Don’t Believe the Hype: LA Asian Americans in Hip Hop, an exhibition by the Chinese American Museum, originates from the single “Don’t Believe the Hype” by Public Enemy. The song encouraged people to question and inspect what was being told to them by the media. Public Enemy’s song reminds each of us to think for ourselves before buying into what others believe.

1. What is the overall message of Public Enemy’s song?

2. In CAM’s current exhibition, Don’t Believe the Hype, the audience is asked to look beyond how Asian Americans are perceived by the media. How does the message of the song and the message in the exhibition complement one another?

3. In the 3rd line of the verse, Public Enemy refers to themselves as “this.” What does “this” mean and how does it relate to thinking for yourself?

Do I make my parents proud cause I made it out of the house, and very few other Asians are makin’ this kind of sound? I was raised to be great, told to be the best. Now every project I release that fails just gives me stress. If you’ve ever been depressed, I know that you can relate. To the weight of a generation and a race. Every time I step on stage, I’m fighting for my place. Even Asians often tell me I don’t have a rapper’s face. I’m not running in place, I’m just running my race.

“Free” by Jason Chu

1. Free is defined as “not under the control of another.” How do these verses show how Jason is feeling in “Free?”

2. Jason uses the word “race” twice in this verse. How is it used the first time compared to the second?

3. Explain whether you agree or disagree with Jason’s definition of the word “free.” Provide an example of feeling free. If you disagree, how would you define it?
There's more to female rap than Nicki Minaj. While men dominate the airwaves and the rap game, there are women pushing to be heard and represented.

Unscramble the words to fill in the hip hop verse below or fill in the blanks to create your own version.

You can have the ______, I got the _________ inside of me

driwo verniues

You can have the ______, I got my _______ to ride with me

amfe ilyfam

Take my last name but you can't deny my history

I'mma show you what it means to have equality

I'mma make my ancestors proud of me

I'mma help you redefine ________

lucniitysam

My fate is greater than the ______ you assign to me

dergen

Yeah I'mma turn you to a ______

nistmeif

I'mma turn you to a feminist

- ROCKY RIVERA
  "TURN YOU"

Metaphors are comparisons done without the word like or as whereas similes do use like or as. They help visualize what is being done. Which one stands out the most to you?

I'm cooler than a polar bear's toenail

"ATLiens" by Outkast

The Hellraiser, raisin' Hell with the flavor/Terrorize a jam like troops in Pakistan Swingin' through your town like your neighbourhood Spiderman

"Protect Ya Neck" by Wu-Tang Clan

Give it a shot! Write down three metaphors.

1.

2.

3.

"I wanted to show people who the person was behind the microphone this time," she added, "tell them about who I was and where I came from."

Throwing out the wicked like God did the devil,
funky like your grandpa's drawers, don't test me,
we're in like that, you're dead like Presley.

"Steve Biko" by Q-Tip

If the beef between us, we can settle it
With the chrome and metal shit
I make it hot like a kettle get

"Kick In The Door" by Notorious B.I.G

Now try it with similes. Remember to use like or as this time around.

1.

2.

3.
Read the following rap lyrics and the corresponding question below.

You took me as safe
That was your first mistake
Who said I was safe
The other night I watched the Oscars
F***a bamboo ceiling, guess I gotta play the villain
- “Safe” by Dumbfoundead

1. Who is Dumbfoundead describing as “safe?” Why does he choose this adjective?

It’s a hard line when you’re an import
Baby boy, it’s hard times
When you ain’t read for
Racists feed the belly of the beast

With they pitchforks, rich chores
Done by the people that get ignored
Ahmed, Snow Tha Product, and Residente

2. How are the immigrants and imports being compared here? What are the hard times that they have been facing and are they also the people getting “ignored?”

Skin you alive for my country, I live and die for my country
I kill a pig in a white hooded suit on the low... for my country
They got evil plans in the devil’s hands, but I don’t pray cause I organize
- “Us” by Ruby Ibarra featuring Rocky Rivera, Klassy, and Faith Santella

3. In your opinion, what is the primary message Ruby is trying to get across?

In 1910, Angel Island was used to regulate immigrants coming into San Francisco, California. Many Chinese immigrants were detained on Angel Island, unable to enter America. To express their hardships, many immigrants wrote poetry on the walls.

I, a seven-foot man, am ashamed I cannot stand tall.
Cu rled up in an enclosure, my movements are dictated by others.
Enduring a hundred humiliations, I can only cry in vain
This person’s tears fall, but what can the blue heavens do?

Most of the poems are written in the styles of classical Chinese poetry which originated during the T’ang Dynasty period. They express a range of thoughts and feelings about dealing with the hardships of migrating so far from home and the difficult conditions they faced once they arrived.

Try it out: knowing what you know about Angel Island, write a poem from the perspective of a Chinese immigrant living on Angel Island.
Answers for Page 31, Asian Women in Rap: Who’s Who?

Line 1: world; universe
Line 2: fame; family
Line 6: masculinity
Line 7: gender
Line 8: feminist