

# **Hip-Hop Poetry and The Classics For The Classroom**

*by*

*Alan Sitomer & Michael Cirelli*

*Connecting our classic curriculum to Hip-Hop poetry  
through standards-based, language arts instruction.*

## ***The Classics***

Tennyson  
Keats  
Frost  
Dickinson  
Hughes  
Shakespeare  
Kipling  
Poe  
Shelley  
Plath  
Blake

## ***The Contemporaries***

Tupac  
Run DMC  
Public Enemy  
Mos Def  
Nas  
Eminem  
Taleb Kweli  
KRS-1  
Notorious B.I.G.  
Common  
Ice Cube

***With Academic Material for...***

**AP Exams**

**Gifted and Talented Education**

**English Language Learners**

**Recitals and Slams**

**Vocabulary Enrichment**

**&**

**All English Classes Teaching Poetry**

# Hip-Hop Poetry and The Classics For The Classroom

**Our goal** is to make the academic study of poetry accessible, relevant, comprehensible and enjoyable to students in our contemporary, multicultural classrooms.

**Our methodology\*** is to analyze the poetry of Hip-Hop and compare its motifs, themes, and general poetic devices (such as alliteration, rhyme scheme, figurative language, etc. ...) to the “classic” poems traditionally studied (by writers such as Frost, Dickinson, Keats, etc. ...) in order to teach the core elements of the poetic craft in an appealing, relevant, thorough and accessible manner.

**Our aim** is to dispel preconceived notions about poetry for students and educators alike.

- **For Students:** Our aim is to convert the traditional response to the idea of studying poetry from, “Poetry?... *YUCK!*” to an appreciation of the writing as well as the art form.
- **For Educators:** Our aim is to convert the traditional response to the idea of studying Hip-Hop from, “Hip-Hop? You mean those thugs and *gangstas?*” to an appreciation of the writing as well as the art form.

**And we pledge to be free of *edubabble*.**

**\*This text has been aligned to 38 different California Language Arts Standards.**

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Visit us on the web: [www.HipHopintheClass.com](http://www.HipHopintheClass.com)

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# Enlightening Alliteration

## Interpretation Guide

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**CA Language Arts Standards Covered:**

9/10 LRA 3.7; L&S 1.1; 11/12 R 2.0, 2.2; LRA 3.4

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**Alliteration:** The repetition of the same or similar consonant sounds in words that are close together.

For example:

Behemoth, biggest born of earth, upheaved his vastness.  
(John Milton)

**Almost every great poet has used the technique of alliteration to add beauty and musicality to their works.**

For example:

We passed the Fields of *Gazing Grain*—  
We passed the *Setting Sun*—  
(Emily Dickinson)

*Brazen bells!*  
What a *tale of terror*, now, *their turbulency tells!*  
(Edgar Allen Poe)

In Xanadu did *Kubla Khan*  
A stately pleasure *dome decree:*  
Where Alph, the sacred *river, ran*  
Through caverns *measureless to man*  
Down to a *sunless sea.*  
(Samuel Taylor Coleridge)

**Almost every great Hip-Hop poet has used the technique of alliteration to add beauty and musicality to their works.**

For example:

I'm the *Ladies Love*, *legend in leather*  
*Long and lean*, and I don't wear *pleather*  
(LL Cool J)

*Peter Piper picked peppers*  
but *Run rocked rhymes*  
(Run DMC)

*Representin'* the West, *relevant to relentless* sentences.  
If *renegade rebels resent* this wicked syntax  
*Revert to revolution Ras reverses, reverberates*  
*revolvin'* with written *retaliation...*  
(Ras Kass)

## Poetry Writing Exercise: Alliteration

- Learning Objective:** Students will identify and utilize the poetic device of alliteration.  
**Standards Addressed:** 9/10 W&O 1.3, 1.4; LRA 3.7, 11/12 W&O 1.1, 1.2  
**Materials needed:** This worksheet.  
**Methodology:** See below.

