

Handout: Excerpts from “Is there a Future for Latin Trap Music?”, an essay by Gloria Malone

Original essay: <https://belatina.com/is-there-a-future-for-latin-trap-music/>

INSTRUCTIONS FOR TEACHER:

To follow are handouts for each *group* in the class.

Divide the class into seven groups. Each group could receive one single handout, or, you could make copies for every student in the group.

This is a reading task. It teaches about the Black roots of Latin music and puts forth some powerful and important ideas.

Each group is responsible for reading their assigned excerpt from Malone’s essay. In the during-task phase (see your lesson plan), they are to answer 2-3 questions on their handout.

In the post-task phase, they are to report to the class orally, giving a summary of the essay excerpt that they read.

There is a PowerPoint that accompanies this task – you can show slides and video clips after groups 2, 4, 6, and 7 each do their report. (In the notes section of the PowerPoint you’ll see when to show the respective content).

GROUP 1

“Latin trap music was born out of two genres created by Black immigrants – hip-hop/rap and reggaeton. For Latin trap to continue to thrive as a genre it needs to remember, acknowledge, and uplift the Black Latinx that laid the ground for today’s artists.

Looking at today’s class of reggaeton and Latin trap artists, you would think that the genre began with white Latinx like Bad Bunny, Nicky Jam, and Karol G. However, the reality is that Black Caribbean immigrants to Latin America created the genre of Reggaeton and its recent offshoot, Latin trap. However, Latin trap has a race problem. Being a Black Latinx person has its own unique experiences that non-Black Latinx cannot capture no matter how hard they try to. One must live a compounded marginalized life experience to create trap music that is truly by and for the trap. As it stands right now, the class of reggaeton artists overwhelmingly don’t appear to have that.”

(Source: <https://belatina.com/is-there-a-future-for-latin-trap-music/>)

Task:

1. Summarize this excerpt for the class (50 words or less; be ready to report to the class!)

2. Who, according to Malone, created Latin trap music?

GROUP 2

The Birth of Genres

“The use of the Jamaican labor in the construction of the Panama Canal naturally led to the merging of Black Caribbean culture and Black Latinx culture in Panama. Jamaicans brought the music of Reggae to the country and thus it was mixed with Spanish speaking music like Salsa and the Bronx-born genre of hip-hop and rap. As a genre, reggaeton is one – if not – the quintessential Black African diaspora genres of music that has been born in recent history. To understand this statement, one must understand the birth of hip-hop, rap and the birth of Salsa.

Hip-hop was created by Bronx, New York resident DJ Kool Herc. Dj Kool Herc was born and raised in Kingston, Jamaica until age 10 when his family moved to The Bronx. As a musician, Dj Kool Herc noticed that people loved the drumbeats and breaks during most songs but the break was often short and would fade. In order to keep the high energy that the drum breaks created he decided to try mixing the drumbeats on loop. This method proved to be a stroke of genius and in 1970 a new genre and style of music production was born, hip-hop. Using DJ Kool Herc’s beats as a base, Black people began to try to “sing” over the new faster paced beats. By 1980, people were singing over faster beats and thus rap was born.”

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Task:

1. Summarize this excerpt for the class (50 words or less):

2. Where and how, according to Malone, was reggaeton born?

GROUP 3

“While the origins of Salsa have been heavily debated, both schools of thought lead to Black people. One argument is that salsa was born in Cuba with its roots in African style footwork and drumbeats brought over by the enslaved Africans on the island and mixed with indigenous music influences.

The other school of thought believes that salsa was born in Harlem, New York by Puerto Rican and Cuban immigrants that were heavily influenced by hip-hop and Rap. Whichever version you believe to be true can be brought back to the Black immigrant diaspora experience.”

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Task:

1. Summarize this excerpt for the class (50 words or less; be ready to report to the class!)

2. What are the two theories on the origin of salsa?

GROUP 4

The Black Panamanian Experience

“Cheap labor of primarily Black people was used to construct the Panama Canal. Many local Black Panamanians, Black Caribbean immigrants, and some Black people from the United States descended upon the region and began building not only their homes and one of the most used canals in the world but they also began to build what we now call reggaeton. The labor conditions for these workers were abysmal at best. According to the official Canal De Panama [website](#), an estimated 30,000 people died of disease and or accident during the construction of the canal with the highest rates of death being West Indian workers.

