



Discussion Questions

1. Look at the record cover for each of the songs. How are the performers presented? What image do you think each group is trying to present?
2. Do the videos echo the images presented on the record covers? How do the performers present themselves? What kinds of images and symbols does each group emphasize? What overall impression do you get of each group and its message from these performances?
3. How are the lyrics to each song different? Judging by these excerpts, what does each song emphasize? What is each song's overall message?
4. "Straight Outta Compton" is an example of Gangsta Rap, which often emphasizes violence and crime. "Me, Myself and I" is an example of Conscious Hip Hop, which typically focuses on personal and social issues. Do you think these labels accurately reflect what is in these videos? Why or why not?
5. Look at the 1990s Timeline. Can you identify examples of some of these specific events reflected in either song? How does each song reflect what was going on in the 1990s?
6. Look at the article on the group De La Soul. How does it portray Gangsta Rap? How does it portray Conscious Hip Hop?
7. According to the *Behind the Beat* interview, what is Ice-T's idea of Gangsta Rap's "negative image with a positive message"? Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?
8. Look at the quotes from KRS-One and GZA. What does KRS-One mean when he says "all Rap is socially conscious"? Does he think the distinction between Gangsta Rap and Conscious Hip Hop is valid? Why or why not?
9. What does GZA say about Gangsta Rap? Do you agree or disagree with him?
10. Gangsta Rap is often characterized as having negative images and ideas, while Conscious Hip Hop is often described as being more positive. Based on what you've heard, is this a fair characterization?
11. Do you think the images of guns and violence in many Gangsta Rap songs encourage violent behavior on the part of listeners? Or is it just a form of entertainment?
12. Based on everything you have seen and heard, what do you think it means to be Gangsta or Conscious? Are these best thought of as two distinct genres, or as two different ways of saying the same thing?