

ISLAND MAN
By Grace Nichols

Work Booklet

Pupil:



Island Man by Grace Nichols

(for a Caribbean island man in London who still wakes up to the sounds of the sea)

Morning

and island man wakes up
to the sound of blue surf
in his head
the steady breaking and wombing

wild seabirds
and fishermen pushing out to sea
the sun surfacing defiantly
from the east
of his small emerald island
he always comes back groggily groggily

Comes back to sands
of a grey metallic soar
 to surge of wheels
to dull north circular roar

muffling muffling
his crumpled pillow waves
island man heaves himself

Another London day

Island man - worksheet pack

Imagine you are leaving your home town. What five things will you miss the most? What five things will you miss the least?

Complete the chart below to record your answers.

Things I would miss the most	Reasons why
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.
5.	5.
Things I would miss least	Reasons why
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.
5.	5.

Why would a man from the Caribbean come to live in London? How would he feel about his life in England and why might he feel this way?

Imagine you are the Caribbean Island man in the poem.

Write a postcard back home to the Caribbean from London.

Use the images in the poem to describe life in London and the images of the Caribbean to express what you miss about the Caribbean.

Contrasts

What things does the island man associate with: a) his island home; b) London?

Complete the chart below to record your answers.

Island home	London
<i>The sound of blue surf</i>	<i>The sound of a grey metallic soar</i>

Grace Nichols appeals to our senses of sight and sound. The images and sounds which she describes help us to see the differences between the two places.

Complete the table below. Fill in the sights the island man sees and the sounds he hears.

In the dream island	In London
He sees:	He sees:
He hears:	He hears:

The poem presents two contrasting pictures - the Caribbean island in the man's head, and the reality of his London surroundings. The words used in the first half of the poem describe the island. They contrast strongly with the words used in the second half of the poem, which describe London. Find as many contrasts as you can. Look for: colours; sight and sounds; natural and artificial features. Complete the table below.

Contrasts	Caribbean island	London
Colours		
Sights and sounds		
Natural and artificial features		

What types of images describe the Caribbean?

POINT: The poet uses very _____ images to describe the Caribbean.

EVIDENCE: An example of this would be _____

EXPLANATION: This gives the reader the impression that

What types of images describe London?

POINT: The poet uses very

EVIDENCE: We can see this when it says

EXPLANATION: By describing London like this the poet makes it clear that

List the verbs in lines 1-10 then list the verbs used in lines 11-19. How do the verbs contrast? Explain why the poet has chosen such verbs.

Verbs in lines 1-10

Verbs in lines 11-19

POINT: The poet uses very positive verbs in order to describe the Caribbean but very negative verbs to describe London.

EVIDENCE: We can see this where it says

EXPLANATION: The poet is using verbs to try and show

Imagery

Think about the images the poet uses. What do the images suggest to you?

Complete the chart

Image	Notes on the image
The steady breaking and wombing	<i>Conveys a natural rhythm like the waves of the sea. 'Wombing' suggests comfort, security - the place of his birth.</i>
The sun surfacing defiantly	
His small emerald island	
A grey metallic soar	
To dull North Circular roar	
His crumpled pillow waves	
Island man heaves himself	
Another London day	

Look through the poem and find examples of: metaphor, alliteration, onomatopoeia, and personification.

Technique	Evidence	Effect
Onomatopoeia	roar	'Roar' suggests not only the unpleasant loud volume of traffic but also that the world outside is a hostile, dangerous place.
Metaphor		
Alliteration		
Personification		

In lines 12-14, the island and the city are mixed up, to suggest the confusion in the man's head as he wakes up.

Which words suggest nature?

Which words suggest the city?

What do you think 'wombing' means? Think about where the man comes from, and what has just happened to him.

POINT: The poet makes it clear to the reader how strong the connection between the island and island man is.

EVIDENCE: We can see this when the word _____ is used.

EXPLANATION: The connotations of this word make the reader think of

Why do you think the sun is described as coming up 'defiantly'?

