The Canterbury Tales – Geoffrey Chaucer, 1387-1400

How does Chaucer use language and imagery in this extract to present the idea of pilgrimage and the diverse nature of the group of travellers?

When April with his sweet showers has pierced
The drought of March right to the root and bathed
Each vein of plant in such life-giving juice
That flowers bloom in every field and heath;
When Zephyrus with his soft and fragrant breath
Has stirred each grove and field in tender growth,
And the young sun has run half of his course
Through Aries, and small birds sing with force,
Their sleep cut short by Nature's eager goad—
Then folks long off on pilgrimage to go,
And palmers travel far to distant strands
To seek out holy shrines in foreign lands,
And especially from every shire's end
Of England, down to Canterbury they wend,
To seek the holy blessed martyr, quick
To help them when in sickness they were sick.
It happened in that season, on a day
In Southwark at the Tabard as I lay,
Ready to travel to Canterbury
With heart devout and will quite voluntary,
That at the inn there came a company
Of various folk, by chance in fellowship,
All pilgrims who had vowed to make the trip
To Canterbury. Rooms and meals they found
At the inn, and when the sun had gone down,
I'd spoken with them all in such a way
That I was one with them in their array,
And made agreement early on to rise
To journey with them as I would advise.

But before I go further in this tale,
It's right to let you know, without fail,
Their social rank, their number, and degree,
And what they wore, and each one's quality.
And with a knight I therefore will begin.

The Faerie Queene – Edmund Spenser, 1590

Explore how Spenser presents the poet's new role and the themes he intends to explore in this extended extract from *The Faerie Queene*.

> Lo I the man, whose Muse whilome did maske,
> As time her taught, in lowly Shepheards weeds,
> Am now enforst a far unfitter taske,
> For trumpets sterne to chaunge mine Oaten reeds,
> And sing of Knights and Ladies gentle deeds;
> Whose prayses having slept in silence long,
> Me, all too meane, the sacred Muse areeds
> To blazon broad emongst her learned throng:
> Fierce warres and faithfull loues shall moralize my song.
>
> Amorous Alcyon riddles all the day,
> And drownes the night with music of his lay:
> Whilest yong Diana, from her Summer court,
> Goes into Crannon to hunt the hart:
> By which, as through a secret path, the more
> I may at will my soules desire direct
> To armes and amours, that whilome were my lore,
> And are my study nowe by just affect,
> Right well I wote, my way is not amisse to sect.

Sonnet 130 – William Shakespeare, c.1592-8

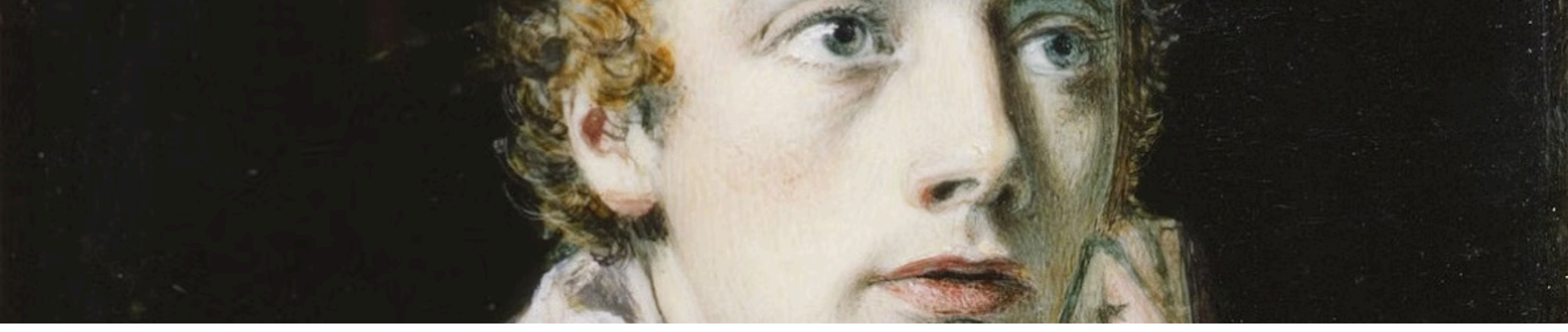
How does Shakespeare challenge traditional ideas of beauty and love in Sonnet 130?

