Stormzy

Stormzy is a British grime and hip-hop artist who shot to fame with a series of freestyle raps on YouTube. He was born on the 26th July, 1993, in Thornton Heath and started rapping at the age of eleven.

Stormzy (real name Michael Ebenazer Kwadjo Omari Owuo, Jr) is proud of his Ghanaian roots but was brought up in south London, often battling MCs much older than himself for fun. He admits to being a "bit of a boffin" at school and left with six A*s, three As and five Bs in his GCSEs! His teachers wanted him to go to a top university and he had his heart set on a career in engineering but, despite spending two years working on an oil refinery in Southampton, things didn't quite work out that way!

From 2011 onwards, Stormzy started freestyling online and soon had a large following. He performed more hip-hop to begin with but soon he started experimenting in grime. In July 2014, the six-foot-five-inch rapper released his debut EP and soon, record companies wanted to sign him up. The song was so successful that by October that year, Stormzy had won 'Best Grime Act' at the MOBO awards (an achievement he repeated the following year in 2015)! Later that month, he became the first unsigned rapper to appear on the BBC's 'Later... with Jools Holland' - and he even found time to work alongside fellow rappers Chip and Shalo, which gave him an invaluable insight into the professional world of rapping.

2015 saw Stormzy go from strength to strength. He came third in the BBC's 'Introducing Top 5' on Radio 1, released two new singles and

Did You Know...?

Stormzy is an actor! He starred in a film in 2016.

He is the cousin of BBC 'Sound of 2017' nominee and fellow rapper, Nadia Rose.

Stormzy isn't all about the music! In 2017, he held an intense Q&A session with 300 students at Oxford University, where he talked about life, grime... and his mum!

Stormzy has lots of nicknames, such as 'Big Mike'!

He once donated £9000 to British-born Ghanaian, Fiona Asiedu, as she couldn't afford to study for a Master's Degree at Harvard University in America.

uploaded more freestyles. One of his tracks was the first ever freestyle tune to reach the top 40 in the UK. After Stormzy performed the song live at Anthony Joshua's British heavyweight title fight against Dillian Whyte on 12th December 2015 (he freestyled the lyrics as Joshua came on into the ring), he decided to release it as an official track. It hit 17 million views online. Stormzy then took on 'The X Factor' in a monumental battle for a Christmas Number 1. After a huge social media campaign, it eventually reached number 8, making it the rapper's most successful track to date.

Stormzy is a self-confessed lover of social networking and often posts photos and messages on various sites but in 2016, he took a complete social media hiatus. After a year of silence, he returned in early 2017 when he released his highly anticipated new album on 24th February. It reached number one on the UK Albums Chart.

In his relatively short career, Stormzy has racked up an impressive number of awards and personal achievements. Along with the two MOBO awards, he has also won 'Breakthrough Artist of the Year', 'Best Artist of the Year', 'Best Solo Artist of the Year', and 'Best International Act' from a number of different award events. He also won 'British Male Solo Artist' and 'British Album of the Year' at the 2018 BRIT Awards.

Following Stormzy's huge rise to stardom and the success of his freestyling tunes, the grime MC finally joined a major record company in January 2018 when he signed for Atlantic Records. Expect lots more 'grimes' to come!

Glossary

Grime – A type of music that started out in England in the early 2000s. A mix of UK garage, drum 'n' bass, and dancehall.

Freestyle rap – A type of rapping in which rap lyrics are made-up on the spot.

MOBO – Music of Black Origin.

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Questions

1. Where was Stormzy born? Tick one.

   - ○ Southampton
   - ○ Ghana
   - ○ South London
   - ○ USA

2. Why do you think things didn't quite work out for Stormzy with his career in engineering?

3. Write three things that show Stormzy's debut EP was successful.

4. Why do you think one of Stormzy's nicknames is 'Big Mike'?

5. Reread the sentence below and explain what you think unsigned means?

   Later that month, he became the first unsigned rapper to appear on the BBC's 'Later... with Jools Holland'...

6. Why do you think Stormzy helped Fiona Asiedu?

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7. Link the dates to events in Stormzy's life.

26th July, 1993	Stormzy releases his debut EP.
early 2000s	Stormzy was born.
2011 onwards	Stormzy signs for Atlantic Records.
July 2014	Stormzy's song reaches number 8.
December 2015	Stormzy begins performing grime music.
2016	Stormzy starts freestyling online.
2017	Stormzy's cousin is nominated for BBC 'Sound of 2017'.
January 2018	Stormzy appears in a film.

8. Why do you think Stormzy is known as the 'frontman of grime'?

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9. Reread the sentence below and explain what you think hiatus means.

...in 2016, he took a complete social media hiatus.

_____

10. Would you like to freestyle? Give reasons for your answer.

_____

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Answers

1. Where was Stormzy born? Tick one.

   ○ Southampton
   ○ Ghana
   ⊘ **South London**
   ○ USA

2. Why do you think things didn't quite work out for Stormzy with his career in engineering?
   Pupils' own responses, such as: I think Stormzy's career in engineering didn't work out because, although he achieved good qualifications and spent two years working on an oil refinery, Stormzy had been freestyling online since 2011 and his music career took off instead.

