bronx, New York City, to arenas and stadiums all over the world, it has become one of the most popular music genres of our time. It goes far beyond just music though, hip hop is a culture; a powerful social movement encompassing DJing, MCing, breakdancing (B-Boys and B-Girls), graffiti art, beatboxing, beat production, fashion, language and more. This culture has often acted as a 'voice for the voiceless', a way for people to amplify their opinions and make their voices heard, where other forums for discussion might be difficult or even impossible to access. Hip hop is the permission to speak your mind, to be yourself. So when it arrived in Australia, first becoming popular in the 1980's with the explosion of breakdancing, it was only natural that Australian hip hop artists would put their own spin on things, developing a uniquely Australian sound that would continue to evolve right up until today. Early acts like Def Wish Cast paved the way for the future success of artists such as Koolism, 1200 Techniques, Hilltop Hoods and Bliss n Eso. 30 years later, Australian hip hop is still going strong, enjoying mainstream commercial success and earning a legitimate place in the Australian music conversation. The local scene is more diverse than ever, celebrating a broad range of artists, styles, cultures and nationalities; a testament to hip hop's values of respect, inclusion and individuality.

*"Rap is something you do,
Hip hop is something you live"*

KRS-One



Hilltop Hoods performing in Melbourne. Photograph by Michelle Grace Hunder

CONTEMPLATE AND DISCOVER

- **Hip hop is all about speaking up about what's important to you.** What are some of the things that matter most to you? What are some of the issues that are affecting you or those around you? Read a newspaper in print or online, watch the news on TV or talk to someone who has, and identify some issues you could write lyrics about.
- **A rapper's greatest weapon is their words, which means their greatest tool is their rhyme book.** Get your hands on a notepad or exercise book that you can use exclusively for lyrics and song ideas (rappers call this their "rhyme book"). Take it with you wherever you go and use it to jot down any ideas you come across. They might be things you overhear, things you see throughout the day, even something that pops into your head while you're at school or on public transport. Write down as many thoughts and ideas as you can. If you don't have your rhyme book with you, you can always use a note taking app on your phone to write or record your ideas.
- **Listen to instrumental hip hop tracks.** Did you know that **RAP** stands for Rhythm And Poetry? This is because when rappers perform their lyrics, they do it over a piece of music which is specific to that song. The 'beats' are what help rappers find the rhythm and timing of their lyrics and decide on the mood of the song. Listen to some instrumental hip hop beats (there are thousands

on YouTube and other websites) and think about what kind of lyrics you could perform over them.

- **Every good rhymers needs a good rhyming vocabulary.** Rhyming words are an important feature of rap lyrics. The more rhyming words we know, the more control we have over the lyrics that we write. On your own or in a small group, write down the longest word you can think of, then the most interesting word. Now, write down as many words as you can think of that rhyme with those original words. As an extra challenge, try to think of words that rhyme with the *whole* word, not just the end of the word. For example, if your word is “discrimination”, a word like “elimination” is a very close rhyme with the whole word, not just the “ation” part at the end.

Hint: there are some rhyming dictionaries online which you can use if you get stuck!

- [Poetry4kids](#)
- [RhymeZone](#)
- [Dillfrog](#)
- [Rhymer](#)

- **What is hip hop? brainstorming activity.** In your class group, brainstorm as many ideas as you can around the question *What is hip hop?* Here are some prompts to get you started:
 - Is hip hop just a type of music?
 - What is the difference between hip hop and rap?
 - What are some of the features of hip hop music?
 - How many hip hop artists (both Australian and International) can you think of?
 - What are some words, clothing styles and activities that are associated with hip hop culture?
 - What are some examples of hip hop culture you might see in everyday life?

REFLECTIONS

Writing hip hop music can be an immensely powerful part of people's lives. It can provide a way to process our thoughts, express our emotions, build our identity and speak out on issues that are important to us. Over the years, hip hop has been able to affect real change within communities around the world. Politically-minded hip hop artists such as Public Enemy, NWA and 2Pac not only changed the world of music, their music and ideas helped to change the world itself. Hip hop in Australia is no exception. It provides a platform for artists to speak out on the issues that matter and represent their culture and identity. Indigenous Australian hip hop artists such as Munkimuk, Briggs, Lady Lash, Jimblah, BrothaBlack, MC Wire and Miss Hood have used their music to address some of the issues facing many First Nations Australians. Hip hop in Australia has grown to reflect the diverse and multi-cultural communities that call this country home.