Identify the alliteration in the following sentences. Underline alike letters.

For example:

Snakes **s**lither **s**lowly on the **s**idewalk.

1. Jumping Jennifer jammed Johnny's jaw full of jellybeans.
2. Silly Susan swims under the summer sun.
3. Pretty Paula pounced on Penelope's purple pancake.

Finish these sentences using alliteration.

1. Terrific Tony \_\_\_\_\_ .
2. English earmuffs \_\_\_\_\_ .
3. Black bears and brown bugs \_\_\_\_\_ .

Tongue Twisters are built on Alliteration.

Try to recite some of the following aloud.

- Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers.
- Black bug's blood.
- Mrs. Smith's Fish Sauce Shop.
- Shy Shelly says she shall sew sheets.
- Three free throws.
- Knapsack straps.
- Which wristwatches are Swiss wristwatches?
- Greek grapes.
- One smart fellow, he felt smart.  
Two smart fellows, they felt smart.  
Three smart fellows, they all felt smart.

Create three of your own tongue twisters using alliteration.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ .
2. \_\_\_\_\_ .
3. \_\_\_\_\_ .

Alliteration can get kind of crazy. See how long of a sentence you can create using alliteration. The meaning of the sentences should make sense (at least, a little).

For example:

*The powers of prunes are prudent to provide potent palliative prophylaxis of potential pooper problems, priming you for purging.*  
(Rob Bohnenberger)

\_\_\_\_\_ .  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ .

# Figurative Language

**Figurative language** is deliberate exaggeration, when a speaker says something that they do NOT *literally* mean.

---

**Traditionally, figurative language falls into a four specific categories:**

**HYPERBOLE  
SIMILES  
METAPHORS  
&  
PERSONIFICATION**

- **Hyperbole** is a very strong exaggeration.  
*Example: “He is stronger than ten giants.”*  
see page 20.
- A **simile** is a comparison between two objects using the words “like” or “as.”  
*Example: “She sings like a nightingale.”*  
see page 79.
- A **metaphor** is a comparison between two objects (without “like” or “as”).  
*Example: “Helen is an angel.”*  
see page 40.
- **Personification** gives an inhuman thing human qualities.  
*Example: “The sunrise was jealous of her loveliness.”*  
see page 69.

## Classic poets use figurative language:

Come away, come away, death  
And in sad cypress let me be laid  
Fly away, fly away, breath;  
I am slain by a fair, cruel maid.  
(Shakespeare)

## Hip-Hop poets use figurative language:

I’m like the farmer, plantin words, people are seeds  
My truth is the soil; help you grow like trees.  
(Nas)



---

# Hyperbole

## Interpretation Guide

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**CA Language Arts Standards Covered:**

9/10 R 1.1, 1.2, 2.2; LRA 3.7, 3.11; 11/12 LRA; 3.4; R 2.2

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**Hyperbole:** A figure of speech that uses incredible exaggeration, or overstatement, for effect.

---

For example:

I pulled up with a million trucks—lookin, smellin, feeling like a million bucks. (*Ludacris*)

People often use exaggeration to make their point strong and clear. In the example above, the speaker did not really have a million trucks; the speaker is boasting about his status as well as how good he feels. Most Hip-Hop lyrics contain a lot of hyperbole.

**Hyperbole is commonly used in society.** For example:

- I nearly died laughing.
- I knocked on the door a million times.
- John was so scared he jumped out of his skin.

### Classic Poets use **HYPERBOLE**

I love thee with the breath, smiles, tears  
of all my life!

(*Elizabeth Browning*)

This little world of mine has lost its light.

(*Dorothy Parker*)

A robin redbreast in a cage  
Sets all heaven in a rage.

(*William Blake*)

**Questions:**

- In the first example does the poet *literally* love with her breath, smiles and tears?
- In the second example has the world *literally* lost its light?
- In the third example is ALL of heaven *literally* in a rage?

