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Glossary

Wat maak hy daar?—what is he doing there?

Baas—boss

Ubuntu—humanity towards others/showing compassion towards people

Tone: (Author's attitude or feelings about the subject)
Intimate

Mood: (Readers emotions from reading the text)
Thoughtful

Theme:
Resistance
Communication

Form:
Visual layout—narrative presented on the left
Translation in brackets

Sound Devices:
Ironic—w/o any formal/sound devices centred on sound + lack of it.

Poetic Devices:
Punctuation + typography (the way it's printed/set-out) to convey the poet's message
Use of italics for different purposes as well as the use of dashes. The use of italics in line 20 + 22 indicate direct speech.
Use of present tense – content feels immediate
Last stages—feels as if we're sharing the cell + watching signals with the speaker.

Last insertions lose the brackets as if the reader has now learned the poem's language + no longer needs them

Motho ke Motho ka Batho Babang (A Person is a Person

Because of Other People)

Jeremy Cronin (1949-)
Political/Activist/Protest

Poem captures scene of one prisoner communicating with another discreetly under watchful eye of a warder. Cleverness shown maintaining human contact communicating with sign language in defiance of the deprivation of imprisonment. Illustrates truth about the human condition. Cruelty of isolation as a form of punishment and favoured treatment of political prisoners

- 1 By holding my mirror out of the window I see
- 2 Clear to the end of the passage.
- 3 There's a person down there.
- 4 A prisoner polishing a doorhandle. → Time-wasting chores
- 5 In the mirror I see him see
- 6 My face in the mirror,
- 7 I see the fingertips of his free hand
- 8 Bunch together, as if to make
- 9 An object the size of a badge
- 10 Which travels up to his forehead
- 11 The place of an imaginary cap. → Link to guard
- 12 (This means: A warder.) → Translation in brackets
Format of this translation/explanation is varied as the poem progresses
1st insertion announces itself as an explanation
2nd L15
3rd L19 give explanations directly
- 13 Two fingers are extended in a vee
- 14 And wiggle like two antennae.
- 15 (He's being watched.)
- 16 A finger of his free hand makes a watch-hand's arc
- 17 On the wrist of his polishing arm without
- 18 Disrupting the slow-slow rhythm of his work.
- 19 (Later. Maybe, later we can speak.)
- 20 Hey! Wat maak jy daar? → Italics—indicate direct speech
- 21 –a voice from around the corner.
- 22 No. Just polishing baas.
- 23 He turns his back to me, now watch
- 24 His free hand, the talkative one, → Personified: commenting on sound by emphasizing its absence.
- 25 Slips quietly behind
- 26 –Strength brother, it says,
- 27 In my mirror,
- 28 A black fist. → Most effective that L26 also written this way as the prisoners are communicating so effectively they may as well use direct speech.