

Background

Hip hop is an expressive subculture art form that was developed in the Bronx in the 1970's and 1980s. Sprouting from creative Black and Latino youth, this genre of music helped communicate the social and economic conditions of the inner city as seen through the people who lived there. Hip hop was not the discovery of one single thing but a collection of elements: dj-ing, emceeing, breakdancing, graffiti, and knowledge. Hip-hop culture boomed in abandoned buildings, school yards and block parties. Some of the most important surviving documents from the early hip-hop period are party flyers. They helped to set the energy of the dance party they were advertising with the use of bold text, stylized graffiti, and images.

The flyers of this time offer a glimpse into hip hop's experimental stage, a period when it was difficult for rappers to get record deals.

Task

After analyzing the hand-drawn flyer created by Buddy Esquire, a self taught artist, students will discuss the importance and purpose of paper handbills. They will discuss how the use of a certain font or stylized text can set a mood or feeling. Students will research images of this time to get a better understanding of the birth of hip hop. They will consider how hand-drawn flyers reflected the hip hop movement in its earliest decades. Once they understand the role of the paper handbills, they will be challenged to create their own flyer commemorating hip hop culture.

Materials

White Paper (5.5 x 8.5 inches, 8.5 x 11 inches or 11 x 17 inches)

Black Markers or Pen

Colored pencils

Rulers

Scissors

Art Vocabulary

Composition: the way in which different elements of an artwork are combined or arranged

Paper handbill: a small printed sheet to be distributed (as for advertising) by hand

Design: a plan or drawing produced to show the look and function

Typography: an art technique that arranges type to make it more readable, legible, and visually appealing when displayed

Graffiti: words or pictures that are written or drawn in public places, for example on walls or streets

Steps

Begin by collecting students' ideas on what hip hop is. Inform students that hip hop consists of various elements coming together. They can learn more about the elements of hip hop [here](#).

Invite students to consider how hip hop began to spread in the 1970's.

- How and where was music shared?
- How is this different from how music is shared today?
- What technology did they have to reach a large audience?

Once students understand that music was created on tapes and then shared on a boom box at the schoolyard or at a party, analyze the [flyer](#) which advertises a 1979 rap battle event in the Bronx.

- What does the document say?
- How is the text written? Is it all the same font?
- What is the purpose of this document? Why are documents like this needed at this time?
- How was it created?
- How might color or images change the mood of the flyer?

For more information on Buddy Esquire, students can read about him [here](#).

Explain to students that ‘a flyer either made you want to tell everyone about the party, or not go at all’ as described by Theodore Livingston, better known as DJ Grandwizzard Theodore, who is said to have invented scratching.

After learning the importance of the flyer and the elements of hip hop, show students 'VOTE Lady Pink' and lead a quick inquiry on the text to show how there are various ways to create a bold message by using typography:

- What do you see?
- How is the text created?
- How are images used in the text?
- Do you think this has a clear message?
- How does this text utilize space on the page?

To prepare students to make their own flyer advertising the culture of hip hop, have students research the street photos by Flo Fox and challenge them to consider what a flyer for one of her photos may be.

Now that the students have a clear understanding of the use of the paper handbill and what events they may advertise, inform them that they will make their own flyer advertising the culture of hip hop.

Remind students that, at this time, flyers were made by hand using minimal materials. Flyer design can be done in different sizes and orientations. Allow students to choose one of these common flyer dimensions: Half-sheet dimensions, which are 5.5 x 8.5 inches; Standard dimensions, which are 8.5 x 11 inches; or large format, which is 11 x 17 inches.

Inform students that in order to create an impactful flyer, their design should include:

- An attention grabbing headline in a strong position.
- Balanced text, though all text elements need not all be the same size.
- The right typography and a use of color and/or shades of black and white.

Once students choose their flyer size, they can begin by designing their advertising flyer using pencils.

After the design is set and text is laid out, they can change their font by using different size point markers to get different effects. Students can stick to the traditional design and only use black and white or add color if they find it to be more helpful expressing their impression of the culture of hip hop.

After students complete their paper handbill, display the works in the classroom and have a gallery discussion of the work.