

Alejandro Becerra

Dr. Gingrich

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Horses or Hustlers? The Enigmatic, Unintelligible Young Thug



What do lean (a mix of Sprite and codeine cough syrup), a [Givenchy dinosaur sweater](#), and Atlanta have in common? Most people wouldn't think of rap music. When a person thinks of rap, the ethereal image of [Tupac](#) flashes to mind. Then come the lowriders, the guns, the OG lifestyle, and lyrics that are clear and hard-hitting just like the beat of a Dr. Dre song. Today, rap is nothing like it was: rappers wear [dresses](#) and create lyrics that are difficult, if not impossible, to understand. Gangsta rap has faded and been replaced by [trap](#) music and its most influential artist, Young Thug. He is an artist that plays by his own rules and refuses to conform to any standard set before him. To many in the industry, Young Thug is regarded as trap's most dominant artist that doesn't follow industry norms because of his amorphous lyrics and an unending stream of music among many other important factors.

Never has an artist been so successful at being misunderstood. Thugger's rap is characterized by his unintelligible verse delivery. While many may view this as pointless or not even real music, it is this quality that makes Thug unique. The fact that one person may hear "horses" and another listener at the same time hears "hustlers" on "[Digits](#)" is truly remarkable. For example, one time Brendan, Claire, and I were talking about this song, and we all heard different things. We then launched into a semi-scholarly debate over the specific lyric as if we were analyzing the true meaning of one of Shakespeare's sonnets. Is Thug referring to the drug dealer lifestyle of hustling or is it yet another example of a haphazard word inserted to maintain

the flow of a song? Very rarely do songs truly inspire a debate about the artist's intentions; this is something that truly makes music great. It is this ambiguity that Young Thug thrives off of. Sometimes, Young Thug doesn't sound like he's speaking English. How can music be effective when it seems that the artist isn't even speaking a language that is spoken by others? Thugger's music has been successful because of the way that it connects with people. Even with what some may consider a hindrance to commercial success, Thug's latest project, *Jeffery*, was the highest rap debut on Billboard's chart that week. This is concrete, statistical proof that Thugger's art is truly resonating with people. Another empirical measure of Thug's success is the number of listeners on Spotify. Young Thug currently has nine million unique listeners per month and is one of the most listened to artists. Just another form of how Thug's strangeness has mass appeal which makes him the king of the rap game.

Another ubiquitous aspect of Thugger's musical career is the sheer volume of music that he produces. In a given year, Young Thug will drop three or four mixtapes and feature on an incredible amount of songs. Some artists don't even release albums for [years](#) at a time. In 2016 alone, Young Thug worked on 21 different projects compared to Kanye West's single project. With Thug just endlessly crafting, he shows the true evolution of an artist's sound, but it also allows him to continually adapt to a changing music scene. There are no expectations to who Young Thug is. Sure, there are some similarities that run through all of his music, but isn't the same as the way that all Michael Crichton novels revolve around the theme of the possible repercussions of advanced technologies. Rather, his music is a narrative of his life from the [tough streets of South Atlanta](#) to his life as a successful rapper. Those rough, unpolished mixtapes are the manuscript of Thugger's life which is diametrically opposed to Jay Z's *Reasonable Doubt* which told of Jay Z's life as well. However, *Reasonable Doubt* was an album

that was meticulously crafted to make sure that it was as flawless as a diamond. While many will discount this as a sloppy artist who just creates and doesn't fine tune, Thug is actually music's most pure and unfiltered expression. Those critics are thinking emotionally, and just believe that because a project was labored over for a longer period of time it is inherently better. This belief curiously overlooks the intensity of which the project was made. Thug forgoes food and locks himself in the studio for days to create his art. Because of Thugger's unique quality of constantly creating, this makes him an individual that plays by his own set of rules in the rap game.

Every artist has something that makes them inimitable; Young Thug's quality is his unpredictability. While most artists have set, predictable meetings with the press, Thug is known for showing up to an interview and not saying a single word. This man is an enigma known only to himself. Many of his critics will cite that his unpredictability and sloppiness do not make him a real artist that cares about his music, but there is a significant flaw in this argument. What separates the meticulous [Jan van Eyck](#) from the notable yet mercurial [Jackson Pollock](#)? Is Pollock not a world-renowned painter? Some scholars consider his paintings of seemingly random splotches of paint a valuable insight into the true expression of art. Those who denounce Young Thug carefully seem to disregard the fact that no artist can be compared empirically to another; that defeats the purpose of the individuality of art. Art is something that is felt and cannot be judged according to any set metric; to do this, would discount the work of so many other great artists in all mediums. Young Thug is one of the greatest rappers today not just because of the music that he makes but because of his unique persona and the fact that he takes risks in an industry where people are just interested in sounding like each other. Not Young Thug. He will continue constructing his rap conundrums, break stereotypes, and leave his listeners wondering, "Horses or Hustlers?"

Mentor Texts by Devin Friedman Analysis

<http://www.gq.com/story/young-thug-best-rapper-alive-interview>

<http://www.gq.com/story/pharrell-williams>

There are so many facets of Friedman's writings that were integral to the creation of my editorial. Probably the most important aspect was the diction that he used. I've noticed that I tend to write in a very clinical, scholastic tone while I speak in a much more relaxed manner. Seeing how Friedman was able to effectively combine words that are very informal and still convey a tone that evokes a sense of knowledge by the author was enlightening. A good example of this is how in the Young Thug article where Friedman describes the highways of Atlanta like traffic-choked arteries. This isn't a complex metaphor rather a straightforward comparison that clearly elucidates the point. With respect to the argumentative strategies used by Friedman, he melds a significant amount of logos and pathos to support his assertion that Young Thug is in a class of his own; he uses metrics like album sales and fees associated with Thug's performances. To persuade the emotional side of the reader, Friedman talks extensively about how Thugger's upbringing affected his music. This clear association and synergy between the emotional and logical appeals played a significant role in the creation of my editorial.

The second editorial written by Friedman also contained many different elements that I tried to incorporate in my editorial. In this article, Friedman uses a lot of imagery to try and illustrate an idea to the reader. For example, he describes Pharell when creating music as having his "brain plugged into the Matrix." This is an image that is very clear and descriptive and leaves the reader knowing exactly what the author intended to say. Another aspect that permeated both my editorial and Friedman's was the use of simile. Simile is one of those rhetorical devices that can help relate a feeling or an unfamiliar concept to the reader in an accessible manner. I tried to

do this by relating some of Young Thug's works to other notable artists' works. Through this manner, it is much easier for an unfamiliar reader to better grasp the topic. When dealing with a topic as abstract and objective as music, it helps to put the topic in more concrete, understandable terms.