



Candidates must complete this page and then give this cover and their final version of the extended essay to their supervisor.

Candidate session number			
Candidate name			
School name			
Examination session (May or November)	May	Year	2015

Diploma Programme subject in which this extended essay is registered: Group 1 (category 3)  
(For an extended essay in the area of languages, state the language and whether it is group 1 or group 2.) ENGLISH A

Title of the extended essay: From the beginning to now: How has the use of language used in Old School and New School Rap evolved?

**Candidate's declaration**

*This declaration must be signed by the candidate; otherwise a mark of zero will be issued.*

The extended essay I am submitting is my own work (apart from guidance allowed by the International Baccalaureate).

I have acknowledged each use of the words, graphics or ideas of another person, whether written, oral or visual.

I am aware that the word limit for all extended essays is 4000 words and that examiners are not required to read beyond this limit.

This is the final version of my extended essay.

Candidate's signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: 3/3/2015



### Supervisor's report and declaration

The supervisor must complete this report, sign the declaration and then give the final version of the extended essay, with this cover attached, to the Diploma Programme coordinator.

Name of supervisor (CAPITAL letters) \_\_\_\_\_

Please comment, as appropriate, on the candidate's performance, the context in which the candidate undertook the research for the extended essay, any difficulties encountered and how these were overcome (see page 13 of the extended essay guide). The concluding interview (viva voce) may provide useful information. These comments can help the examiner award a level for criterion K (holistic judgment). Do not comment on any adverse personal circumstances that may have affected the candidate. If the amount of time spent with the candidate was zero, you must explain this, in particular how it was then possible to authenticate the essay as the candidate's own work. You may attach an additional sheet if there is insufficient space here.

is passionate about this subject and this was reflected in her commitment towards this work. She worked hard to ensure that she wrote using a suitably academic register and also analysed the songs she chose critically. This involved her being open minded and changing her ideas on certain aspects of this genre of music.

This declaration must be signed by the supervisor; otherwise a mark of zero will be issued.

I have read the final version of the extended essay that will be submitted to the examiner.

To the best of my knowledge, the extended essay is the authentic work of the candidate.

As per the section entitled "Responsibilities of the Supervisor" in the EE guide, the recommended number of hours spent with candidates is between 3 and 5 hours. Schools will be contacted when the number of hours is left blank, or where 0 hours are stated and there lacks an explanation. Schools will also be contacted in the event that number of hours spent is significantly excessive compared to the recommendation.

I spent  hours with the candidate discussing the progress of the extended essay.

Supervisor's signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: 03/03/15



### Assessment form (for examiner use only)

Candidate session number		
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#### Achievement level

Criteria	Examiner 1	maximum	Examiner 2	maximum	Examiner 3
A research question	<input style="width: 30px; height: 20px;" type="text" value="2"/>	2	<input style="width: 30px; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	2	<input style="width: 30px; height: 20px;" type="text"/>
B introduction	<input style="width: 30px; height: 20px;" type="text" value="2"/>	2	<input style="width: 30px; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	2	<input style="width: 30px; height: 20px;" type="text"/>
C investigation	<input style="width: 30px; height: 20px;" type="text" value="3"/>	4	<input style="width: 30px; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	4	<input style="width: 30px; height: 20px;" type="text"/>
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Name of examiner 1: \_\_\_\_\_ Examiner number: \_\_\_\_\_  
(CAPITAL letters)

Name of examiner 2: \_\_\_\_\_ Examiner number: \_\_\_\_\_  
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From the beginning to now: How has the use of language used in Old School and New School Rap evolved?

**Subject:** English

Category 3

**Research question:**

From the beginning to now: How has the use of language used in Old School and New School Rap evolved?

**Session:** May 2015

**Word count:** 3666 ✓

From the beginning to now: How has the use of language used in Old School and New School Rap evolved?

### Abstract

Rap is an extremely popular genre of music with today's youth; it is an integral part of youth culture. It features increasingly within all aspects of popular culture- in advertisements, television shows and played more frequently on the radio. It is a risky genre, as themes and styles that may be considered inappropriate or rude can be expressed within rap.

The question that is answered in this essay is *From the beginning to now: How has the use of language used in Old School and New School Rap evolved?* This essay analyses how the language used in rap has changed since the late 1970's, by looking at specific song examples and examining how the language and content of these songs has transformed. It shows how the language used in Old School raps songs is inclusive and how its purpose was to appeal to everybody. The essay then examines how language used in New School rap is noticeably different; it can be aggressive, highly sexual and demeaning towards women.

