

# Childhood Tracks by James Berry

Eating crisp fried fish with plain bread.  
Eating sheared ice made into 'snowball'  
with syrup in a glass.  
Eating young jelly-coconut, mixed  
with village-made wet sugar.  
Drinking cool water from a calabash gourd  
on worked land in the hills.

Smelling a patch of fermenting pineapples  
in stillness of hot sunlight.  
Smelling mixed whiffs of fish, mango, coffee,  
mint, hanging in a market.  
Smelling sweaty padding lifted off a donkey's back.

Hearing a nightingale in song  
in moonlight and sea-sound.  
Hearing dawn-crowing of cocks, in answer  
to others around the village.  
Hearing the laughter  
of barefeet children carrying water.  
Hearing a distant braying of a donkey  
in a silent hot afternoon.  
Hearing palm trees' leaves rattle  
on and on at Christmas time.

Seeing a woman walking in loose floral frock.  
Seeing a village workman with bag and machete  
under a tree, resting, sweat-washed.  
Seeing a tangled land-piece of banana trees  
with goats in shades cud-chewing.  
Seeing a coil of plaited tobacco  
like rope, sold, going in bits.  
Seeing children playing in schoolyard  
between palm and almond trees.  
Seeing children toy-making in a yard  
while slants of evening sunlight slowly disappear.  
Seeing an evening's dusty hour lit up  
by dotted lamplight.  
Seeing fishing nets repaired between canoes.

