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class 12 english notes chapter 2 Flamingo Prose: Lost Spring – Revision Guide (2026-27)

Flamingo Prose – Chapter 2: Lost Spring (Stories of Stolen Childhood)

What this chapter covers: an excerpt from Anees Jung's book *Lost Spring, Stories of Stolen Childhood* (1994). The chapter has two parts. Part I, *Sometimes I Find a Rupee in the Garbage*, follows Saheb, a rag-picker boy from Bangladesh now living in Seemapuri on the outskirts of Delhi. Part II, *I Want to Drive a Car*, moves to Firozabad, the bangle capital of India, and Mukesh, a young bangle-maker who dares to dream of becoming a motor mechanic. Together the two halves explore poverty, stolen childhoods, caste-bound labour, and the failure of state and society to free India's invisible working children. Session 2026-27. CBSE Class 12 English Core, Flamingo (Prose).

Also see for this chapter: NCERT Solutions

Contents

1 Introduction: About the Author and the Chapter

Lost Spring is an excerpt from Anees Jung's 1994 book *Lost Spring, Stories of Stolen Childhood*. The book grew out of years of reportage with India's working children – ragpickers in Delhi, bangle-makers in Firozabad, brick-kiln children in Punjab,

and beedi-rollers in the south. The chapter in your textbook stitches together two of these worlds: Seemapuri and Firozabad. Anees Jung does not write as a sociologist counting heads or a politician promising change. She writes as a witness, walking with the children, sitting in their kitchens, listening, and asking the questions a kindly stranger might ask. The result reads like reportage but feels like prose poetry.

1.1 Who is Anees Jung?

Anees Jung: a quick profile

- **Born** 1944 in Rourkela; grew up in Hyderabad in a family of writers (her parents Nawab Hosh Yar Jung and Begum Zehra Jung were both authors).
- **Education** Hyderabad and the United States.
- **Career** columnist and editor for major Indian and foreign newspapers; long association with *The Times of India*, *The Christian Science Monitor*, and several anthologies on Indian women.
- **Best-known books** *Unveiling India* (1987), *Night of the New Moon* (1993), and *Lost Spring, Stories of Stolen Childhood* (1994).
- **Preoccupations** the lives of women and children whom the modern Indian state has rendered invisible – poor, rural, migrant, female, Muslim, working.

1.2 The two-part structure

The chapter is one continuous essay but reads as two linked stories, divided by an internal heading.

1. ***Sometimes I Find a Rupee in the Garbage*** – set in Seemapuri on the periphery of Delhi. Central child: **Saheb-e-Alam**, a Bangladeshi refugee boy.
2. ***I Want to Drive a Car*** – set in Firozabad, Uttar Pradesh, the centre of India's glass-blowing and bangle industry. Central child: **Mukesh**, born into the caste of bangle-makers.

Both halves circle the same question: why does the spring of childhood get lost? The first half answers with displacement and the cruel arithmetic of survival; the second answers with caste, debt, and the closed circle of middlemen, police, and politicians.

1.3 Why the title *Lost Spring*?

"Spring" is the season of green leaves, the season after a long winter – here a metaphor for childhood, the season of growth. The children of Seemapuri and Firozabad never get their spring. They are pulled out of school and into work before they understand the loss; by the time they do, they have already taken on the

apathy of their parents. The book's subtitle is more precise: *Stories of Stolen Childhood*. The spring is not merely lost; it is stolen, and we, as readers and citizens, are asked to notice the theft.

The numbers behind the prose

When Anees Jung wrote *Lost Spring* in the early 1990s, India had roughly 12–14 million child workers (Census 1991, NSSO). The 2011 Census still recorded 10.1 million working children aged 5–14. India's Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Amendment Act, 2016 bans employment of children under 14 in all occupations and of adolescents 14–18 in hazardous work (such as glass-blowing in Firozabad). Enforcement remains patchy; UNICEF and the ILO continue to flag the bangle industry of Firozabad as a high-risk sector.

2 Plot Summary – Part I: *Sometimes I Find a Rupee in the Garbage*

The first half of the essay opens with a daily encounter between the narrator and Saheb, a small boy who picks rags in the garbage dumps of her neighbourhood in Delhi. From this meeting Anees Jung pans outward to the wider ragpicker community of Seemapuri, then narrows back to Saheb's loss of freedom at a tea-stall. The arc moves from curiosity to friendship to a final note of quiet loss.

2.1 Saheb in the garbage dumps

The narrator meets Saheb "every morning scrounging for gold in the garbage dumps." He is not searching for waste paper or plastic; for him the garbage is gold. He tells her his family fled the green fields of Dhaka after storms swept away their fields and homes. Now they live in the big city. The narrator suggests, glibly, that he go to school. There is none in his neighbourhood. "If I start a school, will you come?" she half-jokes. "Yes," he smiles. A few days later he asks if the school is ready. She is embarrassed by her own promise. *Promises like mine abound in every corner of his bleak world.*

Key Quotation 1 – the narrator on her own glibness

"Go to school," I say glibly, realising immediately how hollow the advice must sound.

– Anees Jung, *Lost Spring* (1994)

2.2 The meaning of Saheb's name

After months of acquaintance the narrator asks his name. "Saheb-e-Alam," he announces. He does not know what it means. If he did – *lord of the universe* – he would have trouble believing it. The grandeur of the name is the irony of the

chapter compressed into three syllables: the lord of the universe walks barefoot through other people's trash.

2.3 Barefoot boys: tradition or poverty?

Saheb roams with "an army of barefoot boys." One says his mother did not bring his *chappals* down from the shelf. Another shuffles in mismatched shoes. A third has never owned a pair. A traveller tells Anees Jung that going barefoot is a tradition. She is sceptical: *I wonder if this is only an excuse to explain away a perpetual state of poverty.* She recalls the Udipi temple where a young boy once prayed for shoes. Thirty years later children of priests wear shoes, but ragpicker boys do not.