> My mistress’ eyes are nothing like the sun;
> Coral is far more red than her lips’ red;
> If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;
> If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.
> I have seen roses damasked, red and white,
> But no such roses see I in her cheeks;
> And in some perfumes is there more delight
> Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks.
> I love to hear her speak, yet well I know
> That music hath a far more pleasing sound;
> I grant I never saw a goddess go;
> My mistress when she walks treads on the ground.
> And yet, by heaven, I think my love as rare
> As any she belied with false compare.

Beachy Head – Charlotte Smith, 1807

How does Smith explore the relationship between humans and nature in this extract from *Beachy Head*?

> On thy stupendous summit, rock sublime !
> That o'er the channel rear'd, half way at sea
> The mariner at early morning hails,
> I would recline; while Fancy should go forth,
> And represent the strange and awful hour
> Of vast concussion; when the Omnipotent
> Stretch'd forth his arm, and rent the solid hills,
> Bidding the impetuous main flood rush between
>
> The rifted shores, and from the continent
> Eternally divided this green isle.
> Imperial lord of the high southern coast !
> From thy projecting head-land I would mark
> Far in the east the shades of night disperse,
> Melting and thinned, as from the dark blue wave
> Emerging, brilliant rays of arrowy light
> Dart from the horizon; when the glorious sun
> Just lifts above it his resplendent orb.
> Advances now, with feathery silver touched,
> The rippling tide of flood; glisten the sands,
> While, inmates of the chalky clefts that scar
> Thy sides precipitous, with shrill harsh cry,
> Their white wings glancing in the level beam,
> The terns, and gulls, and tarrocks, seek their food,
> And thy rough hollows echo to the voice
>
> Of the gray choughs, and ever restless daws,
> With clamour, not unlike the chiding hounds,
> While the lone shepherd, and his baying dog,
> Drive to thy turfy crest his bleating flock.
> The high meridian of the day is past,
> And Ocean now, reflecting the calm Heaven,
> Is of cerulean hue; and murmurs low
> The tide of ebb, upon the level sands.
> The sloop, her angular canvas shifting still,
> Catches the light and variable airs
> That but a little crisp the summer sea.
> Dimpling its tranquil surface.



Ode to a Nightingale - John Keats, 1819

How does Keats use contrast between the nightingale and human experience to explore themes of suffering and immortality in “Ode to a Nightingale”?

1

My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains
My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk,
Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains
One minute past, and Lethe-wards had sunk:
’Tis not through envy of thy happy lot,
But being too happy in thine happiness,—
That thou, light-winged Dryad of the trees
In some melodious plot
Of beechen green, and shadows numberless,
Singest of summer in full-throated ease.

2

O, for a draught of vintage! that hath been
Cool’d a long age in the deep-delvèd earth,
Tasting of Flora and the country green,
Dance, and Provençal song, and sunburnt mirth!
O for a beaker full of the warm South,
Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene,
With beaded bubbles winking at the brim,
And purple-stainèd mouth;
That I might drink, and leave the world unseen,
And with thee fade away into the forest dim:

3

Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget
What thou among the leaves hast never known,
The weariness, the fever, and the fret
Here, where men sit and hear each other groan;
Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last gray hairs,
Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies;
Where but to think is to be full of sorrow
And leaden-eyed despairs,
Where Beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,
Or new Love pine at them beyond to-morrow.

4

Away! away! for I will fly to thee,
Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards,
But on the viewless wings of Poesy,
Though the dull brain perplexes and retards:
Already with thee! tender is the night,
And haply the Queen-Moon is on her throne,
Cluster’d around by all her starry Fays;
But here there is no light,
Save what from heaven is with the breezes blown
Through verdurous glooms and winding mossy ways.

5

I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,
Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs,
But, in embalmed darkness, guess each sweet
Wherewith the seasonable month endows
The grass, the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild;
White hawthorn, and the pastoral eglantine;
Fast fading violets cover’d up in leaves;
And mid-May’s eldest child,
The coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine,
The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves.

6

Darkling I listen; and, for many a time
I have been half in love with easeful Death,
Call’d him soft names in many a musèd rhyme,
To take into the air my quiet breath;
Now more than ever seems it rich to die,
To cease upon the midnight with no pain,
While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad
In such an ecstasy!
Still wouldst thou sing, and I have ears in vain—
To thy high requiem become a sod.

