



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative
2021 Volume II: Race, Class, and Gender in Today's America

How Hip-Hop Moved The Crowd to Social Activism

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Introduction

"If Hip Hop has the ability to corrupt young minds, it also has the ability to Uplift them." KRS One Hip Hop is One Parker, 2014.¹

One of my male students walked into class with his headphones, music blaring and nodded towards me a good morning as he spouted out the following line:

"And just imagine how my girl feel

On the plane scared as hell that her guy look like Emmett Till," West, 2003.²

When I asked him what he was rapping about, "Aww, Ms. Ponder, it's just a song." I pushed him further by asking if he had any idea who Emmett Till was and his response again was "Ms. Ponder, it's just a song. When Chicago's own twenty-two Grammy Award winning Kanye West produced this song titled "Through The Wire," he was in a near fatal car accident in 2002. His jaw was wired to his face for reconstructed surgery. With his mouth wired, Kanye raps about this experience, which ultimately turned him the mega star he is today. However, when artists make historical references in their music, I think that it is a conscious effort to keep history as dark as it may be, alive. The majority of my students who grew up in Chicago revealed that they had no idea who Emmett Till was. Kanye makes a facial disfigurement comparison to the 1955 brutal and tragic murder/lynching of Chicagoan Emmett Till a 14 year old boy who visited relatives in Money Mississippi. Hip-hop is rooted in social justice. I want my students to realize that there is power in voice. Kanye wouldn't allow a wired mouth due to a fractured jaw to silence his words. Hip-hop artists from the 1970s to the present continue to use their voices to express personal and universal inequities and have the platform to bring awareness to a multitude of issues.

It is extremely unfortunate that it took video footage (thanks to Darnella Frazier) of the murder of George Floyd to galvanize Americans and citizens globally to protest police brutality. The black community has been hemorrhaging for years from the deaths of Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown, Sandra Bland, Philando Castile and countless others. Laquan McDonald was shot 16 times by Chicago Police in 2014 and it took community activists over a year to secure the release of the body camera footage for public viewing. In 2019 a social worker Anjanette Young's home was tragically raided by Chicago Police as she stood naked in her own home

as a team of all white officers continued to search her home. Although she screamed on numerous occasions that she lived by herself and that there was no one else in her home. She was repeatedly demeaned and degraded as they ransacked her home. Later the police department admitted that they targeted the wrong house. Most recently Adam Toledo, a Mexican American was shot and killed by a Chicago police officer on March 21, 2021. Protests erupted throughout Chicago, including the Little Village community where 13 year old Adam lived. Since violence has become commonplace for my students, I admonish them about becoming complacent. So when that same student who entered my classroom singing “Through the Wire” by Kanye West asked me what could students do about this injustice, the Hip Hop and Social Activism unit evolved.

Rationale

My students are very prideful and are quick to “rep” their residential communities. Although they recognize the blight, social and economic insecurities surround them daily. They are also quick to point out that NBA basketball star Derrick Rose and Grammy Award Winner Jennifer Hudson also grew up in the same Chicago Englewood Community. They say “if they can make it out, so can we”.

In the Yale National Initiative seminar on Gender, Race and Class in today’s America. Dr. Frances Rosenbluth guided us through an exploration of multiple forms of inequality and discrimination imposed particularly against African Americans over the course of American history. According to the article From Civil Rights to Hip Hop: Towards a Nexus of Ideas by Derrick P. Aldridge, social and politically conscious hip hoppers have continued to espouse many of the ideas and ideology of the Civil Rights Movement and Black Freedom Struggle (BFS), but in a language that resonates with many black youth of the postindustrial and post-civil rights integrationist era Aldridge, 2005.³ This unit will explore the long term influence of rap/hip-hop music today as artists continue to place emphasis on inequalities and marginalization in America and across the globe.