2.4 Seemapuri: a Delhi that is not Delhi

The narrator follows the children to Seemapuri, "a place on the periphery of Delhi yet miles away from it, metaphorically." This is the heart of the first half. The residents are squatters who crossed over from Bangladesh in 1971. Ten thousand ragpickers live in mud structures with tin and tarpaulin roofs, no sewage, no drainage, no running water. They have lived there for over thirty years without identity papers but with ration cards that put them on voters' lists.

Theme spotlight: the poverty cycle in Seemapuri

The Seemapuri sketch is built on three layers that lock the cycle in place:

1. **Displacement** – the 1971 war drove the families from East Bengal; they did not choose Delhi, they were pushed to it.
2. **Erasure** – they have no permits, no legal address, only ration cards. The state sees them as voters but not as citizens.
3. **Inheritance** – children grow up "becoming partners in survival"; ragpicking becomes the family trade in a single generation.

Food, the narrator notes, is more important for survival than identity. The cycle continues because the alternative – the village they left – offers no grain at all.

2.5 Garbage as gold

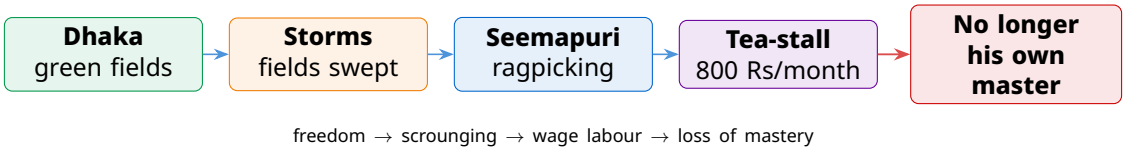
Garbage to them is gold is the most famous sentence of the chapter. For the adults, garbage is daily bread, a roof, the next meal. For the children, garbage is wonder: a silver coin, a ten-rupee note, a stamp from a foreign country. The children scrounge because hope still survives in them; the parents scrounge because hope has been replaced by hunger. The same heap of trash carries two meanings in two pairs of eyes.

Key Quotation 2 – the chapter's defining hyperbole

"Garbage to them is gold. It is their daily bread, a roof over their heads, even if it is a leaking roof. But for a child it is even more."

– Anees Jung, *Lost Spring* (1994)

2.6 Saheb's arc in one diagram



2.7 Saheb at the tennis fence; Saheb at the tea-stall

One winter morning the narrator finds Saheb watching tennis players through a fenced gate of the neighbourhood club. He wears tennis shoes that someone has discarded – a hole in one of them does not bother him; for a boy who has walked barefoot, even broken shoes are a dream come true. But the game he is watching is, the narrator says, "out of his reach."

A few days later Saheb has taken a job at a tea-stall. He earns 800 rupees and his meals. He carries a steel canister for the milk run. The plastic bag of garbage was his own; the steel canister belongs to the tea-stall owner. The chapter's first half closes on that single observation:

Key Quotation 3 – the closing line of Part I

"The steel canister seems heavier than the plastic bag he would carry so lightly over his shoulder. The bag was his. The canister belongs to the man who owns the tea shop. Saheb is no longer his own master."

– Anees Jung, *Lost Spring* (1994)

The boy who was free to scrounge has been turned into a wage-earner at age eleven or twelve. Wage labour, the narrator implies, is not always liberation; it can also be a quieter form of bondage.

3 Plot Summary – Part II: *I Want to Drive a Car*

The second half travels to Firozabad. The pivot is Mukesh, a boy from a family of bangle-makers, who announces in a single line that he will be a motor mechanic. The narrator uses his small rebellion as a lens to look at the whole industry and the social machinery that holds it together.

3.1 Firozabad: capital of bangles

Every other family in Firozabad makes bangles. The town is the centre of India's glass-blowing industry; "families have spent generations working around furnaces, welding glass, making bangles for all the women in the land it seems." Twenty thousand children work in the glass furnaces – children whose work is illegal under Indian law but ignored in practice.

Glass industry hazards – the medical chart behind the prose

Children in Firozabad work in dingy cells with no ventilation, temperatures of $1500\,^{\circ}$C to $1800\,^{\circ}$C near the furnace mouth, and constant flying shards of glass. Documented occupational hazards (WHO, ILO, National Commission for Protection of Child Rights):

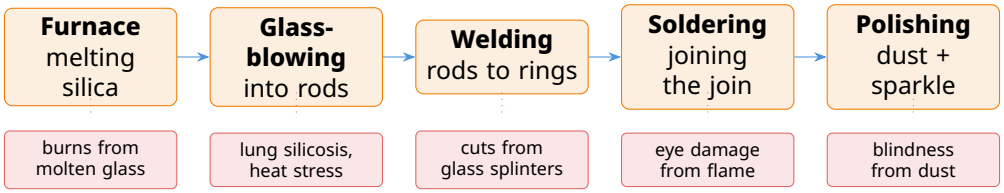
- **Eye damage** from glare and fine glass dust – many lose their sight before adulthood, just as Mukesh's grandfather did.
- **Burns** from molten glass and from the welding flame.
- **Cuts** from glass splinters, often deep, often infected.
- **Lung disease** – silicosis from inhaled silica dust; tuberculosis worsened by close quarters.
- **Stunted growth and skeletal deformity** from prolonged squatting at low workbenches.

3.2 A walk into Mukesh's home

Mukesh proudly leads the narrator home down "stinking lanes choked with garbage," past hovels with crumbling walls and wobbly doors. His home is a half-built shack; humans and animals share rooms in "a primeval state." A frail young woman – his elder brother's wife – cooks the evening meal over a firewood stove. As the elder man enters, she pulls her veil closer, as custom requires of a *bahu* before male elders. The elder is an impoverished bangle-maker who has worked first as a tailor and then a bangle-maker. He has not been able to renovate the house or send his sons to school. All he has taught them is the art of making bangles.

3.3 Bangle production – a step-by-step flow

The chapter's prose images of furnaces, soldering benches, and shanty-town handcarts come from a real production chain. Mapping the chain helps you remember which hazard belongs to which step.



