Dr. Pelotte/Dr. Lawrence/Mr. Arenas

Poetry Handout #2

*Telephone Conversation*

by Wole Soyinka 1963

The price seemed reasonable, location
Indifferent. The landlady swore she lived
Off premises. Nothing remained
But self-confession. "Madam," I warned,
"I hate a wasted journey - I am African."
Silence. Silenced transmission of

Pressurized good-breeding. Voice, when it came,
Lipstick coated, long gold-rolled
Cigarette-holder piped. Caught I was, foully.

"HOW DARK?"..I had not misheard..."ARE YOU LIGHT

OR VERY DARK?" Button B. Button A. Stench
Of rancid breath of public hide-and-speak.
Red booth. Red pillar-box. Red double-tiered
Omnibus squelching tar.It *was* real! Shamed
By ill-mannered silence, surrender
Pushed dumbfoundment to beg simplification.
Considerate she was, varying the emphasis—
"ARE YOU DARK? OR VERY LIGHT" Revelation came
"You mean- like plain or milk chocolate?"
Her accent was clinical, crushing in its light
Impersonality. Rapidly, wave-length adjusted
I chose. "West African sepia"\_ and as afterthought.
"Down in my passport." Silence for spectroscopic
Flight of fancy, till truthfulness changed her accent
Hard on the mouthpiece "WHAT'S THAT?" conceding "DON'T KNOW WHAT THAT IS." "Like brunette."

"THAT'S DARK, ISN'T IT?" "Not altogether.
“Facially, I am brunette, but madam you should see the “rest of me. Palm of my hand, soles of my feet.
“Are a peroxide blonde. Friction, caused-
“Foolishly madam- by sitting down, has turned
“My bottom raven black- One moment madam! - sensing
Her receiver rearing on the thunderclap
About my ears— "Madam," I pleaded, "wouldn't you rather
See for yourself?"

Name:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Legal Alien

by Pat Mora 1985

Bi-lingual, Bi-cultural,
able to slip from "How's life?"
to "Me'stan volviendo loca,"
able to sit in a paneled office
drafting memos in smooth English,
able to order in fluent Spanish
at a Mexican restaurant,
American but hyphenated,
viewed by Anglos as perhaps exotic,
perhaps inferior, definitely different,
viewed by Mexicans as alien,
(their eyes say, "You may speak
Spanish but you're not like me")
an American to Mexicans
a Mexican to Americans
a handy token
sliding back and forth
between the fringes of both worlds
by smiling
by masking the discomfort
of being pre-judged
Bi-laterally.

*this morning*

*(for the girls of Eastern High School)*

by Lucille Clifton

this morning

this morning

 i met myself

coming in

a bright jungle girl

shining quick as a snake

a tall

tree girl a

me girl

 i met myself

this morning

coming in

and all day

i have been

a black bell

ringing

i survive

 survive

survive