Word count? - looks short, but all elements are present

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## Introduction

Hip Hop is a complex genre of music and lifestyle, with four main components: rap, graffiti, break dancing and disk jockeying. Hip Hop is seen as a part of youth culture, with young people having a special affinity with it. This essay will be focusing on rap and its language evolution since the beginning of the Hip Hop movement in the late 1970's. Rap is a form of music stemming from the Hip Hop genre, also known as 'rhyiming' and 'MCing'. Since it's beginnings in the late 1970's, rap music has seen its fair share of controversies and success stories, and has played an integral part in shaping popular culture into what we know it as today. Rap music is frequently featured in the media, with most people having heard at least a few songs, either of their own accord or by being passively exposed to it on TV or Radio- the sheer popularity of rap has exploded over the last five years in particular. Now, it is not only pop songs being played on mainstream radio shows, but also rap music. Many people ask: why is rap so significant in today's society? The answer is this: it is a form of expression, free to anyone who needs it. Rapping gives people of all genders, races and backgrounds an outlet for their pain, anger, resentment or even happiness.

Fans of rap know that behind all of the glorified drug and violence references, there lie deeper meanings within the music. However, thanks to the recent explosion of Hip Hop and rap onto the pop scene, some people believe that it has slowly morphed from a form of artistic expression into a source of absurdity. What was once a serious genre of music has now raised 'special concern' for the youth of today (Kirchheimer) because of the lewd music videos and pointless lyrics frequently featured within the rap world. By analysing the language used within rap music, it can be seen whether it really has been 'dumbed down to create an unintelligent consumer base', (Scott) or whether it is being too harshly criticized.

*Some apposite ideas here. The context for the R.Q. and task are well summarized.*

## The Beginning

Rap music is the genre many people associate with violence, gangs and sexual innuendo, with critics often citing it as being 'materialistic, misogynistic, homophobic, racist, vulgar, and violent.' (Thought Economics) It has a notorious reputation but a huge fan base full of loyal, proud supporters. So how is rap music so successful as a genre when it is always made to look so terrible in the public eye? The answer may lie not in the ostentatious clothes or the celebrity endorsements; the wild parties or the extreme legends. The answer could be in the language. Rap is occasionally referred to as a form of poetry (Z) and although many people disagree, it is a compelling point. Rap songs aren't only about sex and violence- there are songs about genuine issues faced by the youth of the world, beautifully presented by rap artists such as Tupac, for example with his song 'Keep Ya Head Up' up, which deals with the topic of gender inequality, and Immortal Technique's 'Dance With The Devil' which describes the pressure ghetto youths face from gangs and issues such as rape and murder and so gives a unique perspective on the social context facing this cultural group. Rap is 'the sound of the future' (Chang), a new way for young and old people alike to express themselves freely without fear of being judged. Rap is where many people turn (to) when they have nowhere else to go. This is why young people especially adore rap- at a time when you are finding yourself, it is a great community to be in as it allows for expression as well as giving support through music. It is a genre, business and style, but it is also a tightly knit community.

'base' word

The Hip Hop movement began in the late 1970's; thanks to a Jamaican Deejay residing in the South Bronx named Kool Herc. Herc had a unique style of deejaying- rhyming over his instrumentals at house parties- and eventually became known as an 'MC'- 'Master of Ceremony' (Indie Group ). As the parties grew larger and moved outside to accommodate more people, this new style of



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music started spreading like wildfire. 'Instead of getting into trouble on the streets, teens now had a place to expend their pent-up energy' (Chang). From Hip Hop there stemmed a new form of presenting lyrics to the world and it became known as 'rap' music, a product of 'cross cultural integration deeply rooted within African culture and oral tradition.' (Adaso) As the movement spread, other factors like style and dance joined the equation and 'Hip Hop' became a four-part movement- MC'ing, DJ'ing, Graffiti and Dancing. From dance battles there came rap battles, which were used to decide and settle disputes between rival gangs, and kept the young people of the ghetto busy and mostly out of trouble.

The beginnings of Hip Hop are humble, and it gradually sunk its way into society's veins. It slowly became more and more widespread and popular, moving across the globe thanks to artists such as Wu-Tang Clan, Nas, Biggie Smalls, Tupac, Dr. Dre, Three Six Mafia, Immortal Technique, Jay-Z, Busta Rhymes and so many more.