3.4 Karam, caste, and the closed circle

Mukesh's grandmother offers the family's verdict on its own life: "It is his *karam*, his destiny." She has watched her husband go blind from polishing the glass of bangles. *Can a god-given lineage ever be broken?* she implies. The family does not ask for a way out; it does not believe one is possible.

Theme spotlight: caste as a closed circle

Anees Jung names **two distinct webs** in which the Firozabad child is caught:

1. The **web of the family** – the stigma of caste, the inheritance of trade, and the inherited belief that this trade is *karam* (destiny) and cannot be changed.
2. The **vicious circle of the sahukars** – middlemen, moneylenders, policemen, bureaucrats, and politicians. Together they buy the bangles cheap, lend at usurious rates, and silence any move to organise.

Together, the two webs "have imposed the baggage on the child that he cannot put down." Caste binds him from inside the family; the market and the state bind him from outside.

3.5 Savita and the unworn red bangles

Savita is a young girl in a drab pink dress, soldering pieces of glass beside an elderly woman. The narrator wonders if Savita knows the *sanctity* of the bangles she helps make – the bangles that symbolise an Indian woman's *suhaag*, the auspiciousness of marriage. Beside her sits an old woman with bangles on her wrists "but no light in her eyes." The old woman speaks in Hindi – *Ek waqt ser bhar khana bhi nahin khaya* ("I have not eaten one full meal in my whole life") – and her husband says he knows nothing except bangles. The contrast between the bright bangles in the yard and the dark eyes of those who make them is the moral image of the second half.

3.6 The cooperative that never forms

The narrator asks a group of young men: why not organise into a cooperative? Their reply is the moral of Part II: "Even if we get organised, we are the ones who will be hauled up by the police, beaten and dragged to jail for doing something illegal." Fear of the police is more vivid to them than the promise of fair wages. There is no leader among them; their fathers are as tired as they are. The talk moves "in a spiral that moves from poverty to apathy to greed and to injustice."

3.7 Mukesh's dream

In the middle of this stagnation, the narrator notices a flash of daring in Mukesh. "I want to be a motor mechanic," he repeats. He will walk to a garage, however far, and learn. Yet when asked if he dreams of flying a plane, he is suddenly silent.

"No," he says, staring at the ground. *Few airplanes fly over Firozabad.* His dream goes only as high as a car – the highest object he has seen on his streets – and no higher. The chapter ends on this carefully measured note: a small rebellion, but a real one.

Examiner shortcut: how to "frame" Mukesh's dream

In long-answer questions, examiners reward students who notice that Mukesh's dream is *both* hopeful and limited. Hopeful, because he refuses his father's destiny. Limited, because his imagination is bounded by the streets of Firozabad – a car, not a plane. Always make both observations together; do not flatten him into a simple hero of resistance.

4 Character Sketches

The essay's people are sketched economically – a sentence here, a gesture there – yet they carry the chapter's argument. Three figures repay close attention: Saheb, Mukesh, and the narrator herself.

4.1 Saheb-e-Alam

Saheb at a glance

Age: roughly 10–12. **Origin:** Dhaka (East Pakistan / Bangladesh). **Home:** Seemapuri, Delhi. **Trade:** ragpicker, then tea-stall boy. **Dream:** to go to school; to play tennis. **Arc:** from carefree barefoot boy to bonded wage-earner.

Saheb is the chapter's emblem of stolen childhood. His name – *lord of the universe* – is the chapter's central irony: a child who is master of nothing is named master of everything. He is observant (he notices the tennis players, the silver coins, the discarded shoes) and quietly hopeful (he believes that one day there will be a school, that the world might be slightly kinder). He is also pliable: he accepts the narrator's half-promise of a school as easily as he accepts another's discarded shoes.

By the end of Part I, his transformation is complete. The carefree look has left his face; the plastic bag is gone; the steel canister of the tea-stall owner has taken its place. *Saheb is no longer his own master.* The boy who could once walk away from a heap of garbage cannot now walk away from a canister. Wage work has not lifted him out of poverty; it has tightened the grip of poverty on him.

4.2 Mukesh

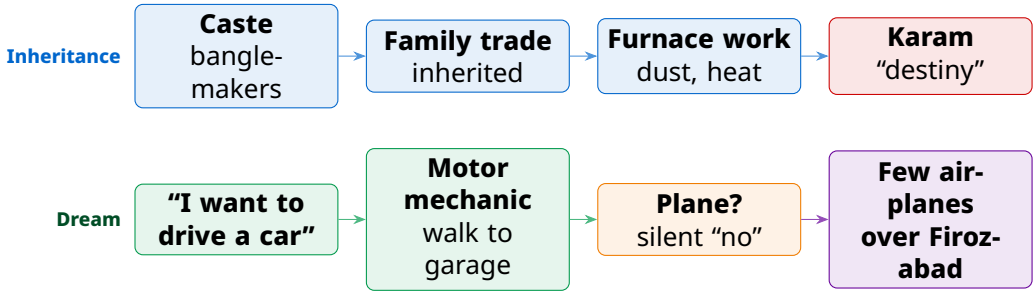
Mukesh at a glance

Age: roughly 13–14. **Origin:** Firozabad, Uttar Pradesh. **Trade:** bangle-maker (family caste trade). **Dream:** to be a motor mechanic; to drive a car. **Arc:** a small but real act of refusal.

Mukesh is the chapter's quiet rebel. He is the only boy in the essay who looks the narrator "straight into my eyes" and says, without hedging, "I will be a motor mechanic." He is proud of his half-built home, eager to show it. He repeats his dream more than once – a sign that the dream is not a stray remark but a settled wish. He has thought practically: the garage is far, he will walk.

But his dream is also fenced in by the only world he has seen. When asked if he wants to fly a plane, he goes silent. A plane is not in his vocabulary because few airplanes fly over Firozabad. The pathos of Mukesh is not that he dreams too little; it is that he cannot see what else he might dream of. He is, the narrator notes, content to dream of cars. The reader is left to wonder what dreams he might have had if his sky had been wider.

