

'Lit hop' here to give Chaucer a big rap



MODERN TALES: Canadian author Baba Brinkman holds a workshop during the Canberra Readers and Writers Festival yesterday on "lit hop". Picture: KARLEEN WILLIAMS

By Lynne Minion

Canberra became the 'hood yesterday when a workshop teaching verse was the hippest classroom in Canberra and Canadian "lit hop" rapper Baba Brinkman showed literature has street cred.

In town for the Canberra Readers and Writers Festival, Brinkman, who made his name with a rap reworking of a 600-year-old Geoffrey Chaucer classic, passed on his genre-blending skills to students and teachers.

The names of rappers 50 Cent, Kanye West and Eminem are not usually invoked as literary inspiration, but in this class their rhyme patterns and alliterations were studied by students, who crafted their own raps with Canberra as their muse.

Stephanie House, 12, of Latham Primary School, said lit hop was an entertaining way to learn modern poetry. "It's more interactive, fun, there are more chances to see how to approach a word, how to make sentences more interesting."

Josh Jessop-Smith, 16, of Hawker College, said, "They should teach this in English."

Brinkman, creator of *The Rap Canterbury Tales* CD and paperback, says it's ironic that literature has become "this great intimidating inaccessible thing, because a lot of it comes from the place of communal play.

"People have rap all wrong, thinking it's just that ignorant gangster music. People have Chaucer all wrong, thinking it's just that old dusty literature."

Both, Brinkman said, made contributions to literature, which old or otherwise should be enjoyed throughout the ages.

"Shakespeare wasn't writing for the purpose of English students to study him, that was an unexpected spin-off of the quality of his technique, but really he was writing to entertain the crowd."

■ Baba Brinkman will be the special guest at the Canberra Readers and Writers Festival's TurboSlam!, an event featuring performance poets and entertainers, tonight from 7-10pm. The Canberra Readers and Writers Festival is on at the Coorong Pavilion, Exhibition Park, Mitchell, today and tomorrow.

For the full program visit www.actwriters.org.au



35%
POSTURE PEDIC
ATION MODELS