

Collegedunia NCERT Notes

NCERT Notes for Class 11 English (Woven Words), 2026-27 Syllabus

Chapter 6: The Third and Final Continent

Jhumpa Lahiri, migration, memory, dignity and immigrant belonging

The Third and Final Continent class 11 English (Woven Words) notes help you revise plot, characters, immigrant experience, marriage, Mrs Croft, themes, language and NCERT answer frames.

Also see:

Chapter 6 NCERT Solutions	Practise textbook answers for The Third and Final Continent.
Chapter 6 NCERT Book PDF	Read the official Jhumpa Lahiri story before revision.
Chapter 6 Handwritten Notes	Use visual notes for last-minute recap.

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1 Chapter Snapshot

Jhumpa Lahiri's story follows a Bengali narrator who leaves India, studies in London, begins work in America, marries Mala and slowly finds home across three continents.

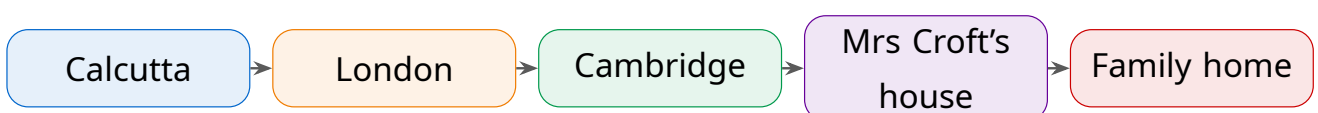
1.1 Core Facts

Point	What to remember	Exam use
Author	Jhumpa Lahiri, Indian Bengali writer and Pulitzer Prize winner.	Use in context answers.
Narrator	A Bengali immigrant who speaks in the first person.	Use for point of view.
Main settings	Calcutta, London and Cambridge near Boston.	Use for migration theme.
Key figures	The narrator, Mala, Mrs Croft and Helen.	Use for character sketches.
Turning point	Mrs Croft calls Mala a perfect lady.	Use for marriage and belonging.

Core idea

The chapter turns an ordinary immigrant life into an achievement. Survival, care and adjustment become as meaningful as the moon landing.

Life movement



1.2 One-minute Reading Route

- Track each place as a stage of adjustment, not just as background.
- Notice small objects: cornflakes, soup cans, saris, keys, rent envelopes and tea.
- Read Mrs Croft as comic, strict, vulnerable and dignified at the same time.
- Connect Mala's arrival to the narrator's own loneliness in foreign cities.

First revision move

Separate the public event from the private story. The moon landing is famous, but the

narrator's quiet migration is the emotional centre.

1.3 Opening Vocabulary

Word or phrase	Meaning in context	Use in answer
LSE	London School of Economics.	Shows student life in London.
Hollered	Shouted loudly.	Use for Mrs Croft's voice.
Clamorous	Loud and forceful.	Use for tone.
Foyer	Entrance hall of a house.	Use for Mrs Croft's house.
Mortified	Deeply embarrassed or shocked.	Use for narrator's reaction.

CLCMB

Remember the journey stages as CLCMB: Calcutta, London, Cambridge, Mrs Croft, Belonging.

2 Plot Sequence

The plot is built from small domestic scenes. Lahiri avoids melodrama and lets ordinary details show the narrator's struggle, discipline and emotional change.

2.1 From India to London

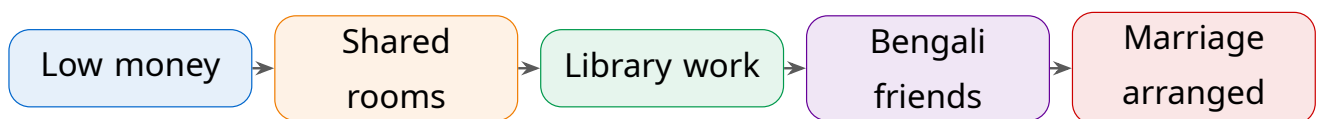
The narrator leaves India in 1964 with little money. In London he lives with other Bengali bachelors, attends LSE lectures and works in a university library.

Detail	What happens	Meaning
Ship journey	He sails on the SS Roma for three weeks.	Migration begins with discomfort and distance.
Shared house	Bengali bachelors live crowded together.	Community helps survival abroad.
Food habits	They cook egg curry and drink tea.	Old habits continue in a new country.
Arranged marriage	His family arranges his marriage to Mala.	Duty follows him across continents.

