



AFTERSCHOOL EXCHANGE ACTIVITY

THE INFLUENCE OF HIP HOP

PREPARATION

Grade Levels: 5-7

Prerequisites

Tape Episode One of the PBS three part documentary DO YOU SPEAK AMERICAN? [<http://www.pbs.org/speak>] For purposes of this activity, the last four minutes of the video and a two minute segment near the beginning, which feature Hip Hop, will be used.

The final learning activity will require students to have access to computers. If computers are not available, print out the information from the Track That Word! Section of the DO YOU SPEAK AMERICAN? Web site. [<http://www.pbs.org/speak>]

Materials Needed

Students will need:

- Pencils, pens
- Loose leaf paper

Group Leader will need:

- Chart paper
- Markers
- Map of the United States
- Index Cards
- Tape

Academic Goals

Participants will:

- Consider the influence of Hip Hop on their own language use, mainstream American English, and various segments of American society.
- Reflect on and demonstrate their knowledge of Hip Hop vocabulary and its use, and compare it to vocabulary used in other parts of the United States.
- Be exposed to and learn new teen/youth vocabulary words and definitions and consider their usage.

Social Goals

Children will:

- Reflect on their language influences and usage in various contexts and with a variety of individuals.
- Interview others about their knowledge and understanding of Hip Hop language.
- Work together to create and perform conversations which incorporate usage of teen/youth vocabulary.

STEPS

Introduction (15 minutes)

1. Mention that the following activities are based on short segments from the three part PBS documentary, *DO YOU SPEAK AMERICAN?* which deals with a number of topics such as: varieties of American English, educational issues related to language diversity, influences on American English, and how language use varies from coast to coast in the United States. The specific topic of these after school activities is the influence that Hip Hop music has had on mainstream American English.

Activity 1: (15 minutes)

1. Before watching the video, students will consider the variety of influences on their language use, and different ways of speaking and writing they use in their daily lives. Give each student a stack of index cards with the following words on each card: video, television, music, Internet, friends, family, neighborhood, school, church. Instruct the students to choose two cards that they feel are the biggest influences on their language (for example, on the words they use, and on their grammar). Ask the students if they think this was always the case? Ask students to share their responses as you tally them on chart paper or a board. Depending on the outcome, discuss why certain cards have more responses than others, as well as why others have not been chosen, and why this may be the case.
2. Ask the students to think about how their speech and/or writing varies according to different situations and who they are speaking or writing to or for (the words on the cards can serve as the categories). Instruct each student to write an example of how their speech or writing may change. Remind students to also consider their use of more than one language (e.g. Spanish, English, Jamaican patois), or variety of the language (e.g. Black English, Chicano English). For instance, students may relate that they speak more informally with their peers than they do with teachers at school, and use more slang in their speech.

Activity 2: (30 minutes)

1. Explain to the students the video segments they are about to watch focuses on the influence of Hip Hop on language in the United States. The first segment is about a Hip Hop Crew from Detroit, and the second is about white suburban teens.

2. With regard to the first segment, ask for a student to locate what state Detroit is in (Michigan) and point out the city on the map. You can ask what students may know about the city (predominantly African American) and its connection to music (the home of Motown in the 1960s, more recently, the rapper, Eminem, and a lively Hip Hop scene).

3. Give the students the video questionnaire handout, located on the last page of this document. Tell them to pay attention to the following questions on the handout as they watch the videos:
 - a. When the crew talks about mainstream America, what are they referring to?
 - b. What are some of the influences on the mainstream?
 - c. Why do you think the crew speaks "street talk" amongst themselves and not standard American speech?
 - d. What are some characteristics of Black English? Are they familiar to you?
 - e. Why is Hip Hop attractive to suburban white teen boys?
 - f. Name some of the words from local street talk the crew uses and words that have been adopted into the suburban boys' language use.
 - g. Which of these vocabulary words do you use?
 - h. Do you recall where you learned them or when they came into use?
 - i. Are there words that are new to you? If so, which ones?