4.3 Mukesh's arc in one diagram



The diagram captures the two pulls on Mukesh: the inherited line that ends in his grandmother's word *karam*, and the dream line that ends in the chapter's closing observation. The two lines stay in tension; neither erases the other.

4.4 The narrator (Anees Jung)

The narrator is not a character in the conventional sense – she does not have a plot arc – but the chapter is filtered through her eyes, and her stance shapes its meaning. She is:

- **A witness, not a saviour.** She does not pretend she can lift Saheb out of poverty; she names her own glibness when she suggests school. She does not pretend her half-joking promise of a school was meant; she records her embarrassment.
- **An interlocutor.** She asks questions: why no chappals, why no cooperative, why no school. The questions are the structure of the essay.

- **A moral analyst.** She is willing to name the two webs – caste and the sahukar circuit – in plain prose. She is not neutral about them.
- **A stylist.** She writes with the texture of poetry: "spirals of bangles – sunny gold, paddy green, royal blue, pink, purple"; "few airplanes fly over Firozabad."

Common Misreading: Anees Jung as "pitying" the poor

Many students read the narrator as a middle-class outsider who pities the children of Seemapuri and Firozabad. This is a misreading. Anees Jung is not pitying – she is *bearing witness*. Pity asks the reader to feel sad for the children; witness asks the reader to look at the social machinery that makes the children's lives possible. The first half closes with an observation, not a tear: "Saheb is no longer his own master." The second half ends with a fact, not a sigh: "Few airplanes fly over Firozabad." The narrator's tone throughout is restrained, exact, and analytic. Calling it pity flattens it.

4.5 Secondary figures (worth a line each in long-answer questions)

- **Saheb's mother** – speaks of storms and lost green fields; appears once but anchors Saheb's history.
- **The women in tattered saris** – voice the survival logic: better to live here without grain in the village than there without food at all.
- **Mukesh's elder brother's wife (the bahu)** – the gendered face of the bangle household; cooks in smoke, veils for elders.
- **Mukesh's father** – a worn-out former tailor, now a bangle-maker; the figure of broken male labour.
- **Mukesh's grandmother** – gives the chapter its key word, *karam*; speaks of her blind husband.
- **Savita** – the girl whose mechanical hands move "like the tongs of a machine"; the future bride.
- **The old woman with bangles** – speaks the Hindi line about never having eaten a full meal.
- **The boy from Udipi** – a memory: the boy who prayed for shoes and grew up to see other boys wear them.

5 Themes

Six themes run through the chapter. Most board questions are arranged around them; learning to recognise them is the difference between a 4-mark answer and a 6-mark answer.

5.1 Theme 1 – The poverty cycle and inherited labour

Poverty in the chapter is not a single misfortune; it is a circuit that closes on itself. In Seemapuri the cycle is built from displacement, erasure, and the inheritance of rag-picking; in Firozabad the cycle is built from caste, debt, and the inheritance of bangle-making. Children become "partners in survival" before they can choose another life. The cycle is what makes Anees Jung's writing political, not merely tender.

5.2 Theme 2 – Stolen childhood

The book's subtitle is *Stories of Stolen Childhood*, and the chapter is its case study. Spring – the season of new growth – is the metaphor for childhood. The children of Seemapuri lose their spring to the garbage dump; the children of Firozabad lose it to the furnace. Both losses are silent. The children do not know they have been robbed. The reader is asked to notice the theft on their behalf.

5.3 Theme 3 – Caste-trapped labour

In Firozabad the cycle is reinforced by caste. "Born in the caste of bangle-makers, they have seen nothing but bangles – in the house, in the yard, in every other house, every other yard, every street in Firozabad." The grandmother frames it as *karam* – destiny. Caste does not appear as a system of rules; it appears as a structure of imagination. The boys cannot picture themselves outside it, and when they try (the cooperative), the threat of police violence pulls them back in.

5.4 Theme 4 – Dream vs. reality

Dreams in this chapter are not crushed – they are scaled down. Saheb dreams of school; he gets a tea-stall. He dreams of tennis; he gets to watch through a fence. Mukesh dreams of a motor garage; he might walk to one. He does not dream of a plane because none fly over his town. The chapter's quiet sadness comes from this scaling-down – the slow narrowing of the horizon of what a poor child can even imagine wanting.

5.5 Theme 5 – The apathy of the state and the middlemen

Saheb's neighbourhood has no school. Mukesh's town has child labour laws that are not enforced. Both children live within sight of the state – voters' lists, factory inspectors, child labour acts – and yet the state is invisible in their lives. The middlemen, by contrast, are very visible: they trap the bangle-makers in debt; the police back them up; the bureaucrats and politicians complete the circle. In Anees Jung's reading, the state has not failed by accident. It has stepped back so the middlemen can step in.

5.6 Theme 6 – Gender and the working girl

Although the chapter's named children are boys, women hold up its background. The women in tattered saris speak of survival; the bahu cooks in smoke and veils her face; Savita solders bangles mechanically; the old woman with bangles speaks of a lifetime of half-meals. The chapter quietly insists that the cost of these industries is paid disproportionately by girls and women: married early, fed last, made invisible by the very ornaments their hands have made.

Memory aid: the six themes of *Lost Spring* – PSCDA + G

P – Poverty cycle
S – Stolen childhood
C – Caste-trapped labour
D – Dream vs. reality
A – Apathy of state & middlemen
G – Gender (women and girls of the industry)

Read it as "PSCDA plus G": the first five spell the men's and children's webs; the G holds up the rest.

5.7 A theme map of the chapter

6 Literary Devices and Language

Lost Spring is reportage, but it reads like poetry. The chapter's NCERT textbook explicitly draws the student's attention to its figures of speech. Below is a tour of the devices and the exact lines from the text that illustrate them.

6.1 Hyperbole

Hyperbole exaggerates for emphasis. Anees Jung's most famous hyperbole is "*Garbage to them is gold*." A heap of rotting waste is not literally a heap of gold; but to those who survive by sorting it, it carries the same urgency that gold carries for a banker. The hyperbole compresses the entire economy of Seemapuri into four

words.