Immigrant networks

Students abroad often create small communities around food, language and shared rooms. Lahiri shows this without romanticising the hardship.

London adjustment



2.2 Arrival in America

The narrator lands in Boston when the moon landing has just made America celebrate itself. His own arrival is quieter, lonelier and more practical.

- He stays at the YMCA in Central Square.
- He starts work at Dewey Library at MIT.
- He learns American words like elevator, busy and thermos.
- He eats cornflakes and milk because they are cheap and familiar enough.
- He reads the newspaper to understand the new country.

Plot mistake

Do not write that the narrator immediately loves America. He first experiences noise, loneliness, confusion and careful budgeting.

America adjustment ladder

1. Find a cheap room



2. Learn new words



3. Manage food and money



4. Read local news



5. Prepare for Mala

2.3 Mrs Croft's House

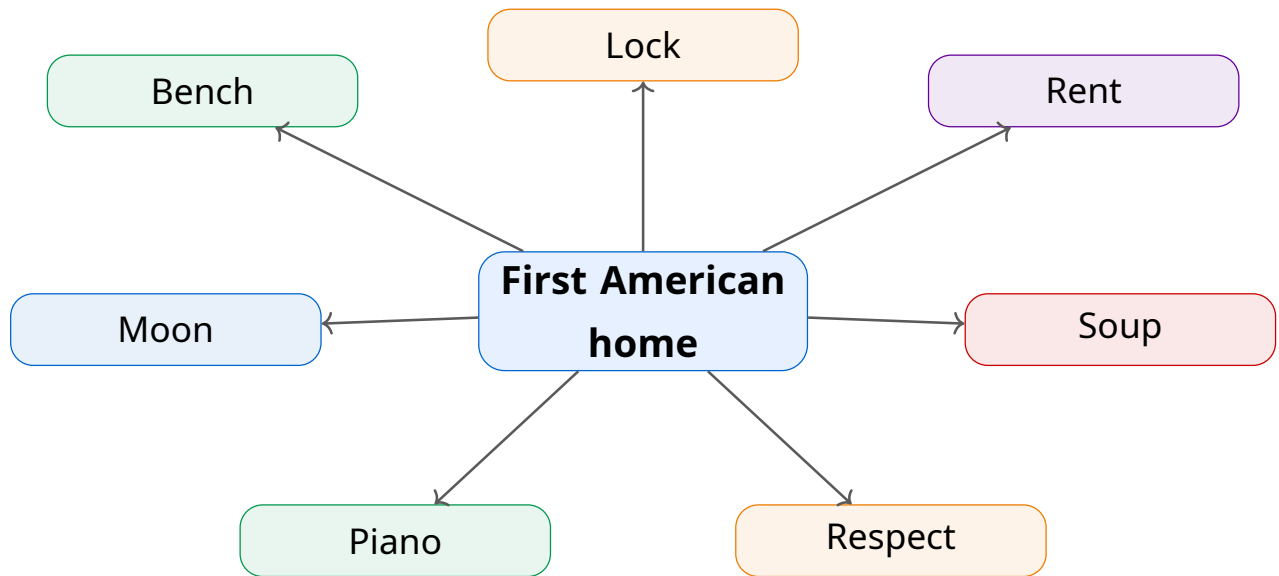
The narrator finds an eight-dollar room in Mrs Croft's house. The house gives him order and quiet after the YMCA, but Mrs Croft gives the place its real meaning.

Scene	What happens	Why it matters
First meeting	Mrs Croft orders him to lock the door.	Shows her strict control.
Moon line	She makes him say splendid.	Creates their ritual.
Rent envelope	He places money in her hands.	Builds respect.
Helen's visit	He learns Mrs Croft is 103.	Turns comedy into awe.
Final visit	Mrs Croft praises Mala.	Begins closeness in marriage.

Ritual

The repeated word splendid looks comic, but it becomes a bridge between two strangers from different worlds.

Mrs Croft house web



3 Character Sketches

The chapter's characters are shown through gestures. Lahiri often reveals feeling through food, clothes, room arrangements and brief conversations.