7

Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!
No hungry generations tramp thee down;
The voice I hear this passing night was heard
In ancient days by emperor and clown:
Perhaps the self-same song that found a path
Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home,
She stood in tears amid the alien corn;
The same that oft-times hath
Charm’d magic casements, opening on the foam
Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.

8

Forlorn! the very word is like a bell
To toll me back from thee to my sole self!
Adieu! the fancy cannot cheat so well
As she is fam’d to do, deceiving elf.
Adieu! adieu! thy plaintive anthem fades
Past the near meadows, over the still stream,
Up the hill-side; and now ’tis buried deep
In the next valley-glades:
Was it a vision, or a waking dream?
Fled is that music:—Do I wake or sleep?

The Night is Darkening Round Me - Emily Bronte, 1837

How does Bronte explore the themes of nature and isolation?

> The night is darkening round me
> The wild winds coldly blow
> But a tyrant spell has bound me
> And I cannot cannot go
>
> The giant trees are bending
> Their bare boughs weighed with snow
> And the storm is fast descending
> And yet I cannot go
>
> Clouds beyond clouds above me
> Wastes beyond wastes below
> But nothing drear can move me
> I will not cannot go

Goblin Market – Christina Rossetti, 1862

How does Rossetti use language and imagery in this extract from *Goblin Market* to create an atmosphere that is both tempting and unsettling?

Morning and evening
Maids heard the goblins cry:
"Come buy our orchard fruits,
Come buy, come buy:
Apples and quinces,
Lemons and oranges,
Plump unpecked cherries,
Melons and raspberries,
Bloom-down-cheeked peaches,
Swart-headed mulberries,
Wild free-born cranberries,
Crab-apples, dewberries,
Pine-apples, blackberries,
Apricots, strawberries; -
All ripe together
In summer weather, -
Morns that pass by,
Fair eves that fly;
Come buy, come buy:
Our grapes fresh from the vine,
Pomegranates full and fine,
Dates and sharp bullaces,
Rare pears and greengages,
Damsons and bilberries,
Taste them and try:
Currants and gooseberries,
Bright-fire-like barberries,
Figs to fill your mouth,
Citrons from the South,
Sweet to tongue and sound to eye;
Come buy, come buy."

Evening by evening
Among the brookside rushes,
Laura bowed her head to hear,
Lizzie veiled her blushes:
Crouching close together
In the cooling weather,
With clasping arms and cautioning lips,
With tingling cheeks and finger-tips.
"Lie close," Laura said,
Pricking up her golden head:
"We must not look at goblin men,
We must not buy their fruits:
Who knows upon what soil they fed
Their hungry thirsty roots?"
"Come buy," call the goblins
Hobbling down the glen. "Oh,"
cried Lizzie, "Laura, Laura,
You should not peep at goblin men."
Lizzie covered up her eyes,
Covered close lest they should look;
Laura reared her glossy head,
And whispered like the restless brook:
"Look, Lizzie, look, Lizzie,
Down the glen tramp little men.
One hauls a basket,
One bears a plate,
One lugs a golden dish
Of many pounds' weight.
How fair the vine must grow
Whose grapes are so luscious;
How warm the wind must blow
Through those fruit bushes."
"No," said Lizzie: "No, no, no;
Their offers should not charm us,
Their evil gifts would harm us.'
She thrust a dimpled finger
In each ear, shut eyes and ran:
Curious Laura chose to linger
Wondering at each merchant man.
One had a cat's face,
One whisked a tail,
One tramped at a rat's pace,
One crawled like a snail,
One like a wombat prowled obtuse and furry,
One like a ratel tumbled hurry scurry.
She heard a voice like voice of doves
Cooing all together:
They sounded kind and full of loves
In the pleasant weather

Because I could not stop for Death– Emily Dickinson, c. 1863

How does Dickinson use imagery and personification in the poem to explore her attitude toward death and eternity?

