

KEY MUSICAL TERMINOLOGY

Term	Definition
Rap	A musical form of vocal delivery that incorporates rhythm, rhyme, and spoken lyrics, often addressing social or political issues.
Protest Song	A song that advocates for political change, raising awareness or challenging injustice.
Hip-Hop	A cultural movement that originated in the Bronx in the 1970s, encompassing rap, DJing, breakdancing, and graffiti art.
Flow	The rhythmic and melodic delivery of rap lyrics, essential for creating a strong performance.
Rhyme Scheme	The pattern of rhymes in a rap or song, usually at the end of lines, which adds to the structure and appeal of the lyrics.
Sampling	The act of taking a portion of a sound recording and reusing it as an instrument or part of a new recording, a common technique in hip-hop.
MC (Master of Ceremonies)	The rapper or vocalist in hip-hop culture, responsible for delivering the lyrics and engaging with the audience.
DJ (Disc Jockey)	A key figure in hip-hop responsible for playing, mixing, and scratching records to create the musical backdrop for rappers.
Beat	The rhythmic foundation of a rap song, usually provided by drum machines or loops, over which the rapper delivers their lyrics.
Social Commentary	The use of music, lyrics, or performance to offer a critique or raise awareness about societal issues like inequality, racism, and injustice.

TIMELINE

- 1940s-1960s**
 - **Protest Songs in Folk and Soul:** Artists like Woody Guthrie, Bob Dylan, and Nina Simone use music to address civil rights, war, and inequality.
- 1970s**
 - **Birth of Hip-Hop:** Hip-hop culture emerges in the Bronx, NYC, combining rap, DJing, breakdancing, and graffiti as a response to social conditions.
- 1980s**
 - **"The Message" by Grandmaster Flash:** The first rap song to offer a stark commentary on inner-city life and inequality, marking the beginning of rap as a tool for social protest.
- 1990s**
 - **Rise of Conscious Rap:** Artists like Tupac, Public Enemy, and Nas use rap to discuss racism, poverty, and political unrest, continuing the tradition of protest music.
- 2000s - present**
 - **Modern Protest Rap:** Artists like Kendrick Lamar, J. Cole, and Run the Jewels tackle contemporary issues such as police brutality, systemic racism, and inequality.

ARTISTS

Artist	Song	Significance	
Woody Guthrie	"This Land is Your Land"	A folk song addressing inequality and advocating for unity and justice.	
Bob Dylan	"Blowin' in the Wind"	A protest anthem of the 1960s Civil Rights Movement, questioning social justice and the meaning of freedom.	
Nina Simone	"Mississippi Goddam"	A powerful protest against racial injustice in the United States, reflecting the emotions of the Civil Rights era.	
Public Enemy	"Fight the Power"	A rap anthem that criticizes authority and systemic oppression, with references to African-American history and cultural resistance.	
Tupac Shakur	"Changes"	Addresses social issues such as racism, poverty, and violence, calling for positive change within communities.	
Kendrick Lamar	"Alright"	A modern protest song, widely associated with the Black Lives Matter movement, offering hope and resistance against police brutality and racial inequality.	

Y 9 P R O T E S T R A P K O

LYRIC WRITING TIPS FOR PROTEST RAPS

- Choose a Social Issue:**
Pick a theme that you are passionate about (e.g., inequality, climate change, racism, mental health).
- Message Clarity:**
Ensure that your message is clear. What are you protesting or calling attention to? Keep your lyrics focused on this theme.
- Use Rhyme Schemes:**
Rhyme helps make your rap memorable and gives it structure. Try to use ABAB or AABB rhyme schemes.
- Focus on Rhythm and Flow:**
Keep the rhythm steady, and experiment with how you deliver each line. Your flow should enhance the impact of the words.
- Engage the Audience:**
Protest songs are meant to inspire others. Use powerful language, repetition, or call-and-response techniques to engage listeners.

MUSICAL FEATURES OF RAP AND PROTEST SONGS

Rhythm

The beat or tempo of the music, often emphasized in rap through **syncopated** patterns that complement the lyrics.

E.G. The fast-paced rhythm in Public Enemy's "Fight the Power" emphasizes urgency and resistance.

Rhyme Scheme

A pattern of rhyming words at the end of lines, typically used in rap to create cohesion and memorability.

E.G. Tupac's "Changes" uses an ABAB rhyme scheme to deliver its message clearly and effectively.

Sampling

Taking a portion of an existing song and incorporating it into a new track. Often used in hip-hop to evoke nostalgia or link to past struggles.

Kanye West often uses samples from soul music in tracks like "Jesus Walks" to connect the past with modern issues.

Call and Response

A technique in which a leader delivers a call (e.g., a lyric or phrase) and the audience or group responds. Common in protest songs.

Public Enemy's "Fight the Power" uses call and response to engage the audience in protest against oppression.

Lyrics as Protest

Lyrics that address social or political issues, encouraging listeners to reflect on or take action against injustice.

Kendrick Lamar's "Alright" provides both social commentary on police brutality and a message of hope for marginalized communities.

Flow

The way in which a rapper delivers their lyrics, including speed, tone, and rhythm.

E.G. Nas is known for his complex flow, weaving together multi-syllabic rhymes in songs like "N.Y. State of Mind."

CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Rap as a Voice for the Marginalized:

Rap music developed in the 1970s in the Bronx, NYC, as a way for African-American, Latino, and marginalized communities to express their frustrations with poverty, violence, and systemic racism. It became a cultural movement, offering a voice to those often ignored by mainstream society.

The four pillars of hip-hop culture (rap, DJing, breakdancing, graffiti) were all ways to express resistance to the socioeconomic conditions of inner-city life.

Protest Songs in the Civil Rights Movement:

In the 1960s, folk and soul musicians like Bob Dylan, Sam Cooke, and Nina Simone used their music to support the Civil Rights Movement. Their songs not only reflected the struggles of the time but also inspired people to stand up for equality and justice.

The Evolution of Conscious Rap:

By the 1980s and 1990s, rap had evolved from a party-based genre into a form of conscious expression. Artists like Public Enemy, Tupac Shakur, and Nas used their lyrics to challenge political systems and highlight issues like police brutality, economic inequality, and racial discrimination.

