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**M8: © Eminem, 2002**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RZIzD0ZfTFg>

**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

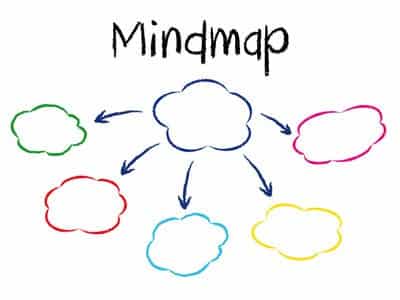
Of this beautiful country of ours, the stripes and the stars

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

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**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.[[1]](#footnote-1)

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[[2]](#footnote-2) 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

For the rights that men have died for to protect?

The women and men who have broke their necksFor the freedom of speech

The United States government has sworn to uphold

(Yo, I want everybody to listen to the words of 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 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 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

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

'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 I'm dumping it on

Chorus: 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

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

If they were brown, Shady'd lose, Shady sits on the shelf

But Shady's cute, Shady knew Shady's dimples would help

Make ladies swoon, baby (ooh, baby)

Look at my sales

Let's do the math, if I was black, I woulda sold half

I ain't have to graduate from Lincoln High School to know that

But I could rap, so fuck school, I'm too cool to go back

Give me the mic, show me where the fucking studio's at

When I was underground no one gave a fuck I was white

No labels wanted to sign me, almost gave up, I was like

"Fuck it, " until I met Dre, the only one to look past

Gave me a chance and I lit a fire up under his ass

Helped him get back to the top, every fan black that I got

Was probably his in exchange for every white fan that he's got

Like damn, we just swapped, sitting back looking at shit, wow

I'm like my skin is it starting to work to my benefit now? it's-

Chorus: [White America, (…) how much hugs I get]

See, the problem is I speak to suburban kids

Who otherwise woulda never knew these words exist

Whose moms probably woulda never gave two squirts of piss

'Til I created so much motherfucking turbulence

Straight out the tube, right into your living rooms I came

And kids flipped when they knew I was produced by Dre

That's all it took, and they were instantly hooked right in

And they connected with me too, because I looked like them

That's why they put my lyrics up under this microscope

Searching with a fine tooth comb, it's like this rope

Waiting to choke, tightening around my throat

Watching me while I write this, like, "I don't like this note"

All I hear is, lyrics, lyrics, constant controversy

Sponsors working round the clock to try to stop my concerts early

Surely hip-hop was never a problem in Harlem, only in Boston

After it bothered the fathers of daughters starting to blossom

So now I'm catching the flak from these activists when they ragging

Actin' like I'm the first rapper to smack a bitch or say "faggot, " shit

Just look at me like I'm your closest pal

The posterchild, the motherfucking spokesman now, for-

Chorus: [White America, (…) how much hugs I get]

So to the parents of America, I am the Derringer

Aimed at little Erica to attack her character

The ringleader of this circus of worthless pawns

Sent to lead the march right up to the steps of Congress

And piss on the lawns of the White House

To burn the - and replace it with a Parental Advisory sticker

To spit liquor in the faces of this democracy of hypocrisy

Fuck you, Ms. Cheney

Fuck you, Tipper Gore

Fuck you with the freest of speech

This Divided States of Embarrassment will allow me to have

Fuck you

Hahaha, I'm just playing, America

You know I love you

**Step 3:**

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

1. [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> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. dichotomy = a division or contrast between two groups or things that are completely opposite to and different from each other (OLD) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)