

Bring Poetry Alive

Rap It Up



Beat the Rap

Got something to say? Compose a rap about a topic of your choice using musical elements and the poetic element: alliteration. Then take the stage and perform it at a classroom 'open mic'.

What do you need?

- backing track
- paper and pen
- microphone and PA system.

Choosing your topic

1. Choose a topic that's important to you. This should be something that you feel strongly about, enjoy or have a unique perspective on.
2. Brainstorm a list of ideas, words and phrases linked to this topic.
 - Don't censor yourself! Free associate, and write down anything that could be a potential lyric idea.
 - The words on this list will help to guide your lyric writing later on.
 - Say the words out loud as you write them down. You may discover rhythmic patterns in the words or potential delivery styles.

Tip

- Keep it simple. Most rap songs are written in 4/4 time (four beats in each bar).

Writing your chorus

1. The chorus is the repetitive hook within a song and should not only be linked strongly to the topic or theme, but be interesting and catchy as well.
2. Play with the words and ideas from your brainstorm list and write four lines for your chorus.
 - If you need inspiration for your chorus, try responding to a line from *Killing Time*.
 - You will have 16 beats to work with in your chorus (4 lines, with 4 beats in each line).

The backing track

To write a piece with a strong rhythm, choose a beat for your rap.

- You can choose one of the audio tracks provided on *ARTS:LIVE*, source them online, or create your own using [Audacity](#) or Garage Band.
- The backing track should invoke a mood or emotion in the audience, which is relevant to your topic.

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Remember

- Writing a rap requires you to try different combinations of words and rhymes until you come up with something that sounds good.
- Some rap artists like to create the feel of a rhyme in their lyrics by using the rhythm of words and matching syllables. For example, the words 'respect' and 'relate' have two syllables each. By saying the word 'respect' at the end of line one then the word 'relate' at the end of line two, you can create the feel of a rhyme.
- Play with the sounds of language and the link between rhythm and words. Try choosing words based on how they sound as well as their meanings.

Writing your verses

1. The verses expand on the ideas raised in the chorus and can be a great place to explore poetic and musical elements.
2. Write two or three verses for your rap (16 beats each), using alliteration as the driving force behind the language that you choose.
 - Try fleshing out ideas and words from your brainstorm list.
 - Don't forget to use the conventions of rap.
 - Focus on including at least two musical elements into your piece.

The structure

1. Think about how you will structure your rap song. There are a number of ways you can do this, but some sample structures are:
 - Verse, chorus, verse, chorus, verse, chorus (ABABAB).
 - Chorus, verse, verse, chorus, verse, chorus (BAABAB).
 - Verse, verse, chorus, chorus, verse, chorus (AABBAB).
 - You may also like to include an intro and outro.
2. Practise rapping your structure over the backing track.
3. Rehearse and refine your work, and don't be afraid of re-working your lyrics.

Keep in mind

- Pauses can be used in rap and can create interesting rhythmic and dramatic effects.
- Keeping to the beat is extremely important.
- Think about the flow – how will the rap be delivered and how do the words sound together?
- How will you add musical elements to enhance the meaning of your lyrics?
- Could your rap be enhanced by including song samples or musical instruments?
- Will you sing any of the lines?

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- Above all else, you should love the rap you've written and feel passionate about delivering it to an audience.

'Open mic' performance

1. Perform your rap at a classroom 'open mic'.
2. Following the class performances, write a reflective piece on your rap, analysing the process you undertook to develop and perform it. Use the questions below as a guide.

What have you learned?

- How were you influenced by the social and political context in which you are writing?
- What were some of the challenges you faced when writing or performing your rap?
- What were the musical elements used in your piece? Were these effective?
- Did the structure of the song enhance the meaning of the lyrics? Why or why not?
- What literary devices did you use when writing your lyrics? Why did you choose these?
- How effective was your choice of language in conveying the key message of your rap?
- What did the audience like about your piece? What worked well?
- What could be done to improve your piece?

Class critique

1. Discuss your reflection responses with your class and consider their feedback on your assessment of your piece.
2. Use this feedback to support and inform the development of future pieces.