

DAYLIGHT COME

Study Guide

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How to Use This Guide

This study guide is designed to enhance your understanding of the Daylight Come audio project and provide multiple ways to engage with the material, whether you're studying independently, in a classroom, or as part of a book club or discussion group.

Recommended Approach

For First-Time Listeners:

1. Read the Project Description to understand the scope and methodology
2. Listen to the audio project without interruption to experience the narrative flow
3. Review the Timeline to contextualize events chronologically
4. Review the Glossary and Cast of Characters for any unfamiliar terms or figures
5. Use the Quiz Questions to test your comprehension

For In-Depth Study:

6. Listen to the audio while taking notes on key themes
7. Answer the Quiz Questions
8. Consult the Timeline and Cast of Characters for historical context
9. Engage with the Discussion Questions that connect past to present
10. Tackle one of the Essay Questions that interests you most

Time Commitments

Audio Listening Time:

- Approximately 45-60 minutes (depending on audio length)

Study Activities:

- Quiz (10 short answer questions): 30-45 minutes
- Discussion questions: 1-2 hours
- Single Essay Question: 2-4 hours (including research and writing)
- Reviewing Timeline and Glossary: 20-30 minutes
- Complete study guide activities: 4-6 hours

What is Essential vs. Supplementary

Essential for Basic Understanding:

- Listen to the audio project
- Review the Glossary for unfamiliar terms
- Complete the Quiz questions to test comprehension

Supplementary for Deeper Learning:

- Study the Timeline to understand historical progression
- Research characters in the Cast of Characters for biographical context
- Engage with Discussion Questions to connect past to present
- Write responses to Essay Questions for analytical depth

Optional Extensions:

- Research additional historical sources about Jamaican migration to Britain
- Explore the Windrush Scandal and its ongoing impact

A Note on the Material

The content of *Daylight Come* deals with colonization, migration, family separation, and systemic racism. While the narrative is personal and focuses on resilience, the subject matter touches on historical trauma and ongoing challenges. We encourage listeners to:

- Take breaks as needed
- Discuss challenging material with others
- Seek additional historical context when questions arise
- Remember that these personal stories reflect broader historical patterns that continue to shape our present

Questions or Feedback?

For questions about the project or this study guide, contact: calvinwalk@gmail.com

Project Description

Daylight Come is an experimental audio project that traces the creator's family history in the context of Jamaica, immigration to Britain, colonization, and past enslavement. The project uses AI-generated voices to tell a deeply personal story of displacement, resilience, and the search for identity across generations.

The narrative weaves together personal memories, family photographs, historical documents, and cultural traditions to explore themes of belonging, loss, and the enduring impact of colonial histories on individual lives. From Jamaica's colonial past through the Windrush generation's migration to Britain, the project illuminates how large historical forces shape intimate family stories.

Note on Technology: Voices were generated using ElevenLabs AI. The use of AI voices was essential to the project's creation, allowing for constant availability during experimentation and enabling the telling of stories where direct testimony was no longer possible.

Acknowledgments: Thanks to Dr. Lisa Hill of Anglia Research for assistance with genealogy research.

Project Website: <https://calvinwalker.cc/daylight-come/>

Episode Descriptions

Prologue: The Gardens of Remembrance *Duration: ~1 minute*

The narrator visits his sister Vera's memorial in 2013, setting the stage for a journey through family history, migration, and loss.

Episode 1: Our Jamaican Origins *Duration: ~10 minutes*

Traces the family's Jamaican roots from 1948, the year of Vera's birth and the Windrush voyage. Explores Jamaica's colonial past from Spanish to British rule, Port Royal's destruction in 1692, and the narrator's birth in 1955. Introduces themes of colourism, the 1960 migration wave, and family structure shaped by absent fathers.