### Old School

The band, the Sugarhill Gang recorded the first 'commercially successful rap song,' Rapper's Delight in 1979 (Genius). Although it is not the first song to feature rapping, it is known for being the first song to popularize rap, and in 2011 was preserved into the National Recording Registry for being 'culturally, historically, or aesthetically significant'. (The National Recording Preservation Board) Recorded in one take, the 15-minute song was a product of Sylvia Robinson, who created Sugarhill Records and subsequently The Sugarhill Gang in order to add rap music to her new record label's portfolio. It is a laid back, entertaining piece of rap with a funk-based beat. At the time, rap music was just beginning to launch, so Wonder Mike confirms that he is 'rappin to the beat' (Rap Genius) and explains the purpose of the song, which is to encourage people to dance. The language is undemanding and straight to the point, with no vulgarity

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or derogatory terms. This is important to note, as the language used gradually becomes much more explicit as rap has evolved from classic rap to modern rap.

'Now what you hear is not a test  
I'm rappin' to the beat  
And me, the groove and my friends  
Are gonna try to move your feet' (Rap Genius)

Wonder Mike then introduces himself 'To the black, to the white, the red and the brown, the purple and yellow' (Rap Genius) - meaning every race there is. By acknowledging everyone at the beginning of the song, Wonder Mike is breaking down the barriers between people and asking them to dance and have a good time together- 'move your feet' (Rap Genius). This use of language creates a sense of community within the song, and this is what the purpose of rap was originally all about- bringing together people of all backgrounds and allowing them to momentarily forget their problems and just enjoy themselves. This style of language is used in most early rap songs of the 80's. Another good example of the laid back style of 80's hip hop is the 1981 hit 'Rapture' by Blondie, the first hip hop song to reach no.1 on the Billboard chart, as well as the first Hip Hop video played on MTV. (The Great 80s)

'Toe to toe dancing very close  
Body breathing almost comatose  
Wall to wall people hypnotized  
Fab Five Freddy told me everybody's fly' (Rock Genius)

The lyrics are similar to those in 'Rapper's Delight' as they're also inviting the listeners to dance 'very close' (Rap Genius)- Blondie is also trying to bring together the listeners, and the line 'everybody's fly' (cool) again shows us that everyone is equal and accepted within the rap world. The language used in these two songs is very carefree and unpretentious. It is almost as if the artists are easing the public into rap by making it approachable. The messages conveyed

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are all about community, enjoying life together and simply having fun. Again, the lack of derogatory and explicit language is in stark contrast to modern rap.

A brilliant example of a more profoundly meaningful rap artist from the old school rap era is Tupac Amaru Shakur, or 2pac. 2pac is arguably one of the most famous and iconic rap artists of all time. A lot of his fame comes not only from his rap, but also from the controversies that surrounded his life, including the well-known dispute between him and former best friend The Notorious B.I.G., and his eventual murder in 1996 at the tender age of 25. Although he faced a range of problems in his own personal life, 2pac managed to inspire millions to better themselves and work their way through life's tough moments. His philosophical thinking- 'Reality is wrong. Dreams are for real.' (brainyquote) and compassionate personality helped him to forge a hugely successful career, and although he did indulge in a few typical 'gangsta' style songs, such as 'Hit Em Up', most of 2Pac's songs were about bringing attention to the struggles faced in the ghettos around America. He focused on themes such as race, poverty, corruption and gender inequality.

An example of this is the 1993 song 'Keep Ya Head Up'. The song was written in dedication to Latasha Harlins, a 15 year old black girl shot and killed by a Korean shop owner in 1991 after the lady wrongfully believed that Latasha was attempting to steal a carton of orange juice. (LA Times) It speaks about the struggles women face and how 2Pac believes that men's attitude to females should change.

I give a holla to my sisters on welfare  
2Pac cares, if don't nobody else care  
And, I know they like to beat you down a lot  
When you come around the block, brothers clown a lot (Rap genius)

The lyrics in this song are similar to those of Rapture and the Rapper's Delight, as they are simple and the rhyme scheme is not complicated. However, something



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that is featured in this song, but not the previous two, is the use of double entendres, which add a deeper layer of meaning to the song. The term 'Beat you down a lot' refers to both the physical and the emotional 'beatings' women in the ghettos of America face. Moreover, by referring to these women as his 'sisters', 2Pac is breaking down another barrier- although this is one of gender and not race-, and creating more of a sense of community, similar to the one seen in 'Rapper's Delight' where Wonder Mike invited all races to join in the fun.

