

Hip hop lit: Using books and beats to meet the needs of the 21st century learner

Too many students experience school in isolation of their lived experiences. They find the language of school doesn't match the language of their life outside of those four walls. Students seek an understanding of their place in the world as they navigate the complexities of schooling. The books teachers select to read aloud often impact how students see themselves and their world. As Bishop (1990) describes books can serve as mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors as readers navigate through reading experiences that invite them to learn about themselves and others. Reading, for many, "becomes a means of self-affirmation, and readers often seek their mirrors in books". (Bishop, 1990, p. ix)

It has been argued that marginalized populations are often left out of mainstream literature (Bishop, 2003; Harris, 1994; McCreight, 2011) making it difficult for teachers to expose students to authentic texts that relate to their lived experiences. McCreight (2011) recommends that teachers not only read texts depicting diverse characters, but also provide authentic representation of the culture and language usage of the characters. By infusing hip hop into our curriculum, students who once felt disconnected from the fabric of schooling now can experience the weaving together of their home and school. Children can learn through reading hip hop literature that stories can be about people who look and sound like them, rather than feeling storybooks are worlds they are not a part of (Baghban, 2007). This presentation showcases how to locate and use hip hop literature in the elementary classroom.

References

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