What happens?

A stranger’s friendly conversation exposes assumptions about race and migration.

The main idea

A courteous exchange reveals the gap between declaring racial solidarity and understanding another person’s world.

1. “startled”

Method: Verb

The greeting unsettles a speaker who was not expecting the encounter.

2. “thoughtful”

Method: Repetition

Pauses suggest an internal response larger than the spoken answer.

3. “Africa”

Method: Geographical misconception

The woman’s question exposes the limits of her proclaimed solidarity.

4. “sincere”

Method: Evaluative adjective

The speaker acknowledges intention while the reader remembers the mistake.

Form and structure

A free-verse dialogue with repeated speech tags; a reflective memory interrupts the spoken exchange.

Development, voice and tone

Greeting — Polite and surprised. A stranger's approach produces a possible opening towards connection.

Memory and questions — Thoughtful and wry. The speaker's private associations complicate a conversation shaped by geographical misunderstanding.

Closing response — Generous but qualified. The woman's sincerity is recognised without erasing the limits of her understanding.

Context

The title locates the encounter in postwar Britain. Berry migrated from Jamaica and explores racial assumptions through a carefully shaped conversation.

Comparison links

Name Journeys: cultural identity in England. Homing: pressure surrounding speech and belonging.

Recall question

Why does the final assessment of the stranger remain qualified?