POINT: _____

EVIDENCE: _____

EXPLANATION: This is a very positive image that gives the impression that

The word 'muffling' is repeated on line 16. How is the sound of the traffic 'muffling' what is in his head?

POINT: _____

EVIDENCE: _____

EXPLANATION:

Look at the verbs that end in -ing. List them here:

These verbs are called present continuous verbs, there is no end to the action. What does this suggest about island man's dream of the Caribbean?

What are the 'crumpled pillow waves'? Think about the sounds in the man's head, and when he has heard them. Think about the physical appearance of the pillow.

POINT: The connection between the island and island man's sleep is made obvious when a metaphor is used to describe Island man's pillow.

EVIDENCE: _____

EXPLANATION:

It is an effort for Island man to come back to reality. How is this effort conveyed?

POINT: _____

EVIDENCE: _____

EXPLANATION:

Structure, pace, rhyme, and punctuation

The poem has no punctuation at all. Why do you think the poet has chosen to do this? Think about the scene that is in the island man's head.

POINT: The poet has decided not to use punctuation within the poem.

EXPLANATION: The poet does this in order to show

Although there is no punctuation, the poet does use capital letters - but not many. Look at the capital letters in the poem, and try to decide why the poet has used them at these points. Notice that there are more in the second half of the poem than the first.

POINT: The poet uses capital letters sparingly in order to indicate _____.

EVIDENCE: One example of this is _____

EXPLANATION:

The dedication under the title is in italics, unlike the rest of the poem. Why do you think this is? How is the language of the dedication different from the rest of the poem? Why is this?

POINT: An unusual part of the poem is the dedication. The dedication

EVIDENCE: _____

EXPLANATION: It's interesting to note that the language of the dedication is prose rather than verse. The reason for this is

The first line is the only one that consists of a single word. Why do you think the poet has chosen to do this?

POINT: The poem opens with a single word.

EVIDENCE: _____

EXPLANATION:

Explain the placement of line 11.

POINT: The poet uses a gap and repetition on line 11 to show _____

EVIDENCE: _____

EXPLANATION: The gap helps to create the sense of struggle as the man wakes up. The repetition of the word 'groggily' shows

Line 15 belongs almost completely to the city - but what does the word 'roar' still connect with? (Remember that rhyme connects things)

POINT: Although line 15 describes the city there is still further evidence that Island man is still thinking of the island.

EVIDENCE: The use of the word _____ makes this clear.

EXPLANATION: Although this word refers to the traffic it could also be applied to the sound of the waves. This shows the reader

The last line is broken off from the rest of the poem - it is the only line that stands by itself. Why do you think the poet has made this structural choice?

POINT: The poet chooses to conclude the poem by

EVIDENCE: _____

EXPLANATION: This indicates that

What is strange about the shape of the poem? Why do you think the poet has used this specific layout?

POINT: The layout of the poem is

EXPLANATION: The poet has used the layout of the poem to reflect

How are the first three lines and the last three lines similar yet different?

The line lengths and number of lines in each verse fluctuate giving the poem a confused feel. Explain why this is appropriate.

Consider the pace of the poem. Look at the first ten lines. How would you describe the pace of the first half of the poem?

Now read from line 11 to the end. How has the pace of the poem changed?

What is Nichols trying to achieve by altering the pace of the poem? What does this tell us about the man's feelings towards his life in London?

Fill in the blanks in the passage below. The words you need are in the box.

The poem *Island Man* is about how _____ can still remember their place of birth in their dreams. It is also about how hard it is to get used to a new _____ when it is totally different to the one you have left behind.

The island man could be the poet because she came to this country in 1980. However, the name *Island Man* also makes you think of every _____ who has left their original home to come and live in Britain.

The first half of the poem is peaceful and relaxing. It describes the _____ sights and sounds of a beautiful Caribbean island. However, this _____ changes when the poet switches her focus and begins to describe the reality of waking up to a new day in busy, drab, dreary London.

