

## Unit 6 - Born With a Mic

### 6A Introduction

A lot of rappers claim that they were born with a mic. Well, what if one of them really was? This is his story.

### 6B Song Lyrics

*I'm on the subway right now, uh, with my mom, but don't worry about that part. I'm in London, and I'm on tour. Let me tell you a little bit of something about myself though.*

I had a mic attached to my umbilical chord,  
 So believe this: I was rhyming as a fetus.  
 Came out in the world, just to find some new beats,  
 Looked up at the doctor, said, "Yo, who's he?  
 Can he make a phat beat like Biggie's 'Juicy'?  
 Something with some kick to it, like Bruce Lee?"  
 My birth was not normal or **orthodox**,  
 'Cause neither the nurses nor the docs  
 Had ever seen a baby with skills or **prowess** like mine.  
 "You've got a son!" Yeah, I'm ready to shine.  
 Mom wrapped me up and brought me home,  
 Started to **nurture** me and help me grow.  
 But, um, I had a temper,  
 You don't want to **tamper** or mess with my temper,  
 I'm a devil in Pampers.  
 I needed some maternal care, that's from my mom,  
 But I also needed to blow up the charts like a bomb.  
 So I recorded a song, wild and bold,  
 To make people forget that I was just nine months old.  
 So follow my **narrative**, my story unfolds,  
 They called me Emcee Baby Food.  
 Made my stage **debut** at the age of two,  
 First time I stepped on the stage they paid me, too.  
 They couldn't **fathom**, understand or figure  
 How this little baby with a mic was the nicest spit-kicker.  
 The crowd was **bewildered**, all confused,  
 Until I busted like Busta Rhymes and showed the dudes.  
 I never got **snared** in the snare or caught in the beat,  
 So I finished the show and hopped in my Jeep.  
 Okay, it wasn't an **authentic** or real Jeep,  
 It was plastic, it went beep-beep on the sidewalk.

*But all the one-year-old ladies,  
 They thought I was crazy.  
 They all called me Baby,  
 "Emcee Baby Food is crazy!"*



My album dropped, people bought it like candy,  
I was always clever, smart and **canny**.  
Flew to L.A. just to win a Grammy,  
Didn't go alone; I brought my nanny.  
A No. 1 single, that was "mission accomplished,"  
People **catered** to my needs, did what I wanted.  
The most intense moment, the **climax**,  
Was when they made a movie about me in IMAX.  
But a few days later I turned on the news,  
And saw another baby straight rapping for dudes.  
Called him Lil' Tito and the dude could kick it,  
Had the nice flows, yeah, the kid was wicked.  
So I **confronted** Tito at his next show,  
Came face-to-face with him to let him know  
That Emcee Baby Food was number one,  
Said, "Pack up your toys, Tito—you're done!"  
That was the start of the biggest baby beef  
Since...well, it was probably the biggest baby beef ever.  
He said, "Oh, you want to battle?  
Drop your mic right now; pick up your rattle.  
Emcee Baby Food, you're so soft and mushy,  
Lil' Tito goes hard, so don't push me."  
I looked the dude up and down, and then I told him this:  
"My good looks make the baby models nervous,  
I'm not all up in the club but I'm getting bottle service.  
Is that your crew? You should call them off,  
Don't mess with my toddler entourage."

Hook

*Yeah, yeah, yeah, what's up man? This is Lil' Tito right here, you know what I mean. We squashed our little beef, and all that, our little battle. You know what I mean? We're gonna let bygones be bygones. We're gonna come out with a new tape, you know what I mean? Ga-ga-goo-goo records. Check us out. Googoo me. Uh-huh. Somebody get my bottle, man.*

## **6C Words Defined**

*Below you'll find each vocabulary word that was used in the song. Each word is followed by the part of speech, a simple definition and a meaningful sentence. Some words will also have synonyms, antonyms and other forms of the word listed.*

**1. authentic**  genuine; real; true

While digging in our backyard, Wing and I found an *authentic* Native American arrowhead.

