

These notes have been written by the teachers at the CLPE to provide schools with ideas to develop comprehension and cross-curricular activities around this text. They build on our work supporting teachers to use quality texts throughout the reading curriculum. They encourage a deep reading of and reflection on the text, which may happen over a series of reading sessions, rather than in just one sitting. We hope you find them useful.

These teaching notes have been written with children in KS2 in mind but you will need to differentiate them as appropriate to the needs and experience of your own children.

Before you start:

- As this book is about India, it may be beneficial to gauge pupils' prior knowledge of the country (including people, food, traditions, wildlife, festivals, geography and more). Depending on your setting, pupils may have extensive knowledge and this could be an opportunity to draw on pupils' own (or other family members') experiences. Some pupils may wish to bring in their own artefacts and photographs – setting up a classroom display including labels and examples of languages could also support pupils. Pupils may even choose to share some words from language spoken at home.
- If this is the beginning of a topic and the book is used as a vehicle to gain knowledge – gauging pupils' prior knowledge may also be beneficial to track progress. Pupils will have an opportunity to raise their own “wonderings” about the topic. These could be recorded on flipcharts and annotated with responses as you read the book. If pupils' wonderings are not resolved, further research could take place.
- This book revolves around a grandmother sharing special objects from her trunk that she collected during her time in India. This concept could be explored prior to reading the book by inviting pupils to each bring an object into school and share its importance to them. This is a fantastic speaking and listening opportunity as pupils can genuinely identify a special object and describe its importance. Other pupils may ask each other questions and generate a real discussion about what each other's important objects mean. These objects could be displayed in a similar way to the **About This Book** page.
- Within this book, a grandmother is sharing her precious objects and in turn passing on knowledge to her young granddaughter. This concept mirrors the oral tradition where information is passed on to generations through the vehicle of talking. Discussing with the younger generation the value of listening to elders who have a wealth of knowledge is so important. If appropriate, you could ask pupils to find out something from their elders at home (this could take place using different forms of communication if necessary, such as phone, emails, Zoom, etc.) and share this with pupils. Exploring what the younger generation can learn from our elders will be further discussed after reading this book with pupils.
- At the beginning of the book (alongside the **Contents** page), there is note from both the author and the illustrator. Sharing these with pupils will really bring to life the purpose of writing this book. Pupils will be interested to hear that both Jasbinder and Nina were born in India and now live in the UK.
- Sharing the **Contents** page with pupils could also be a good pre-reading task as pupils may be able to talk about some of the topics explored within the book. This could be done alongside the map at the beginning of the book – on page 9. Playing “the fastest finger first” by naming places for pupils to find and point to on the map will familiarize pupils with the names of places that they will meet throughout the book. You could also reference images within the book for pupils to find and point to. Pupils could continue this activity in small groups or pairs where they can take the lead – this will encourage pupils to be confident when pronouncing words with which they are unfamiliar.
- Throughout the book, Nanijee opens her trunk and selects an object. Within a double-page spread, there is a short narrative description between Nanijee and Thara, followed by some non-fiction features. You may choose



