SHYAM KUMAR (PAPA)

PAPA'S ROLE IN THE NOVEL

Papa is Daljit's husband, and the father of Meena and Sunil. He works in an office, probably as an accountant. He comes from Lahore, in what is now Pakistan. During the novel he:

- takes Meena to the village shop to find out whether she stole money to buy sweets.
- tries to warn Meena about the consequences of lying.
- enjoys singing at musical evenings and encourages Meena to do so.
- tries to soothe his wife.
- talks about his experiences in India during Partition.
- copes with flirtatious local women attracted by his good looks.
- worries about Meena and is hurt that she talks to him less as she gets older.
- sometimes gets angry with Meena, as when she asks if she is a virgin.
- does a job he does not enjoy, eventually getting promoted.

CHECKPOINT 12 AO1

In what ways do you think Papa is a good father?

EXAM FOCUS: WRITING ABOUT PAPA

AO1

Key point	Evidence/Further meaning
• Papa is a patient, caring father.	• He gives Meena a chance to prove that she did not steal, and is disappointed to find she was lying (p. 23). • He tries to explain to Meena why lying is bad by telling her the story of 'the boy and the tiger' (p. 70).
• He is a loving husband.	• He tries to comfort Daljit when she is unhappy: 'Papa found her on the bed, crying. He'd said it was a migraine and then talked softly to her in Punjabi' (p. 24). • He wonders what Daljit saw in him. Like her, he thinks he is 'the lucky one' (p. 82).
• He is a sensitive and inspiring musician.	• He sings, 'notes ... so close in tone but each one different, a gradual ascent and then pure flight' (p. 72). • Meena asks, 'what word would there be for these feelings that papa's songs awoke in everyone?' (p. 72)
• He is enterprising, determined and hard-working.	• From being 'in a refugee camp with only what I stood up in' (p. 75), he has earned qualifications, come to England and secured a professional job. • Every day he returns from work 'with a bulging briefcase full of papers covered with minute indecipherable figures' (p. 83).

NANIMA

NANIMA'S ROLE IN THE NOVEL

Nanima is Mama's mother. She lives in India and returns there towards the end of the novel. During the novel she visits the family and:

- helps Mama with Sunil and makes him less dependent on Mama.
- communicates well with Meena, despite speaking little English.
- is like a loving second mother to Meena.
- shares a bed with Meena.
- seems to appreciate Meena's wild character.
- tells dramatic stories about her life in India.

EXAM FOCUS: WRITING ABOUT NANIMA

AO1

Key point	Evidence/Further meaning
• Nanima is a confident, independent woman.	• She takes the initiative to visit and befriend the Worralls. • She goes into Mr Ormerod's shop and does the shopping, despite speaking little or no English.
• She has a connection with Meena and appreciates her.	• She pats Meena under the chin 'conspiratorially' (p. 200). • Nanima 'dragged me under her arm ... Then she opened one eye briefly and said, "Junglee!" before dropping off to sleep' (p. 207).
• She is a talented teller of colourful stories about India that give Meena a sense of belonging.	• 'Most of all I enjoyed her stories' (p. 209). • She makes Meena see India as 'a country ... bursting with excitement, drama and passion, history in the making' (p. 211).
• A good judge of character, she perceives that Anita is bad for Meena.	• Meena notes, 'whilst my parents did their dance of welcome around Anita ... my Nanima remained singularly uninvolved and unimpressed' (p. 254). • Meena realises that 'Nanima had not taken to my best friend' (p. 255).

TOP TIP: WRITING ABOUT NANIMA

AO1

Since Nanima speaks little English, and Meena's understanding of Punjabi is limited, our impression of Nanima is formed largely by her actions. For example, her unpredictable tidying of household items into unfamiliar places shows that she wants to help, but makes her own decisions about where things go. Her tying of a thread around Sunil's wrist shows her protectiveness and her superstition.

TOP TIP AO1

If you write an exam essay on Nanima, you will need to focus on Chapters 8–11.

