



Reflect and discuss

Wu-Tang Clan



Wu-Tang Clan is a collection of hip-hop artists who grew up together in New York City in the 1970s and 80s. They are credited with developing the second wave of East Coast hardcore hip-hop style in the 1990s, journaling the harsh realities of everyday life in marginalized communities during the War on Drugs.

The name Wu-Tang Clan is a mash-up of influences. The nine artists loved playing chess and watching Kung Fu movies, in particular Shaolin and Wu Tang. And they were inspired by the teachings of Five Percent Nation, rooted in the beliefs and practices of the Nation of Islam, founded in the US in 1930. Wu-Tang Clan members were also fond of comics and comedy, which is reflected in their logo.

Before Wu-Tang Clan existed, founding member Robert Diggs was known as Prince Rakeem or The Scientist. He and his cousins, Gary Grice (The Genius) and Russell Jones (The Specialist), formed a group named Force of the Imperial Master. They were also known as the All in Together Now Crew. By the time Diggs and his cousins and friends formed Wu-Tang Clan in 1992, he was known by his new name, RZA (pronounced rizza).

As African-Americans, Wu-Tang Clan members have always been vocal about injustices that spring from racism, poverty and lack of opportunity. Two members who survived racism and abuse during the War of Drugs of the 80s and 90s are now running social enterprises involving legal cannabis. The businesses offer jobs and support to poor communities who suffered the most.

Wu-Tang Clan members are also vocal about veganism. RZA has been a vegan since the early 1990s. He influenced the other members over the years to go vegan for health reasons and animal rights.

References and further reading:

- <https://nypost.com/2021/08/15/method-man-to-sell-marijuana-in-ny-under-his-tical-brand/>
- <https://outlawreport.com/wu-tang-clans-raekwon-is-eyeing-a-d-c-dispensary-license-for-his-cannabis-franchise/>
- <https://www.allmusic.com/artist/wu-tang-clan-mn0000959876/biography>
- <https://www.livekindly.co/80-percent-wu-tang-clan-vegan/>



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Activity steps

1. Lead a discussion about participants' favourite kinds of music and ask what they know about hip-hop.
2. Walk through the **Wu-Tang Clan** handout, or read aloud.
3. Working in pairs or small groups, explore the questions and activities below.

Reflect and discuss

Over the years, Wu-Tang Clan members were influenced by many people and ideas, and influenced many others.

- Who or what are your influences? What exactly interests you about them?
- Who or what were your influences 5 years ago? What did you like about them?
- In what ways do you think you might influence others? How do you know?

Identity, acceptance and performance are important themes in the Wu-Tang Clan story. They're also important themes for youth.

- What are some of the specific worries around identity, acceptance and performance that a young person might have?
- What, if anything, do you worry about?
- How do you help yourself get back in balance when you're worried? Where did you learn that approach?

Over the years, RZA and the other members identified with a variety of names, roles and belief systems.

- What are some things that you self-identify with? In what ways are those names/roles/beliefs important to you?
- Imagine yourself in 10 years. Do you believe you will still identify the same way as you do now? Why or why not?

Get creative!

Create a logo that reflects aspects of your character and interests.