

Poem Analysis  
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This paper offers a deep analysis of the hip-hop poem “No More,” by the Ojibway artist Plex (Doug Bedard), by exploring themes, devices, and rhythm throughout the text. Hip hop is one of the most versatile and malleable genres of poetry, as rhythm drive the poems forward while clever word play and phonetic qualities offer multiple interpretations, puns, and cultural references. This poem was selected in conjunction with Section 10 of Walt Whitman’s “Song of Myself,” and another hip hop selection from French artist Keny Arkana entitled “La Rage.” The three poems all offer the poet’s perspective of social injustice, Whitman’s being the oldest and most canonical form of free verse poetry which celebrates diversity and human decency while alluding to the injustice of racism and slavery, Arkana commenting on the need to protest against political corruption and globalization (which loses its phonetic qualities through translation to English, and Plex also providing an outlook that promotes protest against the historical and continued abuse of First Peoples by the Canadian and American governments.

The first line indicates that “No More” is written in the vernacular, as Plex writes, “Say it loud, we native and proud,” (1) which is common in hip hop, distancing itself from the use of esoteric language and themes, as it utilizes language that common people can understand. However, Plex also alludes to historical and contemporary facts to construct an argument denouncing governments and institutionalized racism through the use of metaphor and symbolism, such as the lines “Governments, they’re the real fuckin’

terrorists; Ever since they came to the Americas... They all cannibals, filthy animals (5-8)... The government would rather see us dead or in prison; And 39 percent of Canadians are with 'em" (25-6). These lines address the historical mistreatment of First Peoples since European settlement, while the eighth line twists a historical perception of First Peoples as literally cannibals, and animal-like, and applies these notions to the actions of governments as having plundered the cultures and resources of FP. The mention of the "39 percent" obviously refers to his interpretation of a recent poll, although I could not find out what the specific poll was, but simply acts as another premise to support his argument. The notion of cannibalism is further developed with metaphorical references to vampires, as Plex argues governments are "all cowards, hungry for power; Ain't satisfied 'til the lands been devoured; Vampires, they out for blood," (13-5) developing the notion of consumption into a figurative hunger of resources.

As with much hip hop, assonance and consonance add to the rhythmic and phonetic quality of the poem, such as through the line "They treat treaties like shit, we're mistreated" (19), and "And all the government does is sweep it under the rug," (38). Furthermore, the use of assonance and consonance within the poem not only create the rhyming couplets that lines end with, but create a phonetically-pleasing rhythm that fuels the genre, and the addition of rhymes within rhyming couplets.

Though I don't consider Plex to be the best of hip hop artists, this poem provides many of the themes and poetic devices that fuel the genre, and offers an excellent First Nations perspective of the continued abuse of First Peoples. However, the book that I pulled it from, *The Winter We Danced: Voices from the Past, the Future, and the Idle No More Movement* is a collection of art, essays, and poetry from some of Canada's most

well-know Indigenous scholars, writers, and artists, and provides a number of great resources to use in addition to the poem.