### Hip-Hop Poets use **HYPERBOLE**

A lot of MCs today really know how to please, but I gave birth to most of them MCs.

(*Roxanne Shante*)

My mom's words echo in my head and if I let go I'm dead.

(*Nas*)

I can roast an MC like a barbecue.

(*Big Daddy Kane*)

**Questions:**

- In the first example did she *literally* give birth to them MCs?
- In the second example if the poet *literally* lets go will he die?
- In the third example will another rapper *literally* be put on a barbecue?

## Poetry Writing Exercise: Hyperbole

- Learning Objective:** Students will identify and utilize the poetic device of hyperbole.  
**Standards Addressed:** 9/10 W&O 1.3, 1.4; LRA 3.7, 3.11, 11/12 W&O 1.1, 1.2; W 2.2; LRA 3.4  
**Materials needed:** This worksheet.  
**Methodology:** See below.

Use the following writing prompts to create hyperbole.

- I am so thirsty \_\_\_\_\_ .  
The guy is so cheap \_\_\_\_\_ .  
She is so smart \_\_\_\_\_ .  
I love it more than \_\_\_\_\_ .  
The teacher is so boring \_\_\_\_\_ .

**A TALL TALE is a story that contains a great deal of exaggeration.**

*For example:*

My grandfather came home from fishing yesterday and explained to me how he caught the largest bass in the river. But it wasn't just a gigantic bass — it was a gigantic, speaking bass. This is why, my grandfather explained, he didn't return home with the fish. The gigantic, speaking bass asked to be let go and my grandfather did as he was told.

**Use hyperbole to create a TALL POEM. Your poem should:**

- Tell a short story.
- Be filled with exaggeration.
- Be at least 8 lines long.
- Attempt to use a rhyme scheme.

*For example:*

### ***Hip-Hop Star Hyperbole***

I'm the baddest rapper  
with the sweetest ride.  
But it's not about the money,  
it's about the pride.  
I came through with my army,  
my truck is like a tank.  
If you try to test me,  
I'll take you straight to the bank.

### ***Hyperbole Poem***

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## **Illuminating Imagery – Classic**

### *Harlem: A Dream Deferred*

by Langston Hughes

What happens to a dream deferred?

Does it dry up  
like a raisin in the sun  
Or fester like a sore –  
And then run?  
Does it stink like rotten meat?  
Or crust and sugar over –  
Like a syrupy sweet?

Maybe it just sags  
like a heavy load.

*Or does it explode?*

---

## ILLUMINATING IMAGERY – CLASSIC INTERPRETATION GUIDE

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**CA Language Arts Standards Covered:**

9/10 LRA 3.7, 3.11; L&S 1.1; W 2.2; W&O 1.3, 1.4; R 2.2; 11/12 W&O 1.1, 1.2; W 2.2; R 2.0; LRA 3.4

---

**Imagery:** The use of language to evoke a picture or a concrete sensation of a person, a thing, a place, or an experience.

---

### ***Poetic Theme: Reach for Your Dreams***

**Identify how Hughes uses imagery for all five senses in his poem.**

- *Sight:* Does it dry up  
like a raisin in the sun
- *Taste:* Or crust and sugar over –  
Like a syrupy sweet?
- *Touch:* Maybe it just sags  
like a heavy load.
- *Smell:* Does it stink like rotten meat?
- *Sound:* Or does it explode?

**How does the sum total of all of the imagery add up to answering the question put forth by the speaker in line one, “What happens to a dream deferred?”**

Each image represents something that was once useful or productive but, having been left alone or unattended for too long (i.e., like a dream deferred), becomes useless, decayed and possibly even self-destructive.

- The raisin is dried up.
- The sore has festered and run (with infection and puss).
- The syrupy sweet is crusted and sugared over, too sweet to even taste appealing anymore.
- The meat has turned rotten and smells foul and disgusting.
- The dream itself has exploded, the sound of which is entirely destructive.