And I ain't tryin' to gas ya up, I just call 'em how I see 'em  
You know what makes me unhappy  
When brothers make babies, and leave a young mother to be a pappy  
(Rap genius)

2Pac uses street slang such as 'gas ya up', which means 'to fill another's head with false notions' (Urban Dictionary), in order to be more relatable to his audience, which was at the time predominantly young people from the ghettos of America. Not much slang was used in earlier rap songs, as the Hip Hop movement was still young and there weren't many slang terms in existence at that time. 2Pac also uses an analogy by referring to 'young mothers' acting as 'pappy', referencing men who impregnate women then fail to take responsibility for their actions and therefore create the growing number of single young mothers.

2Pac's image was primarily 'gangsta', therefore releasing this song was a very bold move. The strong feminist connotations reflect a completely different side of rap than the one portrayed throughout popular media, and by releasing a song like this, especially in 1993 when gender inequality was even more predominant than today, 2Pac was making a statement about his views on gender inequality and its harmful results. 2Pac was able to show his point of view on feminism by utilising language intelligently- he stayed audience-orientated by using slang terms that would appeal to the men of the ghettos, but also that wouldn't offend or distance their female counterparts. This song is from the period many people

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refer to as the 'Golden Age of Hip Hop', which was the decade from the mid 80's-late 90's. This era is called this because it is the time when hip-hop was growing and transitioning, and had a wide range of diversity and innovation.

### New School

'New School' rap is the rap music produced between 2000 to the current day. It is the new generation of rappers, who gained their inspiration and skills from listening to old school and pioneer rap, as well as creating new techniques to use in the music. Whilst Old School rap focused mainly on experimenting with themes and language, New School rap focuses on 'hying up' or promoting the musician in question, as well as boasting about things such as money, fame and sexual prowess. This transition in theme is interesting, as it shows how rap has moved from being community centred to self-centred. No longer are the majority of rappers asking for equality. As the world of celebrity has slowly started to take over the minds of young people belonging to modern culture, rappers have stopped focusing on important topics and instead choose to focus on themselves. The language in rap has gotten increasingly explicit as it has moved from pioneer to modern rap. This is another method that rappers use to grab the public's attention- they push the boundaries and come out with controversial lyrics. Profanity can occasionally be used to emphasize a point- it is featured extensively in classic novels, plays and so on- but modern rap artists tend to overuse it in order to provoke a reaction from their audience.

Interesting point

An example of a profanity riddled 'hype song' from the new school of rap is 'Clique' by Kanye West featuring Big Sean and Jay Z. The first verse in the song begins with the line 'I tell a bad b\*\*\*h do whatever I say'. (Rap Genius) From the beginning of the first verse of the song, we see a huge contrast to the tone within 2Pac's 'Keep Ya Head Up'. Whilst 2Pac referred to women as 'sister', Big Sean instead uses the term 'b\*\*\*h' and thus sets the tone for the entire song. The line 'I tell a bad b\*\*\*h do whatever I say' shows the idea of gender equality that most

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modern male rappers seem to endorse: women should do what these men want because they have money and fame, therefore they have power.

Yup, she trying get me that poo-tang

I might let my crew bang, my crew deeper than Wu Tang (Rap Genius)

The use of slang has undoubtedly tremendously increased in modern rap. Pioneer rap had almost no slang (as is evident in the analysis of 'Rapper's Delight' and 'Rapture') and old school rap had a few references thrown in (as seen in 'Keep Ya Head Up'), but now it is used almost constantly throughout modern rap songs. The word 'poontang' (here spelled 'pootang') is a derivative word coming from a French word, meaning prostitute, and can either refer to a woman as a sexual object, or refer directly to a woman's genitals. (The Free Dictionary) Therefore, in this line Big Sean is explaining that the woman in question wants to, quite literally, 'give him' her genitals- or have sex with him. He then uses another vulgar term, saying that he may instead 'let his crew bang', meaning that he will share the girl with his friends. These phrases are insulting to females, treating them like playthings- the complete opposite of what 2Pac was trying to accomplish back in 1993.

I'm rolling with... f\*\*\* I'm saying?

Girl, you know my crew name

You know 2 Chainz? Scrrr!

