



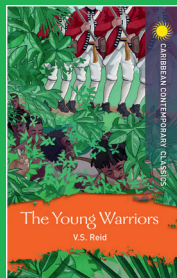
# The Sun's Eye

CARIBBEAN CONTEMPORARY CLASSICS

*In the vast Atlantic  
The sun's eye blazes over the edge of the  
ocean  
And watches the islands in a great bow  
curving  
From Florida down to the South American  
coast.*

The poems and stories included in *The Sun's Eye* present a selection of old favourites and new discoveries, celebrating the rich, warm, vibrant and vital life in the string of islands which curve down from Florida to the South American coast. A great celebration of Caribbean culture, and testimonial to all who have felt the warmth of the Caribbean sun and the whisper of the Caribbean breeze.

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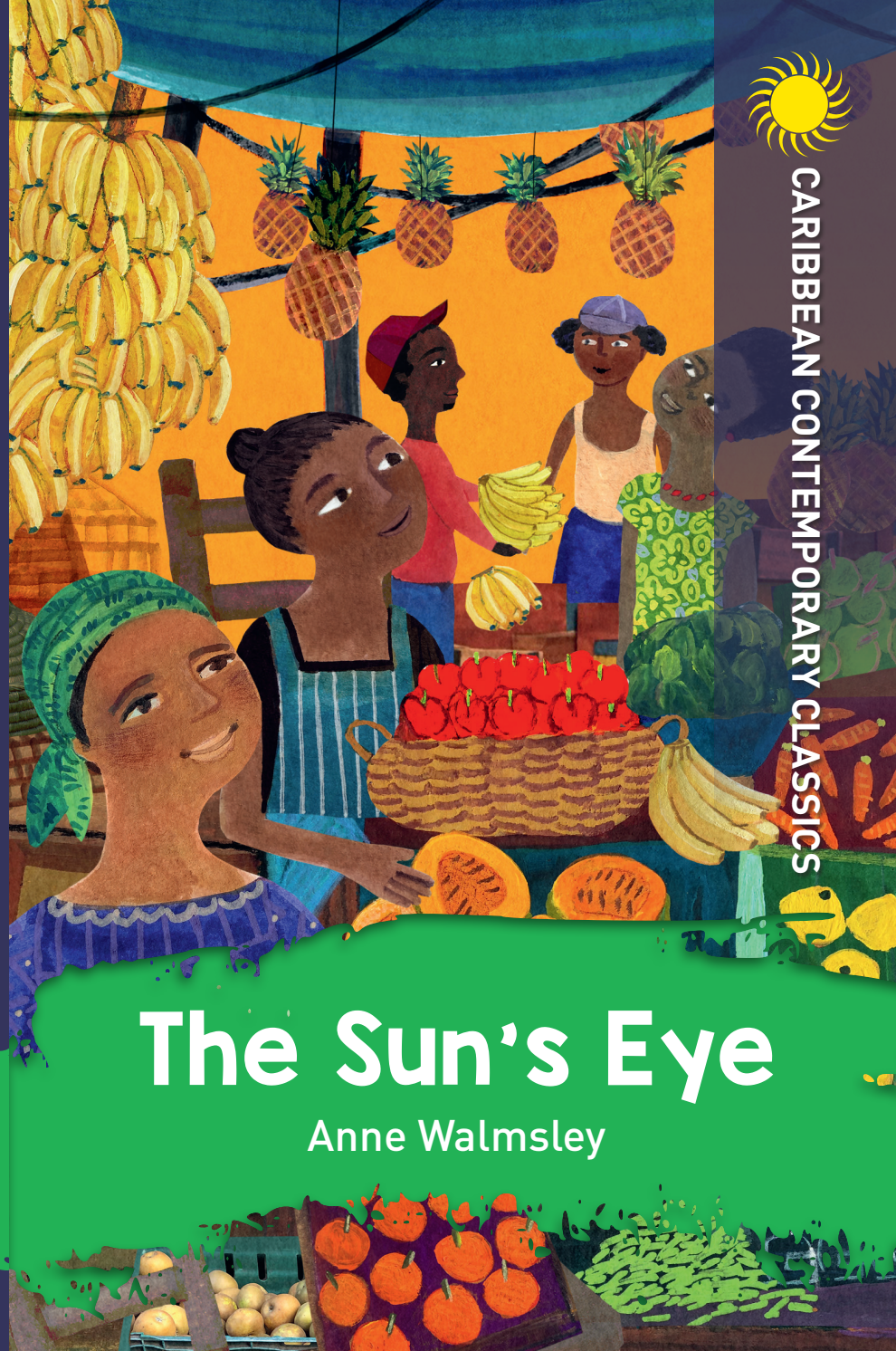
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The Sun's Eye

Anne Walmsley

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EDUCATION**



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Anne Walmsley



CARIBBEAN CONTEMPORARY CLASSICS



West Indian writing for young readers

# The Sun's Eye

compiled by Anne Walmsley

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# *Caribbean Contemporary Classics*

## **Introduction**

Over the last century, Caribbean authors, overflowing with stories about the life and society around them, have written many great and enduring works of literature. The Caribbean novels in this *Caribbean Contemporary Classics* collection were written from around the mid-1900s to the present day, and we are proud to publish them. They serve as unique and personal records and are also works of art, running parallel to what historians say about the region, and revealing to wider audiences the depth and brilliancy of generations of Caribbean writers.