Leonardo “Renato” Aulder, a Black Panamanian man, began singing about the conditions that Black residents in Panama lived in. He sang about the condition over hybrid Jamaican dancehall beats and hip-hop but in Spanish. Singing in Spanish made the music not only accessible to him but also the large majority of Spanish speaking residents in Panama City, Panama. **Thus reggae in Español was born and made way for reggaeton.”**

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Task:

1. Summarize this excerpt for the class (50 words or less; be ready to report to the class!)

2. Where was reggae in Spanish born? Why did Renato start singing in reggae in Spanish?

GROUP 5

Reggae En Español

“Dr. Sonja Stephenson Watson holds a PhD in Hispanic Literature with a specialty focus on AfroPanamanian Literature. Her research findings conclude that, “*reggae en español*, is indeed linked to the hip hop movement. First generation *reggaesero*, Renato’s musical production, and personal narrative as a Panamanian raised in the U.S. Canal Zone, also point to the U.S. (hip-hop) influence on *reggae en español* as well as the general impact of transculturation on the genre’s trajectory and formation.”

[Also,] founder of *Reggaeton con La Gata*, Afro Panamanian musical correspondent Gata, breaks down the history of Reggae en Español and **how the music was an act of rebellion and resistance**. She goes on into complicated relationship between Black immigrant and local Black population in Panama and how this shaped the different styles of presentations of reggae en Español and reggeaton.

One can argue that reggaeton was born in Panama but was raised in the Caribbean in countries like Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic.”

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Task:

1. Summarize this excerpt for the class (50 words or less; be ready to report to the class!).

2. What is Dr. Stephenson Watson’s main research finding?

3. According to Gata, what was the original purpose of Reggae en Español?

GROUP 6

The Spread of Reggaeton and its Reception

“Early reggaeton spoke about the hardships of life, sex, beautiful women, and dancing in “sexual ways.” These lyrics of joy, resistance, and sex made some people uncomfortable, particularly elected officials in Puerto Rico. The Puerto Rican government felt that the genre of reggaeton would harm and ruin the youth of the nation with its lyrics. Thus, policing task force were formed in Puerto Rico with the sole purpose of [raiding stores that sold and distributed reggaeton](#) songs and or cassettes. Unfortunately for the government the violent and very public way they tried to stop the genre helped make it more popular.

Even in the States, reggaeton artists would receive a cold reception from Spanish speaking channels like *Univision* and *Telemundo*. Many felt that genre was too sexy and too controversial for their airwaves. This was further compounded by the fact that early reggaeton artists like Tego Calderon, El General, and N.O.R.E were dark skinned Black Latino men. It wasn’t until reggaeton artists began to be visually lighter – think PitBull – and collaborations with southern hip-hop and rap artists like Lil Jon and The East Side Boys, did reggaeton begin to get the widespread attention it deserved.”

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Task:

1. Summarize this excerpt for the class (50 words or less; be ready to report to the class!)

2. Who were some of the original reggaeton artists?

GROUP 7

The Spread of Reggaeton and its Reception

“Trap music is music born out of hardship caused by white supremacy power structures. White Latinx do not share the same experiences that Black Latinx people do in the United States or in their countries. Reggae en español was essentially Latin trap. Without continuing the legacy of this work with Black Latinx people, modern Latin trap will essentially stay Latin Pop music. As Gata, founder of Reggaeton con La Gata says, ‘No hay reggaeton sin reggae.’

Gata goes on to say: **Reggeaton es un acto de rebelión.**

‘No había música que reflexionaba la experiencia y la creatividad de latinos afrodescendientes. Fue un CHANCE que tomaron ellos, no solo con sus carreras, sino con su bienestar.’”

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Task:

1. Summarize this excerpt for the class (50 words or less; be ready to report to the class!)

2. What do you think *Reggeaton es un acto de rebelión* means? Can you try to get the gist of what Gata says in the sentences above in Spanish? (Try it out – use your translanguaging skills!)
