



YALE NATIONAL INITIATIVE

to strengthen teaching in public schools®

Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative
2014 Volume IV: Eloquence

Eloquence and Authenticity: Who Are You and Why Should I Listen to You?

Curriculum Unit 14.04.10, published September 2014
by Rachel Stayton

Introduction

The appeal to authority, in terms of the credibility or believability of the speaker, is one of the strongest influences on public opinion in a democratic republic. People once flocked to the public square to hear political debates or speeches, but today mass culture has taken the place of the orator. The famous orators of today are hip hop artists, and they both identify and influence the way we grapple with social issues in the same way that orators did prior to the technological revolution. The cultural transition from a physical public platform to a digital one may obfuscate the import of more formalist rhetorical tropes, but the ability of rhetoric to elucidate a perspective and actually change the way people view contemporary issues remains of utmost importance.

I want my students to have an enhanced awareness of rhetorical tropes and devices both in American history and contemporary popular culture. Particularly, this unit will focus on the audience's *desire for authenticity* through modern eloquence. The unit will begin with a brief examination of eloquence as artifice as a means to sincerity. In short, successful eloquence occurs when the audience believes the speaker to be sincerely conveying the plain *truth*. In this unit, we will be comparing the successfulness of eloquence in four different works, Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, Edward Everett's Oration at Gettysburg, Kendrick Lamar's album "good kid, m.A.A.d. city" and Jay Z's album "Magna Carta Holy Grail." In each pair of works, one succeeds much more in stirring the passions through an eloquent style and delivery. In both pairs, one work is unquestionably more successful at achieving this "authentic" form of eloquence, regardless of mastery of a craft. This unit will not only examine what eloquence means, but how the speaker achieves credibility and a sense of "truth" through it.

Rationale

As a teacher in an urban setting, the most recurring question I ask myself is, "How can I make this content relevant for my students?" My students are quick to dismiss a more traditional lesson as boring or useless, and I often don't blame them. It is our job as educators to pinpoint the universal tropes in the literature of the Western Canon that transcend the past. My students will eschew a history or English lesson that lacks a foundational correlation to their lives. The core concept of this unit, that successful rhetoric has the power to *captivate* populations and actually *change* the way people view a particular issue, is forever relevant because it affects our students daily: good rhetoric informs their aesthetic taste, moves their emotions, positions them to act. This unit will empower my students to be more than readers: they will be critics. By critiquing the successes and failures of Jay Z and Kendrick Lamar's rhetoric, and applying that same lens to Abraham Lincoln and Edward Everett's speeches at Gettysburg, they will learn that, though the specifics of what constitutes "eloquence" may change depending on the time or population, true eloquence conveys a sense of authenticity to the audience. In other words, the audience hears it and feels it to be true (n.b. regardless of whether what is said is or is not true).

I believe that the most empowered citizens are informed critics. Critical thinkers are able to speak with authority and conviction about their perspective; they are also able to write clearly and effectively to convey that perspective and persuade others to listen. Critical thinkers are credible. My students are - naturally, as teenagers - already chomping at the bit of rudimentary cultural criticism. I can hear it in their fervor to deliver remarks such as, "this is great!" or "this sucks!" This unit will provide them with a more nuanced rubric to evaluate the merit of literature and consumer media. Moreover, it will show them that the nuances of eloquent rhetoric already jive with the intuition of their ear. Their aesthetic tastes don't exist in some vacuum far removed from the legacies of great speakers: the past and the present are connected.

It is extremely important that hip hop be the resource I use to connect students with the literature of the past for two reasons, the first is the obvious reason that my students already enjoy hip hop and identify with it; the second reason is controversial, but is of central focus in the unit. Mainstream hip hop, also known as gangsta rap, has been under fire by many, ranging from first wave hip hop artists who have disowned the contemporary style to mainstream news networks, for "causing" an epidemic of violence and misogyny in America. Cultural theorist bell hooks, on the contrary, sees gangsta rap as "a reflection of dominant values in our culture rather than as an 'aberrant' psychological standpoint." ¹ In other words, while misogyny and violence are obviously negative and socially unacceptable, their presence in hip hop music is symptomatic of their ubiquity in mainstream culture at large. Notably, it is the messenger, the young black male, who is condemned as the sole perpetrator of violence and misogyny. However controversial the content of popular hip hop might be, much of it tells a story of actual life in an urban setting, and I argue that it is a story that deserves a listen. How Kendrick Lamar rhetorically negotiates with the mourning of deaths from gang violence is a key discussion point in the unit, and will be paralleled with the rhetoric Lincoln uses in his funeral oration that also negotiates with how we mourn for the dead.

Demographic

I teach at a Title 1 school with a student population of about 850. The students take eight classes a year in a block schedule where odd number classes are grouped under odd days of the month, and even number classes with even days of the month. For example, on September 2nd, the students will go to blocks 2, 4, 6, and 8, and September 3rd they will report to blocks 1, 3, 5, and 7. Our school serves a transient population, so class sizes can vary drastically throughout the school year. On average, we expect class size to be about twenty to twenty five students. Our school also has issues with student truancy, which makes it difficult to successfully implement a long unit. My unit is designed with these specific issues in mind. The material that will be studied at home, two musical albums, is convenient to access, and the same material will be used over the course of the two week unit, making it easier for a student to catch up if he or she is absent. If you are teaching in an environment with high truancy rates, I believe it's always better to limit your resources, make them easily accessible, and go deep into analysis in the classroom. This unit accomplishes this goal.

Objectives

The overarching objective is for my students to become empowered critics who feel confident to speak clearly and authoritatively about their perspective on an issue or piece of work. Through this, they will be able to speak knowledgeably about a variety of literature as well as to write persuasively to a particular audience.

The students will examine how rhetorical tropes persuade and move us. We will achieve this goal by analyzing the rhetorical techniques of Abraham Lincoln and Kendrick Lamar, focusing on *how* they address the specific issue of mortality from violence. In Lincoln's case, the violence is the Civil War. In Lamar's case, the violence is from the gang culture of Compton. Both works loosely follow the same structure: mourning the dead followed by advice for the living. We will discuss how their rhetorical style influences the way we see these issues, as well as the successes and failures of the speakers to convey a sense of authenticity or "truth" to the listener. We will also lightly incorporate works that were less successful to provide rhetorical contrast: Edward Everett's Oration at Gettysburg, which failed to be remembered as the "main event" it was supposed to be, and Jay Z's "Magna Carta Holy Grail," which went platinum before it was released but received mediocre ratings across the board. The students will compare and contrast the rhetorical approaches of two 19th century speakers and two 21st century speakers to enrich their understanding of rhetoric as it pertains to the lasting success of the work.

The students will gather and organize evidence to support a position, and they will present their position clearly and effectively in a written work or oral delivery. At the end of the unit, the students will choose one of two options: they may create a persuasive song that employs some of the tropes they have learned, or they may write a review of a musical album that effectively persuades the reader to listen (or not listen) to the album.

