



Cambridge Lower Secondary Checkpoint

ENGLISH

1111/02

Paper 2 Fiction

October 2020

INSERT

1 hour 10 minutes

INFORMATION

- This insert contains the reading passages.
- You may annotate this insert and use the blank spaces for planning. **Do not write your answers** on the insert.



This document has **4** pages. Blank pages are indicated.

Text for Section A, an extract from ‘Jasmine Skies’ by Sita Brahmachari.

Mira, a teenager from a part-Indian family living in the UK, has just travelled alone to India. She is being met at the airport by her aunt, Anjali, and her cousin, Priya.

‘Mira! Mira!’

I suppose that must be Priya leaping up and down, hollering and waving. She looks nothing like she did last week on Skype* ... I’m sure she had long hair. As I draw nearer she vaults over the barrier and sprints towards me with her arms opening into the widest and warmest of hugs. The tears that have been threatening to spill over for the last half-hour suddenly cascade down my face. To meet a whole side of your family in the flesh, for the first time in your life, is the strangest feeling in the world, sort of like coming home.

5

Anjali steps forward and enfolds me in her graceful arms and the soft folds of her cotton sari. Her hair’s pulled back into a tight bun, and without wearing a spot of make-up she still looks beautiful. She takes my head in her hands and studies my face. The tears are rolling down her cheeks too.

10

‘So pretty, like your ma at your age.’ She smiles at me and kisses my cheek. ‘We were getting so worried about you. How was your journey? Tiring?’ She sighs, wiping my smudged eyeliner away.

‘Ha! You didn’t even recognise me!’ Priya laughs and scruffs up her hair, which is now a Pixie crop with red tips. ‘And look at you, all trad*! Anyone would think I am the London chick and you are the Hindu princess!’ Priya wafes my *chunni* scarf over my shoulder, blows an egg-sized gum bubble, then pops it with her tongue.

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‘Priya!’ scolds Anjali.

‘Want some?’ Priya grins and hands me a piece.

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The peppermint feels fresh and cool in my mouth. I can’t wait to brush my teeth properly.

‘Well, thank goodness you’re here safely. We thought you were lost, let me take ... but where is your case?’ asks Anjali.

‘Is that *all* you brought?’ Priya gasps, taking my shoulder bag from me.

‘Priya! Give Mira a chance to breathe! You should know, Mira, that *all* of this’ – Anjali points to Priya’s hair, and then down to her skinny jeans and what look like brand-new red Converse – ‘all of this is done in your honour!’

25

‘I was cutting my hair anyway, Ma. I told you that *ages* ago.’ Priya shrugs, then turns to me. ‘So where’s all your stuff?’

‘My case is missing.’

30

Anjali claps a hand to her forehead in a gesture of total despair. ‘Typical!’ she snaps and then strides over to an official. But, by her increasingly passionate hand gestures and his crossed arms and shaking head, I can tell that she’s not having much luck. After a while she comes back towards us, smoothing her damp hair away from her face.

'Don't worry Mira. If it doesn't turn up, we have everything you need here. It'll be a great hardship for her, but I am sure my Priya won't mind taking you shopping!' Anjali laughs, trying to put a bright spin on things. 35

'That'll be *such* a chore! I hate shopping! But I suppose I *could* just make an exception for you, cous*! I'll take you to the mall. You'll love it. All the shops you've got in London and more!' boasts Priya. 40

'But I brought presents for you all.' I can hear a wobble in my voice and I swallow hard.

'Forget about presents! *You* are the present. Come on, you must be exhausted. Let's take you home. I'll call about the bag later.' Anjali sighs, then walks towards the exit, gesturing for me and Priya to follow.

'What were you going to give me anyway?' whispers Priya, breaking into my thoughts. 45

Anjali overhears her, and then turns and shoots her an 'I'll deal with you later!' look. I wonder if *all* mums, wherever you live, anywhere in the world, have the same silent repertoire of reprimands.

Priya takes my arm and squeezes it tight. Walking arm in arm with her feels so natural, like we've been friends forever. It's only now that I realise how nervous I've been about meeting her, and Anjali, and how relieved I am that they're so lovely. 50

A flock of tiny birds shoots ahead of us, swooping low; shaving the air millimetres from my head. I automatically duck down.

'Only airport birds,' says Priya. 'They're always passing through, just like all the other international travellers! That's going to be me one day. New York, Paris, London ...' She sighs as we watch the birds dart between people and luggage. 55

'And I'm *never* having kids,' announces Priya, shaking her head at a little girl who's throwing a tantrum. Her mum looks exhausted. 'Don't see why I should add to this crazy population! I'll just travel, like you, Mira, free as a bird ...'

Anjali smiles knowingly at Priya's chatter. 'Never is a very long time!' she says, catching my eye. For a moment a look of sadness sweeps the smile from her face. She quickly turns away and walks briskly towards the exit. 60

Glossary

Skype: face to face communication using the internet

trad: traditional

cous: cousin

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