
'Checking Out me History' by John Agard

1. Create a metaphor map, using the metaphors below, annotating each one with any connotations or associations the word has for you.

thorn

beacon

healing star

hopeful stream

yellow sunrise

2. Explain how imagery is used to present each character described in the poem. Add some notes to your metaphor map annotations.
3. Are all these images positive? Highlight any that seem to have potentially negative connotations. Can you explain why the poet might have included such metaphors?
4. Why do you think the poet uses metaphors to describe the figures in his 'own history', and not to describe what 'dem tell' him?
5. Now use your notes from the first four tasks to write *three paragraphs* about the effect of the poet's use of metaphor in the poem. Remember to support your points with evidence, in the form of quotations from the poem.

Extension task

As a way to explain the speaker's relationship with his own history, the poet uses metaphoric description. An example has been identified for you. In pairs, find another example, and discuss what you think both descriptions suggest:

'Bandage up me eye with me own history'

1. Below are three metaphors used by the poet to describe some of the historical figures in the poem:

a 'beacon'	b 'healing star'	c 'hopeful stream'
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For each one, draw a spider diagram and brainstorm any ideas related to each of the metaphors. The first one has been started for you:



2. Now match each metaphor with the person it is describing.
3. How does the poet use metaphor to present the three people who are important in Black history?

Use your ideas and notes from tasks 1 and 2 to write a short paragraph on each one. You can use the prompts in the example below to help you:

Toussaint L'Ouverture is presented as being because he is described as This makes him sound as though

Other phrases that might help to start the second sentence are:

- This suggests that...
- Readers might think that...
- This might make us see him/her as

4. Find another example of a metaphor in the poem which is used to describe *either* Mary Seacole *or* Nanny de maroon.

Note down your ideas on what is suggested by the metaphor, and compare your ideas in pairs.

Extension task

Write a short paragraph explaining what effect this image might have on the reader.