Research and Analysis of Subject Matter

"good kid, m.A.A.d city," released in 2012, is a non-linear narrative based on Lamar's own experiences as a youth growing up in Compton. Throughout the album, the speaker takes on many different voices, but the primary two are present-day Kendrick Lamar and the voice of his young self, spoken through the persona K. Dot. ² These twin voices are often in conflict: Kendrick will comment about events in a more removed, experienced way while K. Dot is swept up in them. It is through K. Dot's persona that we hear the most typical hip hop tropes, such as references to "bitches," for the purpose of betraying his youthful position and evoking sympathy with the listener. The central theme throughout the album is the effects of gang culture on the lives of people in the community. Lamar's rhetorical style puts K. Dot in a sympathetic light while also revealing the horrors of gang lifestyle, and the inability of the language of popular hip hop (and its focus on money, power, women) to fully capture that reality.

The album begins with the recitation of a prayer by a group of young men, "Lord God, I come to you a sinner, and I humbly repent for my sins." ³ This sets up a religious motif that will recur throughout the album, however, the reference to the divine is immediately undermined once K. Dot begins rapping about wanting to have sex with a girl named Sherane, whom he had previously met at a party. He talks about her body, admitting that his "motive was rather sinful." ⁴ Then he raps about wanting to date her and perhaps marry her, which is unusual to find in a typical hip hop song about sex, and thus revealing of his ethos. He rides up to her house then sees "two niggas, two black hoodies," ⁵ which foreshadows a later part of the album where Kendrick gets jumped by these two men. His phone then rings, and the entire "cool" feel of the scene is undermined by a message left on the phone by his mother, who complains that Kendrick isn't home yet. She needs the van to get food, "These kids ready to eat!" She also rattles off her perspective about the scene we just witnessed, "I hope you ain't out there messin' with those damn hood rats out there, shit, especially that crazy-ass girl Sherane," and "You keep fuckin' around in them streets, you ain't gon' pass to the next grade, 11th grade." ⁶ The song accomplishes a clever parapsydokian, a rhetorical device where the ending is unexpected in such a way that it causes the listener to reinterpret the first part. Kendrick uses this device to achieve a humorous anticlimax to the "Sherane" song, which we were led to believe would end with some sort of sexual completion, but moreover, it positions K. Dot in a sympathetic light by tenderly revealing the more banal elements of his family life.

The first song serves as a prologue that sets up the characters and setting of the narrative. Yet the events in first song, importantly, do not occur chronologically first, but happen later, after "Poetic Justice," making it a hysteron proteron, a device where the first event mentioned occurs temporally later than the second for the rhetorical effect of calling attention to an important event. The listener will not understand until later that this is the moment K. Dot gets jumped by two gangbangers, which catapults him into an existential dilemma for which the album gets its namesake. This use of hysteron proteron makes the case that the negative events in our lives are actually the catalysts that make us who we are.

The second song, "Bitch Don't Kill my Vibe," is the real introduction to the narrative, even though the song itself does not advance the plot. The most important line in the song for the narrative is the opening line, "I am a sinner, who's prob'ly gonna sin again, Lord forgive me," ⁷ because it reframes our understanding of the prayer spoken in the beginning. We now see sinning and repenting as a cyclical process instead of a single "coming to Jesus" moment. The narrative resumes at the end of the song when his friends put a tape into the tape deck of his friend's Toyota and they all ride around. In "Backseat Freestyle," K. Dot is doing just that,

freestyling to his friends' beats in the backseat of the Toyota. This is the earliest stage of K. Dot, where he begins his transition into Kendrick Lamar. The beginning sets up an absurd comparison when K. Dot belts out, "Martin had a dream / Kendrick have a dream." ⁸ K. Dot's "dream" is what music critic Ryan Bassil calls "the mantra of [Kendrick's] community," ⁹ : "All my life I want money and power / respect my mind or die from lead shower." ¹⁰ The very real desire for money and power – the "hip hop dream" – juxtaposed with the allusion to King's speech about equal rights for all humankind, comes across as small-minded and immature. This type of irony permeates Kendrick's lyrical interplay with the persona K. Dot. The use of popular hip hop tropes through the mouthpiece of K. Dot playfully undermines their credibility, particularly when he says, "damn I got bitches." ¹¹ In the context of the song, writes music critic Jayson Greene, this chant becomes not "an alpha male's boast" but "a pipsqueak's first pass at a chest-puff." ¹² On a larger scale, Kendrick employs this would-be misogynist lyric to actually undermine a misogynist point-of-view by revealing a "true" face behind it: an immature youth trying to look cool in front of his friends. The lyric now, all semblance of patriarchal authority stripped away, becomes touchingly comical. Kendrick Lamar says of this song:

"'Backseat Freestyle' is being in the mind state of being sixteen years old, and not having no cares in the world. Not giving a damn about nothing, but life and money and what you see in front of you. It's not me talking now, it's me talking then." ¹³

The deep central conflict between K. Dot and the real, interior Kendrick comes to fruition in the next song, aptly titled "The Art of Peer Pressure." We follow K. Dot and his friends, watch him take a hit of a blunt, and listen to him rap a string of enthymemes that force the listener to infer the pressures of life in the 'hood: "Really I'm a sober soul, but I'm with the homies right now," and "Really I'm a peacemaker, but I'm with the homies right now." ¹⁴ We find out that they are planning to do more than smoke and drink; they are attempting to rob a Nintendo and other items from someone's home and get away with it. Lines like, "momma used to say / one day it's gon' burn you out," ¹⁵ show us that K. Dot knows what he's doing is bad for him, but since its followed immediately by, "I'm with the homies right now," we see that he feels this behavior is expected of him in order to fit in with his peers. The argument is intentionally fragile, and the line "me and the homies" takes on a darker tone with each repetition during an interlude where his friend brags about "ridin'" for his "niggas" and imitates the sound of gunfire – to a haunting effect. ¹⁶ In the climax of the song, after the burglary, we hear the siren of police cars and think that the boys are going to get caught, then in an odd *deus ex machina*, Kendrick raps "they made a right, they made a left then made a right / then another right / one lucky night with the homies." ¹⁷ The song ends with the boys taking a puff of a laced blunt and talking about Jeezy, filled with relief but notably lacking an awareness of the danger they have put themselves in or remorse for the crime they have committed. The effect of Kendrick's language is that the listener finds his or herself *actually in the car* with the boys, so the listener can't help but feel that same wave of relief. We are actually happy they got away with the crime, but due to the not-entirely subtle conflict between K. Dot and Kendrick, this relief is subsumed into greater feelings of unease and regret that pervade the rest of the album. We feel for K. Dot and we worry about him. Even though he's doing all this bad stuff, we still somehow see him as a "good kid." This antithesis will become increasingly elaborated.