Key Quotation 4 – the chapter's defining hyperbole

"Garbage to them is gold."

– Anees Jung, *Lost Spring* (1994) [hyperbole]

6.2 Metaphor

A metaphor transfers a quality from one thing to another without "like" or "as." Examples from the chapter:

- *"Drowned in an air of desolation"* – the temple at Udipi is not literally underwater; the metaphor transfers the heaviness of drowning to the quality of the air.
- *"Web of poverty"* – poverty is not a web; the metaphor borrows the sticky, inescapable quality of a web.
- *"Spirals of bangles"* and *"the vicious circle of the sahukars"* – two contrasting metaphors of circular motion: one bright (bangles), one dark (debt).
- *"His dream looms like a mirage"* – this one carries a simile ("like a mirage") inside a larger metaphor: the dream itself is the mirage, not just compared to one.

6.3 Simile

A simile compares two unlike things using *like* or *as*:

- *"As her hands move mechanically like the tongs of a machine"* – Savita's hands compared to industrial tools.
- *"His dream looms like a mirage"* – Mukesh's dream compared to a mirage in the desert: visible, beautiful, perhaps unreal.
- *"An army of barefoot boys who appear like the morning birds"* – the boys compared to morning birds: many, light, transient.

6.4 Irony

Irony places two things side by side so that the gap between them becomes visible:

- **Name vs. reality** – "Saheb-e-Alam" (lord of the universe) is a barefoot ragpicker.
- **Wage vs. freedom** – earning 800 rupees has made Saheb less free, not more.
- **Beauty vs. misery** – the bangles of Firozabad are radiant; the bangle-makers are blind by middle age.
- **Marriage vs. misery** – Savita's hands will one day wear red bridal bangles; the bangles she makes today rob her of childhood.

6.5 Symbolism

- **Shoes** – both a literal possession and a symbol of dignity, social mobility, and being noticed by the state. The boy from Udipi prayed for shoes; the priest's son got them; the ragpicker boys did not.
- **Bangles** – a symbol of bridal auspiciousness (*suhaag*), and at the same time of the workers' invisibility. The very ornaments that bless the bride blind the maker.
- **Spring** – the season of growth and youth, used in the title; its loss is the loss of childhood.
- **The steel canister** – the symbol of Saheb's loss of mastery; it is heavier than the rag-picker's plastic bag because it does not belong to him.

6.6 Other devices

- **Pathetic fallacy / atmosphere** – "stinking lanes," "half-built shack," "dingy cells": the physical environment carries the moral weight of the lives inside.
- **Code-switching** – the inserted Hindi lines (*"Ek waqt ser bhar khana bhi nahin khaya"*, the word *karam*, the word *bahu*) keep the prose anchored to its real Indian speakers; translation would have flattened them.
- **Rhetorical questions** – "Can a god-given lineage ever be broken?" (the grandmother), "If I start a school, will you come?" (the narrator).
- **Contrast / juxtaposition** – the carefree plastic bag against the heavy canister; the bright spirals of bangles against the dark hutments; the rich tennis court against the fenced gate.

6.7 A device-spotting drill (from the NCERT exercise)

Line from the text	Device
"Saheb-e-Alam which means the lord of the universe is directly in contrast to what Saheb is in reality."	Irony
"Drowned in an air of desolation."	Metaphor
"Seemapuri, a place on the periphery of Delhi yet miles away from it, metaphorically."	Metaphor / paradox
"For the children it is wrapped in wonder; for the elders it is a means of survival."	Antithesis (contrast)
"As her hands move mechanically like the tongs of a machine."	Simile
"She still has bangles on her wrist, but no light in her eyes."	Antithesis / irony
"Few airplanes fly over Firozabad."	Symbol / understatement
"Web of poverty."	Metaphor
"Scrounging for gold."	Metaphor (hyperbole)
"Survival in Seemapuri ...has acquired the proportions of a fine art."	Hyperbole
"The steel canister seems heavier than the plastic bag he would carry so lightly..."	Symbolism

7 Key Quotations and How to Use Them

A board answer in 12th English is graded partly on the depth of textual support. Memorise four or five short quotations and you will be able to anchor any 6-mark question on *Lost Spring*. Below is a curated set with an attribution line and a usage hint for each.

7.1 For Part I (Saheb, Seemapuri, ragpicking)

Key Quotation 5 – on the meaning of garbage

"For the children it is wrapped in wonder, for the elders it is a means of survival."

– Anees Jung, *Lost Spring* (1994)

Use it when: the question asks about Seemapuri children's view of garbage, or about hope vs. survival.

Key Quotation 6 – on identity in Seemapuri

"Food is more important for survival than an identity."

– Anees Jung, *Lost Spring* (1994)

Use it when: the question asks why the Seemapuri families stayed despite having no permits, no drainage, no running water.

Key Quotation 7 – closing line of Part I

"Saheb is no longer his own master."

– Anees Jung, *Lost Spring* (1994)

Use it when: the question asks whether Saheb is happy at the tea-stall, or whether the tea-stall is a step up. Five words; carries an entire argument.

7.2 For Part II (Mukesh, Firozabad, bangle industry)

Key Quotation 8 – on caste and destiny

"It is his karam, his destiny."

– Mukesh's grandmother, in *Lost Spring* (1994)

Use it when: the question asks why the bangle-makers do not resist; introduce the word *karam* explicitly.

Key Quotation 9 – on the two webs that hold the child

"Two distinct worlds – one of the family, caught in a web of poverty, burdened by the stigma of caste in which they are born; the other a vicious circle of the sahukars, the middlemen, the policemen, the keepers of law, the bureaucrats and the politicians."

– Anees Jung, *Lost Spring* (1994)

Use it when: the question asks "what forces conspire to keep the workers in poverty?" (this is a verbatim board question).

Key Quotation 10 – closing line of Part II

"Few airplanes fly over Firozabad."