Synonyms: actual, valid

Antonyms: fake, false, counterfeit

Other forms: Do you really question this painting's *authenticity* (noun)?

**2. bewilder** (verb) to puzzle completely; confuse

The high school basketball team, *bewildered* by the nontraditional style of their ape opponents, lost to the “Chimp All-Stars” in overtime.

Synonyms: baffle, fluster

Antonyms: clear up, explain

**3. canny** (adj) smart and careful; watchful of one’s own interests

While General Motors was still building big trucks and SUVs, Honda made the *canny* decision to focus on smaller cars that were better for the environment.

Synonyms: shrewd, prudent

Antonyms: foolish

**4. cater** (verb) 1. to try to satisfy the needs of; try to make things easy and pleasant 2. to supply food and service

1. The cereal company finally *catered* to popular demand and put its “Frosty the Ferret” cartoon character back on the box. 2. We had the big dinner *catered*, so we didn’t have to cook a thing.

Synonyms: 1. humor, indulge

**5. climax** (noun) the highest or most intense moment in the course of something

Marley’s year reached its *climax* when she hit the game-winning home run and found out she got into college on the same day.

Synonyms: top, apex, pinnacle

**6. confront** (verb) to stand up to; to face boldly

I *confronted* the bully after school and told him I wasn’t giving him any more quarters.

Synonyms: resist, oppose

Antonyms: back down

Other forms: The protest became violent after a *confrontation* (noun) between protesters and the police.

**7. debut** (noun) a first public appearance

A famous actor decided to wear shorts and a tank top to his movie’s *debut*.

Synonyms: beginning

Antonyms: closing, finale

Other forms: The show *debuted* (verb) on Broadway last June.

**8. fathom** (verb) to figure out; to understand; to get to the bottom of

I can’t *fathom* why you would want to buy those shoes when you already own a pair just like them.

Synonyms: discern

Antonyms: misunderstand

Other forms: A *fathom* is also a unit of measurement for measuring the depth of the sea.

**9. maternal** (adj) of or like a mother

Thanks to its *maternal* instincts, the wolf successfully raised the human child.  
Synonyms: motherly, protective

**10. narrative** (noun) a story; a detailed report

You'll love reading the *narrative* of Frederick Douglass.  
Synonyms: account  
Other forms: I don't like abstract poems; I prefer *narrative* (adj) poems.

**11. nurture** (verb) to bring up, care for, train, or nourish

I tried to *nurture* the plant, but I must have done something wrong because it died.  
Synonyms: raise, cultivate  
Antonyms: ignore, neglect  
Other forms: Is it nature or *nurture* (noun) that's made you so goofy?

**12. orthodox** (adj) in agreement with established or generally accepted beliefs or ways of doing things, especially relating to religion

Rejecting her parents' lifestyle as too *orthodox*, Julie decided to go live alone on a mountain.  
Synonyms: conventional, customary  
Antonyms: unconventional, unorthodox, heterodox

**13. prowess** (noun) great skill or ability

Few fighters had the swagger, the *prowess*, and the charm that Muhammad Ali had.  
Synonyms: expertise, mastery  
Antonyms: inability, weakness

**14. snare** (verb) to trap, catch, or get

Using his trap, old Jim McGreevey *snared* two plump rabbits.  
Synonyms: entrap  
Antonyms: liberate, let go  
Other forms: The squirrel dodged the *snare* (noun) and ran home.

**15. tamper** (verb) to interfere with; to mess with rashly or foolishly

Someone has been *tampering* with this lock; I can tell because the combination is off .  
Synonyms: meddle, tinker

**6D Fix the Mistake**

Each of the sentences below has a mistake. The wrong vocabulary words have been used, so the sentences don't make sense. Rewrite each sentence using the correct vocabulary word from this unit.

