

# FUTURE SCENARIOS FOR POPULAR CULTURE: HIP HOP

## HSC Depth Study: Popular Culture

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### Syllabus Content

#### The near future (5 to 10 years)

Students are to:

- determine current trends and suggest probable future directions for the popular culture
- evaluate the impact and implications for the popular culture of:
  - likely changes
  - probable continuities
- predict the importance of the popular culture to society in the near future.

### Rationale

The following resource can be used to help students explore the Near Future (next 5 to 10 years) for a specific popular culture genre, such as Hip Hop. Scenario planning through the application of STEEP is utilised as a way to make meaningful predictions regarding the likely changes and probable continuities for a selected popular culture genre. The graphic organiser provided in the resource is highly useful in encouraging students to consider the 'future' of the popular culture genre from numerous perspectives, including both desirable and less desirable outcomes.

### Syllabus Outcomes

- H3 analyses relationships and interactions within and between social and cultural groups
- H5 analyses continuity and change and their influence on personal and social futures
- H9 applies complex course language and concepts appropriate for a range of audiences and contexts
- H10 communicates complex information, ideas and issues using appropriate written, oral and graphic forms

### Related Concepts

continuity and change, values, consumption, conflict, technologies, time



Image by Gordon Cowie, Unsplash

## FUTURE SCENARIOS FOR POPULAR CULTURE: HIP HOP

### Future Scenarios for Popular Culture

**Change** is the alteration in patterns of culture, social structures and behaviour over time. No society can successfully prevent change, even though some try to do so... Is change the only constant? (Robertson, p 507). Why is change so ever present in our lives? There are so many factors which can vary: the technological, the cultural and social, the economic, the political and the personal aspects of our lives. Popular culture is ephemeral by its very nature so is subject to all kinds of changes: fashion, image, trends, zeitgeist, and the need for something new and exciting.

**Continuity** is much less obvious, as we seem to be obsessed by newness and change. Heritage, tradition, way of life are equally dynamic elements of our lives. In context of popular culture, there is nostalgia, the recycling of ideas, sampling and redefining the context and the meaning of sounds, verse, images... plus the idea of 'old school'. Whilst, we generally change readily when it comes to adopting technology, style and fashion, it is our values and beliefs that can typically take much longer to change. Are there aspects of popular culture that reach across time? If they do connect across generations, tastes, cultures. If so, does it become more than popular culture and thus transcend to become art?



Image by Kaysha, Unsplash

### Scenario Writing

"All tomorrow's flowers are seeds today." Syrian Proverb

How can we really know the future? What are the possible futures for the expression of popular culture? If we knew that, we could write the next hit song, the next award-winning movie or acclaimed television series. Scenario Writing is a technique for systematically considering a range of possible futures. But to do scenario writing effectively substantial background information, statistics and data are required so informed interpretations can be made based upon past and current trends. For example:

- Historical background and cultural context in the genre and related genres from more than one perspective
- Beliefs and values of the creators and even of the audience
- Economic, work and aspirational information relevant in that genre
- Political, government and authority structures relevant to that genre.

Specific detailed background information could include:

- Access to means to perform, record and distribute music
- Role and capacity of media, marketing and advertising in the genre
- Availability of communication technology and impact of new technologies
- Demographic trends applicable to the genre: how old, how young, how many?
- Workforce participation, employment, socio-economic status and income options for both artists and audience/ consumers
- Impact of class, age, gender, location, ethnicity and sexuality influencing access and appeal of Hip Hop

## FUTURE SCENARIOS FOR POPULAR CULTURE: HIP HOP



Image by Jake Owens, Unsplash

- Knowledge and understanding of who accepts and who rejects this genre
- Impact of sales, downloads, live performance, local and global trends on this genre as a commercial product
- Impact of artist as visionary and authentic vision of contemporary culture.

### Scenario Selection

From an informed position, the possible range of S.T.E.E.P options are considered to decide which TWO factors are going to be the major determinants of the future of popular culture genre you are studying and wanting to make predictions about.

### S.T.E.E.P. stands for: Social, Technological, Economic, Environmental, Political

The selected pair from STEEP are the major influences you have decided that will shape the future of the genre. Apply your knowledge to the possible futures that might occur if the influence of each of these varied to the positive and to the negative.

For the popular culture of Hip Hop: two possible major influences on the future are:

1. Economic: the capacity for this genre to return a living income and meaningful expectation of financial reward to a diversity of MCs, DJs and other players in the genre.
2. Social: genuine capacity and delivery of social commentary, rhymes, lyric content that informs meaningful debate and discussion on social issues.

It is considered the technological factors will not sufficiently change in the future to have real impact on access and the nature of the genre as digital downloads have already impacted the industry and are unlikely to change further. The environmental and the political have limited impact on the nature of how this genre operates as popular culture.

The four possible scenarios outline the directions for Hip Hop in the context of decline or improvement of economic reward and social acceptance and overall impact of the genre. The purpose of this process is to determine which future/s is preferred and then set about ensuring that actions are taken to work towards the preferred future being the likely one to happen and to avoid those considered inappropriate.

See following page for Scenario diagram.

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### Social Change +

#### Scenario 4: Hip Hop in deficit:

Dynamic underground culture but no genuine way of connecting to the audience

Disinterest in Hip Hop as the revival of Disco sees desire for need to party and stay in style dominate youth culture

UK and USA performers take attention of remaining Hip Hop fans and no interest in local acts

No demand for music and downloads and live show ticket sales slow to a trickle.

#### Scenario 1: Hip Hop in the Zeitgeist:

Vibrant and challenging community of artists: DJ, MC, Graffiti, B-Boys/Girls

Artists get respect and delivery insightful commentary on social issues

Culture is rewarded with royalties for every download in context of real and relevant street culture.

Hyde Park and Domain become public venues for Hip Hop recitals and performances and draw huge crowds

### Economic Change –

#### Scenario 3: Hip Hop Withers

Retro, recycled and 'old school only' Hip Hop dominated the music scene

Very few new rappers get exposure

Free downloads of music continues unchecked

Existing artists rap about queues at Centrelink

Powerhouse Museum opens exhibition of graffiti images, sneakers, old school t-shirts. Co-sponsored by Adidas and Nike

### Economic Change +

#### Scenario 2: Hip Hop Profits (but is sold and out)

Political parties and advertising agencies pay huge salaries to artists to write political slogans and create billboards

Bliss n Eso sign huge contract to promote Pepsi and new Akubra snapbacks

6 Hip Hop artists on BRW Richest 100

Revival of Country and Western music in Aboriginal communities

Nostalgia for old school Hip Hop sees many classics used for advertising washing machines and perfume

Limited vision and artistic credibility

### Social Change –