**What is the unspoken message the speaker is telling the reader about going after their own dreams?**

The speaker seems to be clearly saying that having dreams and not pursuing them will cause one to not only regret their not “going for it,” but cause them to eventually crumble apart. It may be slow but at some point the stress, regrets and disappointment of NOT pursuing one’s dreams will become too much and self-destruction will occur in some shape or form.

---

## Illuminating Imagery – Classic Student Worksheet

**Imagery:** The use of language to evoke a picture or a concrete sensation of a person, a thing, a place, or an experience.

**Identify how Hughes uses imagery for all five senses in his poem.**

- Sight: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Taste: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Touch: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Smell: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Sound: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**How does the sum total of all of the imagery add up to answering the question put forth by the speaker in line one, “What happens to a dream deferred?”**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**What is the unspoken message the speaker is telling the reader about going after their own dreams?**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

# illuminating Imagery – Hip-Hop

## *Juicy*

by Notorious B.I.G.

It was all a dream  
I used to read Word Up magazine  
Salt 'n Peppa and Heavy D up in the limousine  
Hangin' pictures on my wall  
5 Every Saturday Rap Attack, Mr. Magic, Marley Marl...

Now honies play me close like butter played toast  
From the Mississippi down to the east coast...  
Sold out seats to hear Biggie Smalls speak  
Livin' life without fear  
10 Puttin' 5 karats in my baby girl's ears  
Lunches, brunches, interviews by the pool  
Considered a fool 'cause I dropped out of high school  
Stereotypes of a black male misunderstood...

We used to fuss when the landlord dissed us  
15 No heat, wonder why Christmas missed us  
Birthdays was the worst days  
Now we sip champagne when we thirsty  
Uh, damn right I like the life I live  
Cause I went from negative to positive  
20 And it's all good...

---

## Illuminating Imagery – Hip-Hop Interpretation Guide

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**CA Language Arts Standards Covered:**

9/10 LRA 3.7; L&S 1.1; W 2.2; W&O 1.3, 1.4; 11/12 W&O 1.1, 1.2; W 2.2;

---

**Imagery:** The use of language to evoke a picture or a concrete sensation of a person, a thing, a place, or an experience.

---

### **Poetic Theme: Reach for Your Dreams**

**NOTE:** “Juicy” has been an anthem to the Hip-Hop community, much like “Harlem: A Dream Deferred” was to the Harlem Renaissance.

**Line 16 claims that birthdays were the worst days? Why do you think the poet felt this way?**

The poet most probably claims that birthdays were not a happy time because of his family’s financial struggles. Most likely there weren’t any presents or parties and instead of being a day of gladness, his birthday became an event filled with sorrow.

**What images from the verse does the poet use to evoke images of the poverty he endured prior to achieving Hip-Hop fame?**

- Lines 1–4: The poet speaks about how he used to only dream about being a famous celebrity, reading Hip-Hop magazines and staring at pictures of other famous Hip-Hop artists on his walls.
- Lines 12, 13: He boasts about how he was considered a fool because he did not fare well in school but he claims to simply have been misunderstood, not an idiot.
- Lines 14, 15: These lines provide the imagery for his some of his struggles with his landlord including no heat (and when one lives on the East Coast this can be a very big problem).
- Line 15: “Wonder why Christmas missed us” speaks to his early poverty.

**What images from the verse does the poet use to evoke images of the rewards of wealth and Hip-Hop fame in the reader’s mind?**

- Line 6: “Now honies (i.e., girls) play me close like butter played toast” (meaning he gets a lot of ladies).
- Line 8: His concerts are sold out.
- Line 9: He no longer has to live in fear (of the ills of poverty).
- Line 10: “Puttin’ 5 karats in my baby girl’s ears” exemplifies how he is able to financially provide for his children in a way that his own parents could not.
- Line 17: “Now we sip champagne when we thirsty” showing how money is no longer an object in his life.