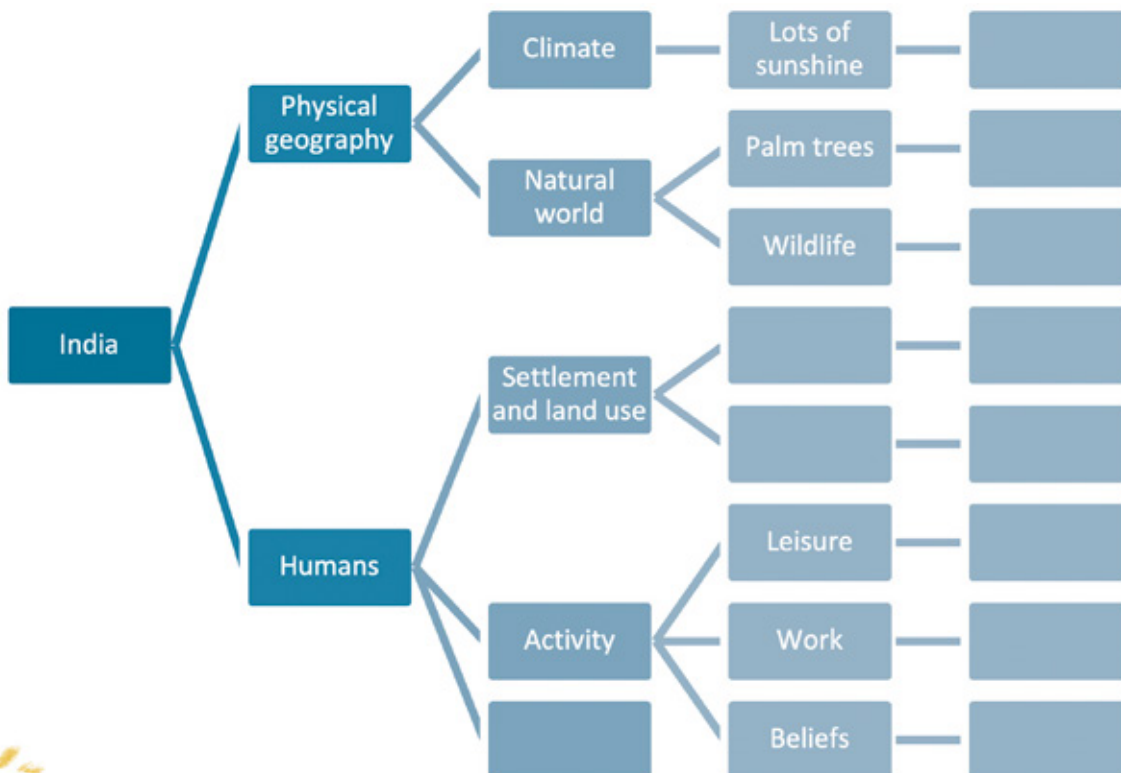
India, Incredible India Teachers' Notes © The Centre for Literacy in Primary Education

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to focus on the differences between the two styles of writing – pupils will be able to identify the narrative and then look at non-fiction features such as text boxes; diagrams; pictures with captions; subheadings and other ways used to present non-fiction content. No two pages are the same and pupils will love the diversity of ways in which pages are organized.

Reading aloud and key talking points:

- Introduce the book by sharing the front cover and reading aloud the title and the author’s and illustrator’s names. Invite pupils to share their initial impressions. Take the opportunity to model specific reading strategies and language associated with non-fiction like “find evidence” or “retrieve facts” to support ideas.
 - *What kind of book is this? How do you know? Does it remind you of anything you have read before?*
 - *Do you know the author or the illustrator? How do they want you to feel about India? How do you think the author and illustrator feel about India? How do you know?*
- At this stage, help the children to locate India on a world map or globe and have the children share what they think they know about India already and how they know this – from personal and real experience, from reading or watching films or television, etc.
- Now encourage the children to look more closely at the illustration and share their responses with each other. *What do you learn about India before even opening the book? Does it confirm anything you already knew? Does anything interest you or puzzle you particularly? Why? What kinds of information might you learn about India in this book? What would you like to find out?* At this point, you could model how to use a visual organizer to begin recording the pupils’ responses and thinking, such as a concept map which illustrates how to categorize information about a country based on key aspects of geographical study. Pupils can use a map like this to record information they have found out in an efficient way. They can go on to use these notes to help them to develop writing of their own, without directly copying from the text:



- Invite pupils to draw on their prior reading experiences to make predictions about what reading this book might involve. *What do you expect to find inside? What will it look like? How do you think the information will be organized and presented? How do you expect text and images to work together? Why do you think that?* Make accessible a range of non-fiction texts to use as reference, including information books, atlases, maps, globes and age-appropriate websites (listed at the back of the book in **Find Out More** on page 76).
- Open the book and give pupils time and space to read and explore the images and text in the endpapers, title page, **Contents** page and map of the states in India. You might provide copies to small groups of children to enable them to discuss in more depth together what information they are finding out as well as further questions they have. Scanning is an important strategy to teach children. Model how to scan for key words and specific facts or information, as well as how to use the **Contents** page, clues in the headings and subheadings, numbers or font design to retrieve or infer meaning.
- Now share the introduction on page 10 with pupils, **Welcome to India**. You may want to enlarge this page as there is a wealth of information shared. This page will provide a perfect opportunity to practise retrieval skills with pupils as well as how to summarize a lot of information into a few key points or sentences. Begin by reading it aloud and talking together about what pupils found interesting or any facts that were particularly memorable and why. Talk together about unfamiliar vocabulary and begin to make a glossary of words or phrases as a class.
- Looking at the class concept map to see if there are any clear categories that are emerging from this introduction. On an enlarged copy of the text, model how to skim-read to get an overall gist. You could draw attention to the starting line of each paragraph, text-marking it and discussing what subject or theme each paragraph will hold: **India is jam-packed with landscapes... The history of India... There are also vibrant cities... One of the very special things about India is that it is a country of very strong belief and faith... India now has the biggest population of Hindus... The most important texts... To make sure that everyone understands each other...**
- As a class, begin to summarize what you have learned about India so far. You might write, “India is Incredible. It...”, asking the children to talk with a partner or in small groups about how they might compose just one or two sentences to summarize what they know about India so far, by way of introduction.
- You can then go on to ask the children to retrieve and scan for specific information from the text. This could be carried out with some retrieval questions to find information. Or pupils could jot down their favourite 3 pieces of information from the page and then share them with each other. This will generate a discussion between pupils – “I chose a similar/a different fact to you; why was that important to you?” or “I was the only one who chose ____.”
- Share **About This Book** (page 11) with pupils and ask them to identify the objects on the page. Some pupils may not know the specific terms for the objects and may improvise with their own ideas. This can be discussed as and when reading through the book. Sharing a class list of Nanijee’s objects may be a good idea and pupils can tick them off as they are read out.
- There is more than one way to read this book as suggested here; reading in chronological order or choosing an object from page 11 and finding the page that corresponds with the object. Decide together which way you will continue to read the book; using the **Contents** and **Index** pages to dip in to learn about a specific area of interest or a particular state, or simply reading it in order.
- Share **A Journey Round India** on pages 12 and 13 with pupils. *What do you know about Thara/her Nanijee? How would you explain their relationship? What does Thara tell us about her bedroom? How do we know that the trunk is important to Nanijee? It smells sweet like the heart of a tree – what does this mean? How can you tell that Thara is excited about what is in the trunk?* Now step back from this world and ask the children to reflect



on how it makes them feel that they can learn about India alongside Thara. *How do her feelings about hearing Nanajee’s stories affect us as readers? What is the impact of learning about a place through special objects? Do you have special objects at home that help you tell stories as a family?*

- If dipping into the book, teachers might find this summary useful in planning for a diverse range of topics and vocabulary to be covered as a class, whilst still modelling how to use the book’s features – **Contents, Index**, clues in the headings and subheadings, numbers or font design, illustrations – to navigate it with pupils:

Page numbers	Object chosen and state/place explored	Narrative content between Thara and Nanijee to discuss (dialogue; use of language; inference)	Topic(s) explored	New language introduced or explored
14–15	Book about the goddess Ganga Uttarakhand	Nanijee... <i>“I knew you would love it... Snuggle in... and I’ll tell you her story.”</i>	Goddess Ganga; the River Ganges; Gangotri Temple	Himalayan mountains; Gaumukh; pilgrims; saffron
16–17	The stamp Chandigarh	<i>“I stare again at the stamp and this little world, frozen in time.”</i>	Goddess Chandi; Nek Chand and the Rock Garden (recycling)	Sculptures; modern art; spirit of creativity
18–19	Tuk tuk/auto-rickshaw Delhi	<i>“Delhi’s got everything, Thara: beautiful old buildings, modern skyscrapers ... and as much street food as you can eat!”</i>	The Red Fort; Kushti – Indian martial art; Old Delhi and New Delhi	Jantar Mantar, Mughal Emperor (Shah Jahan)
22–23	The Taj Mahal Uttar Pradesh	<i>“It looks like a palace – but no, Thara. It’s a memorial.”</i>	The Taj Mahal; Agra and the Yamuna River; marble beauty	Rabindranath Tagore; the Quran
24–25	Sketchbook Madhya Pradesh	<i>“I close my eyes and imagine I’m there – right in the dappled shade of the teak forests surrounding the caves.”</i>	Bhimbetka cave paintings; ancient art	Prehistoric paintings; the Stone Age; archaeologist
26–27	Diya light Sikkim	<i>“She sets the glowing light on the windowsill and cuddles in next to me. I feel a tingle, and know she’s about to tell me a story...”</i>	Diwali; Rama and Sita story; rangoli patterns	Sanskrit; Hindus, Sikhs and Jains
30–31	Seed pod Assam	<i>“Nanijee then tells me about Jadav Payeng, the Forest Man of India. With seeds just like these, he created a new forest, all by himself.”</i>	Jadav Payeng; Majuli Island	Map of the area to discuss the monsoon



