Glossary of Poetic Terms

Alliteration
The repetition of the same consonant sounds at any place, but often at the beginning of words. Some famous examples of alliteration are tongue twisters.  
*She sells seashells by the seashore, Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers.*

Assonance
The repetition or a pattern of (the same) vowel sounds, as in the tongue twister:  
*"Moses supposes his toeses are roses."*

Couplet
In a poem, a pair of lines that are the same length and (usually) rhyme and form a complete thought. Shakespearean sonnets usually end in a couplet.

Enjambment
A line ending in which the sentence continues, *with no punctuation*, into the following line or stanza.  
*"But in contentment I still feel  
The need of some imperishable bliss."*

Hyperbole
A figure of speech in which deliberate exaggeration is used for emphasis. Many everyday expressions are examples of hyperbole:  
*tons of money, waiting for ages, a flood of tears, etc.*

Imagery
The use of *pictures, figures of speech and description* to evoke ideas, feelings, objects, actions, states of mind, etc.

Litotes
A figure of speech in which a positive is stated by negating its opposite. Some examples of litotes:  
*no small victory, not a bad idea, not unhappy.*

Lyric
A poem, such as a sonnet or an ode that expresses the thoughts and feelings of the poet. A lyric poem may resemble a song in form or style.

Metaphor
A figure of speech in which two things are compared, usually by saying one thing is another, or by substituting a more descriptive word for the more common or usual word that would be expected. Some examples of metaphors:  
*the world’s a stage, he was a lion in battle, drowning in debt, and a sea of troubles.*  
It is probably the most important figure of speech to comment on in an essay.
Onomatopoeia
A figure of speech in which words are used to imitate sounds. Examples of onomatopoeic words are:

- buzz, hiss, zing, clippety-clop, cock-a-doodle-do, pop, splat, thump, tick-tock.

Another example of onomatopoeia is found in this line from Tennyson’s Come Down, O Maid:

"The moan of doves in immemorial elms;/ And murmuring of innumerable bees"

The repeated "m/n" sounds reinforce the idea of "murmuring" by imitating the hum of insects on a warm summer day.

Pastoral
A poem that pictures country life in a peaceful, idealized way.

Personification
A figure of speech in which nonhuman things or abstract ideas are given human attributes:

- the sky is crying,
- dead leaves danced in the wind,
- blind justice.

Refrain
A phrase, line, or group of lines that is repeated throughout a poem, usually after every stanza.

Rhyme
The occurrence of the same or similar sounds at the end of two or more words. The pattern of rhyme in a stanza or poem is shown usually by using a different letter for each final sound. In a poem with an aabba rhyme scheme, the first, second, and fifth lines end in one sound, and the third and fourth lines end in another. This pattern is known as a Rhyme scheme.

Simile
A figure of speech in which two things are compared using the word "like" or "as." An example of a simile using like occurs in Langston Hughes's poem 'Harlem':

"What happens to a dream deferred?/ Does it dry up/ like a raisin in the sun?"

Stanza
Two or more lines of poetry that together form one of the divisions of a poem. The stanzas of a poem are usually of the same length and follow the same pattern of meter and rhyme.

Stress
The prominence or emphasis given to particular syllables. Stressed syllables usually stand out because they have long, rather than short, vowels, or because they have a different pitch or are louder than other syllables.

Symbol
When a word, phrase or image 'stands for' an idea or theme.

The sun could symbolize life and energy or a red rose could symbolize romantic love.
Your culture is the way you live your life. It is about the country you live in, the clothes you wear, your language or style of speech, the sort of food you eat, how you celebrate important occasions, and the things you believe in and value. Think about your own way of life and try to give examples of these aspects of your culture. You may write or draw your ideas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Where I live</th>
<th>My language/ style of speech</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The food I eat</td>
<td>Celebrations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The clothes I wear</td>
<td>Things I value</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Can you think of any ways your culture is different to that of one other person? Make a list.

**Themes that can help you make links between the poems**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ideas about language power and dialect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feelings about being caught between two cultures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feelings about change or how things do not change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideas about language and identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Differences between attitudes and values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beliefs and rituals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customs and traditions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protest against ideas and attitudes (including racism)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feelings about independence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Half-Caste**

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

Explain yuself
wha yu mean
when yu say half-caste
yu mean when picasso
mix red an green
is a half-caste canvas/