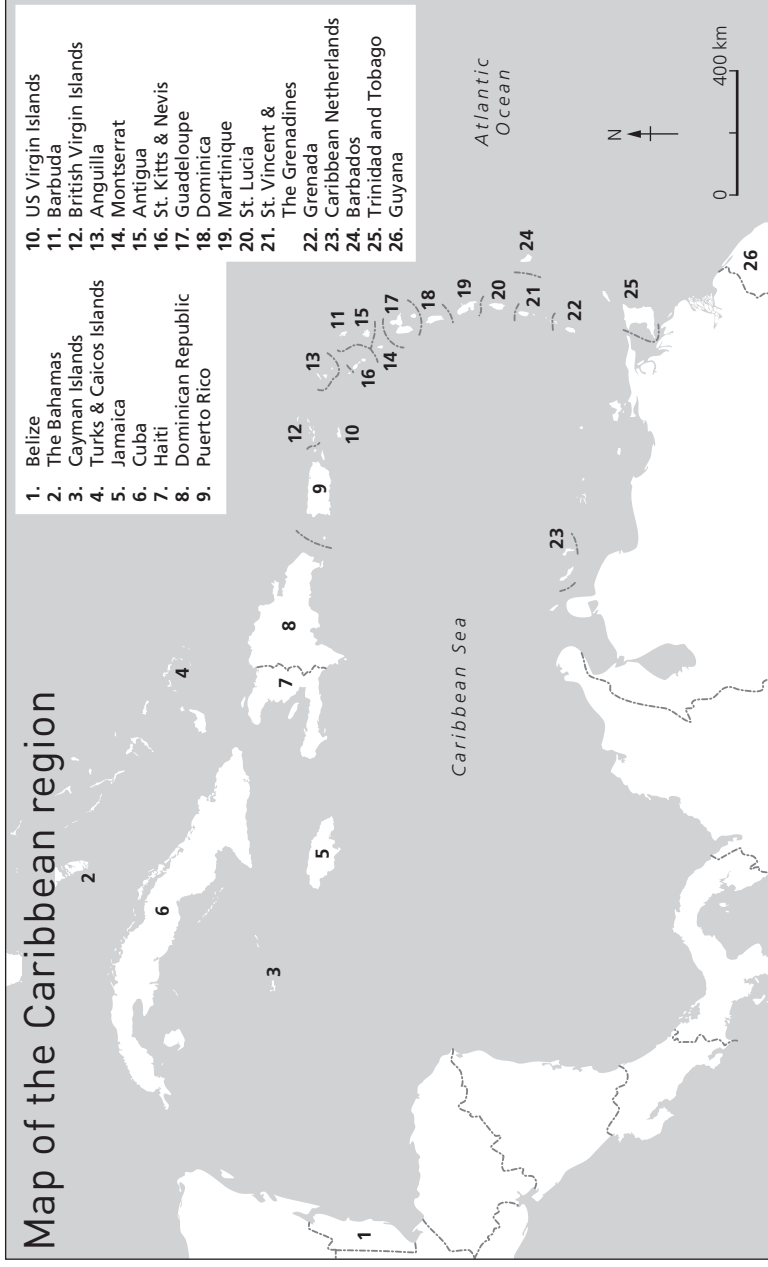
The novels in this collection are re-issued in their original forms even though some words and phrases may seem derogatory in the eyes of modern readers. Some words have been partially redacted, but none have been removed. We acknowledge the sensitivities of persons who have experienced discrimination especially in the verbal form and would like to state without reservation that the publisher in no way supports discrimination against any persons or groups of persons by the publication of these works. As in all works of literature, the language used in these novels reflects the authors' experiences and insights and forms an integral part of the text they set out to produce.

As the publisher, we have followed a number of principles in bringing these works to a wider audience. First, it is important to us to allow readers to interpret the authors' words in the context of the story as a whole, reflected through the readers' own experience, but without trying to dictate what that interpretation should be. Second, we respect the authors' integrity and their intellectual property. Third, we believe it to be important to experience works of art from specific geographic and historical contexts in their original form. The choice, as we see it, is whether to publish the book or not, rather than whether to change its language or not. In the present series, we have opted to publish a series of books which we believe to be significant, valued and important parts of the canon. They are rich, engaging and luminous works, in the authors' authentic voices, and we offer them to readers in the hope that they will delight, entertain and inform.