3. Write three things that show Stormzy's debut EP was successful.
   Accept any three of the following: Record companies wanted to sign him up; Stormzy won Best Grime Act at the MOBO awards; He was the first unsigned rapper to appear on 'Later... with Jools Holland'; He worked with fellow rappers, Chip and Shalo.

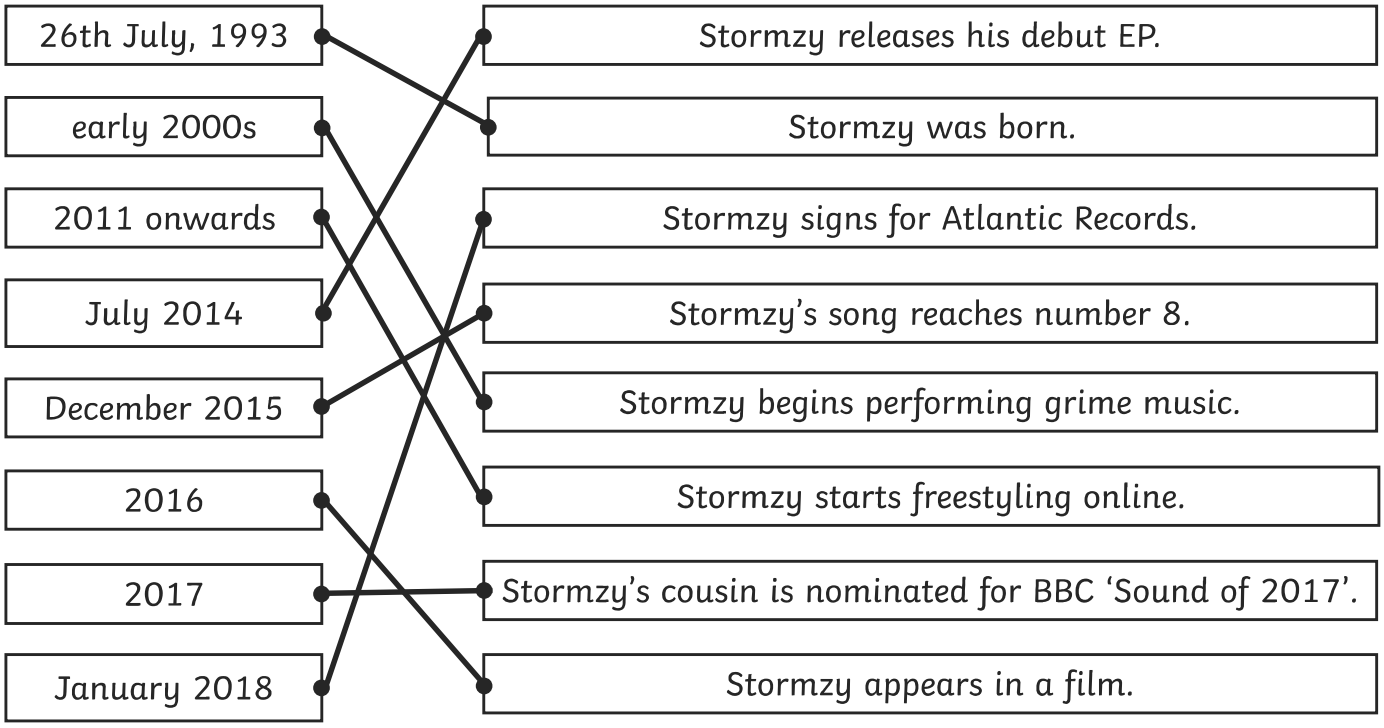
4. Why do you think one of Stormzy's nicknames is 'Big Mike'?
   I think one of Stormzy's nicknames is 'Big Mike' because he is really tall as it says he is 6 foot 5 inches and his real name is Michael (Mike). Plus he sings/raps using a microphone, which sounds like Mike.

5. Reread the sentence below and explain what you think unsigned means?

   Later that month, he became the first unsigned rapper to appear on the BBC's 'Later... with Jools Holland'...
   Accept any suitable answer, such as: I think unsigned means a record label have not signed him up, or he performs independently/without an agent.

6. Why do you think Stormzy helped Fiona Asiedu?
   Pupils' own responses, such as: I think Stormzy helped Fiona because he is kind and generous and wanted to use his money for good causes.

7. Link the dates to events in Stormzy's life.



8. Why do you think Stormzy is known as the 'frontman of grime'?
Accept any suitable responses, such as: I think Stormzy is known as the frontman of grime because 'frontman' means 'leader' or 'best man' and Stormzy is one of the best rappers in grime.

9. Reread the sentence below and explain what you think hiatus means.

...in 2016, he took a complete social media hiatus.

Accept any suitable definition, such as: I think hiatus means a pause, or break.

10. Would you like to freestyle? Give reasons for your answer.
Pupils' own responses, such as: I think I wouldn't like to freestyle because I wouldn't be able think of the words quickly enough.