I'm pulling up in that Bruce Wayne (Rap Genius)

This part of the verse is Big Sean first showing off his 'crew', and then his money. 'I'm rolling with... f\*\*\* I'm saying?' means 'I hang with... wait, I don't need to tell you' because 'girl, you know my crew name' (Rap Genius). Big Sean is explaining that he is so renowned; everyone already knows him and his friends. 'Scrrr!' is onomatopoeia- it is the loud screech one may hear when a fast sports car goes by- in this case, a 'Bruce Wayne'- the Lamborghini driven by Bruce Wayne in the



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Batman film Trilogy. By utilizing this pop culture reference, Big Sean is communicating with a wider range of fans. The fact he drives a very expensive car and gives it a 'cool' nickname reminds the listener of how affluent and relevant he is. This is the 'hype' part of the song, where Big Sean is 'hyping' himself up by showing off his fame and fortune. The next significant line in the verse is 'Freaky women I be feeling from the bank accounts I'm filling' (Rap Genius). In another remark boasting of his fortune, Big Sean speaks about the amount of women he has sexual relationships with because of his money.

Songs like this are what take up the majority of space in modern rap's portfolio and are the reason that rap critics frequently disparage the genre. Another example of a famous song with an uninspiring topic is 'A\*\* Drop' by Wiz Khalifa. Wiz Khalifa is frequently criticized as a 'fake rapper' because of the unintelligent lyrics in his songs, and this song is a good example of why he receives such criticism.

Godd\*\*n, Godd\*\*n

How the hell you get all that a\*\* in them pants? (Rap Genius)

Immediately starting off the song by swearing, Khalifa then addresses a woman directly in quite an aggressively sexual manner. It is not something one would hear in a Sugarhill Gang song, and shows how much rap has changed since the pioneer days. ✓

Bend that a\*\* over; let me see how you work it

Poppin' and shakin', get on your knees hit the dirt (Rap Genius)

This line resembles 'I tell a bad b\*\*\*h do whatever I say' as it is Khalifa telling the girl to dance for him. The phrase 'get on your knees and hit the dirt' is also a double entendre as it can be- and frequently is- used to refer to sexual acts. The lewd and aggressively coarse imagery in the song is very apparent throughout.

Girl I go so deep in that p\*\*\*\* while he just hitting the surface  
What is you sayin'? (Rap Genius)

In the first line of this part of the verse, Khalifa is boasting about his genitals. The direct vulgarity is considered very shocking by most, but unfortunately this sort of language has become the standard within new school rap. Khalifa also uses the slang term 'what is you sayin' which translates to 'what are you up to?' (Urban Dictionary) He is using this slang term to quite shamelessly invite the woman to have sex with him.

The language in new school rap is incredibly different to the language used in the old school. It has become increasingly vulgar and offensive, but at the same time more complex, with rappers incorporating literary devices and a wider range of slang terms. Although profanity within rap is 'not linear' (Powell-Morse) and has always been featured within rap, it seems to be used unnecessarily frequently within new school rap. Since rap has been disseminated into popular culture and is regularly shown on TV, radio and online, the effect is that listeners can become desensitised to the highly sexual and coarse content these songs are purvey. Songs that used profanity with reason- such as 'C.R.E.A.M.' by Wu Tang Clan- have been replaced with songs riddled with swear words, seemingly for the sake of it, such as 'Hot N\*\*\*\*a' by Bobby Shmurda, which became a viral hit in 2014, again showing just how desensitized the public has become to profanity within rap.

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### Conclusion

Rap started out as an all-inclusive genre of music, as reflected in the language used in Old School rap. Its humble beginnings from the ghettos of the South Bronx meant that it was approachable for everyone- rich, poor, big, small, black, white, it didn't matter at that time. Rappers were being heard, and coming out of the ghetto was the sound of people asking for change. Artists like Blondie and Sugarhill Gang asked everyone to have fun together; 2Pac asked for gender equality. Nevertheless as rap moved from the underground to mainstream popular culture, things started to shift from trying to make change to instead focusing on how well rappers have done for themselves. Although rap has always been full of explicit language and shocking themes, it was once done with purpose, to prove a point. It seems that now, rappers are using profanities in an unnecessarily frequent and vulgar manner. From 2Pac asking men to 'fight for [our] women' comes Big Sean telling a 'bad b\*\*\*h to do whatever I say', and Wiz Khalifa adding insult to the injury by telling females to 'get on your knees, hit the dirt'. Hence, although rap has always featured vulgar language, it has not always alienated groups, such as females, as much as it does in modern rap. It can be said that it is not only rap that has become more sexually explicit and profanity filled- compare pop music from the 80's to the 2000's and a similar effect takes place. As the world becomes more desensitized to a generally more 'shocking' form of mass media, rap artists are taking the opportunity to leave all of the powerful words that dominated the rap scene in the old school, and instead are using it to show off their riches, gain a bigger following and bask in the glory of being a 'gangsta'.

*firmlly focused on language, and well-argued throughout.*



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