– Anees Jung, *Lost Spring* (1994)

Use it when: the question asks about Mukesh's dream, or about the narrowing of imagination. Six words; perfect closing line for any long answer on Part II.

7.3 General-purpose quotations

- "*Garbage to them is gold.*" – universal opener for any question on Seemapuri.

- "*Together they have imposed the baggage on the child that he cannot put down.*" – best one-line summary of the chapter's politics.
- "*His dream looms like a mirage amidst the dust of streets that fill his town Firozabad.*" – best image for Mukesh's hope.

How to quote in a 6-mark answer

Use quotations as anchors, not decoration. Two short quotations per long answer is enough. After each quotation, paraphrase its meaning in your own words for one sentence, then connect it to the question. Examiners reward this "quote → paraphrase → argument" pattern.

8 Background and Socio-Economic Context

The chapter assumes its Indian reader will recognise place-names, communities, and institutions. Below is a quick reference for the most important.

8.1 Seemapuri

Seemapuri is a colony on the north-eastern edge of Delhi (NCT). It grew rapidly after 1971, when the Bangladesh Liberation War sent waves of refugees across the border into India. Many Bengali-speaking Hindu families settled in unauthorised colonies on the city's periphery. Today, parts of Seemapuri are recognised slum-resettlement colonies; others remain "unauthorised." The waste-picking trade that Anees Jung describes is still active – and is now part of Delhi's informal recycling economy that handles more than 30% of the city's solid waste, without formal contracts or worker protections.

Rag-picking: India's invisible recycling economy

India's informal waste-pickers (*kabadiwalas*, *ragpickers*) sort an estimated 6 million tonnes of recyclables every year. A 2014 Chintan / WIEGO study estimated that Delhi alone has 1.5–2 lakh waste-pickers, and that they save the city about Rs. 6 crore per year in landfill and transport costs. Yet they have almost no formal recognition: no health insurance, no minimum wage, no protective gear. The Solid Waste Management Rules, 2016 of India, for the first time, instruct urban local bodies to integrate waste-pickers into the formal solid-waste chain; implementation remains uneven across cities.

8.2 Firozabad

Firozabad is a district town in western Uttar Pradesh, about 250 km south-east of Delhi and 40 km from Agra. It has been India's centre of glass-bangle manufacture since the late 19th century, when the discovery of natural gas pockets made the location attractive for furnace work. Today the industry has roughly 200 large fac-

tories and several thousand small home-based units; estimates of the workforce range from 2 to 4 lakh workers, of whom an unknown share are children.

The bangle industry today

The Firozabad cluster produces an estimated 80% of India's glass bangles and a sizeable share of its decorative glassware. In 2019 the National Green Tribunal directed Firozabad's coal-fired furnaces to switch to natural gas; many small units have shut down rather than retrofit. Wage research by NGOs (Save the Children, the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights) continues to find children working in soldering, polishing, and packing units in violation of the Child and Adolescent Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986 (amended 2016).

8.3 Child labour law in India – the essentials

A short legal sketch will sit usefully behind any answer that touches Mukesh's working life.

Key Indian child labour laws

- **Constitution of India** – Article 24 prohibits employment of children below 14 in any factory, mine, or hazardous work. Article 21A (added by the 86th Amendment, 2002) makes education a fundamental right for children 6–14.
- **Child and Adolescent Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986** (amended 2016) – bans employment of children below 14 in all occupations and of adolescents 14–18 in hazardous occupations (the schedule lists 38 occupations, including glass and glassware).
- **Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009** (RTE) – guarantees free schooling 6–14.
- **Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015** – treats children employed in hazardous work as children in need of care and protection.

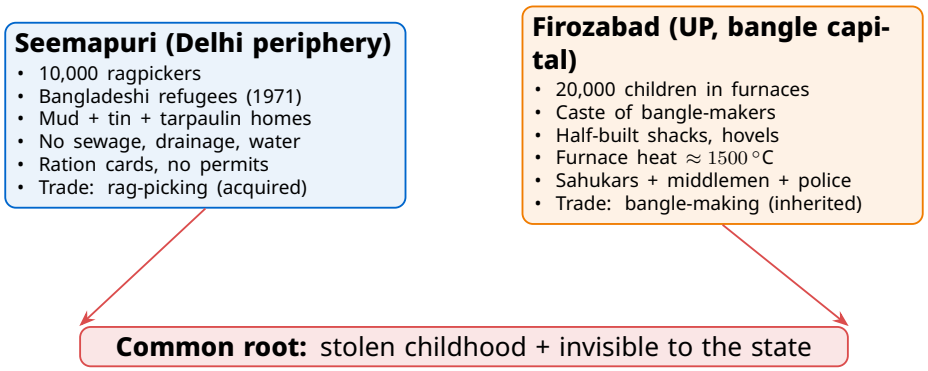
These laws explain the narrator's pointed phrase: "None of them know that it is illegal for children like him to work in the glass furnaces ...that the law, if enforced, could get him and all those 20,000 children out of the hot furnaces." The law exists; enforcement does not.

8.4 The Bangladesh war and Seemapuri migration

Seemapuri's residents trace their migration to 1971. The Bangladesh Liberation War (March–December 1971) displaced roughly 10 million people from East Pakistan into India, most of them into West Bengal, Tripura, Assam, and onward to Delhi. Many never returned. The narrator's line that the Seemapuri families "came from Bangladesh back in 1971" compresses this entire history into one clause.

8.5 Seemapuri vs. Firozabad – a schematic

The two settings are not interchangeable. A schematic side-by-side helps fix the distinction.



8.6 Where to read more

Anees Jung's full book *Lost Spring, Stories of Stolen Childhood* (Oxford University Press, 1994) contains five further sketches not in the textbook chapter. Read the chapter on the carpet-weaving children of Bhadohi for a sharper picture of bonded labour, and the chapter on the beedi-rolling girls of Madhya Pradesh for a sharper picture of gendered child work.

9 Exam Pattern: How *Lost Spring* Appears in CBSE Class 12

Lost Spring is among the most heavily examined chapters of *Flamingo* because it carries six different themes, two settings, and dense literary devices. A short-answer question is almost guaranteed; a long-answer question appears every two years.

