



## 4. THE MOTHER COUNTRY



Victoria Station, London, 1956

### Part 1

My dad came to this country in 1948, on the *Empire Windrush* ship. He was one of the pioneers<sup>1</sup>. One of the 492 people  
5 who looked around the old British Empire colony of Jamaica, saw that there were no jobs, no prospects<sup>2</sup>, and decided to chance his arm in the Mother  
10 Country.

I don't know what my dad's aspirations were when he arrived in Britain – he certainly didn't realize that he was making history at the time. But I do know that, when he boarded the ship, he knew himself to be a British citizen. He travelled on a British passport. Britain  
15 was the country that all Jamaican children learned about at  
20 school. They sang *God Save the King* and *Rule Britannia*<sup>3</sup>. They believed Britain was a green and pleasant land – if not the centre of the world, then certainly the centre of a great and important Empire that spanned<sup>4</sup> the globe, linking all sorts of countries into a family  
25 of nations. Far from the idea that he was travelling to a foreign place, he was travelling to the centre of his country, and as such he would slip-in and fit-in immediately. Jamaica, he thought, was just Britain in the sun.

1. /ˈpiːnɪəz/ pioneers 2. *avenir* 3. *Rule Britannia*: unofficial national anthem 4. *s'étendait sur*

### Part 2

But they soon found that they were foreigners<sup>1</sup> in England, and this shocked them. They suffered bad housing – by no means the plight<sup>2</sup> of black people alone in those post-war  
30 days: The signs in windows read “no niggers, no dogs, no Irish”. My dad faced incredible hostility when looking for somewhere to live because of the colour of his skin. He had a job with the post office. My mum, a trained teacher in Jamaica, had to sew<sup>3</sup> to make a living here. She worked in sweat-shops<sup>4</sup> with other foreigners, Czechs, Poles, Greeks. She had one advantage: She spoke English. And one disadvantage: She was black (or coloured<sup>5</sup>, as  
35 we were termed then).

1. /ˈfɒrənəz/ 2. /plaɪt/ sort 3. /səʊ/ *coudre* 4. /swetʃɒps/ 5. /kʌləd/

### Part 3

I was embarrassed<sup>1</sup> that my parents were not English. One of the reasons was that no one around me was interested<sup>2</sup> in the country my parents came from. To them, it was just a place full of inferior<sup>3</sup> black people. They asked – oh, they asked all the time. “Where are you from?” But if I answered “Jamaica,” lips would curl or tongues would tut. They didn't  
40 want to know about the sun, the sugar cane, the rum punch. They didn't want to try our rice and peas. I remember a white American girl coming to school. Everyone wanted to be her friend. To see her toys, to hear her parents' wonderful accent, to try their food with an “Ooohh isn't it lovely”. America was a great place to come from.

1. /ɪmˈbærəst/ 2. /ɪntrɪstɪd/ 3. /ɪnˈfɪəriə/

Andrea Levy, *This is my England*, *The Guardian Weekend*, February 19, 2000

## 1 Get ready

- Listen to the first recording. Do you recognize it?
- Listen to the second recording. What words strike you?
- Skim through the whole text and answer the following questions:
  - Who is the narrator?
  - Who are the other characters mentioned?
  - Find a date and the names of two countries that are repeated in the text.
  - What kind of text is it? Justify.
- Judging from the photo, what do you think the text is going to deal with?

## 2 Understanding the text WB

Turn to your Workbook for help.

## 3 Recap

Give each part a title then answer these questions.

### Part 1

- Why did the father leave his native country?
- What vision did he have of his future country?
- What did he expect from his future country? Why?

### Part 2

- What difficulties were the parents confronted with?
- What were they the victims of? Were they the only ones then?

### Part 3

- What did the narrator realize?
- What were her feelings then?
- Now explain why the narrator felt "embarrassed" (l. 36).

### Help!

Part 1	Part 2	Part 3
unemployment standard of living living conditions opportunities /ˌɒpə'tjuːnɪtɪz/ better-paid dream of + V-ing fulfil one's dreams achieve success /sək'ses/ improve integrate /ɪntɪgreɪt/ into greet = welcome	racism /reɪsɪzəm/ foreigner /fɔːrənə/: <i>étranger</i> xenophobia /zenə'fəʊbɪə/ = fear or hatred of foreigners disappointed /dɪsə'pɔɪntɪd/ disillusioned ≠ enthusiastic miserable /mɪzərəbl/ ≠ happy awful = dreadful look down on, despise sb: <i>mépriser qqn</i> start from scratch: <i>recommencer</i> à zéro	customs: <i>coutumes</i> disdain = contempt = scorn lonely left out = isolated excluded = rejected popular make friends with feel ashamed /ə'ʃeɪmd/: <i>avoir honte</i> be worth + V-ing: <i>valoir la peine de</i>

## 4 Summary

Replace each number in the following text with a word chosen from the toolbox above.