1. If my parents hadn't done such a good job of **tampering** me when I was a kid, I wouldn't be the brilliant and amazing person I am today.  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Karen hopes her degree will help her **bewilder** a great job when she gets out of college.  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. When I **catered** Pablo for talking about me behind my back, he totally lied and said it never happened.  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Dirk was sent to the office for **snaring** with the fire alarm.  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Erin's **authentic** feelings toward her dog are sweet, but it's kind of weird that she feeds him with a bottle.  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. I was completely **confronted** when my teacher told me he was actually a Zorploink from the planet Clamcracker.  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. I was worried when Max tried to start his own business, but it turned out he made a bunch of **orthodox** decisions and his little company began to grow.  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. The television actress was booed off the stage at her Broadway **climax**; she never acted onstage again after that.  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. My grandmother has such a **maternal** outlook that she still thinks it's weird for boys to have long hair.  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. I prefer **canny** orange juice to that horrible sugary stuff called "orange drink."  
\_\_\_\_\_

11. The only reason Frederick liked reading the **prowess** was because it was about sea monsters.

\_\_\_\_\_

12. I was on the edge of my seat during the movie's exciting **narrative**, but before that, I didn't really care what happened.

\_\_\_\_\_

13. I really can't **nurture** why Monique would come to school wearing a giant inflatable pumpkin on her head.

\_\_\_\_\_

14. The reason why Shaq has such **debut** on the basketball court is because he's the size of four men put together.

\_\_\_\_\_

15. It's so annoying that my parents **fathom** to my sister's every demand.

\_\_\_\_\_

### **6E Pick the Winner**

*Circle the word that best fits into the sentence. Then write a sentence below that uses the word you didn't pick in a meaningful way.*

1. You have to watch TV tonight; I'm making my acting (**debut OR climax**) on the show *A Monkey Bus Filled With Fools*.

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. The easiest way to (**fathom OR bewilder**) Monica is to pretend you don't speak the same language as her.

4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. I'm worried about what will happen when Sammy (**snares OR confronts**) me about having a crush on his sister.

6. \_\_\_\_\_

7. Stefanie was bummed when she learned that her bag wasn't (**authentic OR canny**); it was a cheaply made copy.

8. \_\_\_\_\_

authentic / bewilder / canny / cater / climax / confront / debut / fathom / maternal / narrative / nurture / orthodox / prowess / snare / tamper

9. The chimpanzee had such **(orthodox OR maternal)** feelings toward the hippo that she even tried to nurse the giant beast.

10. \_\_\_\_\_

**6F Draw the Relationships**

*In each grouping of eight words below, draw straight lines between the synonyms (words that mean similar things) and squiggly lines between any antonyms (words that mean nearly opposite things). Every word should have at least one line connected to it. Some may have more.*

**1**

back down	bewilder	explain	smart
confront	neglect	canny	nurture

.....

**2**

maternal	motherly	prowess	expertise
authentic	snare	fake	trap

.....

**3**

fathom	tamper	real	most intense moment
authentic	climax	misunderstand	meddle

.....

**4**

unconventional	cater	closing	orthodox
debut	story	narrative	supply food/service

## **6G Understanding What You Read**

Read the passage below. Then answer the questions.

### **The Roxanne Wars**

From the early days of hip-hop, rappers have been involved in rivalries. One rapper will release a single “dissing” (or making fun of) another rapper. The rapper who has been dissed will then record a response. The rappers don’t often confront one another face-to-face; they usually just battle each other on record. However, a few rivalries have gotten out of hand; for instance, a rivalry between East Coast and West Coast rappers in the 1990s climaxed with the murders of Tupac Shakur and Notorious B.I.G. Most of the time, though, these rivalries are just a sassy way of challenging someone’s proress on the mic.

One of the first hip-hop rivalries is also one of the strangest. In 1984, the hip-hop trio U.T.F.O. released their debut single, a song called “Hanging Out.” The song did not sell well, until DJs began flipping the record over and playing the track on the opposite side—a song called “Roxanne, Roxanne.”

