**Checking Out Me History by John Agard**

1. Who are ‘dem’?
2. What is the meaning of the **metaphor** at line 4?
3. How can someone be blinded to their own history?
4. In what way is the narrator being **sarcastic** at line 7?
5. Why is he told about 1066?
6. For what is Toussaint L’Ouverture famous and why was Agard not told about this?
7. What t**one** do you detect in the first stanza? Why?
8. So what point is he making about the type of history he has been taught?

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 5

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 10*

*a slave*

1. On a s**tructural** level, in what way does the **tone** shift at stanza 2?
2. Explain what a ‘beacon’ is then explain the meaning and the message of the **metaphor** at line 20.

*with vision*

*lick back*

*Napoleon*

*battalion 15*

*and first Black*

*Republic born*

*Toussaint de thorn*

*to de French*

*Toussaint de beacon 20*

*of de Haitian Revolution*

1. In the third stanza, how does Agard reinforce the **sarcasm** and anger introduced in the first stanza?
2. Additionally, how does he maintain the **structural pattern**?

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 25

*Nanny*

1. Explain how ‘beacon’ and ‘fire’ are connected then explain how Agard reinforces the **metaphor of light**, this time with another historical figure.

*see-far woman*

*of mountain dream*

*fire-woman struggle*

*hopeful stream 30*

1. What do you begin to notice about the **structure** of alternate stanzas?
2. Which stanzas have a repeated **rhythm**? What does the **repetition** suggest about his attitude to the history he was taught in school?
3. Why do you think the other stanzas are written in **dialect**? What is he saying about **language** and identity?

*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 35

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

1. Again Agard uses another **metaphor of light**, this time when he speaks of Mary Seacole. Explain what this **metaphor** conveys about the significance this woman has for Agard and his own identity.
2. Now explain how the three **metaphors**, each about an over-looked, black historical figure of great importance, highlight Agard’s heritage and identity.

*From Jamaica 40*

*she travel far*

*to the Crimean War*

*she volunteer to go*

*and even when de British said no*

*she still brave the Russian snow 45*

*a healing star*

*among the wounded*

*a yellow sunrise*

*to the dying*

Dem tell me 50

Dem tell me wha dem want to tell me

But now I checking out me own history

1. The first two line of the closing stanza **repeats** the opening stanza and makes direct reference to the **title** of the poem. Explain the meaning of the title and why Agard use **colloquial language**.
2. Explain the meaning and the effect of the **metaphor** in the final line.

I carving out me identity