



## STUDY GUIDE!



This is an easy and fun way to expand the **23 Skidoo** show into a larger experience. Included are sections on who **Secret Agent 23 Skidoo** is, what to expect at the show, a history of hip hop and four lesson plans based in hip hop creativity! Enjoy yourself, and remember... the principles of hip hop are:  
**Peace, Love, Unity and Having Fun!!!**

**S**ecret Agent 23 Skidoo is a Grammy Award winning, internationally touring hip hop artist dedicated to creating and performing inspiring music for children and families. His albums are filled with entertaining stories, witty wordplay and themes that encourage listeners to embrace individuality and wonder. He also leads rhyme writing workshops that teach children the basics of rhythm, rhyming, bar structure and syllable count so that they can create, perform and express themselves through rhyme. Along with filmmaker Daniel Judson, he has created commercials for the US Library Summer Reading Program for the last five years, and served two years as its official spokesman for New York State. He is a published author who has written two books for children, in addition to five full length albums of positive family hip hop.



23

Skidoo began his hip hop career when he was 18 years old. First, he learned to freestyle, or rhyme improvisationally, and then began writing songs. He toured all over the country for more than a decade with a bunch of crazy hip hop bands until his daughter Saki turned five. He wanted to combine his love of music with his love for his family, so he taught Saki to rap, and along with his wife, Brooke, they made their first album of family hip hop. Since then, they've toured all over the world, played everywhere from Legoland to the Smithsonian to India, and made four more albums, one of them won a Grammy!

**A** big part of why 23 Skidoo has decided to combine hip hop with family entertainment and education is that he knows first hand how much positive effect rhyming, dancing, making beats and creating art can have on a person. Especially when children feel like outsiders or seem misunderstood, having tools to to express themselves in a culture where originality is celebrated is very potent. Understanding themselves better through writing and making art, staying physically healthy through dancing and mentally balanced through interacting with others in a creative context, children can understand their power to change their own lives and inspire those around them. Spreading awareness of this positive power and having a blast while doing it are at the heart of the Secret Agent 23 Skidoo live show.





# AT THE SHOW

What's halfway between story time and a dance party? Where can you win a free prize for getting down while being encouraged to yell and shout? The Secret Agent 23 Skidoo show! The energy levels stay high and funky, the rhymes come at you rapid fire, and the song topics get the audience thinking about who they are, who they want to become, and how to overcome their fears in order to get there. 23 Skidoo aims to leave every crowd with open minds, open hearts, and open eyes that see the world a little bit deeper. Here's a breakdown of some of the songs you'll hear.

## GOTTA BE ME

Everyone has their own style, their own personality and their own thoughts. That's what makes this world so awesome, and we should all be proud of the things that make us different and accepting about what makes others different than us! This ultra funky track has a back and forth chorus that gets kids to loudly embrace who they are.

### [YouTube Link](#)

**Developmental Areas:** Anti-bullying, socio-cultural awareness, character development.



## LAST DRAGON

This crowd favorite is the story of the last dragon left on Earth. Even big scary dragons have their own fears, and this one is afraid of a seven year old boy named Billy! But overcoming that fear and starting an unlikely friendship holds the key to the last dragon being able to rejoin all the other dragons and finally go home. Acted out like a play, you'll see Billy and the dragon interact while 23 Skidoo acts as the hip hop narrator.

### [YouTube Link](#)

**Developmental Areas:** Character development.

# PILLOWFORT PILLOWFIGHT

Rhymed from the perspective of a child, this song uncorks all the excitement of a good sleepover, complete with pillow forts, pillow fights and a lot of healthy movement. Nothing encourages physical involvement more than a dance contest, so the children (and teachers!) better stretch and get ready! This super funky song is made for the audience to go wild and express themselves on the dance floor, and a few lucky winners will walk away with their very own free CD!

[YouTube Link](#)

**Developmental Areas:** Physical education, Large Motor Development, Socio-Cutlural Awareness, Self Awareness.

# BOOGIE MAN

Fear is strong but love is stronger, and getting funky can shake off the worries and help love get the upper hand! We let the children know that everybody in the whole world has fears sometimes, and that courage does not mean that you're not afraid, it means that you do what you have to do even though you are afraid!

[YouTube Link](#)

**Developmental Areas:** Character development, Physical education.



# IMAGINARY FRIEND

Another first person narrative, this strange tale and huge radio hit tells the story of a kid whose imaginary friend Pickles is convinced that he's actually the real one and the kid is imaginary! This makes them both question the nature of reality. Topics addressed are how real the imagination can be, the possibility of other perspectives, and even the multiverse! This is also one of the most upbeat and danceable songs, and usually closes out the show.....sometimes with another dance contest!