Episode 2: Great-Aunt Mel *Duration: ~5 minutes*

Profiles Great-Aunt Mel, born 1904 in rural Jamaica, whose life spans World Wars, the Great Depression, and the 1938 labour strikes. Details her work at Gibraltar refugee camp during WWII, Hurricane Charlie's devastation in 1951, and her eventual migration to England in the late 1950s, where she becomes a matriarchal figure in the family's London life.

Episode 3: The Early Days in Britain *Duration: ~9 minutes*

Chronicles the narrator's arrival in England in September 1961 at age six with Goddie May. Explores early memories of 1960s Brixton : the bedsit on Angell Road, the first winter's coal smoke and fog, structural racism at school, and the close-knit Caribbean community. Introduces the mystery of how Vera arrived in England.

Episode 4: "I Have Come with News from Jamaica" *Duration: ~10 minutes*

Set in the early 1960s, this episode covers Jamaica's independence in 1962, the narrator's British citizenship, and fragmented memories of Vera. A midnight visitor brings news of the narrator's father's death, "killed by a tree", a loss never discussed again. Explores family silence, the narrator's mother's random violence, and a lost photograph from Jamaica.

Episode 5: Going to Britain? *Duration: ~9 minutes*

Examines life in 1960s Brixton through the lens of a 1959 BBC pamphlet warning West Indians about Britain's harsh realities. Details cramped housing on Somerleyton and Geneva Roads, the Caribbean marketplace, Vera's mysterious nosebleeds, and Mr. Sunday-Ani the African landlord. The episode includes the discovery of a bottle marked "POISON" among their mother's possessions.

Episode 6: Esther *Duration: ~9 minutes*

An intimate portrait of the narrator's mother, Esther Eugena Parks: her physical presence, her extraordinary ability to talk without pause, her massive breakfast preparations, and Saturday

market trips. Details her exploitation at the Savoy Hotel Laundry, where harsh conditions led to tuberculosis. Includes fragments preserved: a 1970 TV licence receipt, a photo from the 1960s, and her organizational chaos of papers in plastic bags.

Episode 7: Out from Africa *Duration: ~8 minutes*

Traces the family's African ancestry through the transatlantic slave trade (Akan and Ashanti from Ghana, Igbo from Nigeria) to Jamaica. Explores Columbus's 1494 arrival, the genocide of Taino Indians, and British colonization from 1655. Interweaves childhood memories from Jamaica with explanations of Nine Night funerary traditions, duppy folklore, and Patois language. Introduces half-siblings Stephen (1966) and Hazel, and their irresponsible Barbadian father, Hunter.

Episode 8: Goddie May *Duration: ~10 minutes*

Chronicles Mabel Eugena Parks (Goddie May), born 1919 in rural Mavis Bank, from her coffee-farming childhood and teenage motherhood of Cousin Morris, to her 1960 migration to England. Details her unfulfilled dream of building a house in Jamaica, her relationship with sister Esther, and her gradual decline through the 1990s. Includes a detailed description of a 2003 photograph taken in her council flat, a year before her death in December 2004.

Episode 9: Daylight Comes *Duration: ~7 minutes*

The final episode reveals Cousin Morris's abandonment of his Jamaican daughter, his death in November 2008 after squandering his own burial money, and Esther's death in October 2011. The narrator's 2012 search through the Salvation Army discovers that Vera had died eight years earlier on New Year's Eve 2004 in Croydon, just miles away. The project concludes at Vera's memorial in the Gardens of Remembrance: "Daylight has come."

Total Series Duration: Approximately 78 minutes

Quiz: Short Answer Questions

Instructions: Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. What is the primary purpose of the Daylight Come audio project, and **what technology was essential** to its creation?
2. Describe the **significance of the year 1948** in the context of Jamaican history and the narrator's family.
3. How does the narrative portray **the city of Port Royal in the 17th century**, and what eventually happened to it?
4. **What is "colourism,"** as described in the audio project, and how did it manifest within Jamaican society and the narrator's family?
5. Explain the significance of Edith Clarke's 1957 study, "My Mother Who Fathered Me," in relation to the **family structure** described in the audio project.
6. **What are "duppies,"** and what specific actions does the narrator describe as means of protection against them?
7. According to the pamphlet "Going to Britain?", what specific challenges and realities were **West Indians** likely to face when **immigrating to England**?
8. What are some of the specific details that indicate the **challenging working conditions** faced by Esther at the Savoy Hotel Laundry?
9. What are some of the beliefs and traditions associated with **Nine Night**, and how do they reflect **African influences on Jamaican culture**?
10. Describe the **significance of the title Daylight Come** in relation to the broader themes of the audio project.