Explain yuself
wha yu mean
when yu say half-caste
yu mean when light an shadow
mix in de sky
is a half-caste weather/
well in dat case
england weather
nearly always half-caste
in fact some o dem cloud

half-caste till dem overcast
so spiteful dem dont want de sun pass
ah rass/

Explain yuself
wha yu mean
when yu say half-caste
yu mean tchaikovsky
sit down at dah piano
an mix a black key
wid a white key

is a half-caste symphony/

Explain yuself
wha yu mean
Ah listening to yu wid de keen
half of mih ear

Ah lookin at yu wid de keen
half of mih eye
and when I'm introduced to yu

I'm sure you'll understand
why I offer yu half-a-hand
an when I sleep at night
I close half-a-eye
consequently when I dream
I dream half-a-dream
an when moon begin to glow

I half-caste human being
cast half-a-shadow
but yu must come back tomorrow
wid de whole of yu eye
an de whole of yu ear
an de whole of yu mind

an I will tell yu
de other half
of my story

John Agard

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This sounds apologetic. Why has Agard done this?

What effect does this description have?

Repetition

Why has Agard used a / in stead of a ?

Why is Agard suggesting about the listener?

There is a lack of punctuation in the poem.

Questioning. Is Agard asking us, the reader or someone else?

Agard has written in his own accent. How does that affect the reading of the poem?

Agard is clearly angry about being called "half-caste". What words suggest he is angry?
from
Unrelated Incidents

this is thi
six a clock
news thi
man said n
thi reason
a talk wia
BBC accent
iz coz yi
widny wahnt
mi ti talk
about thi
trooth wia
voice lik
wanna yoo
scruff. if
a toktaboot
thi trooth
lik wanna yoo
scruff yi
widny thingk
it wuz troo.
jist wanna yoo
scruff tokn.
thirza right
way ti spell
ana right way
thi tok it. thi
is me tokn yir
right way a
spellin. thi
is ma trooth
yooz doant no
thi trooth
yirsellz cawz
yi canny talk
right. thi is
the six a clock
nyooz. belt up.

Tom Leonard
Love After Love

The time will come when, with elation you will greet yourself arriving at your own door, in your own mirror and each will smile at the other's welcome,

And say, sit here. Eat. You will love again the stranger who was your self. Give wine. Give bread. Give back your heart to itself, to the stranger who has loved you all your life, whom you ignored for another, who knows you by heart.

Take down the love letters from the bookshelf, the photographs, the desperate notes, peel your own image from the mirror. Sit. Feast on your life.

DEREK WALCOTT

This poem has several possible meanings:

- Self-discovery.
- Human relationships.
- Religion.

Using different colours identify all the aspects of the poem that suggest each possible meaning.

Nobody can say exactly what this poems means, so you will gain marks if you show that there is more than one possible interpretation.
They picked Akanni up one morning
Beat him soft like clay
And stuffed him down the belly of a waiting jeep
What business of mine is it
So long they don’t take the yam
From my savouring mouth?

They came one night
Booted the whole house awake
And dragged Danladi out,
Then off to a lengthy absence
What business of mine is it
So long they don’t take the yam
From my savouring mouth?

Chinwe went to work one day
Only to find her job was gone:
No query, no warning, no probe-
Just one neat sack for a stainless record.
What business of mine is it
So long they don’t take the yam
From my savouring mouth?

And then one evening
As I sat down to eat my yam
A knock on the door froze my hungry hand.
The jeep was waiting on my bewildered lawn
Waiting, waiting in its usual silence.

Who are ‘they’?

How does this image make you feel?

Was this planned?

What does this represent?

Does this sound more or less threatening than the first verse?

What does this show?

Why is it ‘neat’?

Think about the country in which this poem is set. Why is this an effective image?

Why repeat this word?

Is this image effective?

Why does the poem not end with a definite outcome?
‘Not My Business’ is most likely set in Nigeria, Niyi Osundare's country of birth.

He used this poem and others to object to the cruel dictatorship that ruled his country under General Abacha from 1993 to 1998. During Abacha's rule, writing poetry was considered a dangerous activity. Osundare regularly wrote poems for a Nigerian national newspaper which commented on the lives of people in that country. As a result, he was frequently called to account by security agents and quizzed about what his poems meant and to whom they referred. Osundare himself says, "with the kind of poetry I write, I can never be the dictator's friend. So I get a knock on the door at two in the morning a couple of times."

The poem criticises people who allow injustices to go on as long as it does not directly affect them. He suggests that if no one stands up against dictatorship, cruelty, poverty and injustice, it will, eventually, affect their lives.

The poem is a very good example of the narrator's voice being different from that of the poet. Even if we didn't know of Niyi Osundare's political beliefs, we naturally disagree with what the narrator says.

Underline all the words in the poem that suggest anger and hate.

What is your favourite image in the poem? Write a short summary of why you like this image.

How do you feel about the narrator in this poem?