

Jamaica Kincaid (born May 25, 1949) is an Antiguan-American novelist, essayist, gardener, and gardening writer. She was born in St John's, Antigua (part of the twin-island nation of Antigua and Barbuda). She lives in North Bennington, Vermont (in the United States) during the summers, and is Professor of African and African American Studies in Residence at Harvard University during the academic year.¹

Kincaid's writing explores such themes as colonialism and colonial legacy, postcolonialism and neo-colonialism, gender and sexuality, renaming, mother-daughter relationships, British and American imperialism, colonial education, writing, racism, class, power, and adolescence. In her most recent novel, *See Now Then*, Kincaid also first explores the theme of time.²

The first paragraph of the essay describes Kincaid's impressions of England as seen from a map in school. She found the shape of England resembling a leg of mutton, but quickly erased the comparison because: she had been conditioned to think of England as a great land which could not be compared with familiar objects like a leg of mutton. She thought of England as a precious jewel that only the English had the: right to wear. For the Antiguans, England was a distant land, a holy land, like Jerusalem. In short, under their colonial masters, Antiguans had no existence of their own except what the English imposed on them. In the second paragraph, the author tells us that the Antiguans had nothing they could call their own. As a child, Kincaid had realized that everything from breakfast cereal to school uniforms, from shoes to hats and cars plying on the streets of Antigua, were made in England. Thus, the second paragraph takes off from the first and reiterates that Antigua was nothing except what England gave it to exist as a British colony.

Kincaid's statement: "I had long ago been conquered is full of anguish. She feels that she had no identity of her own and that she had been erased completely. The only thing that mattered was the compulsion to know about England and feel a sense of awe at its might and a sense of smallness because she was not English by birth, although her upbringing was English. She was pained at the thought that, like her, all other Antiguans were 'nobodies'; they could never be 'something'; they were just 'nothing'.

The children were taught only British history in the schools. The views children heard about the weather or the natural scenery, were views about the English weather and the English natural scenery. The exotic and picturesque beauty of England was totally alien to the children's imagination because the reality in Antigua was quite the opposite. There was also the compulsory singing of English hymns and paying obeisance to the English flag, with duty to the British Queen and the British people whom the children had never seen. This reveals how far the colonized Antiguans were forced to live an English life alien to their native culture. The literature they read did 'not relate to Caribbean islands.

Kincaid forms a very poor opinion of England. There is nothing in it that appeals to her. She dislikes England, its food, its weather and its people. Even the white cliffs of Dover, that she had

¹ Wikipedia

² Ibid

read about at school, were a disappointment when she saw them. Kincaid knows that all her views about England, starting with the map and ending with her trip, will remain within her because colonized people were powerless to exert or express any opinion on the mighty English. She is sure that her opinions, if expressed, will be contemptuously dismissed as irrational prejudices by the English.