Zaretta Hammond, author of Culturally Responsive Teaching, emphasizes that the way inequality in education is structured means that schools are focusing on creating short-term solutions to get dependent students of color to score high on yearly standardized tests Hammond, 2015.⁴ We don’t focus on building their intellectual capacity so that they can begin to fill their own learning gaps with proper scaffolding.

Transparency is my claim to fame, therefore some possible pushback to teaching this unit could be time and district directives. However, as a student advocate, I propose that our students need more creative outlets to explore race, class and gender in America. Customarily, English teachers use novels to delve into these important topics and I am a huge proponent of novel studies. However, in this Hip hop unit lyrics, videos and interviews will be used to increase student engagement, discussions, critical thinking, debate and argumentative writing.

Demographics

My students are extremely resilient and demonstrated their resiliency throughout the pandemics of social unrest and COVID-19. Many of my students lacked adequate Wi-Fi service so some of them went to work with their parents (essential workers) so that they could have wi-fi access. Additionally, I had several homeless students who sat in cars in front of our school in order to log into Google Classroom. Our school also served as a local food bank and some families that could not afford transportation reported that they walked several blocks in order to pick up meals for their families. Personally, I purchased and took meals to some of my students and their families. To add fuel to the fire, the violence in our community has exacerbated many of the social emotional needs of my students.

The New Englewood STEM High School opened in the fall of 2019 starting with an inaugural freshman class and continues to add one grade level each year until it serves grades 9-12. Our school is not considered a selective enrollment school so all Chicago students residing in the area are eligible to attend. This is the first new public open-enrollment high school in this underserved community in over fifty years. In the 1950s urban renewal in Englewood and other communities displaced many African-Americans of whom many moved to the Englewood community. In the 1950s blacks were 11 percent of the Englewood population. That number increased to 70 percent in 1960 and 96 percent by 1980.⁵ Many thriving businesses left the community plagued with many social and economic ills that Englewood spiraled downhill. Unfortunately, the crime rate became one of the highest in the country. Many thriving businesses left many residents unemployed. Our high school is the answer to years of academic drought and systemic neglect.

Hip Hop Story: A Brief History

Hip-hop is considered an art movement similar to that of the Harlem Renaissance. Both movements emerged out of urban despair, poverty and economic blight. However, during the 1970s, in New York and other major cities where a large number of African Americans were concentrated, there was an economic collapse. White flight occurred and many white families moved to the suburbs, leaving fewer resources and job opportunities behind. The strides made in *Brown v Board of Education* (1954) appeared to be a moot point. This landmark decision extinguished the separate but equal doctrine prohibiting segregation in public schools. Although the Supreme Court decision was unanimous and they agreed that “separate educational facilities were inherently unequal” integration was still a nightmare.

History continues to repeat itself in African American communities and by the 1970s urban communities were re-segregated. Conditions worsened with an increase in poverty, unemployment and under resourced schools where art expression was nonexistent. Ordinarily, when public schools are underfunded art and music are considered extracurricular activities and are the first on the chopping block.

During this time in the Bronx, youngsters were creative and used parking lots and abandoned buildings for block parties. DJs and MCs set up mobile sound systems introduced by Jamaican culture. Sheets of cardboard became dance floors for break-dancers and brick walls became canvas for graffiti art.

DJ Kool Herc, Afrika Bambaataa, and Grandmaster Flash are the influential creators of hip hop. They are considered the “Holy Trinity” of hip hop. Kool Herc is also credited for the development of the rhythmic spoken delivery of rhymes and wordplay performed by MCs.