9.1 Typical mark distribution

Question type	Marks	Typical focus
Extract-based MCQ / SAQ	1–3	Identify speaker, identify device, paraphrase a line.
Short Answer (30–40 words)	2–3	"Why does Saheb scrounge in the garbage?" / "Why does Mukesh dream of a car?"
Long Short Answer (60 words)	3–4	Theme questions: "stolen childhood," "two distinct worlds."
Long Answer (120–150 words)	5–6	Character sketch (Saheb / Mukesh) or theme essay (caste, poverty cycle).
Value-based / Extended (200 words)	5–6	Child labour, dreams of poor children, role of state and society.

9.2 Frequently asked CBSE questions (last 10 years)

1. "**What forces conspire to keep the workers of the bangle industry of Firozabad in poverty?**" – repeated in 2019, 2020 board paper.
2. "**Why does Saheb's face lose its carefree look when he starts working at the tea-stall?**" – short answer, 2018.
3. "**Mukesh dreams of becoming a motor mechanic. How is his dream different from the dreams of his family?**" – long answer, 2017, 2021.
4. "**Anees Jung says, 'Saheb is no longer his own master.' Comment.**" – 2019, 2022.
5. "**Justify the title 'Lost Spring, Stories of Stolen Childhood'.**" – long answer, 2016, 2020, 2023.
6. "**What does the bangle industry of Firozabad symbolise?**" – 2021.
7. "**Compare and contrast the lives of Saheb and Mukesh.**" – long answer, 2018, 2022.

9.3 Sample answer (6 marks): Justify the title

The title 'Lost Spring, Stories of Stolen Childhood' is not a metaphor stretched for effect but a precise summary of Anees Jung's argument. "Spring" is the season of new growth, and the chapter borrows it as a name for childhood – the season of play, dream, and school. The children Anees Jung writes about never get this season. Saheb of Seemapuri loses his spring to the garbage dumps and then to a tea-stall canister; Mukesh of Firozabad loses his to the glass furnace and the inheritance of karam. The word "stolen" is sharper than "lost": it names a thief. The thief is not one person but two webs working together – the family caught in caste and poverty, and the vicious circle of the sahukars, middlemen, and the state. The closing observations of the two halves

– "Saheb is no longer his own master" and "Few airplanes fly over Firozabad" – show the theft in two ways: a freedom taken away, and an imagination boxed in. The title, in short, is the chapter's politics in five words.

9.4 How to plan a long answer in 90 seconds

The four-step planner for any *Lost Spring* long answer

Step 1. Restate the question's key word in one line ("stolen childhood," "two worlds," "Mukesh's dream").
Step 2. Anchor with two short quotations – one from Part I, one from Part II.
Step 3. Connect each quotation to a theme (poverty, caste, dream).
Step 4. Close with a sentence that answers the question's key word directly.
This shape fits 120–150 words cleanly and scores 5/6 or 6/6 almost every time.

9.5 Common pitfalls in CBSE answers

Common Mistake: turning *Lost Spring* into a generic "poverty" essay

Many students respond to any *Lost Spring* question with a general lament about poor children in India – without naming Saheb, Seemapuri, Mukesh, Firozabad, Anees Jung, or any line from the text. Examiners deduct heavily for this. A board answer needs at least three text-specific references: a character, a place, and a quotation. Without those three, the answer reads as a school essay on "poverty" and loses 50% of its marks.

Common Mistake: conflating Saheb's and Mukesh's situations

Saheb is a Bangladeshi refugee in Delhi; he is a ragpicker; his trade was not inherited. Mukesh is a caste-trapped bangle-maker in Firozabad; his trade is his caste; he was born into it. Their arcs differ too: Saheb loses freedom at the tea-stall; Mukesh keeps a small daring ("I want to drive a car"). Treat them as parallel cases, not the same case. Examiners look for the difference, not the similarity.

9.6 Anatomy of an extract-based question

The Board now gives extract-based MCQ + SAQ clusters (1+1+1+1 marks). The extract is usually one of these passages:

1. The opening of Part I ("Why do you do this?").
2. Saheb's name and meaning.
3. Seemapuri and the women in tattered saris.
4. The closing line of Part I (steel canister vs. plastic bag).

5. Mukesh's home, the bahu cooking, the grandfather, the grandmother and *karam*.
6. The cooperative paragraph ("We are the ones who will be hauled up by the police…").
7. Mukesh's dream and the closing ("Few airplanes fly over Firozabad").

For each, learn one device, one theme word, and one short paraphrase. That covers most extract-MCQs.

10 Quick Revision – Last-Hour Summary

A one-page summary for the night before the exam.

10.1 One-paragraph summary of the chapter

Lost Spring is an excerpt from Anees Jung's 1994 book on India's working children. The chapter has two halves. Part I follows Saheb, a Bangladeshi refugee boy who picks rags in Seemapuri and later works at a tea-stall, where "the steel canister seems heavier than the plastic bag" because he is "no longer his own master." Part II moves to Firozabad, the bangle capital of India, and to Mukesh, a boy born into the caste of bangle-makers, who dares to dream of becoming a motor mechanic. Anees Jung names the two webs that hold the children: the family's web of caste and poverty, and the vicious circle of the sahukars, middlemen, police, and politicians. The chapter ends on Mukesh's small but real act of refusal – and on the limit of his imagination: "Few airplanes fly over Firozabad."

10.2 Quick-fire facts (memorise these)

Item	Detail
Author	Anees Jung (1944–), born Rourkela, raised Hyderabad.
Book	*Lost Spring, Stories of Stolen Childhood* (1994).
Textbook	*Flamingo*, Class 12 English Core, Chapter 2 (prose).
Part I title	*Sometimes I Find a Rupee in the Garbage*.
Part II title	*I Want to Drive a Car*.
Part I child	Saheb-e-Alam, ragpicker, Seemapuri.
Part II child	Mukesh, bangle-maker, Firozabad.
Seemapuri facts	10,000 ragpickers; came from Bangladesh in 1971; ration cards but no permits.
Firozabad facts	Centre of India's glass-blowing industry; 20,000 children in furnaces; bangles symbolise *suhaag*.
Closing line, Part I	"Saheb is no longer his own master."
Closing line, Part II	"Few airplanes fly over Firozabad."