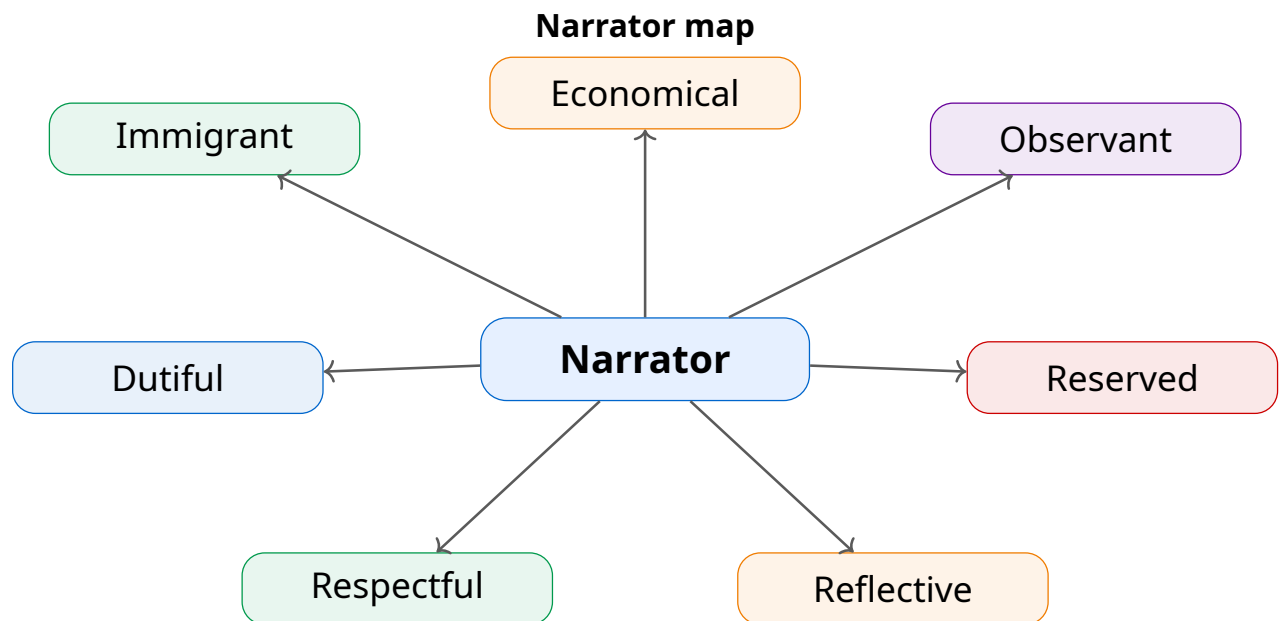
3.1 The Narrator

The narrator is disciplined, observant, economical and emotionally restrained. He survives by learning routines before he learns affection.

Trait	Evidence	Answer line
Practical	He budgets, eats cornflakes and studies newspaper ads.	He adjusts through discipline.
Respectful	He calls Mrs Croft madame and pays rent carefully.	He honours age and formality.
Reserved	He does not comfort Mala at first.	He needs time to feel intimacy.
Reflective	He later measures ordinary survival against the moon landing.	Memory gives meaning to migration.

Character answer order

Begin with his migration, then his discipline, then his relationship with Mrs Croft and Mala, and end with his mature reflection.

**3.2 Mrs Croft**

Mrs Croft is strict, old-fashioned, comic and admirable. Her strength matters because she has survived more than a century and still lives with dignity.

Aspect	Source detail	Meaning
Age	She is 103 years old.	Her survival amazes the narrator.
Voice	She hollers commands.	She is forceful despite physical weakness.
Values	She insists on propriety and chaperones.	She belongs to an older moral world.
Independence	She lives alone with weekly help.	She represents dignity in old age.
Kindness	She calls the narrator a gentleman and Mala a perfect lady.	Her approval creates emotional warmth.

Old age and dignity

Mrs Croft challenges easy pity. She needs help, but she also commands respect and keeps her own rules.

Character mistake

Do not describe Mrs Croft only as eccentric. Her eccentricity is linked with courage, loneliness, humour and self-respect.

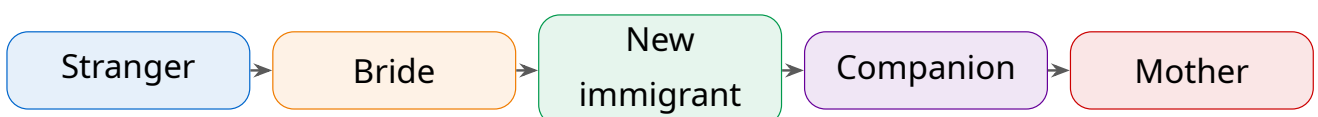
3.3 Mala

Mala begins as a stranger in an arranged marriage. Her adjustment becomes visible through small acts of care, food, clothing and shared laughter.