The narrator relates her own story. Her parents, who had a British passport, emigrated after WW2. The father believed he would have many ... **1** in Great Britain. He expected to ... **2** his dreams, to have a ... **3** job and to ... **4** his ... **5**. However, he soon realized he was considered a ... **6** and was ... **7** because of the colour of his skin. He expected to be welcomed and to integrate into British society easily, but in reality he was confronted with ... **8** and ... **9** and lived in ... **10** conditions. Andrea felt ... **11**, and ... **12** by her school friends.

### PREPARE YOUR TASK



## 5 Creative writing

Andrea writes a letter to her family in Jamaica and tells them about the journey, what she likes, dislikes, and misses in England. (80 words)



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Victoria Station, London, 1956

They sang *God Save the King* and *Rule Britannia*<sup>3</sup>. They believed Britain was a green and pleasant land – if not the centre of the world, then certainly the centre of a great and important Empire that spanned<sup>4</sup> the globe, linking all sorts of countries into a family of nations. Far from the idea that he was travelling to a foreign place, he was travelling to the centre of his country, and as such he would slip-in and fit-in immediately. Jamaica, he thought, was just Britain in the sun.

1. /paɪəˈmɔːz/ pionniers 2. avenir 3. Rule Britannia: unofficial national anthem 4. s'étendait sur

### Part 2

But they soon found that they were foreigners<sup>1</sup> in England, and this shocked them. They suffered bad housing – by no means the plight<sup>2</sup> of black people alone in those post-war days: The signs in windows read “no niggers, no dogs, no Irish”. My dad faced incredible hostility when looking for somewhere to live because of the colour of his skin. He had a job with the post office. My mum, a trained teacher in Jamaica, had to sew<sup>3</sup> to make a living here. She worked in sweat-shops<sup>4</sup> with other foreigners, Czechs, Poles, Greeks. She had one advantage: She spoke English. And one disadvantage: She was black (or coloured<sup>5</sup>, as we were termed then).

1. /fɔːrənəz/ 2. /plaɪt/ sort 3. /səʊ/ coudre 4. /swetʃɒps/ 5. /kɒləd/

### Part 3

I was embarrassed<sup>1</sup> that my parents were not English. One of the reasons was that no one around me was interested<sup>2</sup> in the country my parents came from. To them, it was just a place full of inferior<sup>3</sup> black people. They asked – oh, they asked all the time. “Where are you from?” But if I answered “Jamaica,” lips would curl or tongues would tut. They didn't want to know about the sun, the sugar cane, the rum punch. They didn't want to try our rice and peas. I remember a white American girl coming to school. Everyone wanted to be her friend. To see her toys, to hear her parents' wonderful accent, to try their food with an “Ooohh isn't it lovely”. America was a great place to come from.

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school. They sang *God Save the King* and *Rule Britannia*<sup>3</sup>. They believed Britain was a green and pleasant land – if not the centre of the world, then certainly the centre of a great and important Empire that spanned<sup>4</sup> the globe, linking all sorts of countries into a family of nations. Far from the idea that he was travelling to a foreign place, he was travelling to the centre of his country, and as such he would slip-in and fit-in immediately. Jamaica, he thought, was just Britain in the sun.

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- What were her feelings then?
- Now explain why the narrator felt “embarrassed” (l. 36).

### Help!

Part 1	Part 2	Part 3
unemployment standard of living living conditions opportunities /ɒpə'tju:nɪtɪz/ better-paid dream of + V-ing fulfil one's dreams achieve success /sək'ses/ improve integrate /ɪn'tɪɡreɪt/ into greet = welcome	racism /reɪsɪzəm/ foreigner /fɔːrənə/: étranger xenophobia /zenə'fəʊbiə/ = fear or hatred of foreigners disappointed /dɪsə'pɔɪntɪd/ disillusioned ≠ enthusiastic miserable /mɪzərəbəl/ ≠ happy awful = dreadful look down on, despise sb: mépriser qqn start from scratch: recommencer à zéro	customs: coutumes disdain = contempt = scorn lonely left out = isolated excluded = rejected popular make friends with feel ashamed /ə'ʃeɪmd/: avoir honte be worth + V-ing: valoir la peine de

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The narrator relates her own story. Her parents, who had a British passport, emigrated after WW2. The father believed he would have many ... 1 in Great Britain. He expected to ... 2 his dreams, to have a ... 3 job and to ... 4 his ... 5. However, he soon realized he was considered a ... 6 and was ... 7 because of the colour of his skin. He expected to be welcomed and to integrate into British society easily, but in reality he was confronted with ... 8 and ... 9 and lived in ... 10 conditions. Andrea felt ... 11, and ... 12 by her school friends.

PREPARE YOUR TASK



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