Answer Key (Quiz)

1. Daylight Come is an experimental audio project exploring the narrator's family history within the context of Jamaica, immigration to Britain, colonization, and slavery. AI-generated voices were crucial for the project's development because of their constant availability for experimentation.
2. In 1948, the narrator's sister, Vera, was born in Jamaica, the same year as the Windrush voyage, a highly publicized ship trip that brought hundreds of West Indian people to Britain. This trip is a central part of the overall migration story.
3. Port Royal was portrayed as a debauched and sinful city during the 17th century, filled with pirates and wealth stolen from the Spanish. It was destroyed by an earthquake and tsunami in 1692.
4. "Colourism" is a social hierarchy based on skin tone, with lighter-skinned people having more privilege. Within the family, this is illustrated by the narrator's mother's disparaging comments on both the lighter skin of Kingston girls and darker skin.
5. Clarke's study explores instability rates, low marriage rates, and high illegitimacy rates within Jamaican families. This reflects the family structure of the narrator's family where parents were often not together or even known.
6. Duppies are restless spirits that can manifest in forms like the rolling calf, a shapeshifting goat. Actions such as drawing crosses and placing 10 coffee beans can be used for protection.
7. The pamphlet warned about job scarcity, financial difficulties, the cold British weather, and the necessity of adapting to British social norms and customs. It also warned about the high level of prejudice and racism.
8. Esther was paid a pittance for working in pitiful sweatshop-like conditions with a disregard for health and safety. This ultimately led to her contracting tuberculosis and suffering from other health issues.
9. Nine Night is a funerary tradition stemming from Africa, where a wake is held for nine nights following a death. Traditions include protecting the spirit of the deceased and specific rituals to ensure their spirit moves on.
10. The title Daylight Come signifies the end of the night of injustice and trauma, referring both to the historical legacy of slavery and colonization as well as to the personal struggles and searches for identity described in the audio project.

History in the Present Tense: Discussion Questions

These questions are designed to spark conversation and reflection on key themes from *Daylight Come*. They work well for classroom discussions, book clubs, listening groups, or personal journal entries. **There are no "right" answers.** The goal is to engage critically with the material, explore different perspectives, and consider how echoes of this history resonate in our present day.

On Migration and Belonging

- The Windrush generation faced hostility in Britain despite being invited to help rebuild the nation. How do contemporary immigrants and refugees face similar challenges today?
- What does it mean to belong to multiple places? How do second and third-generation immigrants navigate identity between "home" and "motherland"?
- **Today's echo:** *The 2018 Windrush Scandal revealed that thousands of legal UK residents were wrongly detained, denied services, or deported. What does this reveal about citizenship, belonging, and the precarity of migrant status even after decades of residence?*

On Family Structures and Absence

- The study cites high rates of single-parent families in Jamaica. How do we discuss family structure without stigmatizing non-nuclear families?
- The narrator's search for his sister Vera. What does it mean when family histories are incomplete or deliberately hidden?
- **Today's echo:** *Single-parent families, particularly led by Black women, continue to face economic and social challenges. What systemic factors contribute to family instability across generations?*

On Colourism and Identity

- Colourism creates hierarchies within communities. How does it differ from racism, and how are they connected?
- The narrator's mother both critiqued lighter-skinned Jamaicans and disparaged darker skin. What does this internal contradiction reveal about internalized oppression?
- **Today's echo:** *Colourism continues to affect communities globally, from skin-lightening products to hiring discrimination. How does social media both challenge and perpetuate colourism?*

On Labor and Exploitation

- Esther worked in "sweatshop-like conditions" at the prestigious Savoy Hotel. How do migrant workers continue to face exploitation in wealthy nations today?
- Why were Windrush migrants channeled into low-wage service jobs despite coming from diverse professional backgrounds?

