

In the mornings, my father took me to school.

At three o'clock, when we came home again, I would **rattle off** everything I learned that day (...) We stopped and faced each other in the road. "You have a high forehead," he said, leaning down to take a closer look. "All smart people do."

I walked proudly, stretching my legs to match his steps.

I was overjoyed when my feet **kept time** with his (...) and we walked like a single unit. (...)

My father was born in Malaysia and he and my mother immigrated to Canada several years before I was born, first **settling in** Montreal, then finally in Vancouver.

While I was born in the persistence of the Vancouver rain, my father was born in the wash of a **monsoon** country.

When I was young, my parents tried to teach me their language but it never came easily to me. My father ran his thumb gently over my mouth, his face kind, as if trying to see what it was that made me different.

My brother was born in Malaysia but when he immigrated with my parents to Canada the language left him.

Or he forgot it, or he refused it, which is also common, and this made my father angry. "How can a child forget his language?" he would ask my mother. "It is because the child is lazy. Because the child chooses not to remember."

When he was twelve years old, my brother stayed away

rattle off (v.) = list

keep time (v.) = maintain rhythm

settle in (v.) = go to live

monsoon = heavy rains

in the afternoons. He **drummed** the soccer ball up and down the back alley, returning home only at dinner time.”

During the day, my mother worked as a **sales clerk** at the Woodward’s store downtown, in the building with the red revolving W on top.

Madeleine Thien, *Simple Recipes*, 2001

drum (v.) = beat on something continuously

sales clerk = shop assistant