When it comes to writing hip hop songs, it's important to balance the *craft* with the *content*. The *craft* refers to the technical skills involved – rhyming, flow, rhythm, timing, tone of voice etc. The *content* refers to the personal side of things, choosing subjects that resonate with people, developing original and unique song ideas, putting heartfelt emotion into the music and honing an individual style.



Australian hip hop artist Baker Boy

TASK 1 – FEELING THE BEAT

Writing songs is all about making people *feel* something. For that reason, it's important when writing songs to think about what we want our music to *feel* like.

Please visit the [Australian Music Vault website](#) to listen to an instrumental version of Monkey Marc's Australian/Jamaican crossover hit, *No Surrender*.

Play the song and as it plays, write down on a piece of paper everything the music makes you feel. Don't think too hard about it, just write down whatever comes to mind, the more ideas the better. You never know, they just might inspire a topic for a song or some lyrics for a verse or chorus.

Here are some prompts and ideas to help get you started:

- What emotions do you feel when you listen to the song?
- What does it *feel* like? Eg, does it feel like a dark, empty street covered in ice? Does it feel like a scorching hot desert?
- What can you see when you listen to it? What do you picture in your mind?
- What would the music video look like?

TASK 2 – HEARING THE BEAT

The last task was all about *feeling* the beat and the emotions contained in it. This task is focused more on *hearing* the beat and the different practical elements that make it sound the way it sounds.

This time, listen to the song and think about all the different musical elements you can hear. For example, you might hear drums, bass, synths, record samples, pianos, guitars, the list goes on. Make a note of the different sounds you can hear in this particular instrumental track.

It can be useful to know the speed or pace of the beat you're using. We refer to the pace of a song as the **tempo** and it is measured in **BPM**, which stands for Beats Per Minute. Using a **tap tempo** app or website, see if you can work out the tempo of the beat provided. This will usually involve playing the instrumental track and tapping your screen or computer keyboard in time with the music.

- [Measuring BPM](#)
- [Beats per minute online](#)

Drums are a crucial part of many hip hop tracks. Drums are often the part of the song that hold everything together and provide the song's pace and rhythm. In hip hop music, drums might be played live and recorded, or they might be programmed using drum machines or beat-making software. The feel and structure of the drum track can often lead the song in a certain direction, telling the rapper whether their rhymes should be slow or fast, contain lots of words or be more relaxed with lots of space between the lines. What different kinds of drums can you hear in this song? Can you hear a bass/kick drum? A snare drum? Hi-hats? A crash cymbal? How much space is there between the drum hits? If you were rapping on this beat, how would you go about it?

Listen to the different drum beats in the first section of the [Learning Music with Ableton](#) resource. Play around with the components of the track and see which you like best.

TASK 3 – TIME TO RHYME

Rhyming is important when writing lyrics in hip hop. There are quite a few types of rhymes, the main ones being:

- 1) **Perfect rhymes** – ie. fly and cry
- 2) **Family rhymes** – swapping consonant sounds for other sounds from the same family– ie. had and bag
- 3) **Additive/subtractive rhyme** – ie. start with a word (eg. clears) and rhyme with the long or short form of that (eg. fear)
- 4) **Assonance rhyme** - swapping the consonant sound for sounds from a different family – ie. light and shine
- 5) **Consonance rhyme** – quite different sounds with one similar consonant sound – ie. this and pass

For more information and all the details of these rhyming schemes, check out [this article](#) on SPIRE.

It's time to test out your rhyming vocab. [Download this rhyming exercise](#) and follow the instructions.

In the first section, you are given a number of rap lines with some of the rhyming words missing. Your job is to fill in the blanks with the appropriate rhyming word from the list provided.

In the second section, you are given some more rap lines but this time every second line is missing. Your job is to fill in the blanks with rap lines of your own, choosing your own rhyming words to use at the end of each line.

