**Text/Extract**

**Early Life**

Shawn Corey Carter was born in Brooklyn, New York on December 4th, 1969. Shawn went on to be known as Jay-Z; a world-famous rapper and businessman. He is worth an estimated $810 million, making him one of the richest musical artists in history.

Shawn had a hard life growing up in 1980s Brooklyn. This part of New York was poor, and crime was a constant problem. Shawn lived in a **housing project** and was surrounded by guns and drugs for all his young life; he believed he would end up in jail. In 1981, when he was just 12, Shawn shot his older brother in the shoulder during an argument. Thankfully, he never went to jail but was saved by music. He remembers his mother giving him a **boom box** for his birthday and encouraging him to perfect his talent.

Shawn never graduated from college, but he entered a different type of education. His mentor was a rapper called Jaz-O, an older hip- hop artist who helped Shawn with his music. Shawn had an obvious talent for rapping and was known as ‘Jazzy’ to his friends. He changed his stage name to Jay-Z to reflect this, and in **homage** to his mentor Jaz-O.

**Career**

Jay-Z started his hip-hop career by performing on other artist’s albums, such as his good friend The Notorious B.I.G. He was the co-founder of his own record label, Roc-A-Fella, in 1995 and released his first solo album, Reasonable Doubt in 1996. This would catapult Jay-Z to fame and over the following decades he released 12 further solo albums with the latest at the time of writing being 4:44.

Jay-Z has **collaborated** with many famous artists from Mariah Carey to Kanye West. One collaboration, in 2002, changed his personal life forever. He performed a track called 03 Bonnie and Clyde with Beyoncé Knowles (former member of Destiny’s Child). The pair fell in love and were married in 2008. The couple have three children. The oldest child, Blue, is the youngest person to ever appear on a Billboard hit record at just two days old, in January 2012.

**Did You Know?**

Jay-Z started his career by selling his records from the boot of his car. Jay-Z donated $1 million to help victims of Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

Jay-Z also runs several successful businesses including the clothing brand Rocawear, a drinks company, a beauty product company and real estate businesses which deals in homes and other buildings. Together with his wife, the pair are worth an estimated $1.18 billion. This makes them one of the richest couples in the music industry.

Jay-Z has come a long way from his childhood in Brooklyn. He fondly remembers the boom box his mum gave him for his birthday but receives more extravagant presents now; he was given a private jet by his wife for Father’s Day in 2012. He built his career on rapping about his difficult upbringing and now raps about his great success. Is Jay-Z the perfect example of living the American dream?

**Fun Facts**

Jay-Z has had 14 number one hits in the US Billboard top 200 songs list. That’s the second highest amount for anybody, ever.

Jay-Z is friends with Barak Obama.

**Comprehension Questions**

1. **Look up and write down the definitions** of each of the words, taken from the text, as listed below; then, **put each word into a sentence of your own**.

* Boom Box
* Mentor
* Collaborated
* House project
* Encouraging
* Graduated
* Fondly
* Homage

1. In what year was Jay-Z born?
2. What two words are used to describe the area Jay-Z grew up in?
3. Which word is closest to the meaning of the word ‘mentor’?
4. Friend
5. Father
6. Teacher
7. Muse
8. What was Jay-Z’s first solo album called?
9. Why do you think Jay-Z thought he would end up in jail?
10. Why do you think Jay-Z collaborated with so many other hip-hop artists?
11. *‘Jay-z is a better businessman than an artist.’*

Explain what this means and why some people believe this is true.