

M8: © Eminem, 2002

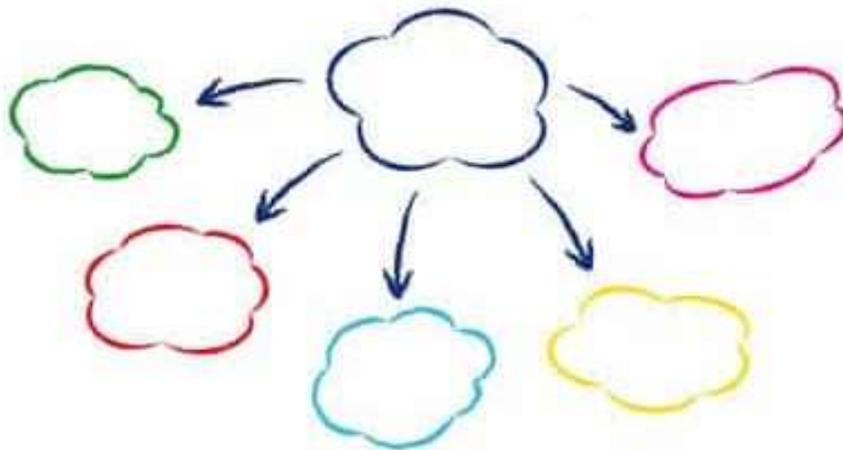
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RZlzd0ZfTFg>



**Step 1:**

**Write down the first five words or phrases that come into your mind when you read the first lines of this song. Then explain your ideas to your partner and create a mind map together.**

America, hahaha, we love you  
How many people are proud to be citizens  
Of this beautiful country of ours, the stripes and the stars  
For the rights that men have died for to protect?  
The women and men who have broke their necks  
For the freedom of speech  
The United States government has sworn to uphold



© Gooseman - Fotolia.com

The first lines you have just read are from “White America” (2002), an autobiographical song by Eminem. Read the info text before you go to step 2.

When Eminem released his first album in 1996, no one would have expected that he would become such a successful and influential artist. By now, he has won 15 Grammy Awards, 8 American Music Awards, 17 Billboard Music Awards, an Oscar Award and a lot more.<sup>1</sup>

He is said to have “conquered Black music” and “broken racial barriers”. In the 1990s, rap / hip hop was still dominated by Afro-Americans, who often expressed their “underprivilegedness” with this kind of music. It had been unthinkable before that a white artist would use “their” style and become successful. But coming from an “underprivileged” family himself, Eminem became the first (white) rapper who gave “a voice and lyrics to the disaffected and disadvantaged white families” (condescendingly referred to as “white trash”).

Despite all this, his reputation is quite controversial: while his rap music is mainstream now, he rather confirmed the general stereotype of the criminal gangster rapper genre by using offensive language at the beginning of his career.

**Step 2:**

**Listen to the song now and underline / mark all passages which express this dichotomy<sup>2</sup> black – white.**

America, hahaha, we love you How many people are proud to be citizens Of this beautiful country of ours, the stripes and the stars 5 For the rights that men have died for to protect? The women and men who have broke their necks- For the freedom of speech The United States government has sworn to uphold (Yo, I want everybody to listen to the words of 10 this song) Or so we're told I never would've dreamed in a million years I'd see So many motherfuckin' people who feel like me Who share the same views and the same exact 15 beliefs It's like a fucking army marching in back of me So many lives I touched, so much anger aimed In no particular direction, just sprays and sprays And straight through your radio waves, it plays 20 and plays 'Til it stays stuck in your head, for days and days Who would've thought, standing in this mirror, bleaching my hair With some peroxide, reaching for a t-shirt to wear	25 That I would catapult to the forefront of rap like this? How could I predict my words would have an impact like this? I must've struck a chord with somebody up in the office 30 'Cause Congress keep telling me I ain't causing nothin' but problems And now they're saying I'm in trouble with the government I'm loving it, I shoveled shit all my life, and now 35 I'm dumping it on <u>Chorus:</u> White America, I could be one of your kids White America, little Eric looks just like this White America, Erica loves my shit I go to TRL, look how many hugs I get 40 White America, I could be one of your kids White America, little Eric looks just like this White America, Erica loves my shit I go to TRL, look how many hugs I get Look at these eyes, baby blue, baby just like yourself 45 If they were brown, Shady'd lose, Shady sits on the shelf But Shady's cute, Shady knew Shady's dimples would help
--	--

<sup>1</sup> [www.eminem.com](http://www.eminem.com) & <https://www.levelman.com/how-eminem-conquered-black-music-and-white-privilege-with-the-marshall-mathers-lp-6b450f54920c/> & <https://english.elpais.com/culture/2022-10-18/50-years-of-eminem-the-rapper-who-survived-addiction-and-controversy-capable-of-ending-any-career.html> & <https://www.zdf.de/nachrichten/panorama/eminem-50-geburtstag-100.html>

<sup>2</sup> dichotomy = a division or contrast between two groups or things that are completely opposite to and different from each other (OLD)

	Make ladies swoon, baby (ooh, baby)		Searching with a fine tooth comb, it's like this rope
50	Look at my sales		Waiting to choke, tightening around my throat
	Let's do the math, if I was black, I woulda sold half		Watching me while I write this, like, "I don't like
	I ain't have to graduate from Lincoln High School	90	this note"
	to know that		All I hear is, lyrics, lyrics, constant controversy
	But I could rap, so fuck school, I'm too cool to go back		Sponsors working round the clock to try to stop
55	Give me the mic, show me where the fucking stu-		my concerts early
	dio's at		Surely hip-hop was never a problem in Harlem,
	When I was underground no one gave a fuck I was	95	only in Boston
	white		After it bothered the fathers of daughters starting
	No labels wanted to sign me, almost gave up, I		to blossom
60	was like		So now I'm catching the flak from these activists
	"Fuck it," until I met Dre, the only one to look past		when they ragging
	Gave me a chance and I lit a fire up under his ass	100	Actin' like I'm the first rapper to smack a bitch or
	Helped him get back to the top, every fan black		say "faggot," shit
	that I got		Just look at me like I'm your closest pal
65	Was probably his in exchange for every white fan		The posterchild, the motherfucking spokesman
	that he's got		now, for-
	Like damn, we just swapped, sitting back looking	105	<u>Chorus:</u> [White America, (...) how much hugs I get]
	at shit, wow		So to the parents of America, I am the Derringer
	I'm like my skin is it starting to work to my benefit		Aimed at little Erica to attack her character
70	now? it's-		The ringleader of this circus of worthless pawns
	<u>Chorus:</u> [White America, (...) how much hugs I get]		Sent to lead the march right up to the steps of
	See, the problem is I speak to suburban kids	110	Congress
	Who otherwise woulda never knew these words		And piss on the lawns of the White House
	exist		To burn the - and replace it with a Parental Advi-
75	Whose moms probably woulda never gave two		sory sticker
	squirts of piss		To spit liquor in the faces of this democracy of hy-
	'Til I created so much motherfucking turbulence	115	pocrisy
	Straight out the tube, right into your living rooms		Fuck you, Ms. Cheney
	I came		Fuck you, Tipper Gore
80	And kids flipped when they knew I was produced		Fuck you with the freest of speech
	by Dre		This Divided States of Embarrassment will allow
	That's all it took, and they were instantly hooked	120	me to have
	right in		Fuck you
	And they connected with me too, because I		Hahaha, I'm just playing, America
85	looked like them		You know I love you
	That's why they put my lyrics up under this microscope		

**Step 3:**

**Discuss whether for you, this song has a real message or rather deals with Eminem himself.**