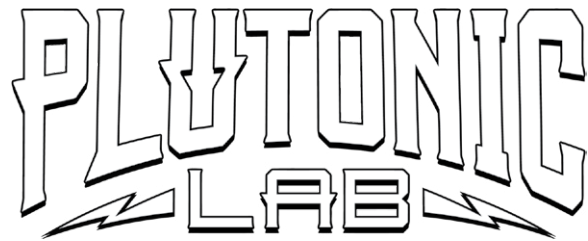
TASK 4 – YOUR OWN HIP HOP ALIAS

Hip hop artists tend to use an alias or stage names when they perform. The **MC** or **DJ** name is a time honoured tradition in hip hop culture.

Some famous examples of hip hop stage names include:

Grandmaster Flash, DJ Kool Herc, Snoop Doggy Dogg, Cardi B, Busta Rhymes, MC Lyte, Urthboy, Illy, Seth Sentry, Maya Jupiter and L-Fresh The Lion.

Come up with your own hip hop alias. Once you've thought of your alias, see if you can think of an interesting way to write or draw your own artist logo. You can do this manually on paper, or [Sketchpad](#) is a great online drawing program. Below are some examples of hip hop artist logos in different styles.



Did you know MC stands for Master of Ceremonies? This is because in the early days of hip hop, the MC's main role was to support the DJ and use a microphone to make important announcements and keep the party people happy. Over the years this role developed to include more musical, hype vocal styles and eventually rhyming entire lines and verses.

Do some research and find out what DJ stands for and why.

TASK 5 - AUSTRALIAN HIP HOP SPOTIFY PLAYLIST

[Here is a playlist](#) spotlighting Australian hip hop music from the 80s, when the scene began in Australia, until today. Note there is some language that may be offensive in this playlist, please check the song lyrics before playing to students.

Def Wish Cast – Dun Proppa

Said to be the pioneers of Australian hip hop, Def Wish Cast hail from Western Sydney. They formed in 1989 and released their debut album, *Knights of the Underground Table* in 1993. It was the first full-length Australian hip hop album, and their anthemic single, *A.U.S.T.*, was the first domestic hip hop clip to be aired on ABC TV's *Rage*. After a hiatus, Def Wish Cast returned in 2003 with the LP *The Legacy Continues* and again in 2012 with the single *Dun Proppa*, taken from their 20th anniversary album *The Evolution Machine*. Def Wish Cast represent all elements of the hip-hop culture including graffiti art and b-boying.

Koolism – Can't Stand It

ARIA award winning duo *Koolism* formed in Canberra in 1992. *Can't Stand It* is taken from the album *The 'Umu*, released in 2010. The album title, inspired by MC Hau's Tongan heritage, is named after an underground oven used in Polynesian cooking. Hau says the album is "dedicated to the essence of original and classic hip hop". The track is a passionate decry of racism in Australia, turning a harsh eye on the injustices of the political system.

The Avalanches – Frontier Psychiatrist

The Avalanches formed in Melbourne in 1997, releasing their landmark album *Since I Left You* in 2000. Created from over 3500 vinyl samples, the album was met with critical acclaim. The single *Frontier Psychiatrist* uses samples from comedy duo Wayne and Shuster, film music, golf instructional videos, Christian records and 'Reading for the Blind' tapes. It was The Avalanches' first single to enjoy commercial success.

1200 Techniques – Karma

1200 Techniques was formed in 1997 by brothers DJ Peril and Kemstar and is fronted by MC/vocalist N'fa Jones. Taken from their debut album *Choose One*, The track *Karma* was released in 2002. It received two ARIA awards for 'Best Independent Release' and 'Best Video' in the same year. 1200 Techniques have been key players in bringing commercial acceptance to hip hop within Australia, drawing influences from other genres including funk, soul, rock and breakbeat.

MC Trey – Light (feat. 26th Letter and Jae Tee)

MC Trey is a Fijian born Australian vocalist and hip hop activist creating music that speaks about social issues, everyday experiences and the possibilities that a new day brings. Her single *Light*, released in 2013, deals with the issue of domestic violence, responding to an incident where a Sydney woman was killed by her partner. Speaking about the track Trey has said "I'm hoping we can get people talking about domestic violence. I'm also hoping we can get young people thinking about how they are being treated in their relationships and how they treat their partners."