Stage	What happens	Meaning
Calcutta	She cries after marriage and misses her parents.	She has been uprooted suddenly.
Arrival	She refuses oxtail soup and brings knitted sweaters.	She carries Indian habits into America.
Apartment	She cooks, cleans and learns the new routine.	Domestic rhythm builds closeness.
Mrs Croft visit	She laughs and receives approval.	The marriage begins to soften.
Later life	She becomes strong and happy in America.	Adjustment turns into belonging.

Mala's importance

Mala is not just the narrator's wife. She helps transform an immigrant room into a shared home.

Mala's arc

3.4 Helen

Helen reveals the practical reality behind Mrs Croft's fierce surface. She brings soup, opens cans and explains her mother's age and past.

- She visits weekly from Arlington.
- She understands her mother's habits but also complains about them.
- She shows that Mrs Croft was once a piano teacher.
- She helps the narrator see Mrs Croft as vulnerable.

Helen answer

Mention Helen when answering about Mrs Croft's family relationship. She shows care, irritation, duty and distance at once.

4 Themes and Ideas

The story's themes grow from movement, memory and quiet human contact. It presents immigration as ordinary in fact, but extraordinary in feeling.

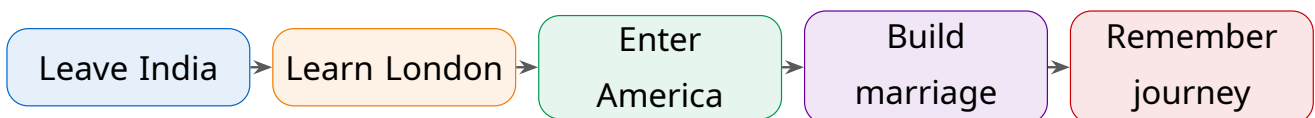
4.1 Migration and Adjustment

The title names the narrator's movement across India, England and America. Each continent demands a new habit, a new vocabulary and a new emotional balance.

Place	Adjustment	Theme link
India	Family duty, marriage and memory.	Origin and responsibility.
England	Shared rooms, study and Bengali bachelor life.	Survival through community.
America	Work, money, language and solitude.	Self-making in a new world.
Mrs Croft's house	Respectful routine with a stranger.	Belonging through human contact.
Family home	Marriage, son and citizenship.	Settlement across generations.

HABIT

Use HABIT for migration answers: Home, Adjustment, Belonging, Identity, Time.

Migration arc**4.2 Loneliness and Companionship**

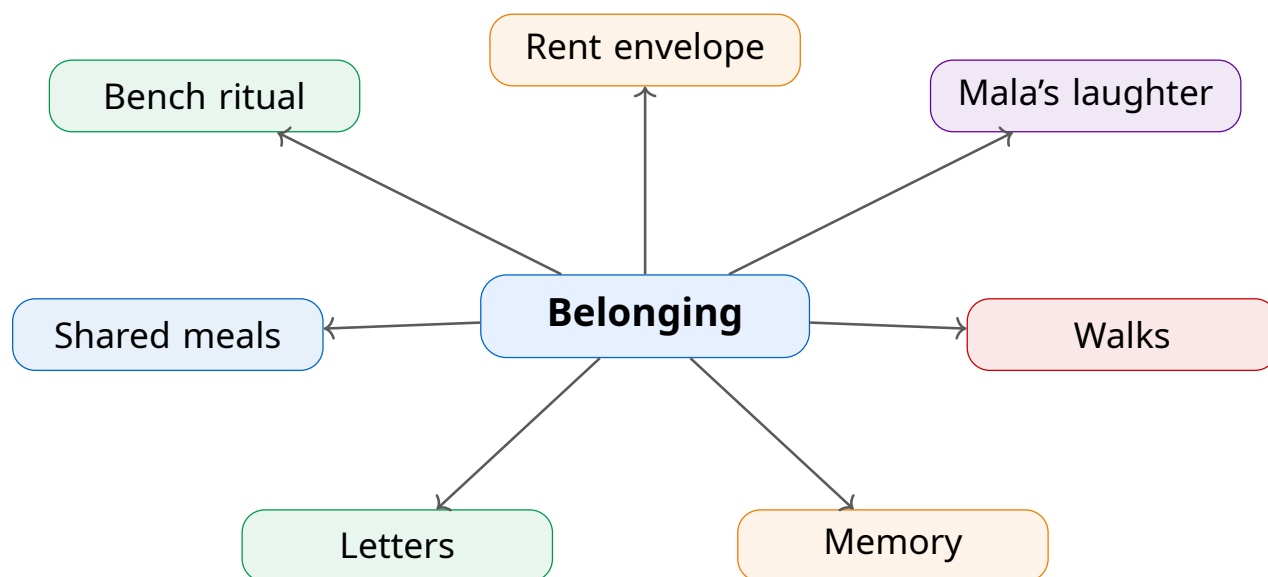
The narrator begins America alone at the YMCA. Companionship first appears in a strange form: ten minutes each evening beside Mrs Croft.