The following song, "Money Trees," is similar to "Backseat Freestylin'" in its use of hip hop tropes and emphasis on dreams and desires to get rich. The epistrophe of "ya bish" ¹⁸ repeated at the end of every line turns the lyrics into rhythmic waves that glide over the beat, which is a sample taken from the dream-pop song "Silver Soul" by musical group Beach House. It is rapped specifically by K. Dot, none of present-day Kendrick's commentary to be found, but we see K. Dot becoming more candid in his ruminations, which go from finally sleeping with Sherane to memories of seeing his uncle being shot in the head. These peppered

thoughts arise sporadically, producing a distressing antithesis between the harsh realities of life in the ghetto and a young man's dream to live life "like rappers do." ¹⁹ This song could be read as an after-the-fact rationalization of the previous robbery in order to downplay his own feelings of guilt – which the song intentionally fails at doing. Instead, the overwhelming dream-like aura, and the paralleling of K. Dot's desires to the impossible idiom "money trees," drowns the rationalization in a sea of nostalgia and regret. Through careful choice of words and word positioning, we hear K. Dot weakly argue against the ridiculousness of his dreams with, "That's just how I feel," and yet simultaneously feel the same poignant desire he feels for a dollar to suddenly "turn into a million." ²⁰

"Money Trees" also contains what may be the most important, and at the very least the most thematically dense, line on "good kid, m.A.A.d city," which is, "everybody gon' respect the shooter, but the one in front of the gun lives forever." ²¹ On the surface this is an idealistic maxim, or perhaps a shout-out to immortalize friends who have been killed by gang violence, and on another level, the maxim is completely false. We all know that the shooter gets famous. Rarely if ever do we hear about the countless victims of crimes. Why, then, does he say the one in front of the gun lives forever? I believe this statement has less to do with an answer and more to do with the way people process gang violence and its effect on friends and family. In other words, this is a statement of mourning.

The song "Poetic Justice" occurs chronologically in tandem with the first song, "Sherane," and expresses K. Dot's anticipation to consummate his relationship with Sherane. The song lines with the end of the first song, "Sherane," and we find out that K. Dot gets jumped by the two young men he sees in the black hoodies. It is fitting that the song is called "Poetic Justice," because K. Dot chronologically gets jumped just after the robbery he has committed. Though the two events are not causally related, the ironic title reinforces the presence of Kendrick's own moral compass and feelings of guilt regarding his past. These events also serve to highlight the harsh conditions and high stakes of life in Compton. Just like the owner of the home they robbed, Kendrick becomes a victim of gang violence simply by existing there. One doesn't have to be a gangbanger to be totally affected by gangbanger culture.

The next two songs catalogue Kendrick's reaction to being jumped, and are the namesake of the album, "Good Kid" and "M.A.A.d City." The theme of "Good Kid" stresses how innocent people can get swept up in a negative lifestyle and change for the worse because of an environment of "mass hallucination." ²² Kendrick expresses feelings of anger, confusion and despair over his lifestyle and environment. He describes himself as a "prisoner," and, in a remark about getting jumped, says, "'I'm easily prey, I got ate alive yesterday / I got animosity building, it's probably big as a building / Me jumping off the roof is me just playing it safe.'" ²³ He literalizes his anger into the shape of a building that he wants to leap from, or escape, but knows he must process. In his confusion, he asks, "But what am I supposed to do when the topic is red or blue?" ²⁴ which is metonymy with a double meaning. Red and blue represent the colors of the Bloods and the Crips, but in a brilliant rhetorical turn of phrase, the colors also represent the police. By using the same symbol to parallel the gangs and the police, Kendrick shows how he feels trapped from all sides, first harassed by the gangs, then harassed by police who assume he's a gangbanger. In the first verse, the gang members "step" on his "neck" with their Nike's, while in the second verse, the police step on his neck as hard as their "bullet proof vest." ²⁵ At the end of the song he remarks in an elegant antithesis, "The streets sure to release the worst side of my best." ²⁶

"M.A.A.d City" continues the theme of alienation. In this song K. Dot expresses increasing self-awareness and disillusionment to the reality of life in the ghetto. The mood this song creates is pure chaos and panic. His

imagery paints a picture of carnage in the streets, particularly in the parallel construction, "bodies on top of bodies, IV's on top of IV's," ²⁷ which suggests both the IV's in the hospital needed for blood transfusions and needles left in the streets by heroin users. He recalls being nine and seeing someone get shot, and censors out the name of the killer while using a paralipsis, or bringing up by denial, "Now this is not a tape recorder saying that he did it / but ever since that day, I was looking at him different." ²⁸ The paralipsis emphasizes the anxiety of retribution that accompanies having seen too much, harkening back to the helplessness of simply being in the wrong place at the wrong time. We know from the lyrics of "Money Trees" that the person he is referring to being shot is his Uncle Tony. After describing a "wall of bullets" and a series of broken truces, Kendrick advises his enemies to "crawl your head in that noose, you wind up dead on the news," ²⁹ which suggests that they ought to commit suicide because they'll be dead soon anyway. The phrase contains a striking allusion to the racist iconography of a noose, symbolizing a lynch mob. One online commenter writes that Kendrick uses this image to argue that African Americans are "partaking in a bigot's work of their own volition" by committing atrocities against their own people, and that gang quarrels are ostensibly putting black people back "in the very nooses [their] ancestors fought so hard to escape" ³⁰. This song's richness in tone and irony make it perfect material for class discussion of gang violence. It is in these two songs that K. Dot realizes he does not want to live the life of a gangbanger, but he still feels helpless about how to change the path of his life.

To cope with his feelings of anger and panic, K. Dot makes the choice to get drunk at a party with his friends in the song "Swimming Pools (Drank)." The bridge of the song coldly repeats "drank" after each activity, from waking up to standing up, to emphasize immoderation and abuse. The hook of the song is someone advising K. Dot to "turn it up a notch" ³¹ by hyperbolically diving into a swimming pool of liquor, a perverse inversion of religious baptism. These unyielding, solid imperatives stand in stark contrast to K. Dot's mental turmoil. He uses hendiadys, "I took a sip then another sip," ³² to stress his over-imbibing to "fit in with the popular." ³³ As he becomes increasingly intoxicated, Sherane takes him into another room where he admits to himself that drinking for relief is just an excuse for dependency, "makin' excuse that your relief / is in the bottom / of a bottle." ³⁴ But it is too late. He uses a charged euphemism for throwing up out of a window, releasing "everything that corrode inside of me." ³⁵ This could symbolize the anxiety and fear that alcohol exacerbated instead of relieved. At the end of the song, K. Dot's friends make the inebriated decision to seek revenge on the people who jumped him. K. Dot's friend's brother, Dave, is shot to death in the ensuing altercation.