Hilltop Hoods – I Love It (feat. Sia)

Hilltop Hoods formed in Adelaide in 1994 and have since released seven studio albums, two 're-strung' albums with an orchestra and five DVDs. Their track *I Love It* was the first single from the album *Drinking From the Sun* (released in 2012) and quickly became one of their biggest selling songs. It is a song about being a rapper and celebrates the success Hilltop Hoods have encountered throughout their career. The single was accompanied by the release of three separate music videos.

Urthboy – The Signal

Tim Levinson, better known by his moniker Urthboy, is a founding member of hip hop outfit The Herd and a co-founder of pioneer label Elefant Traks. He has released five solo albums and collaborated with many prominent Australian artists. Whilst The Herd are known for the political slant within their work, Urthboy's solo albums are a place for Levinson to approach making music from a more personal perspective. *The Signal* is the upbeat title track from the album of the same name released in 2007.

Horrorshow – Own Backyard (feat. Jimblah)

A hip hop duo from inner-city Sydney, Horrorshow combines Adit Gauchan's smooth grooves with MC Solo's eloquent lyrics on themes such as politics, privilege, family, history and racism. The track *Own Backyard* is taken off Horrorshow's third album *King Amongst Many*. It deals with dysfunctional race relationships within Australia and features indigenous artist Jimblah.

Maya Jupiter – Smile ft. Aloe Black

Born in Mexico to a Mexican father and Turkish mother, Maya grew up in Sydney. Hip hop became a vehicle for her to express her joy, pain and life experiences, and later she co-founded Artist Entertainment, an entertainment company committed to creating and supporting art and music that inspires positive social change. *Smile* is taken from her second album *Never Said Yes* released in 2018 and features her husband, US soul singer Aloe Blacc.

Mantra – Learn Your Language

Mantra is an award-winning Melbourne based hip hop artist who has been releasing music since 2002. After releasing albums with iconic groups Equills and Illzilla, he embarked on a solo career in 2010, signing with legendary Australian hip hop label Obese Records. *Learn your Language* is taken from Mantra's 2013 album, *Telling Scenes*. The LP received widespread critical acclaim, *Rolling Stone* naming it "one of the hip hop albums of the year", in a glowing 4-star review.

Vida Sunshyne – All Three Eyes

Melbourne based Ghanian-Australian hip hop artist Vida Sunshyne first came onto the hip hop scene as someone collaborating with a long list of artists including Astronomy Class, Illzilla and Thundamentals. On describing her solo release *All Three Eyes*, Vida has written "It's been a long time coming and after all the obstacles and life lessons I've found my way back to my purpose and understanding who I am and what I'm about. This single is basically a declaration of my presence and intent." The song is taken from her soon to be released EP and has been remixed by a number of producers.

Drapht – Where Ya From

MC Paul Reid, better known by the stage name Drapht, is an Australian hip-hop artist from Perth. He became part of Perth's hip hop crew *Syllabolix* when he was 17, learning from the crew's producers and many freestyle sessions with the crew's MCs. *Where Ya From* is taken from Drapht's third album *Brothers Grimm*, released on Obese Records in 2008. Drapht says about the record "With Brothers Grimm I focused on my song writing and concepts more than any previous album. I set out for it to be more of a personal and truthful account with what I stand for moralistically".

A.B. Original – Take Me Home (feat. Gurrumul)

A.B. Original is an Australian hip hop duo made up of Yorta Yorta MC Briggs and Ngarrindjeri MC Trials. A.B. Original stands for Always Black, Original. Their music is political and has been described as "angry, polemical, brutally frank and meant to inspire a response, good or bad". The duo was created when both artists were invited to perform at Triple J's 40 year celebration in 2015. Since then they have been writing songs that bring attention to social issues. The track *Take Me Home* was taken from the Australian Music Prize winning album *Reclaim Australia*, released in 2016.

Remi – My People (feat. Thando)

Remi is a Melbourne based duo made up of rapper Remi Kolawole and producer Sensible J. They have released two albums, including the Australian Music Prize winning *Raw X Infinity* in 2014. *My People* was released as a single in 2018. All about family, it has Kolawole's brothers Hussein and Yusef Harare on backing vocals. They also feature in the film clip. "I just wanted to showcase my beautiful family whilst centering diversity and blackness in this film clip, which is rarely done in this country" he says in a statement. The song also features Zimbabwean born and Melbourne based singer-songwriter, Thando on vocals.