- The YMCA is noisy but emotionally empty.
- Mrs Croft's house is quiet and ritual-bound.
- The narrator's care for Mrs Croft grows through tiny acts.
- Mala's arrival creates responsibility before affection.
- Laughter in the parlour becomes the first shared emotional moment.

Companionship

The story suggests that companionship does not always begin with love. Sometimes it begins with routine, courtesy and repeated presence.

Companionship web



4.3 Marriage and Emotional Growth

The arranged marriage begins formally. The narrator and Mala barely know each other, but shared life gradually creates affection.

Moment	Emotional meaning	Exam use
Mala's letter	Distance and loneliness remain formal.	Use for early awkwardness.
Airport meeting	The narrator acts dutiful, not romantic.	Use for arranged marriage.
First week	Food, keys and household rhythm develop.	Use for adjustment.
Mrs Croft's praise	The couple smile at each other.	Use for turning point.
Later memory	They become partners in grief and family.	Use for mature love.

Theme mistake

Do not claim the marriage becomes loving in one scene. The parlour scene begins the lessening of distance, but love grows over time.

4.4 Old Age, Memory and Survival

Mrs Croft makes the narrator think about age, widowhood and endurance. Her survival contrasts with his mother's decline after widowhood.

Character	Old age or memory detail	Meaning
Mrs Croft	Lives alone at 103 and commands the house.	Age can hold dignity and force.
Narrator's mother	Sinks into mental illness after widowhood.	Loss can break a household.
Narrator	Remembers each room, meal and person.	Memory turns ordinary survival into wonder.
Son	Sees the rent as unbelievable.	Generations measure the past differently.

Family systems

The chapter lets students compare care for the aged in Indian and Western settings without making either world simple or perfect.

5 Symbols, Motifs and Language

Lahiri's prose is quiet and exact. Repeated objects and phrases carry emotional meaning without heavy explanation.