### **Essay Prompt**

**In Lines 18 & 19 the poet boasts how he turned a negative situation into a positive one. How can you do the same in your own life?**

*Answers will vary.*

---

## Illuminating Imagery – Hip-Hop Student Worksheet

**Imagery:** The use of language to evoke a picture or a concrete sensation of a person, a thing, a place, or an experience.

---

**Line 16 claims that birthdays were the worst days? Why do you think the poet felt this way?**

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**What images from the verse does the poet use to evoke images of the poverty he endured prior to achieving Hip-Hop fame?**

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**What images from the verse does the poet use to evoke images of the rewards of wealth and Hip-Hop fame in the reader's mind?**

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**ESSAY PROMPT:** *In Lines 18 & 19 the poet boasts how he turned a negative situation into a positive one. How can you do the same in your own life?*

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## **Sonnets Made Simple Student Worksheet**

### ***The Mechanics of a Sonnet***

**1. How many lines are there in a sonnet?**

---

**2. There are two sections to a sonnet. What is the group of lines in the first section called?**

---

**3. How many lines are there in the first section (from question #2)?**

---

**4. What is the group of lines in the second section called?**

---

**5. How many lines are there in the second section (from question #4)?**

---

**6. What is an iamb?**

---

**7. In a sonnet, how many “iamb” are there to each line?**

---

**8. What is the official name of the line scheme in which sonnets are written?**

---

**9. Identify the rhyme scheme used in the first section of a sonnet?**

---

**10. Identify the rhyme scheme used in the second section of a sonnet?**

---

**11. The last two lines of a sonnet use a special rhyme scheme. What is this called?**

---

**12. What is the function of these last two lines?**

---

## Examining Symbolism – Hip-Hop

### *Three Strikes You In*

by Ice Cube

- 1 One more strike and I'm through  
Bottom of the ninth, swingin' for my life  
I'm up at the plate, going for the gate  
They got my moms seated in section eight...
  
- 5 Yeah, (It ain't right)  
Playin' people like a game (It ain't right)  
Human beings, puttin' em in a jar (It ain't right)  
For double life, triple life (It ain't right)
  
- I gots to root for my homeboys
- 10 If they don't win it's a shame  
Cuz it's one-two-three strikes you in  
Twenty-five years of pain you know my name

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## Examining Symbolism – Hip-Hop Student Worksheet

**Symbols:** A person, place, thing, or event that has meaning in itself and that also stands for something more than itself.

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For example:

The eagle is a bird, but it is also the symbol for American freedom, liberty and justice.

**Explain what baseball is being used as a symbol for in “Three Strikes You In.”**

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**In “Three Strikes You In,” what is the “In” to which Ice Cube refers?**

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**In the excerpts, baseball is a symbol of something that can be said to be hiding a deeper feeling about society. Describe what that feeling is.**

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# **Additional Poetic Resources**

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# Poetry Recital Exercise

## Memorizing and Performing a Classic Poem

<b>Learning Objective:</b>	To gain a deeper understanding of a particular poem's meaning via an in-depth study and oral presentation of the work.
<b>Standards Addressed:</b>	9/10 L&S 1.7, 1.9, 1.11, 2.4; 11/12 L&S 1.4, 1.7, 2.5
<b>Materials needed:</b>	A Classic Poem (student's choice)
<b>Methodology:</b>	See below.

### Memorize and Perform a Poem

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#### HOW TO PREPARE

1. *Read through your poem silently.*
2. *Think about the speaker of the poem (and characters).*
3. *Ask yourself:*
  - a. What is this speaker feeling?
  - b. What meaning is this speaker trying to get across?
  - c. What do you think this speaker sounds like?