"Sing About Me, I'm Dying of Thirst" is an existentially compelling song, prompted by his friend's murder, that addresses three potential directions of Kendrick's life. The first possibility is dying young as a gangbanger, the second is eking out an insignificant life that fades into oblivion, and the third is being true to his own perspective by recognizing his self-determination. These three life paths correspond with three speakers: the first is the dead gangbanger Dave, the second is the unnamed sister of a dead prostitute named Keisha, whom Kendrick referred to in his debut album, and the third speaker is himself. The song begins with a double entendre, "When the lights shut off / and it's my turn to settle down / my main concern / Promise that you will sing about me." ³⁶ He uses sleep to talk about dying and wanting to be remembered in some way after his death. The first speaker, Dave, thanks K. Dot for attending to his mourning brother. He described the feelings of revenge as a demon on his back, and in a moment of clarity says, "In actuality, it's a trip how we trip off the colors / I wonder if I'll ever discover a passion like you and recover / The life that I knew as a young'n." ³⁷ He then fatalistically accepts his death as inevitable because "dumb niggas like me never prosper." ³⁸ In a poignant and telling aposiopesis, an intentionally incomplete if-then construction, Dave says, "Just promise me you'll tell this story when you make it big / And if I die before your album drop, I hope -" ³⁹ then gun shots,

then a few beats with no lyrics. The listener is forced to infer that he would have said the chorus, "[I hope] that you will sing about me," but his voice has literally been taken from him by gunfire. The lyrics attributed to him posthumously are ironically written by Kendrick Lamar; the only thing we will ever really know about Dave is that he died, nothing more.

The second speaker, Keisha's sister, accuses Kendrick of exploiting or sensationalizing Keisha by referring to her life as a prostitute on his debut album. She says the message resembled "Brenda's Got a Baby," a famous Tupac song decrying societal wrongs, but she interprets Kendrick telling Keisha's story as "judging her past and shit."⁴⁰ She enumerates details about her own life as a prostitute and says that if she could have children she would teach her daughters to be leaders, but she doesn't know how because domestic violence is a natural way of life for her: "you need her to learn somethin' / then you probably need to beat her / that's how I was taught."⁴¹ She reveals a vulnerable side of herself, admits to feeling tired and worn out, then snaps back with "fuck that 'sorry for your loss shit,' / my sister died in vain / but what point are you trying to gain / if you can't fit the pumps I walk in?"⁴² She both needs help but refuses to accept it. She orders Kendrick not to put her in any of his songs because she "brings enough attention on her own,"⁴³ which isn't meant as a brag but as a defiant defense mechanism that is reinforced by the following lines, "did I mention that I physically feel great? / A doctor's approval is a waste of time / I know I'm straight."⁴⁴ To maintain a sense of pride, she is choosing ignorance. Her attitude becomes more heated when she says this amazing paralipsis, "I'll probably live longer than you and never fade away / I'll never fade away, I'll never fade away, I know my fate,"⁴⁵ which implies that she is trying to convince herself of these words more than she's trying to convince Kendrick. As she says this, the sound of her voice literally starts to fade. The last line we hear from her ranting is "Don't ignore me, nigga, fuck your glory, nigga,"⁴⁶ before her voice disappears. Kendrick characterizes this speaker both realistically and empathetically, and includes her despite her spoken wishes in order to advocate for the many struggling women who must assume hardened exteriors to protect themselves.

In the next verse, Kendrick makes peace with Dave and Keisha's sister, but moreover he makes peace with himself by accepting his self-determination. He has mourned, but now must face the fact that he is still alive – what will he do now? He raps that every day "the glass mirror / get tougher to watch,"⁴⁷ meaning that he can no longer passively watch himself transform into someone he doesn't want to be. In this song, Kendrick honors the dead without glamorizing or otherwise fictionalizing their lives. Though this, he succeeds in finding his own voice as well as a sense of truth. He has actualized his prior maxim, "the one in front of the gun lives forever," through the power of his own free will. This completes the first part the funereal cycle: mourning the dead, which will be followed by advice for the living.

Yet there is still unfinished business. The next part of the song, "Dying of Thirst" makes a reference to the profane baptism of "Swimming Pools" to suggest that no amount of drink can relieve him and his friends from the cycle of vengeance that has permeated their environment. The delivery of these lyrics is punctuated by guttural sounds that imitate gasping for air, creating a mood of restlessness and inevitability. The choppy lyrics describe seeking revenge with a hopeless self-awareness, "What are we doing? Who are we fooling?"⁴⁸ and repeats over and over "tired of running" and "dying of thirst" until he jumps into a pool. This is the baptismal climax of the narrative. The voice of his mentor neighbor, spoken by Maya Angelou, rises. She stops the boys and asks them why they are so angry, then she offers to lead them in prayer, which loops back to the prayer spoken in the beginning of the album. Kendrick is redeemed and his spirit is at peace. He now sheds the persona of K. Dot and the conformity to Compton life, and becomes truly himself: Kendrick Lamar.

In "I'm Real," Kendrick revels in his newfound sense of self, and also presents advice for the living. In this song

he begins to negotiate between different kinds of love to figure out where his priorities lie. He uses anaphora to pile on love object after love object, which climaxes with the rhetorical question, "What love got to do with it when you don't love yourself?"⁴⁹ In order to truly love himself, he must separate real love from the twisted desires for money, sex and power. He also begins to deeply question whether rejecting these false desires necessitates rejecting the people he loves who embody them: "Should I hate them for telling me 'ball out'? / Should I hate street credibility I'm talkin' about? / Hating all money, power, respect in my will / Or hating the fact that none of that shit make me real?"⁵⁰ He cleverly refers to his own earlier lyrics in "Backseat Freestylin'" to show that he has moved beyond his juvenile desires, and has realized that loving and obtaining any of that isn't what defines him as a person, but rather, that he should stay true to himself. The song ends with two messages from his father and mother. His father cautions him not to "learn the hard way" and adds, "any nigga can kill a man, that don't make you a real nigga."⁵¹ Then his mother tells him to pursue a musical career and return to Compton to, "give back with your words of encouragement, and that's the best way to give back, to your city..."⁵² This final treatise leads directly into the last song, "Compton," a paean to the same city that Kendrick had to transcend in order to extol. The very end of the album contains a skit where Kendrick tells his mom he's taking the van out and will return in fifteen minutes, which starts the entire narrative over again. This cyclical motif suggests that overcoming and becoming are the eternal processes of life, and harkens back to the first line of the narrative, "I am a sinner, whose prob'ly gonna sin again."

The album "good kid, m.A.A.d city" is unquestioningly rich in rhetorical style and content. The material is both accessible and relevant to the students. The above analysis shows how good rhetoric conveys a sense of truth, captivates an audience, and opens people to a new perspective. As a contrast, I'll briefly examine the album "Magna Carta Holy Grail," by Jay Z, that did not accomplish these three goals.

Upon its release in 2013, "Magna Carta Holy Grail" received negative reviews for being blatantly superficial, to the effect of feeling "weirdly distant" and inauthentic to the audience⁵³. How could a rapper with not one but *three* studio albums on *Rolling Stone's* Top 500 make such a mediocre record? The answer lies in the failure of his rhetoric to achieve his desired ends.

