

# John Agard Sort

This activity extends the work of the Poetry Sort activity to encourage students to make judgements about all the John Agard poems in his anthology "Half-caste" published by Hodder Murray (ISBN 0-340-92585-X). The activity contains a set of cards each with a poem title and the first two or three lines plus a set of statements which relate sometimes to one or two or sometimes to several poems.

Since there are forty five poems you may want to divide them into sets (you could do this best by printing each page in a different colour) and give sets to different groups which could jig-saw. All the statements however will need to go to each group. We have also provided a general sorting board and a blank sorting board to stimulate classroom discussion; the aim being for every group to respond.

The webaddress for this activity is:

<<http://www.collaborativelearning.org/johnagard.pdf>>

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The project is a teacher network, and a non-profit making educational trust. Our main aim is to develop and disseminate classroom tested examples of effective group strategies across all phases and subjects. We hope they will inspire you to use similar strategies in other topics and curriculum areas. We run teacher workshops, swapshops and conferences throughout the European Union. The project publishes a catalogue of activities plus lists in selected subject areas, and a newsletter available by post or internet: "PAPERCLIP".

\*These activities were influenced by current thinking about the role of language in learning. They are designed to help children learn through talk and active learning in small groups. They work best in mixed classes where children in need of language or learning support are integrated. They are well suited for the development of speaking and listening. They provide teachers opportunities for spoken language and other assessment.

\*They support differentiation by placing a high value on what children can offer to each other on a particular topic, and also give children the chance to respect each other's views and formulate shared opinions which they can disseminate to peers. By helping them to take ideas and abstract concepts and move them about physically they help to develop thinking skills.

\*They give children the opportunity to participate in their own words and language in their own time without pressure. Many activities can be tried out in mother tongue and afterwards in English. A growing number of activities are available in more than one language, not translated, but mixed, so that you may need more than one language to complete the activity.

\*They encourage study skills in context, and should therefore be used with a range of appropriate information books which are preferably within reach in the classroom.

\*They are generally adaptable over a wide age range because children can bring their own knowledge to an activity and refer to books at an appropriate level. The activities work like catalysts.

\*All project activities were planned and developed by teachers working together, and the main reason they are disseminated is to encourage teachers to work effectively with each other inside and outside the classroom. They have made it possible for mainstream and language and learning support teachers to share an equal role in curriculum delivery. They should be adapted to local conditions. In order to help us keep pace with curriculum changes, please send any new or revised activities back to the project, so that we can add them to our lists of materials

# John Agard Sort

You have a copy of the anthology *Half-caste* by John Agard, a set of titles and first lines and a set of comments.

Look at the comments and discover which ones fit the poems on your cards. There is no right answer and many statements fit more than one poem and many poems have more than one statement that fits.

When you have got to know the poems better, try fitting them on the sorting board.

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# John Agard Sorting Board

Sentimental poems

Pragmatic poems

Humorous poems

Cynical poems

Optimistic poems

Depressing poems

# John Agard Sorting Board 2


# John Agard Poems from Half-caste

## And All was Good

If I were maker of the human race  
I'd give each one a rainbow face.

## My Move Your Move

Blacks have their castles.  
Whites have their castles.

## Union Jack and Union Jill

Union Jack  
and Union Jill  
went up the hill  
for a patriotic fling.

## Half-caste

Excuse me  
standing on one leg  
I'm half-caste....

## Rainbow

When you see  
de rainbow  
you know  
God know  
wha he doing -

## Tongue

Small flame  
under the roof  
of a mouth.

**A Word**  
can turn  
a key  
in a door  
or....

## Message from your Mobile

I am the message bringer  
who leans against yr cheek.

## Right-On Mr Left

Keep on searching for Mr Right.  
Somewhere out there there's Mr Right

## Smoke-Loving Girl Blues

Would like her for my girlfriend any day  
Would follow if she showed the way  
Would feel honoured if she be my queen  
But.....

## Angels for Neighbours

If you want a neighbour from hell,  
try living next door to an angel.

## Flag

What's that fluttering in a breeze  
It's just a piece of cloth  
that brings a nation to its knees.

## A Vampire's Priorities

Today I want to do green things.  
Eavesdrop on the gossip of leaves.