> Because I could not stop for Death –
> He kindly stopped for me –
> The Carriage held but just Ourselves –
> And Immortality.
>
> We slowly drove – He knew no haste
> And I had put away
> My labor and my leisure too,
> For His Civility –
>
> We passed the School, where Children strove
> At Recess – in the Ring –
> We passed the Fields of Gazing Grain –
> We passed the Setting Sun –
>
> Or rather – He passed Us –
> The Dews drew quivering and chill –
> For only Gossamer, my Gown –
> My Tippet – only Tulle –
>
> We paused before a House that seemed
> A Swelling of the Ground –
> The Roof was scarcely visible –
> The Cornice – in the Ground –
>
> Since then – ’tis Centuries – and yet
> Feels shorter than the Day
> I first surmised the Horses’ Heads
> Were toward Eternity –

The Darkling Thrush – Thomas Hardy, 1900

How does Hardy use imagery and contrast *The Darkling Thrush* to explore feelings of despair and hope?

> I leant upon a coppice gate
> When Frost was spectre-gray,
> And Winter's dregs made desolate
> The weakening eye of day.
>
> The tangled bine-stems scored the sky
> Like strings of broken lyres,
> And all mankind that haunted nigh
> Had sought their household fires.
>
> At once a voice arose among
> The bleak twigs overhead
> In a full-hearted evensong
> Of joy illimited;—
>
> An aged thrush, frail, gaunt, and small,
> In blast-beruffled plume,
> Had chosen thus to fling his soul
> Upon the growing gloom.
>
> So little cause for carolings
> Of such ecstatic sound
> Was written on terrestrial things
> Afar or nigh around,
>
> That I could think there trembled through
> His happy good-night air
> Some blessed Hope, whereof he knew
> And I was unaware.

Song for a Dark Girl - Langston Hughes, 1927

How does Langston Hughes use poetic techniques to explore themes of racism, grief, and injustice in *Song for a Dark Girl*?

> Way Down South in Dixie
> They hung my black young lover
> To a cross roads tree.
>
> Way Down South in Dixie
> I asked the white Lord Jesus
> What was the use of prayer.
>
> Way Down South in Dixie
> Love is a naked shadow
> On a gnarled and naked tree.

Ariel - Sylvia Plath, 1965

How does Plath use animal imagery and powerful symbolism in *Ariel* to explore themes of freedom and identity?

> Stasis in darkness.
> Then the substanceless blue
> Pour of tor and distances.
>
> God's lioness,
> How one we grow,
> Pivot of heels and knees! —-The furrow
>
> Splits and passes, sister to
> The brown arc
> Of the neck I cannot catch,
>
> Nigger-eye
> Berries cast dark
> Hooks —-
>
> Black sweet blood mouthfuls,
> Shadows.
> Something else
>
> Hauls me through air —-
> Thighs, hair;
> Flakes from my heels.
>
> White
> Godiva, I unpeel —-
> Dead hands, dead stringencies.
>
> And now I
> Foam to wheat, a glitter of seas.
> The child's cry
>
> Melts in the wall.
> And I
> Am the arrow,
>
> The dew that flies,
> Suicidal, at one with the drive
> Into the red
>
> Eye, the cauldron of morning.

Woman Work – Maya Angelou, 1978

How does Angelou present the overwhelming nature of the speaker’s daily life and her determination?

> I've got the children to tend
> The clothes to mend
> The floor to mop
> The food to shop
> Then the chicken to fry
> The baby to dry
> I got company to feed
> The garden to weed
> I've got shirts to press
> The tots to dress
> The cane to be cut
> I gotta clean up this hut
> Then see about the sick
> And the cotton to pick.
>
> Shine on me, sunshine
> Rain on me, rain
> Fall softly, dewdrops
> And cool my brow again.
>
> Storm, blow me from here
> With your fiercest wind
> Let me float across the sky
> 'Til I can rest again.
>
> Fall gently, snowflakes
> Cover me with white
> Cold icy kisses and
> Let me rest tonight.
>
> Sun, rain, curving sky
> Mountain, oceans, leaf and stone
> Star shine, moon glow
> You're all that I can call my own.