Metanoia is a rhetorical device where the speaker retracts a statement then restates it differently, for the purpose of strengthening (or weakening) the prior declaration. Jay Z uses, and misuses, this technique to excess. In "Crown," he declares, "You in the presence of a king / Scratch that, you in the presence of a God."⁵⁴ Music Critic Ian Cohen says this line sounds like "wishful thinking."⁵⁵ The rest of the song lacks any supporting evidence, no lush turns of phrases or deity-evoking symbolism or imagery, that Jay Z is in fact what he claims, so the line indeed flops like a shallow brag. Instead of strengthening his first declaration, the restated assertion that Jay Z is a "God" inadvertently undermines his first assertion because of its lack of support. Even the retract/restate formula works against him because he chose the words "scratch that,"⁵⁶ which make him sound confused, like his rap is some kind of rough draft. Wouldn't a true lyrical "God" know for sure what he wants to say? Unfortunately, Jay Z continues to employ this rhetorical strategy throughout another song, "Picasso Baby," where he rattles off seemingly contradictory lines like, "I just want a Picasso in my casa, no, my castle / I'm a hasa, no, I'm an asshole / I'm never satisfied, can't knock my hustle / I want a Rothko, no, I want a brothel."⁵⁷ Jay Z is feigning an indecisive attitude to brag about how much money he has, which comes off very disingenuous. The metanoia fails to strengthen his statements or lead the listener to any greater idea or kernel of truth; his ideas just circulate meaninglessly around his possessions. Jesse Cataldo of *Slant Magazine* says in a review that his lyrics on the album, particularly this song, consist mostly of "lazy acquisition cataloguing."⁵⁸

Jay Z repeats the same phrases and ideas, mostly as short references to the "rags to riches" narrative, over and over. While the repeated phrases in "good kid, m.A.A.d city" change in meaning throughout the song and often carry ironic messages, Jay Z's repeated phrases are boring because the words don't exercise any meaning other than their literal ones. The hyperbole in the line, "Uncle said I'd never sell a million records / I sold a million records like a million times,"⁵⁹ is one-dimensional compared to Kendrick Lamar's "building" symbolism in "Good Kid," where he uses the noun and verb "building" to play with the literal and figurative meaning of "building,"⁶⁰ creating a visual metaphor that stirs the listener's passions. Jay Z's major opportunity to employ verbal symbolism to touch on deeper issues such as race and history was in the song "Oceans." Frank Ocean opens by singing a beautiful lyrical metaphor about the water that slaves crossed hundreds of years ago still running through his own blood, then Jay Z completely misses the point by rapping about *literally* being in the ocean on a Yacht.⁶¹ If insensitive bathos had been his goal, he would have succeeded. He does succeed in appearing insensitive, but in such a clumsy, unintentional way that the listener feels a bit embarrassed.

Cataldo observes that the thematic content on "Magna Carta Holy Grail," is one-dimensional as well, focusing only on one aspect of consumerism: how awesome it is to have everything. Even when Jay Z tries to "look outside himself" toward greater themes of racial injustice and slavery, like on the song "Oceans," "these allusions are inevitably distressing, functioning as mere lead-ups to the eventual conclusion that fabulous wealth is a panacea."⁶² It is now easy to see why the album comes off as unconvincing and inauthentic. It is difficult to convince an educated listener of the obvious untruth that wealth is a cure-all, even if the speaker uses immaculate rhetoric, which Jay Z in this case does not. His rhetoric rings hollow because it lacks a nuanced message. For example, the opening song "Holy Grail" attempts to grapple with anxiety regarding the ephemeral nature of fame, but the allusion to Nirvana comes off as "clumsy" and "borrowed."⁶³ This is because the allusion itself becomes contradictory when fleshed out. "Where Kurt Cobain felt compromised by his fame," writes Ian Cohen, "Jay and Timberlake are doing everything in their power not to offend the money people - whether it's Samsung, Target, or someone dropping \$250 to see them at the Rose Bowl."⁶⁴ Thus, Jay and Timberlake's qualms with fame seem phony, especially since the song is followed by "Picasso Baby," where Jay Z simply brags about how much he can buy.

Kendrick Lamar convinces his listeners that a human can transcend the limitations of his environment. He does this by truthfully conveying real elements of life in the Compton ghetto. He achieves a difficult union of brutal honesty and touching empathy, and applies that lens both to himself and his community. In contrast, Jay Z's album fails to move his audience or change anyone's opinion regarding his materialistic mindset.

Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address is two hundred and seventy two words, and his speech lasted just over two minutes. In the program, the speech is labeled "Dedicatory Remarks," and occurs after the main event, a whopping 13,607 words and two hour long oration by Edward Everett. Yet Everett's speech is mostly unremembered, while Lincoln's is one of the most famous orations in American history, and took on the title of "Gettysburg Address."

Everett's speech expounds a play-by-play account of the battle of Gettysburg, making specific references to the names of essentially every general involved, and compares it to historical battles from the Peloponnesian War all the way through the Thirty Years War, the War of the Roses, and the French Revolution. The comparison to all these great wars is meant to enshrine Gettysburg in historical significance. His play-by-play account of the battle valorizes and honors the soldiers, while also giving the audience a much-desired account of what actually occurred on the grounds they are now memorializing. Everett also makes a long argument for

the necessity of restoring the Union by emphasizing the difference between state's rights and federal rights, the former not including the right to secede to form a separate nation. ⁶⁵ He also praises the Union for not becoming bitter toward the Rebels, saying, "I do not believe there is, in all history, the record of a civil war of such gigantic dimensions where so little has been done in the spirit of vindictiveness as in this war," ⁶⁶ then for the next six lines catalogues all the ways the Rebel Government has provoked the Union, such as employing pirates, starving Union prisoners, enslaving free black Northerners, and fighting a guerilla war under Captain Quantrill. ⁶⁷ This paralipsis succeeds in rallying the audience *against* the Rebels by giving them an outlet for rage with a veneer of moral righteousness. In other words, he's saying something like this: look at how much *better* we are for not succumbing to bitterness, and look at how much *worse* the Rebels are for doing these things that *would* make us bitter if we weren't so gracious.

Lincoln's speech, unlike Everett's, notably lacks any mention of the secession, the South, or slavery. Wills explains that this "suppression of particulars" creates a paradox where the audience is moved despite the "impersonal air" of the speech. ⁶⁸ Through impersonal signifiers, he evokes feelings of universality and eternity, such as when he says, "this ground," instead of Gettysburg, or, "a great civil war" instead of *the* war. ⁶⁹ "Those who gave their lives" ⁷⁰ takes the place of the actual names of the soldiers, and this direct language succeeds at enshrining the fallen soldiers in eternity much more efficiently than Everett's verbose cataloguing.