Rhymes and wordplay were delivered over instrumental sections of songs and this would hype/energize the crowd. This style of lyrical chanting and wordplay was an advanced form of rapping inspired by the Jamaican tradition of toasting. Toasting is a lyrical style of chanting in Dancehall music which involves a deejay talking over a riddim (rhythm). The art of chanting over a beat can be found in many African-based musical traditions. An example of a Kool Herc toasting sample is “This is the joint! Herc beat on the point,” “To the beat, y’all,” and “You don’t stop!” Foundation SKA, 2014.⁶

Another pioneer of hip-hop worth mentioning is Grandmaster Flash. He was another innovative DJ from the Bronx. He is recognized for being the first DJ to maneuver records in a backwards, forward or counterclockwise motion. He was also the mastermind behind the breakout group Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five. They delivered a unique style by trading off lyrics between four rappers and blending them with flash’s DJ skills. Their first hit “The Message” portrayed the realities of growing up in urban ghettos Saddle River, 1982.⁷ This song solidified rap as a credible genre to be reckoned with.

In the 1980’s Yo! MTV Raps, a television video program, was largely responsible for spreading hip-hop around the world. Yo! MTV Raps helped create a worldwide appreciation and interest of the hip-hop scene worldwide. Hip hop became the top grossing music genre by the 1990s. West Coast rappers introduced gangsta rap, southern rap and various other forms of rap produced a new wave of artists. N.W.A., Dr. Dre, Snoop Dog, T.I. and Lil Wayne to name a few. By the end of the decade, hip-hop became one of the most influential genres worldwide.

The latest chapter in hip-hop music for Chicago fans classifies as drill rap that originated from the Southside of Chicago. Chief Keef, G. Herbo, Lil Durk, Polo G, Sasha Go Hard and Dreezy are some of the popular artists of this genre. Each of these rappers sing about the violence that plagues West and Southside communities. We want to empower our students throughout this unit to become agents of change. June 16, 2021 a mass shooting in the Englewood community left four people dead and four wounded. The non-profit organization titled Target Area Development are community violence interrupters. Their goal is to meet with residents to address the needs of the community.

The members of Target Area Development offer local support by occupying corners promoting peace. They also offer counseling to support the lack of mental health resources. Webb’s Depth of Knowledge (DOK) is a method that helps teachers recognize students’ understanding of a concept or idea Guido, 2020.⁸ It provides them with a framework of reference along with the necessary vocabulary to analyze how a student thinks or analyses content. It also helps teachers understand the assessments, tasks and lessons while preparing for students.

Unit Objectives

Students will examine the origins of rap/hip-hop music

Students will compare and contrast hip hop music from the 1970s to present day and its influence on social justice and activism.

Students will explore issues of gender identity and the marginalization of women in rap-hip hop music.

Essential Questions (DOK)

These questions will help guide students through this unit. Students will be introduced to the various songs via video and will also receive and annotate the lyrics in order to explore various events and issues around race, class, gender, police brutality, LGBTQIA, gender equality, mass incarceration, and other topics of relevance to their lives.

Does your interpretation of rap/hip-hop music impact your views on gender, race and class in today's America?

How does rap/hip hop influence your individual response to social injustice?

Does hip-hop define culture or does culture define hip-hop?

Do Individuals have a responsibility to each other?

How does socioeconomic status affect individuals?

Can you identify a rap/ hip hop artist that has influenced you to enact social change?

Lyrics and The Issues

Race

The Bigger Picture by Lil Baby

(I can't breathe, I can't breathe)

Protest and growing national outcry continues over the death of George Floyd

Last night, people protesting in Minneapolis escalated

As demonstrators were lashed by tear gas and rubber bullets

The main message here, the main message here, the main message here

Is that they want to see those officers involved

They want to see those officers arrested Jones, 2020.⁹

The 13th Amendment abolished slavery in the United States over 100 years ago and most Black people concur that the legacy of slavery continues to have an impact on the condition of Black people in American society today. This song "The Bigger Picture" explores the national outcry over the vicious murder of George Floyd. The arrogance of Derick Chavin to sustain his knee on the neck of George Floyd for over 8 minutes and 46 seconds demonstrated white privilege, superiority, conceit and a blatant disregard for Black lives. Lil Baby states "we want to see those officers involved arrested," Derick Chavin was sentenced to twenty two and a half years in prison.

Class

White Privilege Macklemore

And if he's taking away Black artists profits, I look just like him

Claimed a culture that wasn't mine, the way of the American

Hip-hop is gentrified, and where will all the people live?

