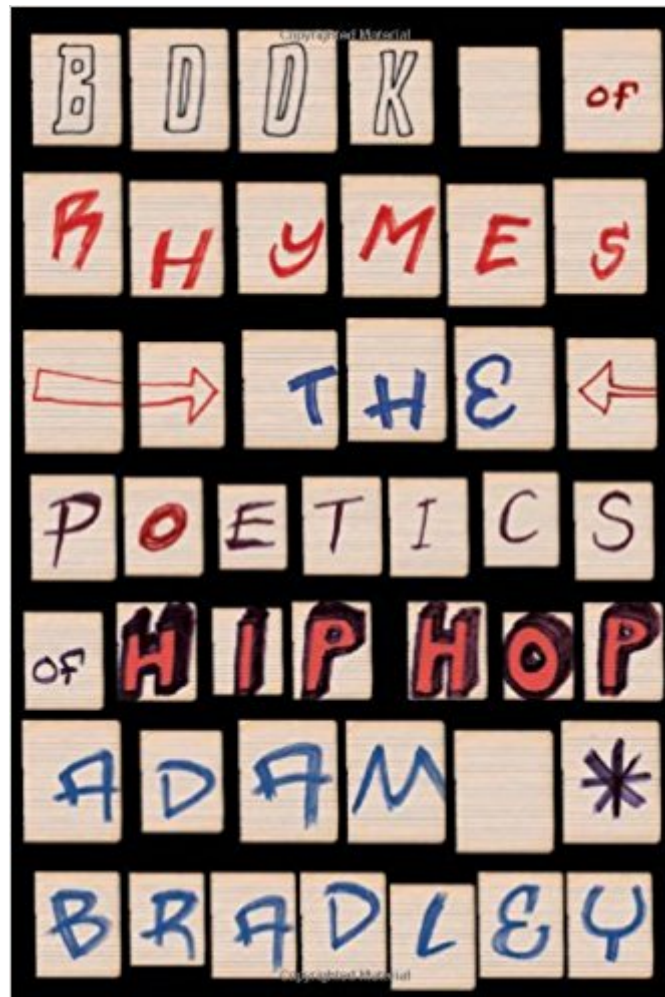


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Book Of Rhymes: The Poetics Of Hip Hop



Synopsis

If asked to list the greatest innovators of modern American poetry, few of us would think to include Jay-Z or Eminem in their number. And yet hip hop is the source of some of the most exciting developments in verse today. The media uproar in response to its controversial lyrical content has obscured hip hop's revolution of poetic craft and experience: Only in rap music can the beat of a song render poetic meter audible, allowing an MC's wordplay to move a club-full of eager listeners. Examining rap history's most memorable lyricists and their inimitable techniques, literary scholar Adam Bradley argues that we must understand rap as poetry or miss the vanguard of poetry today. *Book of Rhymes* explores America's least understood poets, unpacking their surprisingly complex craft, and according rap poetry the respect it deserves.

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Customer Reviews

In the preface to *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, the author Oscar Wilde defended his and all literary works by stating that "there is no such thing as a moral or an immoral book. Books are well written, or badly written. That is all." Condemned for his writings' homoerotic overtones, Wilde was publicly vilified and even imprisoned for his sexual orientation. Outspoken individuals like Allen Ginsberg and George Carlin famously received similar albeit less severe treatment for their expletive antics. A century after Wilde, rap music faces comparably harsh criticism for its explicit, aggressive, violent, misogynistic and, ironically to this analogy (both to Wilde and Ginsberg), homophobic rhymes. But like the diamond in the rough, below the surface of many of these lyrics lies profundity and value.

After all, the culture that points the finger at rap is the very culture through which rap emerges - to describe, confront and reshape how we think, feel and live in this world. In 2004, comedian Chris Rock performed an HBO special called *Never Scared* which was subsequently released on DVD and as a Grammy-winning CD. One of the highlights of this standup set was a segment called "Rap Stand Up", in which Rock professed his love for hip hop. Rock went on to lament the fact that while old school artists like Grandmaster Flash, Run-D.M.C. and Whodini could be "broken down intellectually", it was becoming increasingly difficult to "defend" new school emcees; he went on to mock rhymes like "I got hoes in different area codes" and "move, bitch, get out the way" by Ludacris. The questions then arise: What exactly constitutes the intellectuality that Rock was referring to? Can hip hop be valued as poetry and not just "beats and rhymes"?

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