Lincoln achieves this straightforward tone by using parallelism and anaphora, such as when he says "of the people, by the people, and for the people," as well as asyndeton in the paralipsis, "we cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate, we cannot hallow this ground." ⁷¹ We know that Lincoln is in fact dedicating the grounds, but he uses paralipsis as a gesture of honor toward the dead. He evokes humility in the audience, and connects their goals with the goals of the fallen men (who are not specified as being Northern or Southern), instead of exacerbating their resentment towards the Rebels. In a sense, Lincoln could not "indulge in moral tirades" against the Rebels, for "he meant to govern these people when order was restored." ⁷² His task was to use language to unite a broken nation under one universal ideal, and that ideal is that "all men are created equal."

American culture holds the above truth to be self-evident, but it was the Gettysburg Address that originally determined how we interpret the Declaration of Independence today. ⁷³ Without any mention of the injustice of slavery, Lincoln asserted an irrefutable argument against it by asserting the axiom of the Declaration, the ideal that "all men are created equal," as the premise of Constitutional Law. The war, then, is not about the North versus the South, but about suppressing an insurrection in order to uphold a universal truth. Indeed, throughout his career, Lincoln referred to the civil war as an insurrection, never as a war between a Union and "seceded states," which he claimed was a misnomer. ⁷⁴ He was unwavering in this belief so that he could uphold a crucial tenet of a working Constitution: that the nation precedes the states. If the states legally *could* secede, the document is compromised. Lincoln employed the principle of the Declaration "as a way of correcting the Constitution without overthrowing it," ⁷⁵ and through steadfast language, changed the way all Americans viewed the document from that point forward.

Lincoln's speech only appears straightforward on the surface. What appears to be a consecration of a burial ground is really an imperative case for the entire nation to see the Constitution as a uniting document that can be modified to achieve an ideal. The argument is so tightly knit by enthymeme and antithesis that it is almost invisible, making it highly persuasive. Lincoln appeals to the audience's emotions by the linking of opposing elements; first of past and present, when he begins with "Fourscore and seven years ago," then transitions to the present time; next word and deed, such as when he says, "The world will little note nor long

remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here," and life and death, when he links the goals of the dead men to the "unfinished work" that must be "carried on." ⁷⁶ These antitheses create a sense of continuity and compel the audience to agree with the cause of the war. The "unfinished work" is a stirring double entendre, meaning both the literal work of putting down an insurrection, and the greater work toward the transcendental ideal of equality among men that can only be achieved through pressing forward.

Overall, Everett's speech is mesmerizing. It had to be to keep people mentally occupied for over two hours. But Lincoln's speech succeeds in captivating an audience by conveying the "truth" of their already developing sentiments. In the burgeoning new democracy of the United States, it became increasingly popular to imitate the aesthetics of the first democracy, ancient Greece. Everett uses the traditional rhetorical style that pays homage the ancients, however, "in praising the Greeks, he fails to imitate them." ⁷⁷ Lincoln's succinct, parsed rhetorical style emulates the classical funeral orations of ancient Greece instead of just referring to them. This embodiment of the word helps to convey a sense of authenticity. Lincoln eschews the popular rhetorical tropes of the past to sound more straightforward in the same way that Kendrick Lamar, so many years later, eschews the popular hip hop tropes of mainstream culture to sound more candid. In this way, both transcend mastery of the language (as Everett undeniably had) and enter the realm of true sincerity via the skill of performance.

Teaching Strategies

To pique the interests of students without overwhelming them with an unfamiliar topic, it is best to start with familiar content, in this case hip hop, as a vehicle for the rhetorical concepts before applying them to the unfamiliar, which is the historical element of Lincoln's Address. This will instill in the students a feeling of historical continuity before we return "home" again to the present age, where they will draw a final connection between the elements of rhetoric in past and present culture.

The students should be told one week prior to beginning the unit to listen to both albums for homework. They should be instructed to listen to each album straight through, beginning to end, without prolonged pausing or skipping songs. On the first day of the unit, the students should come to class with a list of questions, comments and reactions they had concerning the albums. Which one did they like better and why? Which parts did they like the best? The least? That way, the students come to class not only with background knowledge but a stake in what is to be learned; the rest of the unit will introduce the language they need to persuasively develop these views.

It is important that the teacher understand that the content of the musical albums is important only insofar as it illuminates how the artist uses rhetorical strategies to negotiate through the key issues. Introducing the Kendrick Lamar album under a thematic umbrella such as, "How does Kendrick talk about gang violence?" for instance, will provoke a more insightful discussion than an imperative like, "List Kendrick Lamar's rhetorical techniques and explain their effect." The strategic goal is to move from a general understanding of a theme to the specific techniques that *convey* the artist's perspective, creating a sort of learning loop. This allows students really see the purpose of rhetorical strategies by experiencing their effects themselves, instead of just learning *about* the techniques.

I included an analysis of every song on Kendrick Lamar's album so that the teacher can respond accordingly to

the areas the students gravitate toward most in the album. Chunking the songs together within a discussion for time's sake, asking questions that play off students' prior knowledge, and emphasizing the latter half of the album are all more judicious strategies than close readings of every song, which risks becoming too repetitive and compromising student interest. It's also important that the teacher limit the class discussions to just a few key rhetorical devices that appear in both Lamar and Lincoln's works, such as epistrophe, anaphora, and antithesis. Stick to two or three devices per class discussion to draw deeper connections and to prevent confusion.

Each day should begin with a close reading of a song, or remarkable tidbits of songs, on "good kid, m.A.A.d city." The teacher will model annotation strategies on an overhead or Smart Board projector, and the students will make their own annotations on hard copies. The framing of the lesson should be inductive. After a read-aloud, the students should be asked to highlight or underline the most striking parts of the song. Then they should be asked to write down what they think these lines mean, and what effects the lines have on them as listeners, (i.e. "What did these words make you think or feel?"). Only then will the teacher introduce the rhetorical devices used in the song, and the student will appropriately annotate those occurrences in the lyrics. More often than not, the recurring moments of student interest will *already* correspond with the loci of these rhetorical devices. Draw attention to these occurrences: this helps the students build confidence in their inferences and leads to more student ownership over the text. Remember, we want the students to become critics. After the first few lessons, encourage the students to identify and explain the effects of the rhetorical tropes themselves.

To keep the discussion on a higher level of Bloom's Taxonomy, it is best to use question stems that begin with "how" and "why," moving from analytical questions into more evaluative questions as the teacher sees fit. The teacher must get the students to critically think about the *effectiveness* of rhetoric. A question like, "How could Kendrick Lamar have said this differently?" is aptly followed by, "Why do you think he chose to say it this way instead of another way?" The teacher should employ elements of the contrasting album, "Magna Carta Holy Grail," to prompt students to make evaluations concerning the successfulness of rhetoric. Take two comparable uses of rhetoric from both albums and ask, "Which line feels more authentic or truthful? What about it makes this one feel more *real* than that one?" To elicit the most insightful conversation, the discussion should be framed through comparing and contrasting. Use Venn Diagrams when comparing authors' styles.