- **Today's echo:** *The gig economy, domestic work, care work. How do these modern labor systems echo historical patterns of exploitation? Who does society's "essential work" and how are they compensated?*

On Cultural Preservation and Loss

- Language (Patois), spiritual practices (Obeah, Nine Night), foodways. How do immigrant communities preserve culture while adapting to new environments?
- The narrator's relationship with Jamaica is mediated through family stories rather than direct experience. What is lost when culture is transmitted through memory rather than lived experience?
- **Today's echo:** *Third and fourth-generation descendants of immigrants often feel disconnected from their ancestral cultures. How do communities balance assimilation with cultural preservation?*

On Historical Trauma and Memory

- How does intergenerational trauma manifest in families affected by colonization, slavery, and forced migration?
- The narrator pieces together family history from fragments: photographs, documents, memories. What responsibility do we have to preserve and tell family stories?
- **Today's echo:** *Descendants of enslaved people, Holocaust survivors, and other traumatized populations show evidence of inherited trauma. How do we heal from historical wounds that we didn't directly experience?*

On Place and Displacement

- Natural disasters (Hurricane Charlie), economic necessity, the pull of "the mother country". What forces displaced people from Jamaica and other Caribbean nations?
- Brixton became a center of Caribbean life in London. What role do ethnic enclaves play for immigrant communities?
- **Today's echo:** *Climate change and economic inequality drive migration today. How are these contemporary "push factors" linked to colonial histories that extracted wealth from the Global South?*

On Racism and Resistance

- The pamphlet "Going to Britain?" warned of prejudice, but many migrants were still shocked by the racism they encountered. Why the disconnect between expectation and reality?
- How did the Windrush generation resist marginalization, through community building, cultural expression, political organizing?
- **Today's echo:** *Black British activism, from the Brixton uprisings to Black Lives Matter UK, continues the struggle against systemic racism. How do contemporary movements build on or differ from earlier resistance?*

On Motherhood and Sacrifice

- Esther left her children in Jamaica, a common pattern among migrant mothers who went ahead to establish themselves. What are the costs of this separation?

- Goddie May became a surrogate mother figure. How do extended family networks sustain communities during migration?
- **Today's echo:** *Contemporary migrant mothers (from domestic workers to healthcare professionals) often leave children behind. What policies might better support transnational families?*

On Identity and Categorization

- The narrator navigates multiple identities: Jamaican, British, Black, Brixtonian. How do we hold these multiple identities simultaneously?
- Terms like "immigrant," "West Indian," "Black British" ... how do labels both unite and divide communities?
- **Today's echo:** *How does the term "immigrant" simultaneously represent a shared experience and mask enormous diversity of origin, language, religion, and circumstance?*

On Witnessing Difficult Histories

- The Daylight Come project is deeply personal yet reflects broader patterns. What is gained and lost by telling historical narratives through individual family stories?
- **Today's reflection:** *How do we bear witness to our own family histories when they include pain, loss, and unanswered questions? What responsibility do we have to preserve and share these stories?*

Essay Questions

These essay questions are designed for deeper analytical work. Choose one that interests you and develop a well-structured argument supported by specific examples from the Daylight Come audio project. Each essay should be 1,500-2,500 words (5-8 pages).

Core Essays

Essay 1: Memory, Identity, and Displacement ★

Theme: Memory and Identity

Analyze the role of memory in Daylight Come. How does the narrator use personal and family memories to construct a narrative about identity, displacement, and historical trauma? Consider how memory functions as both preservation and loss. What is remembered, what is forgotten, and what is actively reconstructed?

