

## “Can’t Tell Me Nothing”: The Principate of Hip Hop

Classical reception in music is a fledgling field, with sterling work having been undertaken in Dylanology and heavy metal (both now renowned disciplines of their own accord). But the surface of hip hop and R&B has barely been scratched—odd, given that since 2017, the Nielsen ratings reveal these as the most consumed musical genres worldwide. As hip hop celebrates a half-century of cultural significance, this brief survey aims to build upon scholarship from Dan el Peralta, Samuel Flores, et al, where the classics in/of the genre—irrespective of depth or accuracy—can be utilised in secondary school Classics classrooms as a way of encouraging students to bring their own prior knowledge of such material to bear, providing agency in their learning. Starting with the output of Drake—the Grammy-gobbling, streaming leviathan—and his links to Virgil’s *Aeneid*, this discussion will look the ways in which hip hop has absorbed the classics, from modern day *aemulatio*, moving through to the manner in which Pulitzer Prize winner Kendrick Lamar encapsulates and incorporates Greco-Roman ideals into his vivid dissections of Compton gang life, touching on the extent and intent of this allusiveness. Attention then turns to the intrigues of Jay-Z—rap’s first billionaire—and his more-than-fleeting acquaintance with both Socrates and Plato, which echoes hip hop’s own obsession with lineage. The talk will culminate with a student-led directive, which maintains that the ideologies of Augustus and Kanye West—the most compelling fuser of the sacred and profane in the 21<sup>st</sup> century—have come to be irrevocably entwined.