

The Rhyme Renaissance

This time we live in is a Rhyme Renaissance
And this history lesson is five minutes long
If hip-hop is bringin' it, fine, let's get it on
And consider it official when I finish this song

My goal is to redefine the whole history of rhyme
'Cause the only way to free the soul is to free the mind
And no wisdom as old as this should be confined
To total mystery, so we'll just read the signs
And DaVinci codes, and try to see the science
In this linguistically-composed pristine design
It goes deep – suppose we could just rewind
To when we first rose to our feet and left the trees behind
We'd see tribes of bipedal australopithecines
Trying to survive, as species divide and interbreed
Attending to basic needs, like safe places to sleep
Raising seeds and making sure they had things to eat
So they started solving problems by evolving language genes
It probably started from the need to follow wildebeest herds
Or the need to distinguish between weeds and herbs
Or from mimicking the mimicking screams of red and green birds
It's a chicken/egg riddle: Which came first
Plain speech or verse? 'Cause as long as there's been words
There's been awareness of relationships between words
And when rhymes connect them, new meanings emerge
The history of languages has been researched
By linguists and traced back to a singular birth
So the ability to speak rhythmically and sing works
To intrinsically link every human being on this earth

But I wonder what percent of what happens is meant to happen
'Cause in the genesis of rap, what has to be factored in
Is that this chapter was invented by black men
And all human beings are descended from Africans
Who spread across the map in every different direction
And adapted to every place under the sun
So their faces started changing as the race was run
Just as every language came from the same mother tongue
Since each one directly relates to another one
From the open plainsmen to the rainforest dwellers
Every people needed designated storytellers
To pass on their culture orally from the elders
And rhythm and repetition and rhymes and refrains
Allow performers to organize storylines in their brains

And memorize more kinds of important signs and names
And make changes based on the needs of each performance
Feats of endurance are needed to describe deeds of enormous
Historical importance, like the Trojan/Greek war
And the horse used to breach the fortress; in the aforementioned
Tradition of reciting, writing was a natural invention
For kings to catalogue things, with practical intentions
And the offspring, of course, was the birth of the author
From Homer to Virgil to the immortal words of Chaucer
The father of modern verse and first formal border-crosser

But the birth of the author was also the birth of the ego
Celebrity seems to bring the worst out of people
Especially with the invention of the printing press
Which instantly made poetry so much less intimate
'Cause suddenly poems were mostly written to be read
Alone, instead of written to be said aloud to crowds of listening heads
And in just a few centuries, rhyme and rhythm were dead
And forty thousand years of lyricism were watered down
And exposed to careless prose, on mostly Modernist grounds
And poets found that the old supportive crowds were not around
But they hardly even noticed, 'cause they were published and important now
But then recorded sound started with Thomas Edison
One of the most intelligent inventions there's ever been
And ever since, a person's words can be heard across the globe
And the emergence of the Rhyme Renaissance was possible
But it really started off in the Bronx in the seventies
When kids with limited means produced monster melodies
High Fidelity beats made their speech more compelling
When ghetto teens resurrected rhymes and storytelling
And used ancient wisdom as a system for rebelling
The rhythm was thrilling, swelling the competition
And millions of brilliant minds fought for the top positions
And people finally seem to be starting to sit up and listen
I'm just tryin' to give 'em a bit of a nudge with this composition

And the epilogue? It's been about twenty-nine years
Since hip-hop first appeared and confirmed the worst fears
Of the powers that be, 'cause now it's in every urban sphere
Assaulting virgin ears; it's like a massive attack
'Cause every language on this planet can be adapted to rap
It's like a gigantic amoeba that's having a snack
A generation thinking vocally, acting locally
Speaking openly, and having an impact globally

'Cause this time we live in is a Rhyme Renaissance

And this history lesson was five minutes long
If hip-hop is bringin' it, fine, let's get it on
And consider it official when I finish this song
And it's on...

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