#### For more advanced presentations ask...

- d. What do you think this speaker looks like?
  - e. How do you think this speaker moves (slowly, quickly, proudly...)?
4. *Think about how you can best portray this speaker through:*
    - a. Voice
    - b. Body
    - c. Facial expression
    - d. Props
  5. **PRACTICE!!** *The only way to memorize a poem is to practice memorizing the poem. There are no shortcuts.*

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**TEACHING TIP #1:** *Students may want to underline key words that need emphasizing or write instructions on the poem itself such as “be loud” or “slam fist” or “SHOUT!”, etc.*

(NOTE: Allowing students to bring their poems to the front of the room with them is at the teacher's discretion.)

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**TEACHING TIP #2:** *Allow the students some time to practice aloud with their peers. It is much easier to recite a poem aloud with dramatic flair after having done so in front of people a few times prior. Having only practiced the poem in one's head or alone may not prove to be enough practice for an effective class presentation of the poem.*

## Poetry Recital Exercise

### ***How to Host a Poetry Slam***

***A poetry slam is a contest in which poets perform original work before an audience.***

- From this audience five, randomly selected judges, will score the poets
- The scale will range from 1-10 (Olympic style, preferably using decimal points to avoid ties).
- Seek to select “impartial” people to do the judging.

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#### **YOU WILL NEED:**

- Poets
- Judges
- An MC
- A location
- Refreshments (well, they add a nice touch)
- Prizes for the winners.  
(Just a suggestion—and money is NOT needed.)
- A day without homework, extra-credit... be creative.)

**HISTORY OF SLAMS:** Poetry Slam was started in 1986 by a construction worker and poet, Marc Smith, at a Chicago jazz club called The Green Mill. It was a way to make poetry reading exciting and to get audiences more involved in the process. In a slam, audience members are encouraged to hoot and holler for the poems they admire. Judges are encouraged to stay consistent with their scores, and not be influenced by the audience.

**1. To start a slam it is best to have 10 or more poets who are willing to have their poems judged.**

They should understand that the criteria on which they will be judged is based on their poem and their performance. In adult slams almost all of the poets have their poems memorized. For student slams, leeway is granted and pupils can bring their written work to the stage.

**2. The person organizing the slam selects 5 judges from the audience.**

These judges are to understand that they are to judge the poets on a 1–10 scale, using decimal points. They will base their scores on both the content and performance of the poem. (NOTE: It is also important that judges try to stay consistent with their scores. Many judges have the tendency to inflate their scores as the competition goes on [*a phenomenon known in the slam world as Score Creep*].)

**3. Provide the judges with blank sheets of paper and markers to write their scores.**

**4. The order of poet performance is randomly picked (out of a hat type of thing).**

**5. The poets will be introduced (by the MC) and allowed to perform their poem.**

**6. After the poet has finished, the audience should be encouraged to cheer for the poet.**

A long-standing slam motto is that the poet is not the points, it is the poetry. (i.e., encourage contestants to write quality works for which they will be rewarded. This is not performance art—it is about the words).

**7. The 5 judges will hold up their scores.**

**8. The host will read the score aloud, drop the highest and lowest score, then add up the total of the three remaining scores.**

**9. The poet with the most points at the end of the slam wins!**

## Activities

### Hip-Hop Poetry Word Search

s k j c q r r k y o o y v j w z e t s b m g w  
n h m o u e k x p p j z z e v n a w c l o m m  
i v a n o s n i k c i d i z y l c b o a s m x  
u r d k n o t o r i o u s b i g q o i k d i w  
v m q z e p s e s n n a s b j y n y m e e k h  
c j t a l s b n r r m c k p s e h f a m f s a  
h w n a u u p k l o k w e a h l e s y b o d x  
d t t t c s k e h e e d h y e l o i z b g n g  
o h u e t i y t a l c r e u i e t l k e a t s  
t n c r s x e n i r t b e j t h n v p q j s l  
i i o e t z n n j k e u j b d s p e m z s v t  
p w m s n h z r n e q x d s k t y r h r m y v  
f r b x y d m t o o g z x k c c n s g v u v j  
p r h c m n q p h i n u j v u g f t i c x v z  
z y o v w w n a w m h f a r h v t e o f b l h  
v d z s u d z e c l g n c a c h m i n h g t i  
x g e c t x v c t l s s p z i m t n e w y j p  
a k o p k h c a p u t i b y h d i x n q j i u  
h u g h e s d i o a b n u s d b x c y a d g j  
n x n w h x v g i f s o o a z n d h e b j n v  
d e i f v x s k p v k i f w i o f r q q c v x  
o e e j c h z r k x t z t c i j r g i e x v c  
m e n i m e q r j c z u u p h o q d v w i j j

