

SCHOOL'D BY FUNKMODE

You want to become a Hip Hop expert? Learn the info below and you're on your way, yo!

INSPIRATIONAL HIP HOP LYRICS

Since its inception, Hip Hop music has been the voice of a people marginalized by society; a people not yet experiencing the opportunity and privilege enjoyed by the majority. Not surprisingly then, much of the lyrical content of Hip Hop has focused on either the gritty realities of living on the fringe of society or imagining, explaining and celebrating the journey to rise above those realities. At their best, the lyrics of the former type cause us to reflect upon our world critically and assess how to address the ills of our culture. And, at their best, lyrics of the latter style have the ability to illuminate and draw out our highest potential. In fact, when Hip Hop uses its poetic magnificence to illustrate what it takes to lift oneself above struggle, it can be as inspiring as any of the prized words from history's brightest minds. In today's lesson, we will review some of the most inspiring lyricists and rhymes Hip Hop has to offer and consider how these words might affect our lives.

"Everything evens up/You just wait/Even a garbage can gets a steak/You ain't even a garbage can/You have faith."

Artist: Jay-Z - Song: Guns & Roses

Jay is saying that eventually, everyone gets an opportunity to rise up. What's more, as people, we get more than just opportunity, because we have hope. Hope gets us through until opportunity presents itself. The message here is that you must not think circumstances are so insurmountable that you'll never have a way to overcome them. We all get desperate when our back is to the wall and it seems there is no way out. We may seek to quit or take the easy way out. A kid struggling with grades may be tempted to cheat and a person struggling with money tempted to steal. However, those with faith know that the chance will come to even things up and get back on track.

"I will not lose/For even in defeat/There's a valuable lesson learned/So it evens up for me."

Artist: Jay-Z - Song: Blueprint 2

Again we get irrefutable truth from Jay-Z and another thought about life evening itself up. This time he speaks about the knowledge that comes even when we have seemingly failed. You can lose a job but gain a valuable lesson concerning changes you need to make to be the best worker possible. You can fail a test but realize where your preparation was lacking for future correction. Every defeat is triumph for those who care to learn.

"Turnin' nothin' into somethin' is God work/And you get nothin' without struggle and hard work."

Artist: Nas - Song: Doo Rags

The act of creation, making something from nothing, is often attributed to God. Nas is explaining that we are able to do godly work by creating but not without putting in full effort. There are no shortcuts in life when anything important is on the line. The solution to all of our problems is in our creativity. A Mom today can become an inspiring example of brilliant entrepreneurship by inventing a solution to a simple problem she encounters daily with her kids. Bringing this creation to life may take long hours and sleepless nights but that's the price that is required to deliver new possibilities into the world.

"If you admire somebody, you should go ahead and tell 'em/People never get the flowers while they can still smell 'em." Artist: Kanye West – Song: Big Brother

An unfortunate truth is that people often take each other for granted until it is too late. Flowers on a grave can't be enjoyed in the same way they can by the living. Take the time to let those who count to you know that they do.

"At exactly which point do you start to realize/That life without knowledge is death in disguise?/ That's why Knowledge Of Self is like life after death/Apply it to your life, let destiny manifest." Artists: Black Star – Song: K.O.S.

Black Star (Mos Def & Talib Kweli) are responsible for some of the best lyrics in Hip Hop. Here they convey the message that those without self-knowledge are not enjoying the fullness of life available. However, when one grows through self-awareness, new opportunities arise, and a new destiny awaits. Make personal growth a habit.

SCHOOL'D BY FUNKMODE

"Yo, I make the money/But don't let it make me/So even if I go broke/You couldn't break me."

Artist: Fabolous - Song: Change Up

Money is important for a great deal but it should not define who we are. If it does, when your money changes, you will be a victim to that change. Some people win the lottery and end up far worse off than they were before the winnings. Some wealthy people lose their riches and decide that life is no longer worth living. Fabolous is saying that though he now has money, he is not letting it change who he is as a person. Rich or broke, he is staying true.

"Life can change directions/Even when you ain't planned it/All you can do is handle it/Worst thing you can do is panic/Use it to your advantage/Avoid insanity manage/To conquer every obstacle/Make impossible possible/Even when winning's illogical/Losing is still far from optional." Artist: T.I. – Song: No Matter What

In addition to these rhymes being masterful in their syntax, they are also brilliant in terms of content. Sudden change tends to make us anxious and in that anxiety we make mistakes. Staying calm allows us to think clearly and overcome. At times, it can seem that our situation is unworkable, but that doesn't mean we should consider quitting. An emergency room doctor faces life and death scenarios sometimes daily but knows that keeping a level head and never believing that a situation is beyond a solution are the keys to saving as many lives as possible. As the popular saying goes, "Keep Calm and Carry On".

"Never looking back or too far in front of me/The present is a gift and I just wanna be." Artist: Common - Song: Be

It's very easy to get so caught up in planning for the future or reminiscing/fretting about the past that we fail to enjoy the blessing of the moment that we have right now to enjoy.

"That's why I'm always telling these many pals of mine/The most that you can spend on any child is time."

Artist: Jurassic 5 - Song: Contribution

It's common to hear parents say they want their kids to have a better life than they did. Too often, this comes in the way of providing them with more material possessions. While these add some spice to life, what children really need from their parents is attention, love and time. That is the most valuable asset a parent has to give and the single best way to give them a better life.

"I wanna fly/But that ain't about just liftin me higher/It's to inspire, light a fire/Cause people to aspire, to greater things/Take a swing, hey and go for the fence/Yeah, it might be out of reach, but sellin' short don't make sense/So to get em there I gotta be the best I can be/The best way to teach a lesson is to let a man see/The possibilities that lie within all humanity/It's pure potential and it's more than any man can forsee." Artist: FUNKMODE - Song: Fly

The best we can do for anyone is to live well. By seeing our greatness, they are inspired to seek and live their own.

HIP HOP WORDS OF THE WEEK

Keep it Real: To stay true to yourself or the reality of the situation.

EX: "Look, I ain't gonna lie, I'm just keepin' it real, yo. She said you can't pass unless get a C or higher on the test."

Real Talk: To be totally honest about something very important, potentially unsettling or controversial.

EX: "Check it, real talk, my brother is gonna freak out if you bring a dog in here."

BONUS: Create a sentence using all words of the week

EXTRA LEARNING

- 1) Take three of these quotes and speak specifically about how they apply to your life.
- 2) Take a piece of wisdom you've found important in your life and turn it into a short rhyme.