RESPONDING TO WRITERS' EFFECTS

The two most important assessment objectives are **AO1** and **AO2** (except for Edexcel, where you will only be examined on AO1, AO3 and AO4). They are about *what* writers do (the choices they make, and the effects these create), *what* your ideas are (your analysis and interpretation) and *how* you write about them (how well you explain your ideas).

ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVE 1 AO1

What does it say?	What does it mean?	Dos and don'ts
Read, understand and respond to texts. Students should be able to: • Maintain a critical style and develop an informed personal response • Use textual references, including quotations, to support and illustrate interpretations	You must: • Use some of the literary terms you have learnt (correctly!) • Write in a professional way (not a sloppy, chatty way) • Show that you have thought for yourself • Back up your ideas with examples, including quotations	**Don't write:** *Anita looks like she's really upset that her mum's gone off.* **Do write:** *When Deirdre leaves, Anita's 'red and crusty' eyes show she has been crying and has not slept. The metaphorical 'snail trails' on her face show she is too miserable even to wipe away her tears.*

IMPROVING YOUR CRITICAL STYLE

Use a variety of words and phrases to show effects:

Syal *suggests ..., conveys ..., implies ..., explores ..., demonstrates ..., describes how ...*

I/we (as readers) *infer ..., recognise ..., understand ..., question ..., see ..., are given ..., reflect ...*

For example, look at these two alternative paragraphs by different students about Anita. Note the difference in the quality of expression:

Student A:

Syal says that Anita bosses everyone about. Meena talks about her being 'the undisputed cock of our yard'. This shows she is in charge. She gets her way by just knowing people will do what she wants or by charm (the fairground boys) or by manipulating them, like when she winds up Fat Sally for a fight.

Confuses Syal with Meena — *Chatty and vague* — *Limited analysis* — *Informal language*

Student B:

Meena calls Anita 'the undisputed cock of our yard' implying that none of the children dares to challenge her. Sometimes she assumes they will follow her, as when she walks off with Meena's sweets. At other times her 'pouting, sulking ... and unsettling mood swings' make them seek her favour and fear her anger. She is particularly manipulative when she goads Fat Sally into a fight.

Offers an interpretation — *Backs up point with an example* — *Signposts argument* — *Concise analysis* — *Precise language*

ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVE 2 AO2

What does it say?	What does it mean?	Dos and don'ts
Analyse the language, form and structure used by the writer to create meanings and effects, using relevant subject terminology where appropriate.	'Analyse' = comment **in detail** on **particular aspects** of the text or language. 'Language' = vocabulary, **imagery**, variety of sentences, **dialogue**/speech, etc. 'Form' = **how** the story is told (e.g. **first-person narrative**, overheard conversations, notes, chapter by chapter) 'Structure' = the **order** in which events are revealed, or in which characters appear, or descriptions are presented 'create meaning' = what can we, as readers, **infer** from what the writer tells us? What is **implied** by particular descriptions, or events? 'Subject terminology' = **words** you should use when writing about novels, such as 'character', **imagery**, 'setting', etc.	**Don't write:** *The writing is really descriptive in this bit so you can really imagine what time of year it is.* **Do write:** *Syal emphasises the seasons as an aspect of change. Meena describes her love of spring, **symbolised** by the call of the cuckoo, and **personifies** Tollington as 'prancing around in its ostentatious autumnal cloak' (p. 88). The playful image **expresses** Meena's love of language, as well as **implying** the richness and innocence of childhood.*

IMPLICATIONS, INFERENCES AND INTERPRETATIONS

- The best analysis focuses on specific ideas or events, or uses of language and thinks about what is **implied**.
- This means drawing **inferences**. On the surface, Sam Lowbridge can be seen as a hate-filled racist, but is it that simple? What does the description of him and his gang with 'shaven heads, downy and vulnerable as dandelion clocks' (p. 226) imply?
- From the inferences you make across the text as a whole, you can arrive at your own **interpretation** – a sense of the bigger picture, a wider evaluation of a character, relationship or idea.