

CREATING COOL SOUNDS

Perfect Rhyme

A perfect rhyme is one in which the endings of words sound exactly the same. Perfect rhyme is the most basic kind, and was the dominant form of rhyme in the early days of rap. Now it is one of a variety of rhyme types, but is still widely used because of the strong connection it creates in lyrics, as in this verse from T.I.'s "Rubberband Man":

Tote a hundred grand
Cannon in the waistband

Assonance

In assonance, words don't have the same ending, but they share a vowel sound. The consonants surrounding the vowel sound are different, but the shared vowel sound links the words. Assonance is the most common form of rhyme in rap today because its looseness opens up many rhyming possibilities. Here's some assonance from Jay-Z on "A Star is Born" – notice how the rhymes at the end of the lines are imperfect but work because of the shared vowel sound of "ay":

Rae' took on the date
with the Purple Tape

Bending Words

Bending words are a variant on assonance, in which a rapper "bends" a word (pronounces it in an odd way) to create a shared vowel sound between two words that, when pronounced normally, have similar – but slightly different – vowel sounds. This is a common technique among southern rappers, who naturally pronounce words in a way that sounds "odd" to the Northern ear. Take this verse from Lil Wayne off "I'm Blooded", where he pronounces "thing" (in reference to repping Bloods) as "thang", so it rhymes with "gang":

Yeah, been around the world, rep the same thing
Been around the world, it's the same gang

Alliteration

In alliteration, words begin with the same letter or sound. Alliteration is a subtler form of connection between words than some other forms of rhyme, but it is sonically evocative and musical. 2Pac was one of the pioneers of alliteration in rap, and he uses it to especially powerful

effect by choosing hard sounds like “puh” and “kuh” and “buh” and “duh” to make him sound tough. Cam'ron, another artist whose flow is both musical and tough, often uses alliteration. Both 2Pac and Cam are masters of the subtle alliterative art:

From To Live & Die in L.A.:

Blind to a broken man's dream, a hard lesson
Court cases keep me guessin'

From Killa Cam:

The hooligan in Houlihan's
Maneuverin's nothin' new to me

Multisyllable Rhyme

A multisyllable rhyme is a rhyme that is more than one syllable long. Multisyllable rhymes can use any of the types of rhymes in conjunction with one another. Multisyllable rhymes are popular in rap today because they allow for a lot of creativity in making linkages in the lyrics.

For example:

From Eminem's guest verse on “Renegade”:

Maybe it's hatred I spew, maybe it's food for the spirit
Maybe it's beautiful music I made for you to just cherish

From Kanye West's “Through the Wire”:

The doctor said I had blood clots, but I ain't Jamaican, man
Story on MTV and I ain't tryin' to Make a Band

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