**Find the poets (Classic and Hip-Hop) in the jumble above:**

Blake  
ChuckD  
Common  
Dickinson  
Eminem  
Frost  
Hughes  
IceCube

Keats  
KRSONe  
MosDef  
Nas  
NotoriousBIG  
Plath  
Poe  
RunDMC

Shakespeare  
Shelley  
Talib Kweli  
Tennyson  
Thomas  
Truth  
Tupac  
ZionI

## AP Exam Success Sample Essay Prompt

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**TIME ALLOTTED: 40 MINUTES**

Read the following poem carefully, then write a well-organized essay in which you discuss both the technical and interpretive aspects of the work. Be sure to consider such literary elements as structure, imagery, figurative language, meaning and point of view.

### *Sonnet 18*

*by William Shakespeare*

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?  
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:  
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,  
And summer's lease hath all too short a date:  
5 Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,  
And often is his gold complexion dimm'd;  
And every fair from fair sometime declines,  
By chance, or nature's changing course, untrimm'd;  
But thy eternal summer shall not fade,  
10 Nor lose possession of that fair thou owest;  
Nor shall Death brag thou wander'st in his shade,  
When in eternal lines to time thou growest;  
    So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see,  
    So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.



## About the Authors

**Michael Cirelli** is a poet and educator from Providence, Rhode Island. He has been an Individual Finalist at The National Poetry Slam and was the only person to make all three Bay Area slam teams in the same year, winning the finals in both San Francisco and Berkeley. He was a two-time member of both the Oakland Slam Team and the Long Beach Slam Team, as well as the Individual Grand Slam Champion of NYC Union Square. He has performed his work all over the United States and Canada and has taught writing workshops up and down the West Coast and in NYC. While in Los Angeles, he was the director of PEN Center West's Poet In The Classroom program. He is currently the Associate Programs Coordinator for Urban Word NYC through the Teachers and Writers Collaborative and has an MFA from The New School University. He has been published in numerous journals and anthologies and has self-published seven chapbooks. He currently lives in Brooklyn, NY.

**Alan Lawrence Sitomer** was born in New York and educated at the University of Southern California (GO TROJANS!). Aside from being a novelist, playwright, screenwriter and greeting card author (yes, your granny may have been wished Happy Birthday via one of his wondrous creations), Alan is also an inner-city high school teacher in Los Angeles. His self-proclaimed mission is to inspire, educate, brighten and delight the lives of others through the written and spoken word. And if he gets to go for a swim at a nice beach now and then, life is pretty good. Oh yeah, he won a small little award called TEACHER OF THE YEAR for his efforts to promote literacy, holds a Master's Degree in Cross-Cultural Language Arts Education, and recently signed a three-book publishing deal with Disney for a trilogy of novels, the first of which is "THE HOOPSTER." Check 'em out!

## About Our Off the Hook Cover Artist

Taaron Silverstein is delighted to have gotten the opportunity to design the cover for this book! She was born in Cincinnati, Ohio where, at age four, her love of Hip-Hop was born when her dad brought home the 12" of *Rapper's Delight*. Many years—and rap tapes later—she received a BFA with a degree in Graphic Design from Miami University. She now works at Midway Games in Chicago as a video game artist. She is also an accomplished painter. As you can see, Taaron has *mad skillz*.