It's like the Central District, Beacon Hill to the South end

Being pushed farther away because of what white people did, now

Where's my place in a music that's been taken by my race

Culturally appropriated by the white face? Haggerty, 2005.¹⁰

White Privilege is described by Women's Studies scholar Peggy McIntosh as "Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack" McIntosh, 1989.¹¹ This concept highlights the unfair societal advantages that white people have in a racist society McIntosh, 1989.¹² White skin allows for vast unearned privileges unavailable to people of color. It is quite pervasive throughout society and exists in all the major systems and institutions in America. White people tend not to acknowledge the advantages they have in society. The term has considerable focus and has come into brighter lights due to recent events including the murder of George Floyd resulting in multiple Black Lives Matter protests. In this song, Macklemore questions his place in a music industry that was created by Black Americans. He toils not so much with guilt but more of a consciousness regarding his success as a white rap artist.

Gender Equality

Moment 4 Life Nicki Minaj

I fly with the stars in the skies

I am no longer trying to survive

I believe that life is a prize

But to live doesn't mean you're alive

Don't worry 'bout me and who I fire

I get what I desire, it's my empire

And yes, I call the shots, I am the umpire Maraj, 2010.¹³

Gender equality is another layer of inequality in America. In addition to racial oppression, economic and medical exploitation are all barriers to gender equality in America. There is an enormous pay gap amongst various genders in the United States. Black women are paid significantly less than white men and pale in comparison to white women. When we look at the gains of black women it is attributed to the likes of Sojourner Truth, Ida B. Wells, Rosa Parks, to Stacey Abrams and Kamala Harris, the first black vice president of the United States. Nicki Minaj makes reference to survival as many black women are accustomed to surviving rather than thriving. She suggests that women should own their success with pride.

LGBTQIA

Lil Nas X Panini

Ayy, Panini, don't you be a meanie

Thought you wanted me to go up

Why you tryna keep me teeny?

It's a dream, he wished it on a genie

I got fans finally, ain't you wanting them to see me?

I thought you want this for my life, for my life

Said you wanted to see me thrive, you lied Hill, 2019.¹⁴

Positive environments are super important with helping all youth thrive, however the needs of LGBTQIA can differ vastly from those of their heterosexual peers. As educators we should not tolerate any kind of hateful speech and speak up if we hear comments like "That's so gay" or "man you're acting real fruity". I've had several students approach me after class and stated that they didn't feel comfortable participating in the class discussion because they feared being ridiculed by their peers. We must explore strategies to allow positive and productive self-expression for all of our students, even those questioning their sexual orientation. In this song Lil Nas X addresses bullying by asking Panini "Why are you being meanie?" Hill, 2019.¹⁵

He goes on to make an assumption about their friendship status and questions the sincerity of so-called friends. So many of our youth can relate to feelings of deception and character assassination.

Police Brutality

KRS-One Sound of da Police

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First show a little respect, change your behavior

Change your attitude, change your plan

There could never really be justice on stolen land

Are you really for peace and equality?

Or when my car is hooked up, you know you wanna follow me

Your laws are minimal

'Cause you won't even think about lookin' at the real criminal

This has got to cease

'Cause we be getting hyped to the sound of da police Parker, 1993.¹⁶

Police brutality in America has been systemic for years. Let's begin by defining police brutality, which is the unwarranted or excessive and often illegal use of force against civilians by U.S. police officers. Forms of police brutality have ranged from assault and battery to murder. Although history shows that a variety of ethnic groups have been subjected to police brutality in the United States, the great majority of victims have been African-American. There is a preponderance of antiblack racism among members of mostly white police departments.

