

Long Before Hip-Hop:  
The New York Uprisings of 1712 and 1741

“People bury the parts of history they don’t like, pave it over like African cemeteries beneath Manhattan skyscrapers.”

— Alyssa Cole, *When No One is Watching*

*New York is the undeniable birthplace of hip-hop, an art form that has dominated music and beyond since the early aughts. Standing as a testament to the power of black and brown solidarity, young people birthed a genre that has grown into a billion-dollar industry. Far from the fad it was first thought to be, the culture is grounded in five pillars—DJing, MCing/Rapping, B-Boying/Breaking, Graffiti and Knowledge of Self. And while mainstream hip-hop is not overtly reflective of this foundation, a return to rap’s roots can connect the dots while looking forward. To foster appreciation for the cultural phenomenon that is hip-hop, particularly its force as a vehicle for social change, students will explore rap’s lyricism as resistance.*

*Through this lens, students come to know hip-hop originators as the literal and figurative children of New York’s earliest Black residents. This centering serves as a contemporary connection to New York’s 17th- and 18th-century freedom seekers; their perspectives are examined through a collection of media, interactive websites, literary works and seminal texts of the era.*

Key Concepts

Enslaved people resisted the efforts of their enslavers to reduce them to commodities in both revolutionary and everyday ways.

The experience of slavery varied depending on time, location, crop, labor performed, size of slaveholding and gender.

Enslaved and freed people worked to maintain cultural traditions while building new ones that sustain communities and impact the larger world.

By knowing how to read and interpret the sources that tell the story of American slavery, we gain insight into some of what enslaving and enslaved Americans aspired to, created, thought and desired.

## **The Origins of Hip-Hop**

### **Image Study**

- From the list of resources, facilitators should curate a collection of images representative of the Harlem Renaissance and early hip-hop.
- Prior to this presentation, instructors should make the images accessible to students (e.g., projected to whole class, images/file/link sent via an online platform).
- Students are encouraged to jot down their immediate thoughts/commentary/questions

about each image. They can also be guided by the following questions:

*What stands out most in each image?*

*Is there anything about the image that is familiar to you?*

*What do you notice about the clothing?*

*Are there similarities between the Harlem Renaissance and early hip-hop images? What are the differences?*

- Images should be shown in about one-minute increments, leaving just enough time for students to respond viscerally before moving on.

## RESOURCES

[A South Bronx Family Album](#)

[Exploring the birth of the b-boy in 70s new york](#)

[James Van Der Zee's Photographs: A Portrait of Harlem | National Gallery of Art](#)

## Media Viewing

- Ideally, students should view the media as a whole class. Instructors, however, should present the media in a way that works best for their students.

## RESOURCES

[The Birth of Hip Hop | Black History in Two Minutes with Dr. Henry Louis Gates](#)

[History of Hip Hop in the Bronx | Arts in the City](#)

[Robert Glasper: "Jazz is the mother of hip-hop" | Jazz Night in America](#)

[De La Soul | Stakes is High \(lyrics\)](#)

[De La Soul | Stakes is High \(video\)](#)

[Nas | The World Is Yours \(lyrics\)](#)

[Nas | The World is Yours \(video\)](#)

## Reading Session

- Instructors should conduct the reading session in the way that best suits their students (e.g., teacher-led, independent, small group, excerpts).

## RESOURCES

[Jazz Age New York | History of New York City](#)

[Hip-Hop: A Culture of Vision and Voice](#)

[Best Blue Note Samples: 20 Tracks That Built Hip-Hop](#)

## Writing Task | 3&3

In closing, students will construct (NOT copy and paste)

- 3 sentences detailing facts learned while exploring the media and texts
- 3 researchable questions sparked while exploring the media and texts

## Slavery in New York

## Interactive Media

- Students will explore the entire People Not Property site to understand the historical context

of slavery in New York. At the instructor's discretion, this can be student- or instructor-led.

*The remainder of this lesson is built around [Fighting Back](#) (subchapter of [Choosing Resistance](#)) and the uprisings it details; we will explore these points of early American history as precursors to the New York African Free School (which becomes a larger movement) and New York as a hub of abolition.*

## RESOURCE

[People Not Property: Stories of Slavery in the Colonial North](#)

### Reading Session

- Instructors should conduct the reading session in the way that best suits their students (e.g. teacher-led, independent, small group, excerpts).

## RESOURCE

[Buried Stories: Lessons from the African Burial Ground](#)

### Writing Task | Dialectical Journaling

## The Uprisings

### Interactive Media

- Students are redirected to People Not Property, specifically the videos in Fighting Back.

## RESOURCES

[People Not Property | Choosing Resistance](#)

[People Not Property | Fighting Back](#)

### Reading Session

- Instructors should conduct the reading session in the way that best suits their students (e.g. teacher-led, independent, small group, excerpts).

## RESOURCES

[The New York Slave Revolt of 1712 Was a Bloody Prelude to Decades of Hardship | Smithsonian Magazine](#)

[New York: The Revolt of 1712 | PBS](#)

[Witchhunt in New York: The 1741 rebellion | PBS](#)

### Writing Task | Dialectical Journaling

## Black Abolition in New York

### Media Viewing

- Ideally, students should view the media as a whole class. Instructors, however, should

present the media in a way that works best for their students.

## **RESOURCE**

[From the Abolitionist Movement to #BlackLivesMatter | Time Capsule](#)

### **Interactive Media**

- Students should be given time to independently explore the storymap.

## **RESOURCE**

[Landmarks Associated with Abolitionist & Underground Railroad History](#)

### **Reading Session**

- Instructors should conduct the reading session in the way that best suits their students (e.g. teacher-led, independent, small group, excerpts).

## **RESOURCE**

[African Free School. First in America for Black Students. Found a Home in Greenwich Village](#)

### **Writing Task | 3&3**

- Students will construct  
3 sentences detailing facts learned while exploring the media and text  
3 researchable questions sparked while exploring the media and text

### **Reading Session**

- Instructors should conduct the reading session in the way that best suits their students (e.g. teacher-led, independent, small group, excerpts).

## **RESOURCE**

[Profiles: Black Abolitionists | Zinn Education Project](#)

### **Writing Task | Informative Paragraph**

- Using at least three additional online sources, students will compose an informative paragraph highlighting a Black abolitionist.
- Guidelines for this assessment should be crafted by the instructor to suit the needs of their students.

### **Abolitionist Literature**

### **Reading Session**

- Instructors should conduct the reading session in the way that best suits their students (e.g. teacher-led, independent, small group, excerpts).

## **RESOURCES**

(1843) Henry Highland Garnet, "An Address To The Slaves Of The United States" (1866)  
Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, "We Are All Bound Up Together"

**Writing Task | Summative Assessment**

A Rhetorical Analysis: Ethos, Pathos, and Logos in Abolitionist Literature