# Map of the Caribbean region

1. Belize
2. The Bahamas
3. Cayman Islands
4. Turks & Caicos Islands
5. Jamaica
6. Cuba
7. Haiti
8. Dominican Republic
9. Puerto Rico

10. US Virgin Islands
11. Barbuda
12. British Virgin Islands
13. Anguilla
14. Montserrat
15. Antigua
16. St. Kitts & Nevis
17. Guadeloupe
18. Dominica
19. Martinique
20. St. Lucia
21. St. Vincent & the Grenadines
22. Grenada
23. Caribbean Netherlands
24. Barbados
25. Trinidad and Tobago
26. Guyana









# INTRODUCTION

FOR A BOOK prepared in the early '60s still to be in demand in the late '80s seems extraordinary. But so it is with *The Sun's Eye*: so much so that its publishers have requested a revised edition. Given the book's content, its continuing vitality is not extraordinary at all. For, as one of the earliest school collections of work by West Indian writers it was able to draw on some of the very best writing from the region. Stories such as Timothy Callender's *An Honest Thief* and Ralph Prince's *Sharlo's Strange Bargain*, poems such as Edward Kamau Brathwaite's *The Pawpaw* and A. L. Hendriks' *An Old Jamaican Woman thinks about the Hereafter*, extracts such as those from George Lamming's *In the Castle of My Skin* and from Namba Roy's *Black Albino*, first made available to a young readership through *The Sun's Eye*, are now firm favourites in schools wherever West Indian literature is studied.

*The Sun's Eye's* long history began when I was teaching English to the first three forms of a girls' secondary school in Jamaica. In the early '60s, even with Independence so close, and with a fair quantity of good literature from Jamaica and the other West Indian countries already published, books by British authors alone were read in schools. This seemed to me unnatural, unfair and short-sighted: I wanted my students to be able to read stories and poems about people and places which they recognised, or experiences which were close to them. Also, I was myself an avid reader of West Indian writing, and wanted them to share my pleasure. I therefore read aloud to my students stories, poems, extracts from novels by West Indian writers which I thought they would like. Their response to this writing, their quickened

interest in all that they then read, the improvement in what they then wrote – all this encouraged me to make a collection of West Indian writing for young readers in the region.

In this new edition I welcome the chance to make changes recommended to me by teachers, and to include work by younger and more recently-published writers. Here are the features of this new edition:

- Again, both stories and poems are included, in the belief that they should be seen as a continuum of writing, and that poetry is not, as is sometimes feared, something strange and obscure. Stories and poems are now placed alternately, and in a new sequence.
- More than half the original contents, including all the firm favourites, have been retained. Other stories and poems, found by students to be less immediately accessible and drawing a less vivid response, have been replaced by six new stories or extracts from novels, and seven new poems: by older writers whose writing was (unbelievably now) not represented here before – Louise Bennett, Mervyn Morris, Earl Lovelace, and by younger writers – Michael Aubertin, Hazel Campbell, Lorna Goodison, Fred D’Aguiar, Clyde Hosein, John Robert Lee, Grace Nichols, Olive Senior.
- The inclusion of Louise Bennett’s poem and Olive Senior’s story signals the breakthrough in permitted language forms. When I first submitted *The Sun’s Eye* for publication in 1962, it was rejected because some of the writing was in ‘dialect’. By the time of publication in 1968, dialogue in ‘dialect’ was permitted, but no work written entirely in what was still considered a debased language form. Now that attitudes to language have been sensibly revised, and that much of the good new Caribbean writing is in ‘nation language’, more such writing has been included.

- There are still no introductory notes, but there are – in response to persistent demand – three or four questions on each piece of writing: questions which first test surface comprehension, then provoke a search for deeper meaning, then stimulate an oral or written response to the writing.
- As before, the notes on the contributors have been written, or updated, by the authors themselves. The aim is to let the writers speak directly to the students, so that they seem accessible and real, and so that their writing is shown to be part of their lives, rooted in the particular. In response to comments by teachers, authors have attempted to describe the occasion and context of each piece of writing.
- These ‘Notes about the writers’, and the questions, are deliberately not placed beside each story or poem, but at the back of the book. This continues the accepted style of *The Sun’s Eye*, where the writing itself is uncluttered by notes, in the hope that the students’ response may be fresh and direct. The questions follow the order of the contents, with a page reference; the ‘Notes about the writers’ are in alphabetical order by author.

Each time I return to the Caribbean – my most recent visits were in 1981 and 1986 – I meet teachers who say their students have enjoyed and benefited from using *The Sun’s Eye*. This new edition is dedicated to them: for keeping faith with the concept of the book, and for making this new edition possible.

Again, as before, I must thank many people: the writers, especially those who have been in the book from the start, and who have so kindly agreed that their work should continue to be in it; the teachers, who have advised and encouraged me: Veronica Jenkin initially, and more recently Liz Gerschel and Dorothy Noel, who have given me many specific suggestions on the contents, and given practical help with the questions. I thank in particular



Edward Kamau Brathwaite for his creative interest when the book was first put together, Mervyn Morris for his valuable help with preparing the new edition; and Arthur Seymour for his long-standing encouragement, and for permission to take my title from his poem, 'For Christopher Columbus':

*In the vast Atlantic  
The sun's eye blazes over the edge of ocean  
And watches the islands in a great bow curving  
From Florida down to the South American coast.*

And finally, warm thanks always to my pupils at Westwood High School, Jamaica, and the late Dorothy Parsons, then headmistress, without whom *The Sun's Eye* would never have come into being.

Anne Walmsley

*London 1987*