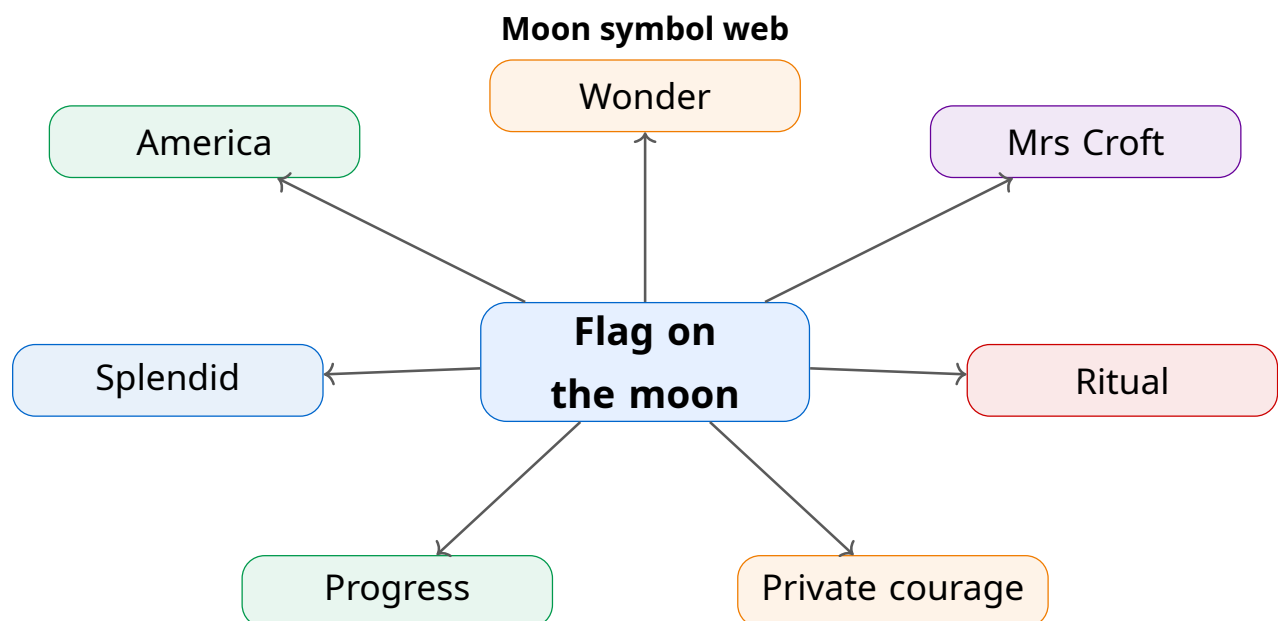
5.1 The Moon Landing

The moon landing is a public symbol of progress. Mrs Croft keeps repeating it, while the narrator later compares it with his own ordinary journey.

Moon detail	Story function	Theme
National holiday	America celebrates the astronauts.	Public history.
Say splendid	Mrs Croft turns history into ritual.	Comic connection.
Flag removed	Narrator protects her feeling by not correcting her.	Kindness.
Final comparison	Astronauts spent hours on the moon, he spent decades in America.	Private achievement.

Symbol answer

Write both meanings. The moon landing marks American achievement. It also helps measure the narrator's migrant courage.



5.2 Food and Domestic Objects

Food marks adjustment in every place. Egg curry, cornflakes, soup cans, oxtail soup and chicken curry all reveal culture, budget and relationship.

Object or food	Where it appears	Meaning
Egg curry	London house and first meal for Mala.	Bengali continuity.
Cornflakes and milk	YMCA and early Cambridge days.	Cheap adaptation.
Soup cans	Mrs Croft's kitchen.	Age, routine and dependence.
Oxtail soup	Mala's flight.	Cultural discomfort.
Darjeeling tea	Mala's gift from India.	Home carried abroad.

ECSSD

Food memory code: Egg curry, Cornflakes, Soup, Sari, Darjeeling tea.

5.3 Conversation and Gentle Humour

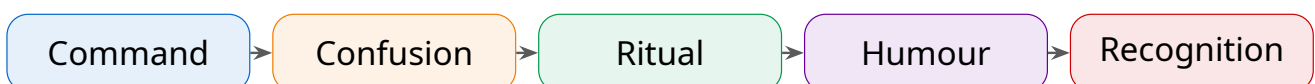
The chapter uses short, repeated conversations. Mrs Croft's commands, Helen's practical tone and Mala's first exchanges reveal personality.

- "Say splendid" creates comic repetition.
- "No lady visitors" shows Mrs Croft's strict code.
- Helen's remarks show affectionate irritation.
- Mala's oxtail soup line creates gentle cultural humour.
- The final "perfect lady" line opens emotional connection.

Dialogue as character

Short speech can reveal a whole worldview. Lahiri lets characters speak in their own rhythms instead of explaining them fully.

Dialogue function



6 NCERT Answer Frames

Most NCERT questions ask students to explain adjustment, character, affection, cultural contrast and narrative technique. Use evidence from scenes, not only theme names.

6.1 How to Answer Text Questions

Answer ladder

1. Name the issue in the question



2. Quote or paraphrase one scene



3. Explain what it shows



4. Connect to migration or relationship



5. Close with Lahiri's larger point

SEEC method

Use SEEC: State, Evidence, Explain, Connect. It keeps literature answers focused and source-based.

6.2 Important Question Frames

Question type	Best opening	Evidence to add
Financial hardship in London	The narrator was not comfortable financially.	Third-class cabin, crowded rooms, shared toilet and egg curry.
Adjustment abroad	He adjusts by observing routines and learning local habits.	Cornflakes, thermos, newspaper, language differences.
Mrs Croft's character	Mrs Croft is strict, eccentric and admirable.	Lock command, moon ritual, rent, perfect lady.
Indian and American contrast	The story contrasts family duty with individual living.	Mala's sari, Mrs Croft living alone, Helen's weekly visits.
Bond of affection	Their bond grows through respect and simple gestures.	Bench ritual, rent envelope, final visit.