[YouTube Link](#)

**Developmental Areas:** Critical thinking, creative writing, physical education, large motor development.

# A HISTORY OF HIP HOP



A DJ mixing records at a NYC block party.

Hip hop is a very American phenomenon, mixing aspects and contributions from many ethnicities and time periods into an ever changing culture. It is some of the funkier soup ever cooked in the American melting pot. Starting as an underground world of block parties and dance battles in the early 1970s, this culture was created by the youth of NYC, and still speaks to the hearts, minds and souls of the youth all across the planet.

The Bronx is one of the five boroughs, or neighborhoods, of New York City. In the 1970s, it was a rough place to grow up. Construction of a huge highway that went right through the middle of the borough cut the South Bronx off from the rest of the city, and the communities there felt abandoned and angry. But just as pressure turns coal to diamonds, this difficult environment created hip hop.

The inventor of hip hop is mostly recognized as Clive Campbell, but he is much more well known as DJ Kool Herc. One day, when his sister Cindy had a birthday party in the rec room of their apartment building, Clive was playing his favorite funk records. As he played, he realized that during the sections in certain records called the “breaks”, where the music simplified and the drummer took the lead for a short while, the people danced the hardest. So he developed a technique of using two turntables and two copies of the same record to just play the break over and over. He’d start on one turntable, then when the break section was almost done, he’d start the same break on the other turntable, keeping the funkier part going for minutes on end. And the crowd loved it! Other DJs, such as Grandmaster Flash and Grand Wizard Theodore, learned Kool Herc’s technique. They perfected and added to it, inventing record scratching along the way. The break beats, with the same records being looped over and over, were hypnotic and funky. It was 1973, and they had created a brand new sound.



A Breaker dancing to the beat, about to do a head spin.



Rapper DMC rocking the microphone.

The night of Cindy's birthday, Kool Herc and his friend also had a microphone plugged in. As the beat heavy breaks thumped out of the speakers, they had fun messing around on the mic, shouting out their friends' names and making little phrases rhyme. This fit so perfectly with the new sound that, before long, some of the Bronx locals started actually writing and reciting longer rhymes. The vocal style became known as "rap", but the lyricists referred to themselves as "MCs". MC stands for "Master of Ceremony", but eventually

it also stood for "Move the Crowd" and "Mic Control", as the MCs took pride in sounding great and making the crowd respond to their lyrics. Inspired by the funky new music being invented before their eyes and ears, dancers came up with new styles as well. They took the crazy dance steps of James Brown, the godfather of funk music, and mixed them together with the sweeping kicks and jumps they had seen in kung fu movies and even gymnastic moves. The amazing, acrobatic dance style they created was called "breaking", because they were dancing to the "breaks" in the records. Later, some people called it "breakdancing", but just like a lot of rappers prefer to be called "MCs", these dancers prefer to be known either as "breakers" or "bboys and bgirls". There were also a lot of artists involved in this emerging scene who used spray paint to adorn the crumbling, abandoned landscape of the Bronx and similar neighborhoods with graffiti. Big, cartoony letters and characters covered buildings and subway trains with vivid color. Graffiti has been around about as long as human civilization, but these artists began a new style, developing techniques to make their art pieces more intricate and three dimensional. Their art looked as wild as the breakers when they danced, and as funky as the DJs and MCs sounded through the speakers.

All of these styles, from looping record breaks and rhyming to battling with acrobatic dance and spraying up nicknames in colorful paint, became the culture known as hip hop. First it spread across New York City, and then across the world. It was created as an alternative lifestyle to negativity and violence, and to be a guiding light to the youth who practiced it. The principles of hip hop as laid down by its founders are "peace, love, unity and having fun", and that's why so many people who have gotten involved with the culture have changed their lives for the better.



Rapper LL Cool J holding an old school boombox.

# THE FOUR ELEMENTS

## THE DJ

(FOUR LESSON PLANS)

(Common Core Standard: Speaking & Listening - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.3)  
(VAPA Standard: Music. 3.0 Historical and Cultural Context)

### Activity 1. Understanding the DJ (10 Minutes)

DJs choose which records to play in what order, and therefore help create the mood and energy in a party or show. Sometimes in doing this, they are contributing to or helping create a scene, which can bring different types of people together. Watch this Youtube interview with DJ Kool Herc about his role in creating hip hop, then discuss. [YouTube Link](#)

a) How do you think a handful of DJs in the Bronx and Brooklyn in the early 1970s helped create an entire culture that has grown worldwide in the decades since?

b) Can you think of any other time in history where musicians or artists helped define or create a culture or movement?



