CHECKING OUT ME HISTORY



John Agard

WHAT HAPPENS? A speaker challenges a selective education and reclaims neglected historical figures.

BIG IDEA **Identity develops through questioning the histories that institutions choose to make visible.**

FOUR EVIDENCE FRAGMENTS · ZOOM IN, THEN EXPLAIN

"Dem tell me"

Refrain

Repeated instruction becomes evidence of an imbalance of authority.

"Blind"

Metaphor

Selective education is presented as an obstruction to self-knowledge.

"healing star"

Metaphor

Seacole becomes a source of guidance as well as medical care.

"carving"

Creative verb

The ending presents identity as an active, ongoing achievement.

FORM

A performance-oriented poem with contrasting stanza shapes, rhythms and typography rather than a fixed metre.

CONTEXT

Agard challenges a colonial education and celebrates histories of Black resistance and care. His chosen voice asserts cultural authority.

COMPARE IT WITH…

The Emigrée: protecting identity.
London: institutional power.

VOICE, TONE & FEELINGS · FOLLOW THE SHIFTS

Repeated teaching

MOCKING AND FRUSTRATED

An imposed curriculum is made audible through recurrent reports of what is taught.

Alternative histories

CELEBRATORY

Distinct verse passages give neglected figures the imaginative space denied to them.

Ending

SELF-ASSERTIVE

The speaker moves from receiving a history to actively shaping an identity.

FULL POEM: use your anthology. Evidence fragments are prompts for close reading.

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