

## NYPD moves to a new beat

### Lead-in

What do these words refer to?

NYPD

Run DMC

Hip-Hop

Discuss these questions with a partner.

- 1 Where did hip-hop or rap music originate?
- 2 Can you name any rap artists or groups?
- 3 What do rappers sing about?
- 4 Do you think that rap culture is a force for good or bad in the communities where it has most influence?
- 5 What do you think the relationship between the police and rappers is like in large American cities?

### Reading 1

You are going to read a newspaper article about the relationship of the police in New York with rap culture.

Read the passage and find the following.

- 1 The New York rap group who were responsible for bringing rap to the world's attention.
- 2 The academic who argues that rap tells you more about Black American culture than anything else.
- 3 The rap DJ who was recently murdered.
- 4 The states where there are police teams investigating the hip-hop scene in a similar way to the team in New York.
- 5 A rapper who criticizes rap music for not sending out a positive message.

## **NYPD moves to a new beat** by Gary Younge in New York

In New York, the home of hip-hop, rap is a serious business. This is the city that is home to the place (Sugar Hill, Harlem) that produced the group (the Sugar Hill Gang) that gave us the record (Rapper's Delight) that made rap mainstream. Rap has risen beyond the status of a music genre to the level of a viable modern state. New York is the capital of the hip-hop "nation", which is ruled by the hip-hop "generation", whose turf wars are resolved at hip-hop "summits", during which the hip-hop "community" get together to promote and protect hip-hop "culture".

Professor Todd Boyd, a hip-hop "academic", argues: "You might get a better read of what's going on in the world of black people today by listening to DMX on It's Dark and Hell Is Hot than by listening to repeated broadcasts of Martin Luther King speeches."

This state has got its own police force. The New York Police Department has assigned a team of detectives to patrol the hip-hop nation - studying songs, scrutinizing artistic battles, visiting clubs and monitoring business feuds. Last November Lt Brian Burke told the New York Times that following the murder of Jam Master Jay, the DJ for Run-DMC, the team was looking for leads in the lyrics and criminal connections in the world of rap.

When not covering specific cases, the team of six officers acts as police liaisons with both the hip-hop world and detectives covering a similar beat in California and Florida. Rappers are

rarely found alone, preferring instead to travel in "crews", and the detectives keep track of these entourages, going on alert when two sets of rivals are in town at the same time.

Wary of accusations of racial profiling in a city where four African-Americans were shot by police in the first two days of the year, the NYPD is eager to point out that this is not a unit dedicated to hip-hop. "We have a team, within the intelligence unit, that monitors the music industry," said a spokesman. "They deal with the music industry as a whole."

Rap does not simply reflect the faults of American society; it also impacts on them and, all too often, compounds them. Nowhere is this more readily acknowledged than within the hip-hop community itself, which has a vocal reformist wing. Public Enemy's Chuck D is constantly calling on rappers to live up to their potential rather than down to expectations. "Hip-hop has got to look itself in the mirror. It is fomenting too much negativity out here," he says.

It is precisely for this reason that so many African-American politicians and civil rights leaders are so keen to engage with the hip-hop community. They understand what so many of rap's critics refuse to acknowledge – that its power to influence could be harnessed to great, positive effect.

*The Guardian Weekly* 20-3-03, page 18

### Glossary

DMX = a rap DJ

Crew = a group of rappers

Entourage = a group of people who go round with someone well-known or powerful

Vocal reformist wing = a group of people who speak out, asking for change

### Reading 2

Read the passage again and answer the questions. Discuss them with a partner.

- 1 In what ways is Rap a 'viable modern state'?
- 2 How do NYPD detectives police the hip-hop nation?
- 3 Why are the NYPD sensitive about being seen as policing hip-hop?
- 4 Why should rap look itself in the mirror?

### Vocabulary in context

Find the words in italics in the passage, then choose the best definition.

- 1 It's important to *scrutinize* all the facts before coming to a conclusion.
  - a. argue
  - b. carefully check
- 2 Rap gangs often engage in *turf wars*, where one gang fights another.
  - a. international combat
  - b. a fight to prove you are the most powerful in your area
- 3 The police are *looking for leads* in their latest investigation.
  - a. trying to find information that will tell them who committed a crime
  - b. trying to find gang bosses
- 4 In some areas, policemen walk the *beat*.
  - a. an area that a policeman/woman has responsibility for
  - b. a way of walking typical of policemen
- 5 A *feud* between both gangs went on and on.
  - a. a brief, violent fight
  - b. an angry disagreement that lasts a long time
- 6 It's difficult to *keep track of* international criminals.
  - a. know exactly where they are
  - b. keep in touch with
- 7 She only managed to *compound* the problem.
  - a. make better
  - b. make worse
- 8 His speech *fomented* a riot in the street.
  - a. caused
  - b. prevented

## Follow-up

Discuss the questions.

- 1 'Its power to influence could be harnessed to great, positive effect.' In what ways do you think rap music could be used as a force for good?
- 2 Do you think that popular music, like rap music, has a moral responsibility to present a positive message for young people?
- 3 Do you know a rap song, or any other pop song, which has controversial lyrics?

Talk to your partner.

## Teacher's notes - NYPD moves to a new beat

### Lead-in

It is a good idea to start the lesson by playing some rap music, and/or asking students what rap artists and songs they know.

Ask students what the words refer to?

### Answers

NYPD = New York police department

Run DMC = a rap group

Hip-Hop = rap music

Ask students to discuss the questions with a partner.

### Answers

- 1 Harlem, New York
- 2 Suggestions: Run DMC, Public Enemy, Eminem
- 3 They sing about love and relationships, but also guns, gangs, crime, life in inner cities
- 4 Students' own ideas
- 5 Students' own ideas

### Reading 1

Ask students to read the passage and find the answers.

### Answers

- 1 Sugar Hill Gang
- 2 Professor Tom Boyd
- 3 Jam Master Jay
- 4 Florida and California
- 5 Public Enemy's Chuck D

### Reading 2

Ask students to read the passage again and answer the questions, then discuss them with a partner.

### Answers

- 1 The people who follow hip hop, many young black people in New York, see the city as the capital of the hip-hop "nation". It is ruled by the hip-hop "generation", whose turf wars are resolved at hip-hop "summits", during which the hip-hop "community" get together to promote and protect hip-hop "culture".

- 2 They study songs, scrutinise artistic battles, visit clubs and monitor business feuds. They look for leads in the lyrics and criminal connections in the world of rap.
- 3 They are wary of accusations of racial profiling in a city where four African-Americans were shot by police in the first two days of the year.
- 3 It does not simply reflect the faults of American society; it also makes them worse. Rappers should live up to their potential rather than down to expectations. Its power to influence could be harnessed to great, positive effect.

### **Vocabulary in context**

Ask students in pairs to find the words in italics in the passage, and choose the best definition.

### **Answers**

1b, 2b, 3a, 4a, 5b, 6a, 7b, 8a

### **Follow-up**

Ask students to discuss the questions in pairs or groups. Then have a brief whole class feedback.