Kendrick Lamar Is A Modern Legend

Kendrick Lamar is widely considered to be the modern legend in Hip-Hop, compared with the likes of 2Pac and , with his numerous albums and features, each of them containing thoughtfully written lyrics, which relate to the community that Kendrick came from, Compton. The harsh environment shaped the rapper into who he is today, and he has been recognized around the world for his relatable lyrics and flow that other modern rappers can't match. In *Promise That You Will Sing About Me* by Miles Marshall Lewis, Lewis goes into the life of Kendrick Lamar, from when he was a kid growing up in Compton trying to survive the rough streets and grit of the city, to becoming one of the most popular Hip-Hop artists in the 21st century. Lewis analyzes his life and upbringing, connecting to the themes of masculinity and legacy.

In the chapter "Introduction", Lewis had interviewed Kendrick and went into his personal views and upbringing. Lewis had asked Kendrick who he could really open up to, with Lewis following the question with "As men, generally we speak to each other about sports, sex, music, movies, maybe politics, and that's it" (Lewis, 8). Lewis is asking Kendrick what he can talk about besides the topics that Lewis had mentioned. This relates to masculinity because it is common to see that most men don't speak their minds or speak up about their problems. Kendrick responds with "I can't even answer that," he admitted. "With all the good things my father has taught me, this is one of the things he taught me that he shouldn't have: that I can't really confide to him in an emotional way, you know?" (Lewis, 8) This connects to masculinity because Hip-Hop typically exclusively expresses being tough and being protected from emotion. Kendrick brings up the problem openly and treats it as something passed down due to influence from the father. The issue is shown up again in his album *To Pimp A Butterfly*, where he talks about depression and doubting himself. I found this theme interesting because I believe it is a worldwide problem, where men are taught to suppress how they truly feel and think, thus preventing anybody from helping them. This is shown by the fact that men are more likely to be depressed or commit suicide. Kendrick being open about the fact that his father taught him to suppress his emotions and talking about the depression he experienced in *To Pimp A Butterfly* shows that he is not afraid to go into deeper topics that require more deconstruction. Because of that, his legacy is widely recognized and likened to other successful Black artists and musicians.

Lewis ranked Kendrick among Tupac, Biggie, Jay-Z, and Eminem. Kendrick called himself an old soul, saying that he has always been drawn to older people, whether that be at parties or just in general. "I think it's just the blood of my ancestors. I've always been drawn to older people. I was always at the house parties, always in the older crowds, always around my uncles and my parents." (Lewis, 10) He also said that he credits the blood of his ancestors for jazz instincts, despite having never studied jazz. In his mind, Black musical traditions are inherited, not learned. The chapter also connects legacy to loss, as popular Black artists like Tupac, Biggie, MJ, and Prince had all died, which he described as leaving "sinkholes". "Biggie and Tupac, Michael Jackson and Prince left seismic sinkholes in the bedrock of pop culture that Kendrick has done his part to fill." (Lewis, 17). I found this theme interesting, because Kendrick Lamar is following the footsteps of other legendary Black artists like Tupac and MJ, and using techniques that he had seen from seeing them to fill that sinkhole. Obviously the loss of those famous Black artists leaves much to be filled, Kendrick Lamar has played a big role in the modern conscious rap scene by using his lyrics to deliver a story.

In conclusion, Kendrick Lamar is a living Hip-Hop legend that isn't just a legend because of his ability to write lyrics, but also because he uses his music to express his feelings and follows in the footsteps of famous late Black artists, utilizing the relatable stories and experiences that not only Kendrick experienced, but those same Black artists, to deliver conscious and thoughtful Hip-Hop songs that successfully tell that story and become the modern legend. His harsh upbringing empowered him to make music to speak up against violence, social, and political issues. He not only shows the theme of masculinity and being able to talk about his feelings through his music, he also shows that filling the gap left by other famous late Black artists keeps the conscious Hip-Hop genre alive.