In your essay, consider:

1. The role of photographs, documents, and artifacts in preserving memory
2. Gaps in the family narrative (Vera's mysterious departure, absent fathers)
3. How the narrator constructs identity from fragmentary evidence
4. The difference between lived experience and inherited memory
5. How AI voices paradoxically both preserve and transform memory

Key figures to discuss: The narrator, Vera, Esther, Goddie May

Extension question for advanced students: *How does the act of creating this audio project itself become a form of memory-making? What does it mean to use AI to tell stories that can no longer be told by those who lived them?*

Essay 2: Place, Displacement, and the Making of Diaspora ★★

Theme: Migration and Belonging

Discuss the significance of place in Daylight Come. How do the different settings of Jamaica and England contribute to the themes of the audio project, and how do these places shape the experiences and identities of the narrator and his family? Consider how migration creates a sense of living between worlds—neither fully "here" nor "there."

In your essay, consider:

1. Jamaica as both homeland and mythic origin, a place known through stories rather than lived experience
2. Brixton as a site of Caribbean diaspora community-building
3. The cold of England as both literal climate and metaphor for hostile reception
4. How colonial history shaped both the conditions for leaving Jamaica and the reception in Britain
5. The concept of "motherland" and its ironies

Historical context to discuss: Windrush generation, British Nationality Act 1948, the 2018 Windrush Scandal

Extension question for advanced students: *How does the Windrush generation's experience complicate narratives about immigration? They were British citizens invited to help rebuild Britain, yet faced discrimination and eventual deportation threats. What does this reveal about citizenship, race, and belonging?*

Essay 3: Intergenerational Trauma and Resilience ★★

Theme: Historical Trauma and Resistance

Explore the theme of intergenerational trauma in *Daylight Come*. How do the legacies of slavery, colonization, and migration impact the narrator and his family across multiple generations? Consider both the transmission of trauma and the forms of resilience and resistance that emerge in response.

In your essay, consider:

1. How slavery and colonization shape family structures (absent fathers, complex kinship networks)
2. Economic exploitation across generations (from plantation labor to sweatshop conditions)
3. Forms of resilience: community networks, cultural preservation, spiritual practices
4. How trauma manifests in the family (health issues, family separation, silence)
5. The act of telling these stories as a form of healing and resistance

Key concepts to discuss: Colourism, family structure, labor exploitation, cultural traditions (Nine Night, Obeah, Patois)

Extension question for advanced students: *Research shows that trauma can be biologically inherited across generations. How might understanding this scientific reality change how we think about reparations, social support, and healing from historical injustices?*

Essay 4: Women's Lives and Gender in Migration ★

Theme: Gender and Labor

Analyze the representation of women in *Daylight Come*. How does the narrative portray the lives, struggles, and resilience of women like Esther, Goddie May, and Vera? Consider how gender shapes both the experience of migration and the labor opportunities available to Caribbean women in Britain.

In your essay, consider:

1. The gendered nature of Caribbean migration (women often migrated before men or independently)
2. Women's labor: domestic work, laundries, care work—low-wage service sector jobs
3. The paradox of working mothers who left children behind to earn money for their support
4. Women's community-building and cultural preservation roles
5. The strength and vulnerability of women navigating multiple oppressions (race, gender, class)

Key figures to discuss: Esther, Goddie May, Vera, Great-Aunt Mel

Extension question for advanced students: *Caribbean women's migration patterns differed from other migration flows, with women often pioneering migration rather than following male relatives. What factors enabled this, and what were its consequences for family structure and community formation?*

Essay 5: Language, Voice, and Cultural Identity ★

Theme: Language and Identity

Examine the use of language and voice in *Daylight Come*. How do the different voices and languages (Patois, Standard English, the narrator's reflective voice, AI-generated voices) contribute to the narrative's complexity and emotional impact? What do they reveal about the narrator's cultural identity and the negotiation between Caribbean and British identities?