Due to America's treatment of African American citizens, racism is identified as the major factor in police brutality. The culture of police departments particularly in large urban cities seems to stress a "show of force" approach. For example, the July 13, 2015 death of Sandra Bland, a 28 year old African American woman from Naperville, Illinois. She was found hanged in a jail cell in Waller County, Texas three days after being arrested during a pre textual traffic stop. Her death was ruled a suicide which lead to massive protest around the country; Bland was pulled over for failing to signal while switching lanes. After the FBI investigation, they ruled that Waller County jail did not follow required policies. When KRS-one released this song in 1993, he was addressing the systemic police brutality. He offers advice to police officers around the country suggesting that if police changed their behavior, mindset and policies just maybe when black people hear the sounds of sirens they wouldn't have this fear or disdain for the police.

Black Lives Matter has been a rallying cry for years. With all the injustice and discrimination aimed against black citizens

Mass Incarceration

Tupac 16 On Death Row

Bye, bye, I was never meant to live

Can't be positive when the ghetto's where you live

Bye, bye, I was never meant to be

Livin' like a thief, runnin' through the streets

Bye, bye, and I go no place to go

Where they find me; 16 on Death Row Shakur, 1997.¹⁷

According to the American Civil Liberties Union American makeup is close to 5% of the global population but has nearly 25% of the world's prison population ACLU, 2021.¹⁸ Since the 1970s our incarcerated population has increased by 700%. Additionally, 2.3 million people are in American prisons today. One out of every three black boys born today can expect to go to prison in his lifetime, as one out of every six Latino boys compared to one of every fifteen white boys. At the current time, women are the fastest growing incarcerated population in the United States. There are twice as many people rotting in local jails awaiting trial and presumed innocent. Tupac Shakur, like many other African American boys, when asked the question what do they want to be when they grow up, the answer is "ALIVE!" Many of them don't expect to live beyond 14 years of age or anticipate being locked up on death row by the age of 16. He says bye bye to life so casually as you would say bye bye to a friend whom you expect to see tomorrow.

Put The Guns Down Community Violence

MC Lyte Self Destruction

Leave the guns and the crack and the knives alone

MC Lyte's on the microphone

Bum rushin and crushin, snatchin and taxin

I cram to understand why brother's don't be maxin

There's only one disco, they'll close one more

You ain't guarding the door

So what you got a gun for? Moorer, 1989.¹⁹

According to University of Chicago research, gun violence is increasing. Theories that focus on community level factors such as poverty, mobility and neighborhood cohesion suggest that violence is a product of environmental conditions in which individuals live. Research has consistently demonstrated that murders and shootings are heavily concentrated in particular places Urban Labs, 2016.²⁰ This is very true in Illinois. Analysis of data reported by Illinois police agencies and sheriffs indicates that eight municipalities accounted for approximately 64 percent of the murders and aggravated assaults and batteries across the state from 2013-2015. The municipalities include Chicago, Aurora, Rockford, Springfield, East St. Louis, Joliet, Champaign and Peoria. Chicago alone accounted for around 43 percent of murders and aggravated assaults and batteries in Illinois Urban Labs, 2016.²¹ MC Lyte asks a rhetorical but significant question regarding the logic behind carrying and using guns. The reality is that none of the people shooting own any of the possessions they are killing over.

Spirituality

Chance The Rapper "Blessings"

I don't make songs for free, I make 'em for freedom

Don't believe in kings, believe in the Kingdom

Chisel me into stone, prayer whistle me into song air

Dying laughing with Krillin saying something 'bout blonde hair

Jesus' black like ain't matter, I know, I talked to his daddy

Said you the man of the house now, look out for your family Bennett, 2016.²²

Since the times of slave masters dropping bibles down to shackled Africans who couldn't read or speak the English language, black people have always developed a deeply personal definition of God and their spiritual identity. Enduring extreme persecution and exploitation, black people took a template of Christianity and customized it to reflect their own interpretation of its teachings. As a result, spirituality became the soul of black artistry, the language of black existence, and the backbone of black communities. It instilled a sense of power and purpose within a race of people who were deemed powerless.