In Cardigan Bay - Brian Morris, c.1980s-

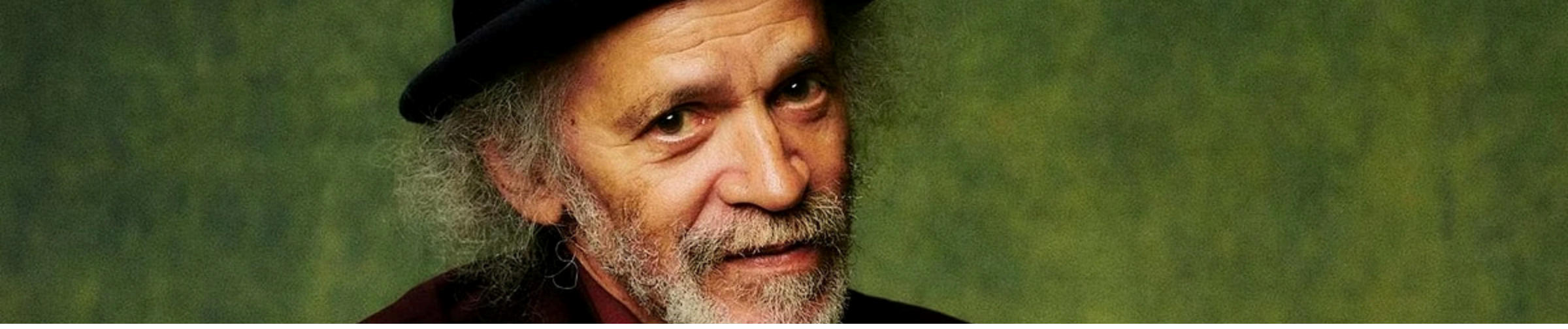
Explore how sensory imagery is used to bring the market scene to life in the poem.

> Auntie Jane fish, they call her. She is rough,
> Rawboned, fat, toothless, fifteen stone of grin
> And grumble. Her voice cuts the market din
> Like a saw on a nail. She stinks enough
> Of fish to change the colour of the light.
> Her phosphorescent flesh's steaming glow
> Drips female sweat and friendship. Traders know
> Men come for miles and buy from morn till night.
> Daily she sells the princely salmon, trout,
> The vulgar herring and the vicious eel
> With ancient eyes, lobsters black from the creel,
> All fresh, all caught before the stars went out.
> All day she squats here, nodding her big head,
> Richly alive among the silvery dead.

Havisham - Carol Ann Duffy, 1993

How does Duffy explore the complex emotions of love and pain in *Havisham*?

> Beloved sweetheart bastard. Not a day since then
> I haven't wished him dead. Prayed for it
> so hard I've dark green pebbles for eyes,
> ropes on the back of my hands I could strangle with.
>
> Spinster. I stink and remember. Whole days
> in bed cawing Nooooo at the wall; the dress
> yellowing, trembling if I open the wardrobe;
> the slewed mirror, full-length, her, myself, who did this
>
> to me? Puce curses that are sounds not words.
> Some nights better, the lost body over me,
> my fluent tongue in its mouth in its ear
> then down till I suddenly bite awake. Love's
>
> hate behind a white veil; a red balloon bursting
> in my face. Bang. I stabbed at a wedding cake.
> Give me a male corpse for a long slow honeymoon.
> Don't think it's only the heart that b-b-b-breaks



Windrush Child – John Agard, 2015

How does Agard use imagery and repetition to portray the experiences and feelings of the Windrush generation in this extract?

> Behind you
> Windrush child
> palm trees wave goodbye
>
> above you
> Windrush child
> seabirds asking why
>
> around you
> Windrush child
> blue water rolling by
>
> beside you
> Windrush child
> your Windrush mum and dad
>
> think of storytime yard
> and mango mornings
>
> and new beginnings
> doors closing and opening
>
> will things turn out right?
> At least the ship will arrive
> in midsummer light
>
> and you Windrush child
> think of Grandmother
> telling you don't forget to write
>
> and with one last hug
> walk good walk good
> and the sea's wheel carries on spinning
>
> and from that place England
> you tell her in a letter
> of your Windrush adventure
>
> stepping in a big ship
> not knowing how long the journey
> or that you're stepping into history
>
> bringing your Caribbean eye
> to another horizon
> Grandmother's words your shining beacon
>
> learning how to fly
> the kite of your dreams
> in an English sky
>
> Windrush child
> walking good walking good
> in a mind-opening
> meeting of snow and sun