In your essay, consider:

1. Patois as both heritage language and marker of difference in Britain
2. Code-switching between Patois and Standard English
3. The use of AI voices to resurrect absent voices (Vera, Esther)
4. Silence and what goes unsaid in the family
5. How telling this story becomes an act of reclaiming voice and agency

Extension question for advanced students: *What are the ethics of using AI to generate voices for this project? Does AI enable the telling of stories that would otherwise be lost, or does it raise questions about authenticity and representation?*

Essay Writing Tips

Before you begin:

- Listen to the audio project at least twice
- Take detailed notes on specific examples and themes
- Consult the Timeline and Cast of Characters for context
- Research additional historical sources as needed

Structure your essay:

- **Introduction:** Present your thesis and outline your argument
- **Body paragraphs:** Each should focus on one main point supported by specific examples from the audio project
- **Conclusion:** Synthesize your arguments and consider broader implications

Citation:

- When referencing specific information, cite the project: (*Daylight Come*)
- For historical sources mentioned in the project, cite them directly when possible

Timeline of Important Events

600-800 AD: Taino Indians settle in Jamaica.

1494: Christopher Columbus lands in Jamaica, claims it for Spain, and names it Santiago.

1510: Spanish colonize Jamaica, destroying the Taino population through brutality and disease.

1655: The British capture Jamaica from the Spanish, renaming it Jamaica. Jewish refugees from the Inquisition are allowed to settle. The British begin importing enslaved Africans to work on sugar plantations.

1660: Jamaica's population is approximately 4,500 white and 1,500 black.

1670: Spain officially cedes Jamaica to Britain, leading to increased sugar plantations and a majority enslaved Black African population.

1692: A massive earthquake and tsunami destroy Port Royal, the center of Caribbean shipping and known as the "Sodom of the New World."

1739: Peace Treaty signed between the British and the Maroons after years of conflict.

1807: The Slave Trade is progressively abolished, but not slave ownership.

1832: The Baptist War, a large slave revolt involving 60,000 enslaved people.

1834: The Jamaican Weekly Gleaner newspaper is launched.

1838: Slave ownership is abolished in Jamaica, but indentured servitude continues.

1845-1854: The first Asian Indians and Chinese arrive in Jamaica as indentured servants.

1865: The Morant Bay Rebellion occurs, with British soldiers killing hundreds of Jamaican protestors.

1881-1889: Over 9,000 Jamaicans work as laborers on the French construction of the Panama Canal.

Late 19th Century: Tourism begins in Jamaica, mainly restricted to the wealthy.

1912-1925: More than 110,000 Jamaicans migrate to Cuba to work on American-owned fruit plantations.

1915: Jamaicans recruited to fight for Britain in World War I.

1919: Mabel Eugena Parks (Goddie May) is born in Jamaica.

1928: Esther Eugena Parks (the narrator's mother) is born in Trinityville, St. Thomas, Jamaica.

1938: The People's National Party is formed. Labor strikes and riots occur in Jamaica.

1939: Jamaicans recruited to fight in World War II and accepted into the Royal Air Force.

1943: The Jamaica Labour Party is formed.

1948: Vera (narrator's sister) is born in Mount Charles, St. Andrew, Jamaica. The HMT Windrush arrives in Britain, bringing many West Indians from Jamaica to England.

1951: Hurricane Charlie devastates Jamaica.

1955: The narrator is born in St. Thomas, Jamaica. The Jamaica Tourist Board is established. Around 15,000 West Indians, mostly Jamaicans, migrate to Britain.

Mid to late 1950s: Vera moves to England (circumstances unclear). Goddie May emigrates to the UK around this time.

1957: Anthropologist Edith Clarke publishes "My Mother Who Fathered Me," a study on family structures in Jamaica.

Late 1950s: Great-Aunt Mel moves to England.

1959: The BBC Caribbean Service publishes the pamphlet "Going to Britain?"

