

SALTLEY NEWS

JOHN AGARD'S VISIT TO SALTLEY ACADEMY

BY NAJMA MOHAMED

On Tuesday 1st May, the year 10's got a visit from John Agard, the poet of the well known 'Checkin out me history' For 2 hours, during the afternoon periods, the poet read his poems, as well as introducing his new poems in 'Half Caste'. He spoke of his childhood in his place of birth, Guyana. His upbringing, seemed to have been enjoyable in his country. He made a joke about having only one cinema venue that only played Indian films. According to him, the couples that went there didn't go to watch the films. His sense of humor made everyone laugh, lighting up the hall and keeping everyone's attentions so they wont fall into boredom.

One of his poems spoke about his dislike for science and math. He even said he had an 'allergy to Bunsen burners'. Surprisingly, he never thought being a poet as he was in school. And he even told us that he knew poets who are both poets and a qualified scientist. He then went on to say 'you can be a professor, and peruse a poetry career too. You don't have to pick one.' A student asked ' how do we understand the poems' To which Agard advised 'read the poems out loud.'

Agard then read the poem ' Checkin out me history' and talked about the context behind it. He said that he felt as if, at the time he was in school, he was never taught about his culture.

His school would only talk about Britain's victory and past.

He went on to say that he felt that everyone's culture and history should be celebrated. And that is what seemed to have inspired his poems. That was the poetic intention. He read his poem out loud, it sounded almost like a song. As i met him after the event, he told me that he did this so it sounded like the tunes he would listen to in his home country. This could be an attempt to bring his culture into his poem.

This visit gave the year 10 students a deeper understanding into the poem that could give us the advantage in the exam in May. Students even got the chance to ask questions, which Agard replied in various ways. His answers did not have a straightforward reply, allowing the students to interpret in their own way. A teacher, who claimed he was a massive fan, also even asked a question too. Proving that this visit was not only for the students but for the staff too, to gain a better understanding in their teaching.

We hope to have a visit from you again !