### Activity 2. Understanding Sampling (10 Minutes)

DJs play, and sometimes create, hip hop beats for MCs to rap over. A lot of these beats involve “sampling”, the use of small sections of pre-existing songs rearranged into a new context. There is debate over whether sampled music is cheating, or whether it is a legitimate art, like musical collage. Watch this Youtube clip that shows songs that have been sampled, and what was created out of the samples. [YouTube Link](#)

a) Is sampled music still an original form of music?

b) How many genres of music can you think of that currently rely on sampling or looping?

c) What's the line between stealing, plagiarism, and being inspired by an earlier piece?

### Activity 3. Learning to Beatbox (15 Minutes)

Along with DJs, beatboxing is another method of creating a beat to rhyme over. Beatboxing is the act of creating a beat with nothing but the sounds you can make with your mouth. There are some really amazing beatboxers in the world, and there are even competitions where beatboxers try to outdo each other in skill and originality. Watch this tutorial on the basics of beatboxing, and see if you can learn to make beats yourself! [YouTube Link](#)



# THE MC

(Common Core Standard: Writing -  
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5)  
(VAPA Standard: Music 2.0 Creative Expression)

MCs are the lyricists who craft rhymes to go along with the beats. There are many styles of lyrics, from simple to very complex, and many topics for songs, ranging from playful bragging and battling, to imaginative storytelling, to thorough breakdowns of political and social issues. One of the greatest things about hip hop lyricism is that while it takes a lifetime to master, it only takes a little while to begin learning. Unlike beginning to play violin or guitar, for instance, talking is something you already know how to do, and rhythm is something that all of us have. Your heart beats in rhythm and you breath and walk in rhythm, so you know you have it! Hip hop enables every person to tell their own stories in a creative way, taking what you care about and turning it into a song.



## Activity 1. The MC as an Activist (10 Minutes)

MCs can become a voice that speaks for a larger movement or cause. The Earth Guardians are a team of two brothers from Colorado that use hip hop to promote environmental awareness. Watch the video for their song, “Live as if Our Future Matters”, then discuss. [YouTube Link](#)

a) How do you think the lyrics in hip hop songs create actual change in the world? Do you think the fact that these MCs are children have any different effect on people than if they were adults?

## Activity 2. Freestyle Rhyming (10-20 Minutes)

One aspect of hip hop lyricism is “freestyling”, or improvising rhymes on the spot. This is one of the most mindblowing techniques of hip hop performance. Watch this TedX Talk about freestyling and the use of improvisation in life, then discuss. [YouTube Link](#)

a) Can you think of any place in your own life that you improvise? How do you think people get better at freestyling?

b) Do you think you could freestyle rap? Give it a try over these beats, or beatbox for each other!

[YouTube Link](#)

[YouTube Link](#)

[YouTube Link](#)

## Activity 3. Rhyme Writing (30 minutes)

Rhyme writing is the core of being an MC. Using this worksheet, write your own rhyme. Take your time, experiment and explore. Have fun with it! (insert worksheet link here). Play this beat while writing, to give you rhythm and inspiration. When you’re done, rap your rhymes for each other!

[YouTube Link](#)



# THE BREAKER

(Common Core Standard: Speaking & Listening - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.3)  
(VAPA Standard: Dance 2.0 Creative Expression)



Breakers, also known as bboys and bgirls, are the dancers who embody the spirit of hip hop. Although some classes teach “hip hop dance”, they usually are referring to the type of choreographed moves that you see in modern hip hop music videos. Breaking was the original dance form that actually emerged along with hip hop culture. There are sometimes synchronized moves and choreography that a number of crew members may do simultaneously, but for the most part, breaking focuses on individual expression and rocking your own style.

## Activity 1. Understanding Breaking (10-15 Minutes)

B-boys and b-girls come in every size, shape and color. Check out this amazing battle. B-girl Terra is only 6! [YouTube Link](#) And here's another battle between two of the original breakers. Crazy Legs is 50, and B-boy Storm is 45! Watch both videos, then discuss. [YouTube Link](#)

- a) Can you feel the differences in the breakers' personalities through their moves and styles?
- b) Breaking battles are friendly even when they act aggressive, and even though they're competing, breakers will cheer each other on when they rock impressive moves. How do you think friendly competition can help you advance your skills?