November 1960: Esther moves to England using the revamped warship, Ascania.

September 1961: The narrator moves to England with Goddie May; they live in Brixton.

1962: Jamaica gains independence from Great Britain. The narrator automatically becomes a British citizen. Helen Shapiro's "Walking Back to Happiness" is a #1 hit in the UK.

1963: The coldest winter on record in the UK. The narrator's half-sister Sarah is born.

Mid 1960s: The narrator and his mother move to a bedsit on Angell Road, later a house on Somerleyton Road with Vera on the top floor, then to Leander Road.

1966: The narrator's half-brother Stephen is born.

Late 1960s/Early 1970s: The family moves back to Geneva Road in Brixton.

1968: Reggae music is born.

1970: Esther's TV licence payment receipt is dated March of this year.

1970-1980: Political violence takes place in Jamaica.

Mid-1970s: Vera introduces her future husband to the family. Vera distances herself from her family.

1983: Esther is employed at The Savoy Hotel laundry.

1990s: The narrator visits Goddie May frequently and sees her health declining.

2003: A medical letter reveals Esther's symptoms are related to old tuberculosis. The narrator takes a photo of Goddie May in her flat.

2004: Vera dies in Croydon on New Year's Eve. Goddie May dies in December.

November 2008: Cousin Morris dies.

October 2011: Esther dies and is buried in Lambeth Cemetery.

2012: The narrator contacts the Salvation Army to try to locate Vera.

2013: The narrator visits his sister's memorial at the Gardens of Remembrance, reflecting on family history.

2024: Daylight Come experimental audio project is created.

Cast of Characters

Family Members

Calvin Walker (AI-narrated): The creator of the audio project "Daylight Come." Born in St. Thomas, Jamaica in 1955, moved to England with Goddie May in 1961. He is exploring his family history and identity through this project.

Vera: The narrator's older sister, born in Jamaica in 1948. Moved to England sometime in the mid to late 1950s under mysterious circumstances. Described as having a manic laugh and nosebleeds. She became increasingly distant from her family and died in 2004.

Esther Eugena Parks: The narrator's mother, born in 1928 in Trinityville, St. Thomas, Jamaica. Described as strong, talkative, and a devout Christian. She migrated to England in November 1960. Worked in harsh conditions at the Savoy Hotel Laundry, eventually developing tuberculosis. Died in October 2011.

Mabel Eugena Parks (Goddie May/Mrs. Telfer): The narrator's maternal aunt, born in 1919 in Jamaica. A significant figure in the narrator's childhood who provided stability and support. She moved to Britain and lived in Brixton. Mother of Cousin Morris. Died in December 2004.

Maudrianna Lenorah Parkes (Maud): The narrator's maternal grandmother and older sister of Great-Aunt Mel. Described as living a hard life and dying young.

James Patterson: Esther's father, a farmer and devout Christian who taught her to read the Bible.

Great-Aunt Mel (Jocelyn Melvina Parks): Born in 1904 in Jamaica, older sister to Maud. Moved to England in the late 1950s. Described as large in stature, statuesque, and a matriarchal figure. Eventually returned to Jamaica while her husband remained in Britain.

Uncle: Great-Aunt Mel's quiet, philosophical husband.

Telfer: Goddie May's husband who opposed the narrator being adopted by her. Described as beating her.

Morris Morrison (Cousin Morris): Goddie May's son, born in the 1930s. Described as a "ladies man" who enjoyed music and spent money carelessly. He never lived up to his responsibilities as a father. Died in November 2008.

Theodora: The narrator's cousin, entrusted by Goddie May with funds for Morris's burial.

Almond (Uncle Alti): Goddie May's older brother.

Tattis (Aunt Tat): Goddie May's younger sister.

Big Head: The father of the narrator's half-sister Sarah. Described as irresponsible and unreliable with child support payments.

Hunter: The Barbadian father of the narrator's half-siblings Stephen and Hazel, described as heartless and irresponsible.