Before the students begin their final projects, they need to be exposed to actual album reviews of "good kid, m.A.A.d city" and "Magna Carta Holy Grail." Give students copies of the reviews listed in the bibliography. Have the students annotate the reviews by highlighting persuasive words and explaining their effect on the reader. Next, have the students evaluate the reviews. Ask the following questions when appropriate: How accurate is this review? Do you as a reader agree or disagree with it? Which specific parts would you add to, remove, or otherwise change based on your own understanding of the album? How could the author's language have been more effective at convincing the audience to listen or not listen to the album?

Use the same strategies above when teaching the Lincoln and Everett material. Use only one or two paragraphs of Everett's Oration for the purpose of contrasting the rhetorical style with Lincoln's. The emphasis needs to be on Lincoln's style of "plainspeaking" and how it conveys a sense of truth. The class only needs to spend one to two days on Lincoln's Gettysburg Address. The teacher must provide a brief historical background that includes the information above. After the discussion, the students should complete a Venn Diagram that compares and contrasts the rhetoric that Lincoln uses with the rhetoric that Kendrick Lamar uses. The thematic link between these two speakers is the concept of a funeral oration. Both speakers deal

with mourning and loss. Discuss the connecting theme of both works, but focus on just three rhetorical devices: antithesis, epistrophe and anaphora. How are these devices used in each work, and to what effect? This connects the tropes of the past with the tropes of the present. These teaching strategies will aptly prepare the students for the activities that follow.

Classroom Activities

Classroom Activity 1

Have the students translate the Gettysburg address into contemporary language without sacrificing any part of the message. This is a challenging activity that allows students to get creative. This activity should be done in groups of two or three. Allow them to use whatever language they choose as long as it does not violate the student code of conduct. Encourage the students to incorporate music and rhyme as they please. The object of the activity is to get the students to use some of the rhetorical devices they have learned in a creative way.

Classroom Activity 2

The students will write a rubric for the perfect rap song. Begin this activity as a whole class to establish a baseline before allowing students to create more nuanced rubrics independently. It is crucial that the teacher steer students away from just rhythm and beat, and toward how the lyrics and rhythm complement one another. This rubric should mainly concern the lyrics, and will be divided into two parts: style and content. The style section is where the essential rhetorical tropes will be listed and explained, and the content section is where the ideas of the speaker are outlined. After the students create their rubrics, they will pick out a song and rate it according to their rubric. They will write one evaluative paragraph about how successful the song is rhetorically.

Classroom Activity 3: Final Project

For the final project, the students have a choice. They may write a persuasive speech as a rap, or they may write an album review for an album of their choice. The album review must include a thoughtful analysis of the musician's approach, the rhetorical strategies used, and an evaluative statement that persuades the reader either to listen or not listen to the album. The review will include the student's opinion, but it *must* be backed by their knowledge of rhetoric. Thus, the student should not say "I like the part when..." but instead speak objectively, "This particular line is emotionally stirring because of x rhetorical device." At the top of their review, they must assign a number of stars for the album, ranging from 1 to 10. Ten stars is a perfect masterpiece, and one star is a total flop. Encourage the students to stay away from the absolutes to enhance their credibility. Make sure the students use their rap rubrics as guidelines for what to write. The students will each present their final projects to the class with a brief synopsis of the album and their rating of it. The presentation shouldn't last more than three minutes but should include relevant information as to why they picked that rating. The reviews will be posted around the classroom with pictures of the album covers.

Some students are going to be turned off at the prospect of writing what is ostensibly a persuasive essay. These students have the option of writing a persuasive speech in the form of a song. They may revise and expand upon their rewrites of the Gettysburg Address, or they may pick another topic they find relevant. They also must use the rap rubrics they designed as a guideline. The song should be no less than two minutes long.

The teacher or a student will record a performance of the song and it will be played to the class. That way, the student can have time to practice and revise their performance after they view the tape. If the teacher does not have access to a video recorder, the performance can be live, but allow a few days for the student to practice at home

Resources

Bibliography and Reading Material

Bassil, Ryan. "The Narrative Guide To Kendrick Lamar's 'good kid, m.A.A.d city' | NOISEY." NOISEY. http://noisey.vice.com/en_uk/blog/the-narrative-guide-to-kendrick-lamars-good-kid-mad-city (accessed July 29, 2014). Ryan Bassil catalogues the storyline of "good kid, m.A.A.d city" and distills the narrative voices of K. Dot and Kendrick Lamar.

Cataldo, Jesse. "Jay-Z: Magna Carta... Holy Grail | Album Review | Slant Magazine." Slant Magazine. <http://www.slantmagazine.com/music/review/jay-z-magna-carta-holy-grail> (accessed July 29, 2014). This is a lambasting criticism of "Magna Carta Holy Grail" in comparison with the other reviews. Students may pick out the strong words and allusions the author uses to persuade the reader.

Cohen, Ian. "Jay-Z: Magna Carta Holy Grail." Pitchfork. <http://pitchfork.com/reviews/albums/18247-jay-z-magna-carta-holy-grail/> (accessed July 29, 2014). This is another persuasive album review that can be used as a classroom example.

Elkouby, Sebastien. "Is Hip Hop Destroying Black America?" RapRehab. <http://raprehab.com/is-hip-hop-destroying-black-america/> (accessed July 29, 2014). This article gives a brief history of hip hop and outlines some key elements in the argument about contemporary hip hop's violent/misogynist lyrics. It can be used as classroom reading.

Fliegelman, Jay. *Declaring independence: Jefferson, natural language & the culture of performance*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1993. A useful resource for teachers interested in the link between modern eloquence and American democracy.

Greene, Jayson. "Kendrick Lamar: good kid, m.A.A.d city." Pitchfork. <http://pitchfork.com/reviews/albums/17253-good-kid-maad-city/> (accessed July 29, 2014). This is a strong review of "good kid m.A.A.d city" to be used in contrast with the negative reviews of "Magna Carta Holy Grail."

Hall, Stuart, and Simon Frith. "Music and Identity." In *Questions of cultural identity*. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1996. 108 - 127. This is an essay about how music creates and shapes experiences. This is a helpful resource for teachers who want to understand why it is important to use popular music in the classroom.

hooks, bell. "Race & Ethnicity: hooks: Misogyny, Gangsta...." Race & Ethnicity: hooks: Misogyny, Gangsta.... <http://race.eserver.org/misogyny.html> (accessed July 29, 2014). Cultural theorist bell hooks's perspective on the argument about hip hop's violent lyrics. Essentially, the violence/misogyny in hip hop is more illustrative of the values of mainstream culture than of young black men, who are the "messengers."

Jay Z. "Magna Carta Holy Grail." 2013. Rock-a-Fella, Universal Records. This is the musical album teachers will use as a rhetorical contrast to "good kid, m.A.A.d city."

