SHORTFILE 2

# The Windrush Generation

## EXPLORE Answering the call

TB → p. 31 (doc 2) DIFFÉRENCIATION

WAY 1

**1. a. Read** the excerpt and **identify** where and when the scene takes place.

At night, on the deck of a boat heading to England.

**b.** True or false? **Find** a quote to justify.

- The narrator is travelling with his family. ❑ T ☒ F

"I had left both my parents, and two older sisters, in what I was already thinking of as the old world." (ll.15-16)

- Before leaving, he was living with his parents. ❑ T ☒ F

"I had long ago left them and gone to live in the room at the back of the piano teacher's house." (ll.20-21)

- He plans to study medicine in England. ❑ T ☒ F

"my hope of maybe getting a newspaper job in England" (ll.27-28)

- He paid for the crossing himself. ☒ T ❑ F

"I'd finally saved enough money to buy a passage to England" (ll.23-24)

We were sitting out on deck listening to the sound of the sea. I say listening because it was so dark it was difficult to see the water. The deck lights above our heads were angled so they pooled about our feet. Complementing the sound of the sea, I could hear the low, intrusive grinding of the ship's engines. On the first night it had been impossible for any passengers to sleep, given this constant noise. Furthermore, we were skittish[1] and excitable emigrants, and our heads were populated with thoughts of what lay ahead in England. By the start of the second week most of us had accustomed ourselves to the perpetual rumbling vibration of the banana boat, and the mind-numbing[2] reality of the passage had now effectively stifled[3] our initial enthusiasm.

I was cold, for the night breeze was getting stronger. [...]

I had left both my parents, and two older sisters, in what I was already thinking of as the old world. But I knew that the family wouldn't miss me. They had no ambition, and they all felt safe within the narrow orbit of their predictable island lives. Why should they feel anything for me? After all, I had long ago left them and gone to live in the room at the back of the piano teacher's house. It was the only way I was going to get any privacy and peace and quiet. When I went to find my father at the stables[4] to tell him that I'd finally saved enough money to buy a passage to England, he looked me up and down and sucked his teeth dismissively. My father and I walked together in silence. There was little point in sharing with my father my hope of maybe getting a newspaper job in England. 'Hope' was a word that was absent from our communal vocabulary, but my girl Lorna understood what I wanted, and she encouraged and pushed me.

Caryl PHILLIPS, *Another Man in the Street*, 2025

1 nervous 2. boring 3. repressed 4. building where horses are kept

**2. a.** For each quote, **identify** the sense(s) involved.

| Quote | Sense(s) |
|---|---|
| "We were sitting out on deck listening to the sound of the sea. I say listening because it was so dark it was difficult to see the water." (ll.1-3) | Sound + sight which is blocked |
| "On the first night it had been impossible for any passengers to sleep, given this constant noise." (ll.6-7) | Sound |
| "I was cold, for the night breeze was getting stronger." (l.14) | Touch |

**b. Identify** which sense is most present in the first paragraph. What atmosphere does it create?

Sound - it insists on the darkness of the scene and the tiring aspect of the trip, with constant background noise.

**3. a. Find** quotes to **describe** the reaction of the narrator's family and of Lorna.

| Narrator's family | Lorna |
|---|---|
| "the family wouldn't miss me" (l.17) | "my girl Lorna understood what I wanted" (ll.29-30) |
| "They had no ambition, and they all felt safe within the narrow orbit of their predictable island lives" (ll.17-19) | "she encouraged and pushed me" (l.30) |
| "Why should they feel anything for me?" (l.19) | |
| "he looked me up and down and sucked his teeth dismissively" (ll.24-25) | |
| "My father and I walked together in silence" (ll.25-26) | |
| "There was little point in sharing with my father my hope" (ll.26-27) | |
| "'Hope' was a word that was absent from our communal vocabulary" (ll.28-29) | |

**b. Compare** the parents to Lorna in a sentence.

She seems to want the best for the narrator while the parents are either uninterested in their son, or even maybe angry with him.

**4.** To better understand the narrator's state of mind, **match** each quote with an adjective that describes him.

a. "our heads were populated with thoughts of what lay ahead" (ll.8-9)
b. "the narrow orbit of their predictable island lives" (ll.18-19)
c. "My father and I walked together in silence" (ll.25-26)
d. "I was cold, for the night breeze was getting stronger" (l.14)
e. "my girl Lorna understood what I wanted" (ll.29-30)

critical
lonely
nervously excited
vulnerable
grateful, understood

**5. Sum up** the excerpt, using the following phrases:
*to dream of a brighter future – a glimmer of hope – to leave one's family behind – a challenging journey*

The narrator is sailing to England on a boat, having left his family behind on his island. It is a challenging journey, marked by the noise of the engines, the darkness, and the cold of the night. Although his parents do not understand his ambition, he dreams of a brighter future and hopes to find work as a journalist. His girlfriend Lorna offers him a glimmer of hope, as she is the only one who truly believes in him.

## WAY 2

**1. Read** the excerpt and **describe** the situation: where and when does the scene take place? Who is the narrator?

At night, on the deck of a boat, during the second week of a crossing to England. The narrator is a young emigrant who has left his parents and two older sisters behind on his island. He has saved enough money himself to buy his passage and hopes to find a newspaper job in England.

**2.a. Pick out** three quotes from the first paragraph that appeal to the senses.

"listening to the sound of the sea", "it was so dark it was difficult to see", "the low, intrusive grinding of the ship's engines", "constant noise", "the perpetual rumbling vibration", "I was cold".

**b. Find** which sense dominates the paragraph. What atmosphere does it create?

Sound dominates, with sight blocked by darkness. The atmosphere is oppressive, monotonous and exhausting. It conveys the exhausting reality of the crossing.

**3. Find** quotes from the text to **contrast** the family's reaction to the narrator's departure with Lorna's. **Comment on** the difference between the family and Lorna.

Expected: family = indifference ("the family wouldn't miss me", "sucked his teeth dismissively", silence, absence of "hope" from "our communal vocabulary"). Lorna = understanding and active support ("understood what I wanted", "encouraged and pushed me"). The contrast highlights the narrator's isolation within his own family and the central place of Lorna as his only emotional anchor.

**4. Find** a quote to illustrate each one of the narrator's states of mind.

| State of mind | Quote |
|---|---|
| **a.** nervously excited | "our heads were populated with thoughts of what lay ahead" (ll.8-9) |
| **b.** critical | "the narrow orbit of their predictable island lives" (ll.18-19) |
| **c.** lonely | "My father and I walked together in silence" (ll.25-26) |
| **d.** vulnerable | "I was cold, for the night breeze was getting stronger" (l.14) |
| **e.** grateful, understood | "my girl Lorna understood what I wanted" (ll.29-30) |

**5. Sum up** the excerpt, focusing on the themes of hope and loneliness.

The narrator is sailing alone to England, surrounded by other emigrants but emotionally isolated. He feels lonely because his family does not understand or support his ambition: his father even reacted with dismissive silence when he announced his departure. Yet hope drives him forward, as he dreams of starting a new life and finding a job as a journalist in England. His girlfriend Lorna, who encouraged him to leave, is the only person who shares his hopes and yet she is still in the old world.