Answer mistake

Do not answer only from memory of the plot. For each response, include at least one concrete object, line or scene.

6.3 Appreciation Questions

Appreciation focus	What to mention	Best scene
Family details	They interrupt and deepen the main narrative.	Mother's death and Mala's adjustment.
Bond between strangers	Respect can grow without long conversation.	Mrs Croft's obituary and narrator's grief.
Conversation	Speech reveals worldview.	Mrs Croft's propriety and moon line.
Gentle humour	Humour softens loneliness.	Oxtail soup, miniskirt arrest, splendid ritual.

Appreciation answer

In appreciation answers, discuss method. Name the device first: memory, contrast, repetition, humour, dialogue or first-person narration.

7 Quick Reference Summary

Use this section for final revision before class tests. It gathers the key scenes, themes, character points and exam-ready lines.

7.1 One-page Summary

- The narrator moves from Calcutta to London and then to America.
- He learns American life through work, food, language and observation.
- Mrs Croft's house becomes his first real American home.
- Mrs Croft is strict and funny, but also dignified and admirable.
- Mala's arrival begins as duty and grows into companionship.
- The story turns ordinary immigrant survival into a quiet achievement.

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Final check

Before submitting, check three points: place, person and feeling. Lahiri's story needs all three.

7.2 Fast Revision Table

Need	Best point	Best scene
Plot	Journey across three continents.	Ship to London, flight to Boston.
Character	Mrs Croft is fierce, funny and dignified.	Say splendid and perfect lady.
Theme	Belonging grows through small routines.	Bench visits and shared home.
Symbol	Moon landing parallels migrant achievement.	Flag on moon and final reflection.
Technique	First-person memory gives intimacy.	Older narrator looks back on early America.

Why it matters

The chapter shows migration as more than travel. It is the slow building of language, shelter, dignity and love.

7.3 Last-minute Memory Bank

This bank gives short, exam-ready links between event and meaning. Use it when a question asks for explanation, not summary.

Memory cue	Scene to recall	Meaning to write
Eight dollars	The rent for Mrs Croft's room.	A modest room becomes emotionally important.
Splendid	Mrs Croft's moon landing ritual.	Repetition creates humour and connection.
Soup cans	Helen opens cans for her mother.	Care for the aged is practical and imperfect.
Sari	Mala covers her head and adjusts to America.	Tradition travels with the immigrant.
Obituary	The narrator mourns Mrs Croft.	A stranger becomes part of his American memory.

Final theme line

The story says that ordinary migration can be heroic because it asks a person to rebuild food, speech, work, love and memory in a new world.

Last-minute mistake

Do not compare the narrator with the astronauts as if one is greater than the other. Lahiri uses the contrast to honour quiet, ordinary endurance.

Closing sentence bank

End answers with a balanced line: Lahiri makes private adjustment as memorable as public achievement.

7.4 Sample Paragraph Starters

Use these starters to shape long answers. Add one source detail after the first sentence, then explain its meaning in your own words.

Question focus	Starter	Detail to add
Migration	Lahiri presents migration as a series of small adjustments rather than one dramatic event.	Cornflakes, thermos, newspaper and YMCA room.
Mrs Croft	Mrs Croft appears eccentric at first, but the narrator gradually understands her dignity.	Lock command, rent envelope and age of 103.
Mala	Mala's arrival makes the narrator see his own foreignness from another angle.	Sari, oxtail soup and first apartment.
Humour	The humour in the story is gentle because it reveals difference without cruelty.	Say splendid, no lady visitors and miniskirt arrest.
Ending	The ending turns ordinary family life into a record of survival.	Son at Harvard and memory of Massachusetts Avenue.

How to expand a starter

After the starter, write one scene, one feeling and one theme. That gives every paragraph plot, emotion and interpretation.

- For a five-mark answer, use two starters and two scenes.
- For a short answer, use one starter and one exact detail.
- For an appreciation question, name the narrative technique before the theme.
- For a character sketch, move from action to value: what the person does, then what it shows.

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