Sampa the Great – F E M A L E

Sampa the Great was born in Zambia and raised in Botswana before coming to Australia at age 22 to further her musical studies. Since then she has received the Australian Music Prize in 2018 for her album *Birds and The BEE9*, a lyrically rich meeting point of reggae, hip-hop and soul. *F E M A L E* is taken off her album *The Great Mixtape*, released in 2015, described by Sampa herself as "a search for creativity, laughter, purpose and rhythms."

Tkay Maida – White Rose

Adelaide based rapper Tkay Maida was born in Zimbabwe before moving to Western Australia as a child. She released her debut single at age 16 and has released two albums since then. On describing the motivation behind the track *White Rose*, Maida says "A white rose is a symbol of a friendship, or this feeling of security you get when two people are on the same terms. I wanted to make a super conversational song to a person explaining exactly what was going on in my head word for word. It's about how a person is only there for you when everything is smooth but isn't there when it's gloomy or dark."

Bliss n Eso – Bullet and a Target

Originally from Sydney, Bliss n Eso consists of MCs Bliss (Jonathan Notley) and Eso (Max MacKinnon), as well as DJ Izm (Tarik Ejjamai). They met at high school in the 1990s. Since their first release in 2000 they have put out six studio albums. *Bullet and a Target*, originally a song by US songwriter Citizen Cope, was released by Bliss n Eso in 2007 after a trip to South Africa where they were inspired to write about the living conditions they witnessed there. They collaborated with the Zulu Connection Choir of South Africa and recorded the song at the home studio of Jimmy Barnes in Sydney. Funds raised from sales of the single were given to the Oaktree Foundation charity, Australia's only youth-run international aid and development organisation.

DURING VISIT



LOOK

Look at the two jumpsuits at the end of the hip hop case:

- What kind of attitude do you think the performers were trying to convey?
- Find out the year the jumpsuits were made from the digital label. Compare the fashion statements they are making and how these relate to the different time periods in which they were created.
- What do you think the effect of their fashion choices would have on their image?
- When these costumes were created, do you think that the designers considered how hip hop performers would move around the stage?

What can the design of the objects in this case reveal to us about hip hop artists in Australia? See if you can pick up on any trends – ideas that keep popping up. Also think about how hip hop style compares with other musical genres in the exhibition – what are the similarities and differences?

LISTEN

*Teachers please be aware the lyrical content of the songs played via the digital labels may be explicit.

Listen to one of the songs in the exhibition via the digital labels. Make sure it's a song you've never heard before.

- What does it make you feel?
- What ideas are being expressed?
- Sketch a quick album cover you think would be a good representation of this artist, based only on the sound of the song.

Find a piece of technology that one of the artists has used to make music. Listen to the song on the digital label and identify as best you can, what kind of sound would that machine make? What kind of other instruments can you hear in the song?

INVESTIGATE

Find a piece of graffiti that one of the artists has used to decorate an object in the exhibition. Identify as best you can, the main design elements - line, colour, shape, space, texture, typography, scale, dominance and emphasis, balance and harmony. Why do you like it or find it interesting?

Find and compare the logo designs for Def Wish Cast and Muph & Plutonic. What is different about them? How do the images, font, design and colours create a certain mood or identity?

POST VISIT





Beat Making. Photograph by Zoe Rinkel

TASK 1 – BUILDING A BEAT WITH LOOPS

Hip hop beats are often made up of short, cyclic sections of music called loops. These loops might go for a length of 2 bars, 4 bars, 8 bars or longer. The loops are put in a specific order to create the different sections of the song – for example, the intro section might have no drums, while the chorus might introduce extra layers of instrumentation to make it sound more impactful.

Please visit the [Australian Music Vault website](#) to listen to a snippet from the instrumental version of Combat Wombat's song *Asylum*, taken from their 2017 album *Just Across The Border*.

Download: [Audio Loops](#)

Using a beat-making program such as GarageBand or Logic, try putting the loops in order to recreate the arrangement of the song. (You may need to refer back to the original reference track if you're unsure). The tempo/BPM for the track is 95 BPM (Beats Per Minute).

Hint – the loops will not end up in alphabetical order.

Once you've done that, try putting the loops in a new order or repeating different sections to create a completely new arrangement of the song.