“Roxanne, Roxanne” was a narrative song about a girl who didn’t really exist. In the song, the members of U.T.F.O. try to get Roxanne’s attention, but she ignores them. The song pokes fun at Roxanne for being stuck up. “Roxanne, Roxanne” became a huge hit due to its funny lyrics and catchy hook. Although Roxanne was not based on an authentic person, U.T.F.O. hired an actress named Adelaida Martinez to play Roxanne in the video.

Not long after the song became a hit, U.T.F.O. canceled an appearance on “Rap Attack,” a New York radio show hosted by DJ Mr. Magic. Mr. Magic was annoyed, so he hired a 14-year-old rapper named Shanté Gooden to work with producer Marley Marl to record a response to “Roxanne, Roxanne.” The result was the single “Roxanne’s Revenge,” released under the name Roxanne Shanté. Unlike “Roxanne, Roxanne,” “Roxanne’s Revenge” directly dissed real people—the members of U.T.F.O. “Roxanne’s Revenge” was also a smash hit, and the battle was on.

With both songs on the charts, the canny members of U.T.F.O. recognized the potential to keep the rivalry going. They recorded another song called “The Real Roxanne,” with vocals by Adelaida Martinez. After this single, others started to jump on the bandwagon. Another female rapper, Sparky D., released a song called “Sparky’s Turn (Roxanne, You’re Through).” Both Shanté and Martinez released follow-up singles. A group called Crush Groove released a song called “Yo, My Little Sister (Roxanne’s Brothers)” from the perspective of Roxanne’s older brothers. All told, more than 30 songs were released in the battle...a battle about a person who never even existed!

#### **1. According to the author, how often do rap rivalries get out of hand?**

- (A) Never
- (B) Rarely
- (C) Most of the time
- (D) Always

#### **2. Why is it strange that “Roxanne, Roxanne” became a hit?**

- (A) It was not meant to be a single.
- (B) It did not have very good lyrics.
- (C) It was the first song by a female rapper.
- (D) It did not get played on the radio.



**3. Why did Mr. Magic record “Roxanne’s Revenge”?**

- (A) He wanted to make Roxanne Shanté a star.
- (B) He thought the song would make a lot of money.
- (C) He was mad at the members of U.T.F.O.
- (D) The song was about his little sister.

**4. Who is Adelaida Martinez?**

- (A) The woman who recorded “The Real Roxanne”
- (B) The woman who played Roxanne in the video for “Roxanne, Roxanne”
- (C) Both A and B
- (D) Neither A nor B

**5. How many Roxanne songs were released?**

- (A) 3
- (B) 7
- (C) 30
- (D) More than 30

**6H Thinking Creatively**

Answer each question below. Don't be afraid to think creatively.

1. What's a good way to **bewilder** someone?

---

2. Describe what would happen at the **debut** performance of the most awful indie rock group anyone has ever heard.

---

3. What's a difficult thing for you to **fathom**?

---

4. You walk out of class to find an alien **tampering** with your locker. What happens next?

---

5. Describe a time when you did something **canny**.

---

## The Word Up Project: Level Yellow

authentic / bewilder / canny / cater / climax / confront / debut / fathom / maternal / narrative / nurture / orthodox / prowess / snare / tamper

---

### Word Breakdown

The word *orthodox* is a combination of the Greek roots *ortho-*, meaning “straight or correct,” and *doxia-*, meaning “opinion.” So to be *orthodox* is to have “the correct opinion.” Since it’s difficult to know what the “correct” opinion is about anything, the word is more often used to mean “conservative.” It’s often applied to religion, as in “Orthodox Judaism” or “Orthodox Christianity.”

The word *maternal* comes from the Latin root *mater-*, meaning “mother.” A complementary word for *maternal* is *paternal*, which means “of the father.” These words are easy to remember as a pair, because they start with ma and pa!