**Sam Selvon, *The Lonely Londoners* (1956)**

This sheet will assist you in thinking about particular key issues related to Sam Selvon’s *The Lonely Londoners*. It contains information on Caribbean immigration and racial tensions in London. In the case of all embedded Windows Media files, double-click on the icon to play using your computer’s default settings for playing them back.

**Caribbean Immigration**

Look at the following newsreel (2 minutes, 49 seconds). It is from 24 June 1948 and, after a short section on the arrival of Ingrid Bergman at Heathrow, there is another on the arrival of a number of new Jamaican immigrants on the *Windrush*:



**Things to Consider**

1. Consider the kind of questions that John Parsons, the Pathé reporter, asks the new arrivals. What kind of tone do his questions convey about British feelings to immigration at the time? How does this compare to the episode in *The Lonely Londoners* when Tanty is interviewed by the *Echo* reporter (pp. 30-32)? What does Moses feel about the reporter and what might have changed in the intervening period between 1948 and 1956?
2. At the end of the interview, we meet a calypso singer known as “Lord Kitchener,” who sings a song called “London is the Place for Me.” Who was the original “Lord Kitchener” (this singer’s namesake)? Why is London the place for him and the other immigrants? What is a “calypso” and why might it be a useful way of understanding how Selvon writes *The Lonely Londoners*?

**Racial Tensions in London**

Look at the following newsreel, entitled “Our Jamaican Problem” (5 minutes, 14 seconds). It is from 17 January 1955, and deals with “nation-wide concern” about the influx of emigrants from West Indies:



**Things to Consider**

1. What is the “national controversy” that immigration has stirred? Why does the reporter state that “whatever our feelings, we cannot deny them entry”? How does the reporter “spin” their story? How does this compare to Moses’ assertion in *The Lonely Londoners* that “we have more right than any people from the damn continent to live and work in this country” (p. 40)? Why do you think, despite Moses’ assertions, they are *not* treated like British citizens?

**Sources**

Selvon, Sam. *The Lonely Londoners*. Longman, 2001.

*Our Jamaican Problem*. [17 January 1955]*.* [British Pathé Limited](http://www.britishpathe.com/), ref. 501.28.

*Pathé Reporter Meets 24 June 1948*. [24 June 1948]. [British Pathé Limited](http://www.britishpathe.com/), ref. 1430.37.

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