Have a listen to other peoples' versions to see some of the different ways the same loops can be put together.

TASK 2 – WRITING TO THE BEAT

MC's will generally decide on a beat *before* starting to work on lyrics. This is because the beat will have a particular pace, rhythm and mood, so it's important that the MC's lyrics reflect these elements. Listening to the beat before starting on lyrics will help the creative process, giving the MC rhythmic and emotional cues to follow when developing ideas for the song.

Write a short rap verse using the beat you created in the previous task. Try to come up with lyrics that complement the mood of the song.

Hip hop's magic number

Hip hop culture originally consisted of four "elements", which together covered some of the broad styles and components of hip hop.

The four official elements of hip hop are:

1) DJing



DJ Wasabi

2) MCing or rapping



Remi performing live at the Bowler Bar.
Photograph by Markus Ravik

3) Breakdancing or breaking



Wickid Force

4) Graffiti art



Indigenous Mural by Adnate and Slicer & Itch

The number four can also be helpful when writing hip hop music. Nearly all hip hop songs are in a 4/4 time signature, which means there are four beats in each bar of music. Simply put, the music is counting to us in groups or cycles of 4. This is usually most noticeable in the drums. A basic hip hop drum beat will have the bass or kick drum playing on the 1 and 3 counts, while the snare drum plays on the 2 and the 4.

Infamous and avant-garde Melbourne crew Fortnight Productions released [this entertaining video](#) in the early 2000's breaking down their process for making a slammin' hip hop beat.

The exact rhythm of the drums will vary from track to track, but the 4 counts will generally still be there. Even when a song has no drums in it, this count of 4 will still be audible, often in the rhythm of other instruments or audio samples. MC's use this rhythmic guide to decide on how best to deliver their words over the track, like a map that can be followed to help keep the artist's lyrics in time with the music.

Please visit the [Australian Music Vault website](#) to listen to Aaron Chouai's song *Why Must It* featuring Mantra. This piece is a good example of a song that follows the 4 count without a constant drum beat.

When you're writing your lyrics, try rapping them out loud to test how they sound over the beat. Are they fitting within the counts of four? Are they too fast? Too slow? Sometimes you may have to add or subtract words to help your lyrics fit better within the timing of the beat. A good rule to use when getting started is

– one line of rap should fit inside one count of four. Putting your rhyming words at the end of the line - on or near the 4 count – can be a good way to break up the lines and keep the listener engaged.

These lines are taken from the classic *Beastie Boys* track, "Intergalactic". Notice how the 1, 2 and 3 counts are in different spots each time, but the rhyming word always lands on the 4.