4. Start the video at the 50:43 mark (when the narrator introduces the Hip Hop Crew, Athletic Mike League). End the video at the 54:42 mark, right before the narrator speaks at the end of the episode.

5. Ask the students to write down their responses to the questions (#1, 2, 3, 4, and 6). If students need to watch the segment again in order to answer the questions, you can rewind the tape before proceeding to the second segment. As the students write their answers, rewind the tape to watch the second segment, which begins at 14:18 and continues until 16:25 (before the narrator begins speaking about Black English and "Im-ing").

6. Show the second video segment and at the end of the second segment, ask the students to write additional responses to the questions (5, 6). Lead a discussion where students share their responses and write them on chart paper or a board.
7. In conclusion, tell the students that in the next period they will do an activity around words specific to Hip Hop and teens. In the meantime, tell your students to ask older teens or adults about Hip Hop terms or teen language that they used and are still in use, or others that were previously popular but have gone out of fashion. Explain that what they learned will be used during the activity the next time you meet.

Activity 3: (30-40 minutes, in classroom/activity room)

1. Begin the next session by having students report to the group their findings regarding Hip Hop words, and write them on chart paper next to their answers from question 6. Ask students to compare their findings with vocabulary words and use of the words as in the video segments.
2. In pairs, assign your students to computers. Instruct students to go to the DO YOU SPEAK AMERICAN? Web site [<http://www.pbs.org/speak>] to the section titled, "Track That Word!" Tell them that they will be working with the Hip Hop dictionary and the youth/teen dictionary.
3. Explain that the tasks for each student are:
 - a. To write down 3-5 Hip Hop vocabulary words that are not listed in the dictionary (the dictionary only lists fifteen). They can draw from their own knowledge, from words they discovered by speaking with others and from the video segments. They must also define the word and write a sentence using it correctly.
 - b. Go to the teen/youth language section and write down 3-5 words they are unfamiliar with and would consider using. In pairs, they create a short conversation using as many of the new words as possible.
4. Reconvene the group and have students share their Hip Hop word additions, and see how many words they added to the dictionary.
5. Time permitting, ask students to act out their conversations for each other using new terms, and discussing how correct they are (are they using the words appropriately?)

Follow-up:

1. Students may need to act out their conversations in an additional activity period.
2. Have your students create a Hip Hop dictionary, drawing from their additional words and those from the Web site. In creating it, they should consult a dictionary for the proper way to write entries. Once the dictionary is created ask your students to share it with other students and adults in the after school program for additional words. Then have the students collect the additional words and add them to the dictionary throughout the course of the year.
3. Have the students watch a video segment on line (approximately 7 minutes) from the Thirteen/WNET series, NEW YORK VOICES [LINK TO: www.thirteen.org/nyvoices/features/bigtowngroove.html] about the beginning days of Hip Hop, which began in the Bronx, New York in 1976. Ask students to discuss the similarities and dissimilarities between Hip Hop as it originally began and their experiences today.

CREDITS

This AFTERSCHOOL EXCHANGE activity was developed by Julie Spiegel, Ph.D., Educational Specialist at The Point CDC, based on the PBS series DO YOU SPEAK AMERICAN? [<http://www.pbs.org/speak>]

VIDEO QUESTIONARRE HANDOUT

Read the questions. As you watch the video, see if you notice the answers. After the video, write the answers.

1. When the crew talks about mainstream America, what are they referring to?
2. What are some of the influences on the mainstream?
3. Why do you think the crew speaks "street talk" amongst themselves and not standard American speech?
4. What are some characteristics of Black English? Are they familiar to you?
5. Why is Hip Hop attractive to suburban white teen boys?
6. Name some of the words from local street talk the crew uses and words that have been adopted into the suburban boys' language use.
7. Which of these vocabulary words do you use?
8. Do you recall where you learned them or when they came into use?
9. Are there words that are new to you? If so, which ones?