"The church is, and always has been the center of African American life, a place to call our own in a too often hostile world." Obama, 2015.²³ Chance the Rapper evokes the spirits of the ancestors in this song titled Blessings.

Relevance of Hip Hop Voices Today

KRSOne Hip Hop is One

My style of rap hard to find, I believe that every rapper has a larger mind

But they spit the sex, spit the murder, spit the crime

Cause they told if they do it they'll be livin' fine

People know it's only music, y'all don't mind

But every now-and-then I question what these rappers say and rhyme

Take you time, I send this our to every rapper saying rhymes, and every

DJ out there playing mine

You know I don't live for the prime time

But out of all these rap names, young people should be able to find mine. Krs One 2014.²⁴

Strategies

Annotation and Close Reading

English language arts teachers encourage students to annotate texts as often as we can. We teach tips and strategies to help students annotate effectively, so that they must read closely to make sense of or find meaning in the text. Annotating means underlining or highlighting key words and phrases—anything that strikes you as surprising or significant, or that raises questions—as well as making notes in the margins. When we respond to a text in this way, we not only force ourselves to pay close attention, but we also begin to think with the author about the evidence—the first step in moving from reader to writer. In addition to other visual literacy strategies, this activity will encourage students to find details they would not have otherwise considered if they were listening or reading the lyrics on their own. They will annotate at least three to four lyrics in the same way that they annotate a text, by looking for and marking patterns, word choices, rhyme scheme, figurative language, unfamiliar vocabulary, themes and anything else they think is worth noting along with making comments and asking questions. This thorough annotation will lead us to the next stage of the activity as we look at close reading.

When you close read, you observe facts and details about the text. You may focus on a particular passage, or on the text as a whole. Your aim may be to notice all striking features of the text, including rhetorical features, structural elements, cultural references; or, your aim may be to notice only *selected* features of the text—for instance, oppositions and correspondences, or particular historical references. Either way, making these observations constitutes the first step in the process of close reading.

The second step is interpreting your observations. What we're basically talking about here is inductive reasoning: moving from the observation of particular facts and details to a conclusion, or interpretation, based on those observations. And, as with inductive reasoning, close reading requires careful gathering of data (your observations) and careful thinking about what these data add up to.

Think, Pair-Share

Think, pair-share is a technique that encourages and allows for individual thinking, collaboration, and presentation in the same activity. Students must first answer a prompt or essential question on their own and then come together in pairs or small groups, then share their discussions and decisions with the class. Discussing an answer first with a partner before sharing maximizes participation, and helps to focus attention on the prompt given.

Step 1 Think

Begin with a specific question, and give students time to individually think about the answer, and document their responses on their own, either written or in pictures. Students can be given one to three minutes for this part of the exercise.

Step 2 Pair

Students are instructed to get into pairs. Decide beforehand whether you will assign pairs or let students choose their own partners. Remember when pairing to think of students and their personalities. Ask the students to share what they came up with, with their partners and discuss. You can provide questions for the

students or have them ask one another. This part of the activity can take five minutes.

Step 3 Share

This part requires the class to come back together as a unit and host a whole class discussion. You can either choose to have one person report out from each pair or group with the class or the discussion can be more open. Students can also share with the class what their partner said.

Benefits

Think, pair-share is a simple technique that enhances students critical thinking skills, improves listening and reading comprehension and helps with collaboration and presentation skills. Students who are typically shy may feel more comfortable sharing with the class after sharing with a partner, and students who are outspoken will benefit from first listening to others before sharing their own opinion. Using think-pair-share strategy at a number of different times within the classroom, such as before introducing a new topic to assess prior knowledge, after reading an excerpt or watching a film to encourage opinion formation and critical thinking, or before students begin an assignment, to help them gather ideas.

Using think-pair-share across disciplines

Language Arts

To enhance reading comprehension and critical thinking within the language arts, use think pair-share after finishing a book or chapter. Ask the students questions to further understanding of themes questions to further understandings of themes and characters, or some what if type of questions. If you're struggling to come up with questions, think of the Five Ws, who, what, where, why, when and the bonus question how?