1 2 3 4
Well, now, don't you tell me to smile

1 2 3 4
You stick around I'll make it worth your while

1 2 3 4
My number's beyond what you can dial

1 2 3 4
Maybe it's because we're so versatile

TASK 3 – DROP SOME KNOWLEDGE

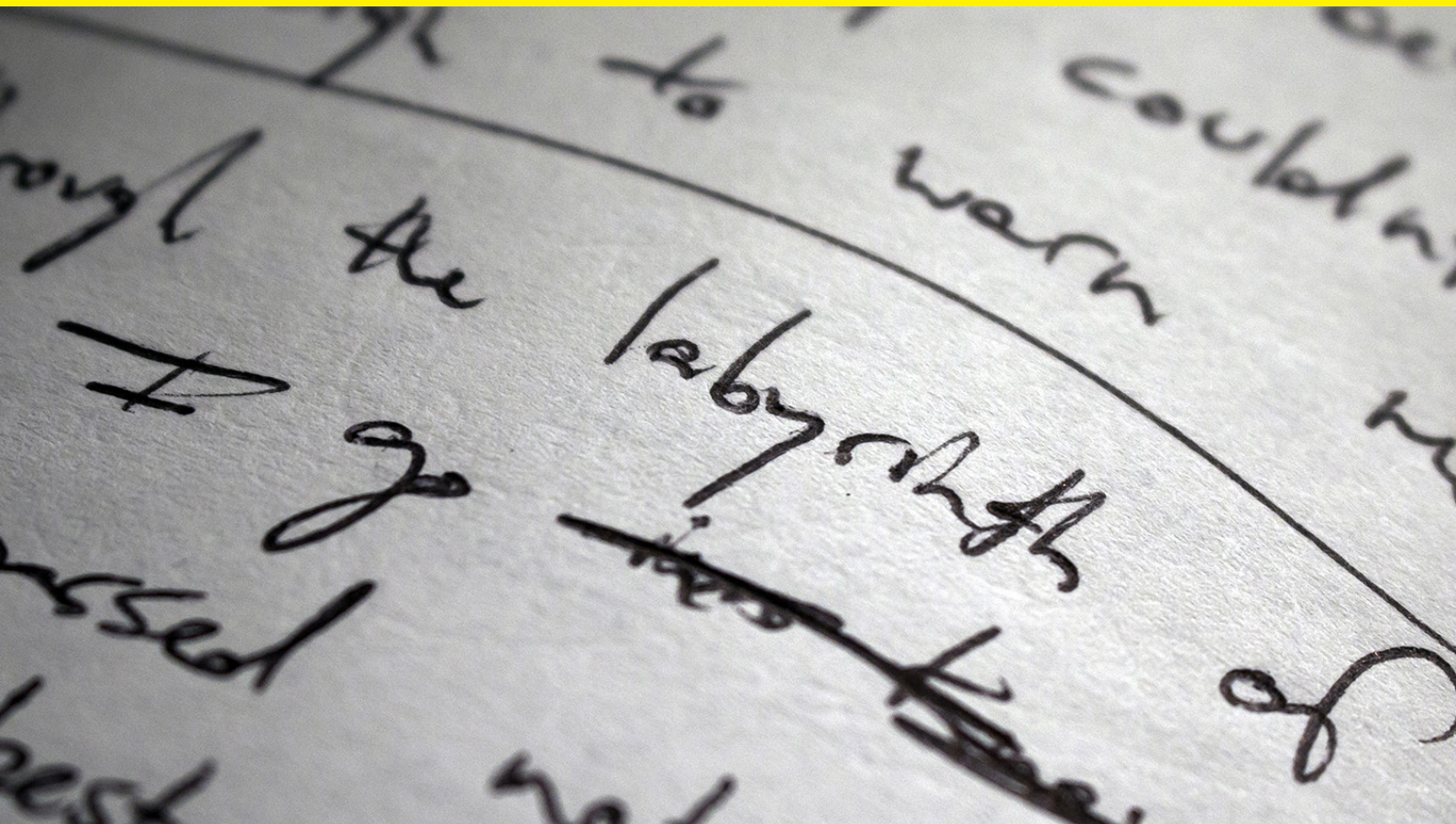
Hip hop and rap are powerful ways to speak your mind and create a positive message. Many of the greatest hip hop acts of all time have created their material by responding to social issues. In Australia, issues such as racism, treatment of asylum seekers, family violence and climate change are often addressed in hip hop songs.

In order to confidently speak out on these kinds of issues, it's important to do some research and build a basic foundation of knowledge.

Find 3 articles relating to a particular social issue. Read the articles and consider whether this social issue could be the basis or inspiration for a hip hop track. Present what you've learned to your class group for discussion and feedback.

STAND ALONE





PROJECT 1 – WRITING A SONG

What makes a good hip hop song? Is it the subject matter? The lyrical content? The beat? The flow? The artist's tone of voice and vocal delivery? The meaning and messages inside the words? The emotion and mood of the song? The truth is, all of these things can contribute to making a great song. The most important thing is that it sounds like it's coming directly from the artist themselves. An audience, particularly a hip hop audience, want to hear an artist speaking from the heart. So as long as you're being yourself and not trying too hard to sound like someone else, you're already off to a good start. If you're writing about things that mean something to you, then your lyrics will be delivered with conviction and chances are they will mean something to the listener as well.

Be patient and be prepared to be imperfect. A lot goes into writing a good song. Artists are constantly refining, adjusting and reworking their ideas. A song will often go through several different incarnations before it's finished, so don't be discouraged if your ideas aren't popping right away. Be prepared to flesh things out and follow a train of thought, even if you're unsure where it will end up. You can always refine and edit things later, so write them all down and try them out before you decide whether or not to keep them. No song will ever be perfect, nor should it be. Hip hop isn't about being perfect, it's about being you.

Step 1 - Find the beat.