Sarah: The narrator's half-sister, born in 1963.

Stephen: The narrator's half-brother, born in 1966.

Hazel: The narrator's half-sister, born two years after Stephen.

Other Figures

Mr. Sibly: The headmaster of the narrator's school who led assemblies with religious hymns.

Jeffrey: A West Indian road sweeper the narrator remembers from childhood.

Mr. Sunday-Ani: The narrator's African landlord.

Ian Fleming: Author of the James Bond novels who worked at his Jamaican home, Goldeneye, in the 1950s.

Christopher Columbus: Landed in Jamaica in 1494, claiming it for Spain.

Henry Morgan: A buccaneer who attacked Spanish ships, acquired wealth, and was knighted by the King of England.

Helen Shapiro: A pop singer whose song "Walking Back to Happiness" hit number one in the UK in 1962.

Norman Manley: Founder of the People's National Party in 1938.

Alexander Bustamante: Founder of the Jamaica Labour Party in 1943.

Glossary of Key Terms

Akan: A major ethnic group from Ghana, many of whom were enslaved and transported to the Americas.

Ashanti: A subgroup of the Akan people, known for their powerful kingdom and resistance to colonization.

Bedsit: A single room that serves as both bedroom and sitting room, with shared bathroom and kitchen facilities. Common form of low-cost housing in post-war Britain.

Blighty: A British slang term referring to England, often used nostalgically by those abroad.

Brixton: An area in South London known for its large Afro-Caribbean community, where the narrator and his family first settled in England.

Buccaneers: Pirates or privateers operating in the Caribbean during the 17th century who attacked Spanish ships.

Colourism: Discrimination based on skin tone within racial groups, favoring lighter skin. A legacy of colonialism that privileges proximity to whiteness.

Duppies: In Jamaican folklore, malevolent spirits associated with the dead who can cause harm or mischief.

Empire Windrush: A British ship that famously brought a large group of West Indian immigrants to Britain in 1948, marking a significant moment in post-war migration.

Gibraltar Camp: A refugee detention center in Jamaica during World War II, housing displaced Europeans.

Great Depression: A severe worldwide economic downturn beginning in 1929 that affected Caribbean economies.

Igbo: A major ethnic group from Nigeria, many of whom were enslaved and transported to the Americas.

Indentured Servants: Individuals forced to work for a set period under contract, often under harsh conditions; a system that continued after the abolition of slavery.

Jamaica Tourist Board: An official organization established in 1955 to promote tourism to Jamaica.

Maroons: Communities of formerly enslaved Africans who established independent settlements in the mountainous interior of Jamaica.

Nine Night: A traditional Jamaican wake originating from Africa, involving ceremonies and rituals held over nine nights following a death.

Obeah: A system of religious and magical beliefs and practices originating in West Africa, a form of folk magic in the Caribbean.

Patois: A Jamaican Creole language blending English with West African, Taino, Irish, Spanish, Hindi, and Portuguese influences.

Privateers: Privately owned ships authorized by a government to attack enemy vessels during wartime.

Rolling Calf: A shapeshifting spirit in Jamaican folklore that appears as a goat or bull with chains, one of the forms a duppy can take.

Taino Indians: The indigenous people of the Caribbean, including Jamaica, who were largely exterminated during Spanish colonization.

Trinitarian Bible Society: A Christian organization that distributes Bibles, which the narrator's mother was known to use.

Tuberculosis (TB): A bacterial infection primarily affecting the lungs. In post-war Britain, TB rates were high among Caribbean migrants living in poor, overcrowded housing conditions. Esther contracted TB from her work conditions.

Windrush Generation: The name given to people who immigrated to Britain from Caribbean countries between 1948 and 1971.

Windrush Scandal: A 2018 scandal in which thousands of long-term legal UK residents of Caribbean heritage were wrongly detained, denied services, or deported due to the UK government's "hostile environment" immigration policies, despite having lived in Britain legally for decades.