

Short Introduction to Hip Hop

1. The culture, music, and lifestyle known as hip-hop began in the Bronx in New York City. At house parties and community centers DJs mixed songs from different records together. They started extending short drum breaks into longer dance mixes by switching between record decks. Bronx DJs experimented with touching and moving vinyl records with their hands. They also used electronic sounds coming from other places, like Europe. A famous example is Afrika Bambaataa's use of Kraftwerk's 1977 Trans-Europe Express.
2. In 1973 DJ Kool Herc DJed his first party in the South Bronx. The South Bronx was a poor neighborhood isolated from the rest of New York. One factor in this isolation was construction of the Cross Bronx Expressway, which created a scenery of rubble in neighborhoods it ran through. Young people of color found their own way to make these bleak surroundings positive and beautiful. They spray-painted and danced on cardboard they laid on the ground. Hip-hop parties were positive alternatives to gang violence.
3. Kool Herc, who became known as the father of hip-hop, formed the basis of hip-hop music by experimenting with instrumental breaks of funk, soul, and R&B songs. In the following years hip-hop pioneers such as Afrika Bambaataa, Grandmaster Flash, and Grandmaster Caz start DJing at parties across the Bronx.
4. The story of Afrika Bambaataa—for example, his life-changing trip to Africa that resulted in his name change and his efforts to transform the South Bronx community—shows how the emergence of hip-hop is connected to identity, race, and place. Reformed gang member Bambaataa defined the four elements of the hip-hop scene.
5. The four elements of hip-hop culture are:
 - **DJing** – The art of spinning records at a dance party, picking out songs in a crowd-pleasing sequence. Also the art of touching and moving records with your hands. Cutting (using volume control to drop in a section of music from one turntable into music from another turntable) and scratching (the sound a

DJ makes by putting his hand on the record and rubbing the vinyl under the needle in time with the music) are two popular DJing techniques.

- **Breakdancing** – A style of dancing that includes gymnastic moves, head spins, and backspins. Young people who were into dancing to the breaks at Bronx parties started calling themselves B-boys and B-girls, and their style of dancing came to be known as breakdancing. B-boys, B-girls, and members of the Zulu Nation made breakdancing popular.
 - **Graffiti** – Visual art, an expression of youth culture and rebellion in public spaces. The first forms of subway graffiti were tags, or signatures of someone's nickname or crew (group of artists that work together). It has evolved into elaborate scripts, color effects, and shading.
 - **MCing** – MC are initials for “master of ceremonies.” MCs originally hosted parties and introduced tracks to the dancing audience. Eventually the term was used to describe rappers. Rapping is the art of saying rhymes to the beat of music. It comes out of the African-American oral tradition of using rhyming language to ridicule your friends or enemies in a clever way. In the early 1970s, this developed into street jive, a type of half-spoken, half-sung urban street talk. Rapping also has roots in Jamaican toasting, a type of lyrical chanting.
1. Bambaataa also formed the Universal Zulu Nation, a hip-hop awareness group that organized cultural events for youth. The group was an alternative to gang activity for many young people. Over time, the Zulu Nation has spread internationally as a hip-hop awareness movement guided by certain spiritual principles.
 2. The Sugar Hill Gang recorded the first popular commercial rap recording, “Rapper’s Delight,” in 1979. This song was many Americans’ first brush with hip-hop.
 3. In the 1980s the hip-hop scene expanded and entered the mainstream in the U.S. Kurtis Blow, Grandmaster Flash, Public Enemy, and NWA released albums. The first West Coast rap albums came out. The films “Wild Style” and “Style Wars” were released. Def Jam Recordings was established. Two big steps in making hip-hop mainstream were Run-DMC’s release of its version of Aerosmith’s “Walk This Way” and the group’s nomination for a

Grammy. MTV and the radio started to have rap-specific programming with "Yo! MTV Raps!" and "Mr. Magic's Rap Attack" on the New York FM radio station WHBI.

4. Two noteworthy women in the hip-hop world in the 1980s were Wendy Clark and Queen Latifah.
5. At the end of 1980s hip-hop started getting some negative press. Politicians and media personalities painted a picture of commercial hip-hop as music that taught immoral values.
6. In the 1990s gangsta rap, a type of rap that describes life in inner-city neighborhoods, became commercially popular in the U.S. Even though many people criticized it, this music spoke to youth who could identify with its themes of anger, rebellion against authority, and apathy. Companies who could profit from young consumers caught onto this trend and linked up their products with popular rap music. Some hip-hop fans see the commercialization of hip-hop music as selling out and compromising hip-hop's original message.
7. Breakdancing, rapping, scratching, and graffiti art all became part of youth culture's vocabulary. Looking at the roots of hip-hop, we see a powerful example of human creativity. A group of deprived kids managed to create an entire culture and art-form with the limited resources they had.

- See more at:

http://www.educationworld.com/a_lesson/what-is-hip-hop.shtml#sthash.NLXimmXf.dpuf