Lamar, Kendrick. "good kid, m.A.A.d city." 2012. Top Dog Entertainment, Interscope Records. This musical album is central to the unit.

"Magna Carta... Holy Grail by Jay Z." Genius. <http://genius.com/albums/Jay-z/Magna-carta-holy-grail> (accessed July 29, 2014). This is a resource for teachers to find all the lyrics to the album "Magna Carta Holy Grail" as well as annotations added by readers online.

Rosen, Judy. "good kid, m.A.A.d city | Album Reviews | Rolling Stone." Rolling Stone. <http://www.rollingstone.com/music/albumreviews/good-kid-m-a-a-d-city-20121022> (accessed July 29, 2014). This is a succinct review of "good kid, m.A.A.d city" that can be picked apart, challenged, or added to as a classroom assignment.

Rytlewski, Evan. "Jay-Z: Magna Carta Holy Grail." *Â- Music Review Â-* The A.V. Club. <http://www.avclub.com/review/jay-z-emmagna-carta-holy-grailem-99869> (accessed July 29, 2014). A negative review of "Magna Carta Holy Grail" that uses a colloquial writing style.

Vozick-Levinson, Simon. "Jay-Z's 'Magna Carta... Holy Grail' | Album Reviews | Rolling Stone." Rolling Stone. <http://www.rollingstone.com/music/albumreviews/magna-carta-holy-grail-20130710> (accessed July 29, 2014). This review is an example of effective persuasive writing. The author's diction and approach to writing could be analyzed in class before students write their own reviews.

Wills, Garry. *Lincoln at Gettysburg: the words that remade America*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992. This book contains a detailed explanation of how the Gettysburg Address changed the way Americans viewed the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence. It also contains a thoughtful analysis of the language of the Gettysburg Address as well as the entire Oration at Gettysburg by Edward Everett.

"good kid, m.A.A.d city by Kendrick Lamar." Genius. <http://genius.com/albums/Kendrick-lamar/Good-kid-m-a-a-d-city> (accessed July 29, 2014). This is a resource where teachers may find all the lyrics to "good kid, m.A.A.d city" as well as annotations added by online readers.

Appendix

This unit fulfills elements in all three categories of the Virginia Standards of Learning for 11th grade English: Oral Language, Reading Analysis and Writing.

The final project of the unit fulfills Virginia SOL strand 11.1 of the Oral Language category by having the students make persuasive presentations. They must gather and organize evidence logically to support a position, they must present clearly and convincingly to the rest of the class, and they must use vocabulary appropriate to their topic, which is an evaluation of an artist's rhetoric.

The classroom activities, including the final project, also fulfill Virginia SOL strand 11.7 of the Writing category

by encouraging the students to write in a variety of forms with a focus on persuasion. Rewriting the Gettysburg Address helps the students locate a purpose for their writing, helps them to organize their ideas logically with a central focus, and gives them fodder to elaborate their ideas. The framework of the persuasive album review is designed to keep an intended audience and purpose in the students' minds as they write.

Finally, the subject matter fulfills strand 11.3 of the Reading Analysis category of the Virginia SOL, where students must read and analyze relationships among American literature, history and culture. By design, this unit links the rhetorical tropes of contemporary hip hop with famous tropes of American history. By comparing and contrasting the approaches of different authors, the students can view the development of American literature through both a historical and contemporary lens. The unit also illuminates the universal themes and motifs inherent in literature that continue to defy generational boundaries, such as the process of mourning for the dead. The structure of the class discussions and the phrasing of the questions force students to draw conclusions about the author's intent from the context and language of the texts.

Notes

1. bell hooks, "Misogyny, Gangsta Rap, and the Piano"
2. Ryan Bassil, "The Narrative Guide to Kendrick Lamar's 'Good Kid, M.A.A.d City.'"
3. Kendrick Lamar, "good kid, m.A.A.d city"
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. Ryan Bassil, "The Narrative Guide to Kendrick Lamar's 'Good Kid, M.A.A.d City.'"
10. Kendrick Lamar, "good kid, m.A.A.d city."
11. Ibid.
12. Jayson Greene, "Kendrick Lamar: good kid, m.A.A.d city," Pitchfork.
13. Genius.
14. Kendrick Lamar, "good kid, m.A.A.d city."
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid.

17. Ibid.

18. Ibid.

19. Ibid.

20. Ibid.

21. Ibid.

22. Ibid.

23. Ibid.

24. Ibid.

25. Ibid.

26. Ibid.

27. Ibid.

28. Ibid.

29. Ibid.

30. "M.A.A.d City Lyrics." Genius.

31. Kendrick Lamar, "good kid, m.A.A.d city."

32. Ibid.

33. Ibid.

34. Ibid.

35. Ibid.

36. Ibid.

37. Ibid.

38. Ibid.

39. Ibid.

40. Ibid.

41. Ibid.

42. Ibid.

43. Ibid.
44. Ibid.
45. Ibid.
46. Ibid.
47. Ibid.
48. Ibid.
49. Ibid.
50. Ibid.
51. Ibid.
52. Ibid.
53. Ian Cohen, "Jay Z: Magna Carta Holy Grail," Pitchfork.
54. Jay Z, "Magna Carta Holy Grail."
55. Ian Cohen, "Jay Z: Magna Carta Holy Grail," Pitchfork.
56. Jay Z, "Magna Carta Holy Grail."
57. Ibid.
58. Jesse Cataldo, "Magna Carta... Holy Grail Album Review," Slant Magazine.
59. Jay Z, "Magna Carta Holy Grail."
60. Kendrick Lamar, "good kid, m.A.A.d city."
61. Jay Z, "Magna Carta Holy Grail."
62. Jesse Cataldo, "Magna Carta... Holy Grail Album Review," Slant Magazine.
63. Evan Rytlewski, "Jay Z: Magna Carta Holy Grail," A.V. Club.
64. Ian Cohen, "Jay Z: Magna Carta Holy Grail," Pitchfork.
65. Garry Wills, *Lincoln at Gettysburg*, 237
66. Garry Wills, *Lincoln at Gettysburg*, 241
67. Ibid.
68. Garry Wills, *Lincoln at Gettysburg*, 53

69. Ibid.

70. Ibid.

71. Ibid.

72. Garry Wills, *Lincoln at Gettysburg*, 144

73. Garry Wills, *Lincoln at Gettysburg*, 147

74. Garry Wills, *Lincoln at Gettysburg*, 133

75. Garry Wills, *Lincoln at Gettysburg*, 147

76. Ibid.

77. Garry Wills, *Lincoln at Gettysburg*, 52

<https://teachers.yale.edu>

©2023 by the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute, Yale University, All Rights Reserved. Yale National Initiative®, Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute®, On Common Ground®, and League of Teachers Institutes® are registered trademarks of Yale University.

For terms of use visit https://teachers.yale.edu/terms_of_use