## A Hello from Cello

Stroke  
me  
high  
Stroke  
me  
low

# John Agard Poems from Half-caste

## The Hurt Boy and the Birds

The hurt boy talked to the birds  
and fed them the crumbs of his heart.

## Boomerang

Featherless bird  
I will nest in the eye of the wind

## That Mouth

That mouth  
was generous with kisses

## Behold My Pen

Behold my pen  
My pen is a friend  
that cries blue tears...

## Punctuating the Silence

I could be a comma  
and pause you  
in mid-sentence

## Poetry Jump-Up

Tell me if Ah seeing right  
Take a look down the street

## Follow That Steel Pan

Was a sledge hammer sink um down  
to shape the belly of the sound

## Coal's Son and Diamond's Daughter

Coal's son  
and Diamond's daughter  
were head over heels  
in smouldering glittering love.

## A Date with Spring

Got a date with Spring  
Got to look me best  
Of all the trees  
I'll be the smartest dressed.

## Vote for your Local Shadow

Shadows appointed  
Shadows reshuffled  
Shadows with briefcases  
Shadows in high places.

## Twins

To bring forth one  
is to be blessed..

## Quest

Go south  
Go north  
Go east  
Go west

## Clouds

Those high flying dragons  
that are now here, now gone.

## The Ozone Liar

The ozone liar  
says all is well with  
the ozone layer.

# John Agard Poems from Half-caste

## Cowtalk

Take a walk to the splendid morning fields of summer  
check out the cows in full gleam  
of their black and white hide...

## Who'll Save Dying Man

Who'll save dying Man?  
I, said the Baboon.

## For the Record

The flea gives  
the hedgehog  
stimulation.

## One Question from a Bullet

I want to give up being a bullet  
I've been a bullet too long..

## A Hand on a Forehead

You don't have to be a refugee on a bus  
From Zepa to Zenica....

## Not Arms

Not arms  
that come  
to kill  
or maim...

## Checking Out Me History

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

## Toussaint L'Ouverture Acknowledges Wordsworth's Sonnet 'To Toussaint l'Ouverture'

I have never walked over Westminster Bridge

## Windrush Child

Behind you  
Windrush child  
palm trees wave goodbye

## Crybaby Prime Minister

I'd love to be led  
By a crybaby prime minister  
who'd burst into tears  
whenever people bled.

## Skin

Is it a window of flesh  
to let in the sunlight  
and look out at the world?

## A Social Skeleton

I am a skeleton,  
My bones are brittle white..

## A Giant with a Taste for Mongrel Blood

Fee fi fo fum  
I smell the mongrel blood  
of the Brit nation.

## Behind the Menu

Sweet and Sour  
moved in next door  
to Fish and Chips.

# John Agard Poems from Half-caste

## Salt

Once used as Roman currency,  
now a common guest on your table

## Coal

My body heaved to the hacking of picks  
Fuelled your industry and politics,...

## Marriage of Opportunities

I copper, child of Fire,  
married Zinc, child of Water,...

A poem about punctuation.

A poem which plays with words that  
sound the same, but mean different  
things.

A poem that puts life into an  
inanimate object.

A poem about black and white.

A poem that mentions an animal or  
animals and draws ideas from  
animals.

A poem makes the shape  
of an object

A poem that asks a question or  
questions.

A poem written in dialect or uses  
dialect words.

A poem which is like a conversation

A poem that has a political  
message.

A poem that imagines another very  
different world.



# John Agard Poems from Half-caste

<p>A poem that puts words, that never usually go together, together</p>	<p>A poem that teases out a lot of meaning from a single word.</p>
<p>A poem that explores ethnic and cultural diversity.</p>	<p>A poem that develops a simple concept into a more complex one.</p>
<p>A poem that asks you to know something about science.</p>	<p>A poem that deals with history or an historical event.</p>
<p>A poem that explores the relationship between two concepts.</p>	<p>A poem about love, difficult love or impossible love.</p>
<p>A poem that refers to other poets or poems.</p>	<p>A poem that shows optimism about human nature.</p>
<p>A poem about the damage we do to the environment.</p>	<p>A poem that gives animals a voice.</p>
<p>A poem about spirituality or other non-tangible things.</p>	<p>A poem that pretends to be a photograph or picture.</p>