

JOHN AGARD COMES TO SALTLEY ACADEMY

SALTLEY ACADEMY NEWS REPORT

John Agard

BY RABIA BASRI

Last week on Tuesday 1st May 2018 John Agard came to Saltley Academy to perform for year 10s to help them with their English Exams. John Agard is an awarding winning poet, performer, playwright, editor and short-story writer who have written prolifically for both children and adults. John Agard started his performance with some background information of his life which is that he was brought up from Guyana and his mother is Portuguese and his father is black. Then he read many of his poems such as kettle, half cast and a poem that is studied by years 10s which is called 'Checkin' out me History'.

As he read his poems he was passionate and got into the role this showed some of his personality that he is a fun and chilled out person. Also as he was reading the poem with such passion and amusement it shows that he enjoys writing and reading out poems. Furthermore, he had given some encouragement that when doing poems have fun with it and that wherever you are just read out your poems no matter what, even if you are in the shower you can still read out your poems.

Just enjoy it!

As the performance was for year 10s and their English exam, they had a great experience of hearing the poem being read out. This basically means that the way the poet had written his poems, he wrote it a way that he could express it properly. As many readers don't understand or know how to read out a poem in a different way so, they just read it out like a book, in one tone and voice. But for John Agard his poems and books are supposed to be read out in a way that will help you understand the emotions of how it is e.g. so if it a happy poem you have to express your happiness by saying it in a chirpy and calm way but if it is an angry and miserable poem you have to read it with anger and frustration so you can understand the poem more. This will help because understanding the poem will make it easier to explain the poem more in detail.

So, for year 10s to see how John Agard read out 'Checkin out me History' it showed them how he expressed his emotions and the actions he did when reading it out, he acted in an unusual yet great way. The reason for it being unusual is that when the pupils read out the poems and the teachers they don't act out in the same way as Mr Agard. The pupils had now witnessed how the great poet feels and reads out his own fantastic poem.

Background information of 'Checkin out me History'

John Agard had told the year 10s the meaning of 'Checkin out me History' and what it is about. Firstly the poem is written in a non-standard phonetic spelling (written as a word sounds) to represent his own accent, and he wrote about what it is like being black to challenge racist attitudes. Also that the poem draws on his experience to make us (the readers) look at the way history is taught, and at how we conceive our identity as we learn about cultural traditions and narratives.

JOHN AGARD BOOKS & POEMS

- The Monster Who Loved Cameras
- The Monster Who Loved Telephones
- The Monster Who Loved Toothbrushes
- Oriki and the Monster Who Hated Balloons

Agard had to follow a history curriculum biased towards whites, especially British whites, so that he learned about mythical, nursery rhyme characters instead of living black people from the past. He challenged this view of history and cited some major black figures to balance the bias and create a basis for his own identity.

Lastly Mr. Agard answers the questions that was asked by teachers and pupils. Many pupils and teachers had enjoyed the experience of having John Agard at Saltley Academy. Few pupils was asked of how it was and they answered 'it was awesome', 'It was funny' and 'it was helpful' even teachers had enjoyed John Agard as some had said 'i'm a great fan' and 'he is a fantastic poet'. John Agard had influenced many people with his performance leaving happiness and positive emotions to pupils and teachers and also helped year 10s with their exams.

JOHN AGARD BOOKS & POEMS

- Half-Caste
- Tiger Dead! Tiger Dead!
- Shine On, Butter-Finger
- Einstein the Girl That Hated Maths
- Hello H2O
- Why is the Sky?

Check in out me History

Dem tell me
Dem tell me
Wha dem want to tell me

Bandage up me eye with me own history
Blind me to me own identity

Dem tell me bout 1066 and all dat
Dem tell me bout Dick Whittington and he cat
But Toussaint L'Ouverture
No dem never tell me bout dat

Toussaint
A slave
With vision
Lick back
Napoleon
Battalion
And first Black
Republic born
Toussaint de thorn
To de French
Toussaint de beacon
Of de Haitian Revolution

Dem tell me bout de man who discover de
balloon
And de cow who jump over de moon
Dem tell me bout de dish ran away with de
spoon
But dem never tell me bout Nanny de Maroon
Nanny
See-far woman
Of mountain dream
Fire-woman struggle
Hopeful stream
To freedom river

Dem tell me bout Lord Nelson and Waterloo
But dem never tell me bout Shaka de great Zulu
Dem tell me bout Columbus and 1492
But what happen to de Caribs and de Arawaks
too

Dem tell me bout Florence Nightingale and she
lamp
And how Robin Hood used to camp
Dem tell me bout ole King Cole was a merry ole
soul
But dem never tell me bout Mary Seacole

From Jamaica
She travel far
To the Crimean War
She volunteer to go
And even when de British said no
She still brave the Russian snow
A healing star
Among the wounded
A yellow sunrise
To the dying

Dem tell me
Dem tell me wha dem want to tell me
But now I checking out me own history
I carving out me identity