Find an instrumental hip hop beat that you can use as the basis for your song. This could be a beat you've found online, a beat you or a friend have made yourself, or even the beat you created out of loops in one of the earlier tasks. The most important thing is that you like it and feel inspired to write something to it.

Check out [Ableton's Learning Music](#) online activities in beat-making to get you started.

Think about the mood and emotions you feel when you listen to the beat. What does it make you feel? What kind of lyrics could you write to it? Decide on the tone you want your lyrics to take and what kind of emotions you want people to feel when they listen to your song. You could even do the 'Feeling the Beat' task from the [Pre-Visit section](#) of these resources to help get some ideas flowing.

Step 2 - Find the topic

Now you have an idea of the emotion and mood you want to put into your song, it's time to pick your topic. This could be the social issue you researched in one of the earlier tasks, or another issue that is important to you. It could be based on what you've learned about hip hop history or Australian hip hop. It might just be something that means something to you, or that comes to mind when listening to the instrumental beat you've chosen. It doesn't matter what your topic is, as long as you find it interesting, and feel like it will suit the mood you're going for.

Once you've decided on your topic, use a blank page to brainstorm some ideas associated with that topic. The more ideas the better, so don't worry too much about making everything fit with the original idea. Write down every word or thought that comes to mind. Sometimes the best ideas come from the places we least expect. You might like to use your rhyme book from one of the earlier tasks for inspiration.

Step 3 - Find the angle

How is your song going to be different to other songs? How can you make sure it stands out? It's important to find original and unique ways of presenting your music. If you know what your song is about and what you want your song to feel like, start thinking about how you can write the song to give it your own flavour. Is it going to be a story? A collection of different thoughts and ideas? Will it be written from your perspective, or someone else's? These are all things to think about *before* you start writing your lyrics. The clearer you are about the angle you're taking to present your song, the stronger your song will be.

METAPHOR

Many hip hop artists use metaphor to add a deeper layer to the meaning in their music. In his song *Flightpath*, hip hop artist Mantra tells a story about a paper plane that goes to war. The purpose of the story, however, is to illustrate the futility of war and violence, and discuss how thoughts, ideas and communication can be far more powerful.

Step 4 - Write the song

When you're ready to write your lyrics, there are a few different approaches you can take. You may already have an idea of how you want your song to go, in which case you might just want to start writing and see where it takes you. Another way you can go about it is by thinking about your song's structure. Most songs have different sections – verses, choruses, bridges, intros, outros etc. Hip hop instrumentals often contain different musical sections already, so this can help you decide where your lyrical sections will go. Thinking about what sections you want to include in your song and how you want to arrange them can often help steer your lyrics in a certain direction. Some artists like to plan the sections out first, making dot points of what could be covered in each of the different parts of the song. This can be particularly useful if you're taking a storytelling approach, as you can plan out the beginning, middle and end points of

your story in line with the verses, choruses and other sections of your song.

Remember there is no right or wrong way to write song lyrics, so if it feels right to you, go with it. You can always refer back to the work you've already done. You've identified the mood you're going for, decided on the song's topic and established what angle you're taking to get your point across. Once all that is in place, writing lyrics is the easy part!

For more information about songwriting, see the [Stand Alone Music Module](#).

PROJECT 2 – DESIGN AN ALBUM COVER

The album cover is an iconic part of hip hop music and music in general. Over the years there have been countless styles, trends and movements influencing hip hop album artwork.

Your task now is to use your hip hop alias and your new artist logo from earlier tasks to create your own album cover. You can refer to the [Design unit's learning resources](#) for some tips on getting started.

Hip hop album covers have constantly changed and evolved over time. The sky is the limit in terms of what you could include in yours and how it looks is completely up to you. Your cover could include photos, illustrations, computer-based graphic design or even a collage of different images. Here are some examples of Australian hip hop album covers that use a range of different design styles.

The Signal (Urthboy) - Collage style



Album cover for The Signal – Urthboy

Heretik (Layla) - Illustration



Album cover for Heretik - Layla

Birds And The BEE9 (Sampa the Great) – Illustration of the artist



Album cover for Birds And The BEE9 – Sampa the Great

Telling Scenes (Mantra) – Photo composite



Album cover for Telling Scenes – Mantra

One (L-Fresh the Lion) – Photo of artist



Album cover for One – L-Fresh the Lion