10.3 Theme map – one box for the last hour

The whole chapter in six lines

1. Childhood is a season; the children's spring has been stolen.
2. Saheb loses his spring to the garbage dump and the tea-stall canister.
3. Mukesh loses his spring to the glass furnace and the word *karam*.
4. Two webs hold the child: caste & family inside, sahukar & state outside.
5. Dreams are not crushed; they are scaled down. Saheb watches tennis through a fence; Mukesh dreams only as high as a car.
6. The narrator is not a saviour. She is a witness. The reader is asked to bear witness too.

10.4 Saheb vs. Mukesh – comparison at a glance

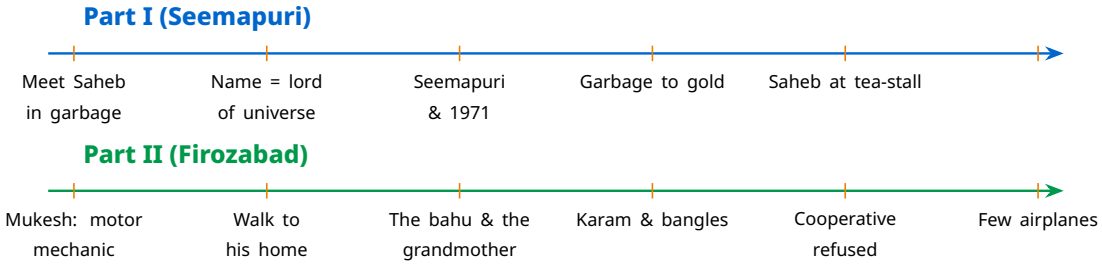
Aspect	Saheb	Mukesh
Origin	Bangladesh (refugee, 1971)	Firozabad (born in caste)
Setting	Seemapuri, Delhi	Firozabad, UP
Trade	Ragpicker, then tea-stall boy	Bangle-maker (family trade)
Why he works	Displacement; no school nearby	Caste, inherited destiny
What he watches	Tennis through a fence	Cars in the dust of his town
What he dreams of	School, tennis shoes	Motor mechanic
End-of-section image	Heavy steel canister	"Few airplanes fly over Firozabad"
Direction of arc	Loses freedom	Keeps a small daring

10.5 Quick mnemonic deck for the last hour

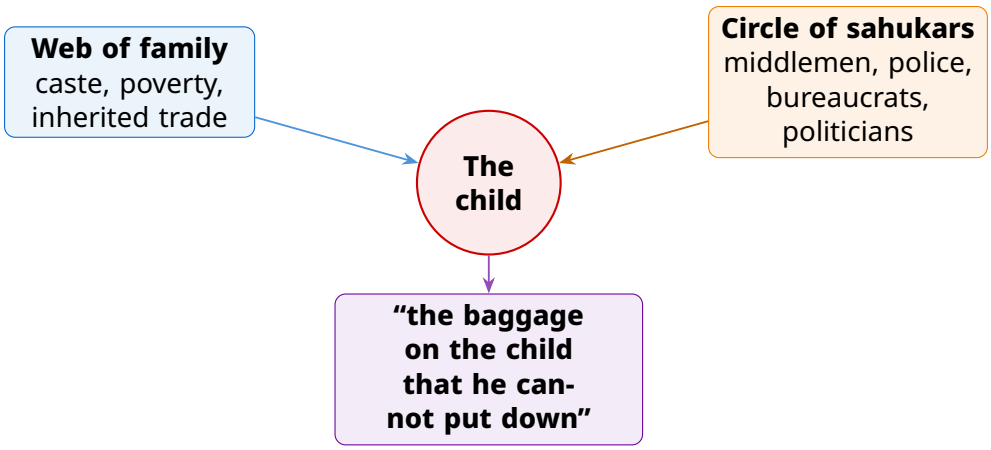
Memory deck – six hooks

S–S–S for Part I: **S**aheb – **S**eemapuri – **S**teel canister.
M–M–M for Part II: **M**ukesh – **F**irozabad – **M**otor mechanic. (Drop one M for Firozabad, keep two for Mukesh and Mechanic.)
PSCDAG for the six themes (Poverty, Stolen childhood, Caste, Dream, Apathy, Gender).
KAR-AM for the grandmother's word – caste as destiny.
1971 for the year of the Bangladesh migration to Seemapuri.
20,000 – children working in Firozabad's furnaces, per Anees Jung's number.

10.6 A two-minute timeline of the chapter



10.7 The two-web diagram (memorise this picture)



10.8 Final exam-day reminders

Five last-hour reminders

1. Always name the author – **Anees Jung** – in your opening sentence.
2. Always anchor with one quotation per long answer.
3. Don't conflate Saheb (refugee, ragpicker) with Mukesh (caste, bangle-maker).
4. Read the narrator as a witness, not a saviour. Don't write that she "helped" the children.
5. For the closing sentence, borrow one of the two famous endings – "Saheb is no longer his own master" or "Few airplanes fly over Firozabad."

Download the Full NCERT Solutions for Lost Spring

11 Related Collegedunia Resources

For the same chapter – look across the rest of the Collegedunia NCERT vertical for the resources below. For wider revision, see the previous and next chapter notes, or the Class 12 English Core hub.

Related Collegedunia Resources

Same chapter — other resources:
- NCERT Solutions
- NCERT Book PDF
- Handwritten Notes

Continue learning:
- Ch 1: Flamingo Prose: The Last Lesson
- Ch 3: Flamingo Prose: Deep Water
- Class 12 English Core — All Chapters

End of Notes – Class 12 English (Core) Flamingo Chapter 2 (Prose) – Lost Spring – Session 2026-27