Social Studies

At the start of a unit, you can use think-pair-share to find out what students already know about a topic similar to a K-W-L chart. As you get further into the topic, use this technique to connect students to the subject matter. For example, ask how they would feel, or what they would do if they lived during a time period, or ask what they think of an ethical issue.

Mathematics

Think-pair-share can be used in mathematics as well. Questions that work well with this strategy include word problems, logic problems, estimations, and patterns. Use this strategy when students are trying to figure out how to approach the problem.

Science

In science, think-pair-share can be used during hypothesis, formation and experiment interpretation. It can also be used for introducing new topics, such as, what do we already know about space, or what do plants need to grow?

Vision Boards

Vision Boards can serve many different purposes but, above everything else, its main reason for being is to

make the things you want as part of life reality. After discussing the origins and the benefits of hip-hop music, students can work on vision boards. A vision board is a great tool for students that want to set goals over any period of time, and also serve as a crucial part of assessing and evaluating your personal goals. Students could include their personal challenges but also their proudest moments.

As one of the best ways to manifest dreams into reality, virtually every successful professional uses at least one. You don't have to cover each area exactly the same, just take a mental inventory of what you want each of those areas to look like and write them down. Always handwrite your goals instead of typing them, there's something energetic about actually handwriting your goals. From your goals and aspirations, think about what you want on your vision board. Like I said before, what you focus on expands. You'll be amazed at how things just start popping up all over the place once you set the intention for what you want and how you want to feel.

Supplies for Vision Boards

Any kind of board, if you're new, maybe start with a cork board or poster board from the hardware store, they run about a dollar. If you can, I recommend a pin board or something pretty you like to look at -- I got my 24x24" white wood framed pin board on Etsy.

Scissors, tape, pins, and/or a glue-stick to put your board together.

If you want, fun markers, stickers, or anything else you can think of to deck out your board. I don't use that stuff, but if embellishments make you feel great, then go for it. Magazines that you can cut images and quotes from.

Most importantly, the stuff you want to look at every day. Photos, quotes, sayings, images of places you want to go, reminders of events, places, or people, postcards from friends and just about anything that will inspire you.

Time

Give yourself a stress-free hour or two to put your board together. If you're a social butterfly, invite your friends over and make a party out of it. I host a vision board party every year on the first night of my partner mastermind weekend and I can't even tell you how much it sets the tone for the event -- everyone is more focused and less stressed after we do it.

Appendix on Implementing District Standards (CCSS)

Reading Standards (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2010):

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.2

Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text. Students will determine the theme or central idea throughout the unit as they annotate and read critically for literary and informational purposes, both with the lyrics and accompanying primary sources.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.1

Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text. Students will cite strong and thorough evidence to support their analysis throughout the unit as they annotate and read critically for literary and informational purposes, both with the lyrics and accompanying primary sources.

Social Studies Standards:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.6

Compare the point of view of two or more authors for how they treat the same or similar topics, including which details they include and emphasize in their respective accounts. Students will compare the point of view of various artists throughout the unit as they annotate and read critically for literary and informational purposes, both with the lyrics and accompanying primary sources.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.5

Analyze how a text uses structure to emphasize key points or advance an explanation or analysis. Students will analyze how particular text is structured to emphasize key points or analysis of lyrics throughout the unit as they annotate and read critically for literary and informational purposes, both with the lyrics and accompanying primary sources.

Writing Standards

Text Types and Purposes:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.1

Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence. Students will write arguments to support claims in an analysis of various topics and text throughout the unit as they annotate and read critically for literary and informational purposes, both with the lyrics and accompanying primary sources.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.1.A

Introduce precise claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that establishes clear relationships among claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence. Students will distinguish claims from alternate or opposing claims throughout the unit as they annotate and read critically for literary and informational purposes, both with the lyrics and accompanying primary sources.

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