

This story centered on the conflict of cultural identity. The narrator and her friend Eddie are both English descending children growing up in the Caribbean. The narrator is a full blown white English girl while Eddie has an English father and colored mother. Eddie's father is obsessed with his English heritage and expects Eddie to be too. Both children are unsure of their true cultural identity. When people who had never seen England before talked about it around Eddie, he remained silent. This gave the narrator doubts about 'home.' Eddie claims that he does not like strawberries or daffodils, which are English, even though his father constantly talks about them. The narrator states that her relations with the few 'real' English boys and girls she had met were awkward. She says that if she called herself English, she was told that she is not English, but a horrid colonial. Both children were also ridiculed by the black children. Eddie's father built a room onto their house to store his books from England. Eddie's mother hated this room. When Eddie's father died, Eddie claimed the room and books as his own. One day, Eddie's mother and their housekeeper Mildred went into the room and started pulling books off the shelves and piling them into two heaps. Eddie's mother planned to burn one of the piles of books. Eddie and the narrator tried to prevent the books from being burned by both of them grabbing and saving one. Both children struggle with their cultural identity because they have English roots, but are growing up in the Caribbean. Eddie does not want to be English like his father, but when his father dies, he is angry at his mother for burning his father's English books. Those books are Eddie's closest tie to being English and he cherishes them. His father tries to force an English identity upon him while his mother tries to take his English identity away. Jean Rhys had similar life experiences as the narrator and Eddie. She was raised in Dominica, but had a Welsh father and Creole mother. She felt out of place in Dominica, but estranged from her European roots. Since Rhys can relate to the characters in her story, this enabled her to become an influential women's writer of the twentieth century.