

Divergent Paths of the 1990s

1. Play the intro to Ice Cube's ["Gangsta Rap Made Me Do It"](#) (2008), and answer on this document in short answers:

- What does this video say about the public perception of "Gangsta Rap"?
- Do you think the performer, Ice Cube, agrees with this perception? Why or why not?

2. Open and read: [Handout 2: Excerpts from Song Lyrics](#); [Handout 3: Compton, California](#); [Handout 4: 1990s Hip Hop Timeline](#); [Handout 5: Article on Conscious Hip Hop](#); [Handout 6: Article on Gangsta Rap](#); and [Handout 7: Two Views of Conscious Hip Hop and Gangsta Rap](#)

3. Play the videos of the excerpts from ["Straight Outta Compton"](#) and ["Me, Myself, and I"](#) for the class. Instruct each group to then begin discussing the questions BELOW. These videos are edited, you can watch the unedited versions on youtube.

Comprehension and Thinking Questions

1. Look at the record cover for each of the songs. How are the performers presented? What Image do you think each group is trying to present?

2. Do the videos echo the images presented on the record covers? How do the performers present themselves? What kinds of images and symbols does each group emphasize? What Overall impression do you get of each group and its message from these performances?

3. How are the lyrics to each song different? Judging by these excerpts, what does each song emphasize? What is each song's overall message?

4. "Straight Outta Compton" is an example of Gangsta Rap, which often emphasizes violence and crime. "Me, Myself and I" is an example of Conscious Hip Hop, which typically focuses on personal and social issues. Do you think these labels accurately reflect what is in these videos? Why or why not?

5. Look at the 1990s Timeline. Can you identify examples of some of these specific events reflected in either song? How does each song reflect what was going on in the 1990s?

6. Look at the article on the group De La Soul. How does it portray Gangsta Rap? How does it portray Conscious Hip Hop?

7. According to the Behind the Beat interview, what is Ice-T's idea of Gangsta Rap's "negative image with a positive message"? Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?

8. Look at the quotes from KRS-One and GZA. What does KRS-One mean when he says "all Rap is socially conscious"? Does he think the distinction between Gangsta Rap and Conscious Hip Hop is valid? Why or why not?

9. What does GZA say about Gangsta Rap? Do you agree or disagree with him?

10. Gangsta Rap is often characterized as having negative images and ideas, while Conscious Hip Hop is often described as being more positive. Based on what you've heard, is this a fair characterization?

11. Do you think the images of guns and violence in many Gangsta Rap songs encourage violent behavior on the part of listeners? Or is it just a form of entertainment?

12. Based on everything you have seen and heard, what do you think it means to be Gangsta or Conscious? Are these best thought of as two distinct genres, or as two different ways of saying the same thing?

4. Play "[Ice-T Life on the Streets](#)" video to supplement the information about Gangsta Rap in [Handout 6](#).

5. Writing Activity:

[Handout 8: Press Release Template](#). Instruct students that they must now decide whether their radio station will play Gangsta Rap or only Conscious Rap. They will issue a press release of two to three paragraphs announcing their decision. (Make sure students understand that a press release is a document issued to the media announcing something newsworthy.) Instruct students that they must include at least three specific arguments in the press release in support of their decision. No matter what they decide, their press release must acknowledge arguments on both sides of the issue. (For example, it might state: "We understand that many people feel..., but we do not agree with this argument because.....")

Do the writing here:

****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****

Date:

The Board of Directors of _____ (fill in the name of your radio station) are
announcing today that they have decided _____