

Workshop Historical Context Sheet:

Article Title

Hip Hop History: From the streets to the Mainstream

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Hip hop is more than music; it's a cultural movement that incorporates 4 main pillars of artistic expression. These original four pillars are DJing, Emceeing (rapping), Breaking, & Graffiti. These original forms of expression have also developed into further subcultures with lasting legacies.

The intersection of these four elements also generated a cultural revolution that rapidly spread across the globe. The global influence of hip hop culture has shaped music styles, fashion, technology, art, entertainment, language, dance, education, politics, media, and more. To this day, hip hop continues to be a global phenomenon, developing new art forms that impact the lives of new and old generations.

Hip hop is a subculture and an art movement that emerged from the Bronx in New York City during the early 1970s. Its development reflected the negative effects of post-industrial decline, political discourse, and a rapidly changing economy.

During this economic collapse, much of the white middle class populations moved to the suburbs to escape the social and economic challenges. The migration shifted demographics and segregated communities. Conditions worsened in neighborhoods predominantly populated by African-Americans, Puerto Ricans, and Caribbean immigrants. Urban despair also brought rising crime, gang violence, and poverty.

As a result, urban youth turned to the streets for recreation and self-expression. The abandoned buildings and parking lots set the stage for block parties. These block parties laid the groundwork for everything associated with early hip hop culture. DJs and MCs brought the music by setting up mobile "Sound Systems" introduced by Jamaican culture. Sheets of cardboard became dance floors for breakers, and brick walls transformed into canvases for graffiti artists.

A new era was on the rise fueled by sentiments of anger, hardship, and abandonment. However, the emerging hip hop movement transformed despair and racial barriers into numerous creative outlets. It also became an outlet to deal with violence.