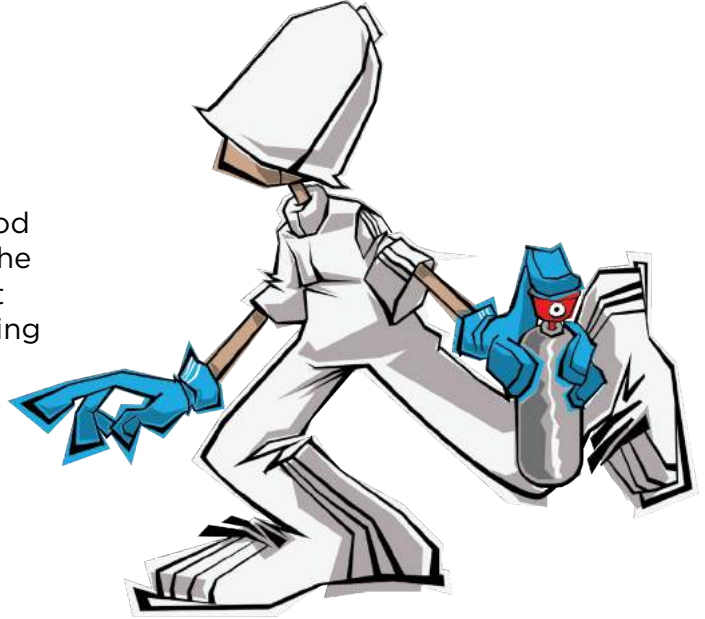
## Activity 2. Learning to Break (15-30 Minutes)

Here is a great tutorial on the basics of breaking. It's not too tough to learn the first steps, and then you can progress to whatever level you feel comfortable. Depending on how much time you put into it, you may be amazed at what you can achieve! [YouTube Link](#)

# THE GRAFFITI WRITER

(Common Core Standard: Speaking & Listening - CCSS.ELA-LITERACYSL.3)  
(VAPA Standard: Visual Arts 2.0 Creative Expression &  
3.0 Historical and Cultural Context)

Throughout its long and winding history, graffiti has been looked down on as visual pollution and criminalized, but has also been seen as neighborhood beautification, as cutting edge popular art, and as the voice of oppressed people with no other way to get their messages out. And although the act of inscribing thoughts and ideas on public spaces is many centuries old, the graffiti and “street art” styles specific to the last few decades have exploded across the planet on wall murals, in galleries, and in advertising and fashion.



## Activity 1. Understanding Graffiti (10 Minutes)

It has been a debate for quite a long time whether graffiti is art or vandalism. Is it possible that it is both? Watch this Ted Ed video on the history of graffiti, then discuss. [YouTube Link](#)

- a) Do you think graffiti is art or vandalism?
- b) Have you seen any graffiti around your town that you think is ugly or beautiful, or that makes you feel happy or angry?
- c) Why do you think people write their names over and over?

## Activity 2. Graffiti as Activism (10 Minutes)

Graffiti has long been used as a form of social activism. This means that people who want to spread an idea have used art on public spaces to accomplish this. Watch this PBS video on a social activism movement of graffiti artists in Brazil, where graffiti is legal and is being used to combat domestic abuse. Then discuss. **Teachers: There is discussion of domestic violence in this video that may not be appropriate for some ages. Please review and decide.** [Video Link](#) How do you think public art can actually affect the way people think and act? Do you think graffiti artists with a cause are different from graffiti artists that just want personal fame?

## Activity 3. Learn to Write Graffiti Letters (10-20 Minutes)

Try writing some letters in graffiti style! Here's a great lesson for beginning writers. Also, check out the photos, and see if you can read all the letters! **Teachers: Although the movie “Style Wars” is a fantastic primer on 1970s NYC graffiti culture, the trailer here is PG-13 for language, so steer students clear.** [Link](#)

# GLOSSARY

**BBOY:** A male breaker.

**BGIRL:** A female breaker.

**BREAK:** The part of a song where the music becomes more simple and the drums and percussion take the lead.

**BREAKING:** A style of dance that originated along with hip hop music.

**DJ:** A person who plays records to entertain others.

**FUNK:** A type of music that combines elements of R&B and Soul music.

**GRAFFITI WRITER:** An artist who writes words in public and private spaces, usually with spray paint.

**HIP HOP:** A creative culture involving music, dance and art that began in NYC in the 1970s.

**MC:** A lyricist that performs vocals in hip hop music.

**SAMPLING:** The use of small sections of pre-existing music when making new music.

**THE SOUTH BRONX:** A neighborhood in New York City.

**STREET ART:** Usually legal art in public spaces. Though street art uses a wider range of mediums including stencils and wheatpaste, there is a large crossover between street art and graffiti.



All original illustrations by Stu Helm and Joe Buck.