

Comparative Analysis: West Indies, U.S.A. vs Test Match Sabina Park

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Introduction

Stewart Brown's *West Indies, U.S.A.* and *Test Match Sabina Park* both use specific Caribbean spaces to examine race, power, and postcolonial identity. *West Indies, U.S.A.* presents an airplane stopover in Puerto Rico, exposing American imperial control, racial suspicion, and economic inequality. *Test Match Sabina Park* presents a cricket match in Jamaica where a white Englishman's racial pride is dismantled by the West Indian crowd. Both poems criticize colonial power, but *West Indies, U.S.A.* focuses on American control over Caribbean movement and ownership, while *Test Match Sabina Park* focuses on the humiliation of British arrogance in a Caribbean cultural space.

Central shared theme: race, colonial power, and Caribbean identity, especially how Caribbean spaces expose, challenge, or reverse imperial authority.

Caribbean spaces as political stages

Both poems turn physical settings into symbols of power.

In *West Indies, U.S.A.*, airports become "calling cards" and "cultural fingermarks." Each terminal reveals something about the island's economic condition and political identity. San Juan's airport becomes a site of control, where passengers are ordered to stay on the plane under "US regulations."

In *Test Match Sabina Park*, the cricket ground becomes a site of cultural reversal. The Englishman enters "proudly wearing the rosette of my skin," expecting his whiteness and nationality to carry authority. Instead, Sabina Park becomes a place where West Indian spectators dominate the atmosphere and judge English cricket.

Race and authority

Both poems expose racial power, but they do so from different angles.

In *West Indies, U.S.A.*, racial discrimination appears through American fear of "desperate blacks" who might enter the "Island of the free." Brown uses sarcasm to expose the hypocrisy of American freedom rhetoric. The passengers' bodies are controlled because of race, poverty, and nationality.

In *Test Match Sabina Park*, race is explored through the Englishman's pride and humiliation. His "rosette" of white skin begins as a badge of honour, but by the end it is "tarnished" and "frayed." The Caribbean crowd refuses to treat whiteness as superiority, turning his racial pride into embarrassment.

Voice and perspective

The poems differ strongly in speaker and perspective.

West Indies, U.S.A. is spoken by an observer who critiques American imperialism from a position of awareness. The speaker looks at contrasts between glitter and poverty, freedom rhetoric and racial exclusion, prosperity and theft. His tone is sarcastic and condemnatory.

Test Match Sabina Park is spoken from inside the mind of the Englishman. This choice is important because the speaker exposes himself without fully understanding his own prejudice. His language, from "strut" to "skulking," tracks the collapse of his confidence. Brown lets the colonial voice reveal its own weakness.

Control and movement

Both poems connect power to movement.

In *West Indies, U.S.A.*, passengers are physically prevented from disembarking. The repeated command to "stay on the plane" turns travel into confinement. The poem presents American power as the ability to decide who may enter, who must wait, and who remains outside the promise of freedom.

In *Test Match Sabina Park*, movement is symbolic. The Englishman "strut[s]" into the ground but is "driven" out by the crowd's verbal force. His physical movement from confident entrance to shameful exit mirrors the collapse of colonial authority.

Tone and irony

Both poems rely on irony to expose power.

In *West Indies, U.S.A.*, phrases such as "Island of the free" and "Give me your poor" are used sarcastically. Brown contrasts America's public ideals with its exclusionary treatment of Caribbean people. The glitter of San Juan becomes "fool's glitter," revealing false prosperity.

In *Test Match Sabina Park*, irony comes through the Englishman's humiliation. He tries to explain England's poor performance with excuses about weather, even mentioning the absurd "monsoon season in Manchester." His authority becomes ridiculous, and his own language begins to break down.

Conclusion

Both *West Indies, U.S.A.* and *Test Match Sabina Park* use Caribbean settings to expose race, colonial power, and fragile authority. *West Indies, U.S.A.* criticizes American imperialism, racial exclusion, and stolen identity through the image of the airport and the plane. *Test Match Sabina Park* dramatizes the collapse of British racial pride in a cricket ground where Caribbean voices dominate. Together, the poems show that Caribbean spaces are not passive backgrounds, but places where power is challenged, revealed, and sometimes reversed.