

## ABSTRACT

### Early Reading Books and Jamaican Identity: Re-visiting a Postcolonial Perspective

Cecille Inez Maye-Hemmings

This thesis investigates the way in which Jamaicans have interacted with their primary level reading books at different periods, specifically with regard to the books' impact on their identity formation.

Colonial education and its cultural products are widely acknowledged to have affected Jamaican students negatively. This thesis investigates that notion by hearing from some people who themselves had used the series of colonial reading books, *Royal Readers*, in order to find out what they felt about the books. Then I do a comparative investigation of students in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, who had used a different set of reading books created specifically for them, the *First Aid in English Readers for the Caribbean*, to hear how they interacted with these more modern texts.

The methodology has two components: content analysis through a close reading of both series of reading books, and interviews of two sets of people who respectively had used these reading books.

From the analyses of both sets of interviews, I demonstrate that the students, even at differing historical periods, have found ways to use their books to their own ends, based on their own preferences and needs. The students show a strong sense of self, and show that the books have been only one factor in their identity formation.

**Keywords:** Cecille Inez Maye-Hemmings; *Royal Readers*; colonial education; reading books; identity; self-image.