The _____ of the poem is almost like the breaking of waves on a seashore. This works well: the varying lengths of the lines, and the words used, create a sense of waves rolling onto a beach.

The poet uses the _____ of sights and sounds to help to structure the poem. First she builds a picture of living on an island in the

West Indies: *the sound of blue surf, the sun surfacing, the wild seabirds, the fishermen pushing out to sea, etc.* Then she contrasts this description with the phrases used to describe London: *the sands of a grey metallic soar, the surge of wheels, the dull North Circular roar.* This helps to paint a picture of two very different worlds.

The poet uses three poetic devices very effectively. In the first _____, you notice the use of the real verb *breaking* and the invented verb *wombing*. These words suggest comfort and security because they make you think of _____. They suggest the island man gradually emerging from his soothing dream and into the real world...like a baby being born. The poet also uses colour very effectively to paint contrasting pictures of the Caribbean island and of London. At the beginning of the poem, the colours used to describe the Caribbean island are very _____. For example, *blue surf* and *emerald island*. Towards the end of the poem, the colours used to describe London are very _____. For example, *grey metallic soar* and *dull North Circular*. This is effective because it provides a good contrast between the past and the present - between living in the West Indies and living in London. The colours provide clues about how the man feels: happy and full of life in the _____; sad and depressed in _____. The reader is left with the impression that the present life in London is a poor substitute for the Caribbean past.

Lastly, I would like to look at the use of repetition used in lines:

11 _____

11-12 _____

16 _____

I think that the poet uses repetition to slow the _____ down. It allows the reader to focus on the implications of the man waking from his dream. It suggests that the man has to accept the daytime reality of living in London, but in his dreams he keeps alive the memories of living in the West Indies.

In conclusion, I think that the poem works very well. The reader is given an insight into what it must be like for an immigrant living in a new country. Surrounded by a different culture, emotional ties to your homeland remain and many happy _____ are locked inside you.

Childbirth	memories	London	immigrants	
Bright	rhythm	Caribbean	tranquil	
Stanza	mood	environment	drab	person
	Pace		contrast	

Bringing it all together:

Now let's write a **Critical Essay Response**.

The Question:

How does the poet, Grace Nichols use **imagery** and **poetic techniques** to create a strong sense of **place** for the reader?

Essay planning

Use this grid to make notes about what you think will be important to mention in your essay.

Storyline	Imagery
Imagery	Poetic techniques
Pace	Structure
Rhyme	punctuation

Critical Essay Plan:

Introduction

- Tell the reader the title and name of the poet.
- Explain briefly in two sentences what the poem is about.
- Say what you are going to do - explain how a variety of images and poetic techniques used by the poet creates a strong sense of place for the reader.

Paragraph 1

- **Point** - introduce a technique (from the grid above) used at the beginning of the poem which creates a strong sense of place - the Caribbean island.
- **Evidence** - quote the technique from the poem
- **Explain** - **explain** the connotations of the image (what it suggests to us) then go on to show how this helps us imagine the Caribbean more clearly and vividly.

Paragraph 2

- **Point** - introduce another technique (from the grid above) which is the turning point in the poem and creates another strong sense of place (waking up in London).
- **Evidence** - quote the technique from the poem
- **Explain** - explain the connotations of the image (what it suggests to us). Suggest why the poet has chosen to structure the poem this way -the unusual position of the repeated phrase... What does it make us think about and understand about the man's situation.

Paragraph 3

- **Point** - introduce final technique (from the grid above) used in the second part of the poem which creates a strong sense of place - London.
- **Evidence** - quote the technique from the poem
- **Explain - explain** (give reasons for) the impact of the technique (what it suggests or helps the reader understand about London life more clearly and vividly).

Conclusion

- Briefly sum up the points you have made in your essay - don't quote or add anything new.
- Directly answer the question asked at the beginning of the essay task - say how well you think the poet, Grace Nichols, has used the techniques (the 3 analysed in the essay) to create a strong sense of place for you, the reader.

Well done, you've finished!