32–33	Coconut Andaman and Nicobar Islands	<i>“I can’t believe my eyes when Nanijee leans into the trunk and brings out a coconut!”</i>	Andaman and Nicobar Islands; islanders	Map of the area to discuss; white-bellied sea eagle, sea cow, turtle, sea snake and Moorish idol
34–35	A train ticket West Bengal	<i>“This little train is like going on a journey into the past...”</i>	Darjeeling (Queen of the Hills); Himalayan Railway; growing tea leaves	Agony Loop!
36–37	A postcard of a bronze statue West Bengal	<i>“Kolkata is such a buzzing city, Thara, with so much to do. You can see groundbreaking theatre or browse fancy shopping malls. And the flower market is heavenly: I remember the clouds of jasmine scents wrapping themselves around me as I chose flowers to take to the temple. I take a deep breath, imagining the perfume floating up to my nose.”</i>	Kolkata (Calcutta) Howrah Bridge Famous artists	Buddha and Sujata Jasmine flowers Eden Gardens
38–39	A wooden spice box Odisha	<i>“Some families pass their masala dabbas on through the generations. This one was used in a kitchen for a long time.”</i>	Bhubaneswar Market; Cardamom; Bay of Bengal	Star anise, turmeric, black pepper, cloves and cumin
42–43	A rocket Andhra Pradesh	<i>“‘Even though we can’t see it,’ she says, ‘the Chandrayaan-2 is up there this very minute.’”</i>	Satish Dhawan Space Centre; various famous rockets; Maharaja Jai Singh II; Ritu Karidhal and Muthayya Vanitha	Counting to ten; “Jai Hind”
44–45	Ankle bracelets (ghunghroos) Tamil Nadu	<i>“‘I love them!’ I laugh, and the ghunghroos fill my bedroom with the tinkling sounds of bells.”</i>	Chennai; classical dance; Bharatnatyam dance; musical instruments	Precision
46–47	A photo of a houseboat Kerala	<i>“I lay my head in Nanijee’s lap and she sings my favourite lullaby – I close my eyes, and imagine the waters lapping in the dark.”</i>	Arabian Sea and houseboats; the Western Ghats; Ayurvedic medicines	



50–51	A photo of a woman Karnataka	<i>“When Nanijee begins to describe Nidhi’s gigantic road-trip, all the way from Delhi to London, I imagine it’s me sitting there in the scorching driver’s seat, motoring through seventeen different countries.”</i>	Nidhi Tiwari’s treks; Bengaluru; Women Beyond Boundaries	Map to explore areas; Chola statues
52–53	A turquoise skirt and top Maharashtra	<i>“‘It’s beautiful!’ I say, holding the skirt up against myself. ‘And just the right size.’”</i>	Mumbai – inequality; Bollywood; city wildlife	Dhobi Ghat – world’s largest laundry; map to explore Mumbai
54–55	A leather cord with a tooth Gujarat	<i>“I hold the tooth and imagine my lion roaming through the thick forests, stalking its prey. The thought makes me shiver...”</i>	Gujarat; wildlife sanctuary; national lions; the Nawab of Junagadh; International Kite Festival	
56–58	Pair of dice Gujarat	<i>“‘Did you know that dice were invented in India?’ says Nanijee.”</i>	Indus Valley civilization – inventions	Number system; algebra; snakes & ladders; buttons; ludo and more
58–59	A puppet Rajasthan	<i>“Just imagine what stories he would tell us, if he could speak.”</i>	Udaipur’s Lake Palace and Aravalli hills; Jaisalmer	Map to explore; Rajputs and maharajas
60–61	A gold chain with a painting Punjab	<i>“I close my eyes too, hold my necklace, and whisper the prayer Nanijee taught me – a wish for peace across the world.”</i>	Sikhism, including the Five Ks; Guru Nanak; the Golden Temple in Amritsar (and the chores to do inside)	Amrit Sarovar; shopping near the Golden Temple
64–65	A black string with a claw Jammu and Kashmir	<i>“I stay as quiet as I can and make a wish...”</i>	Hemis National Park – including snow leopards; Khenrab Phuntsog seasonal; information	Kaladi Kulcha

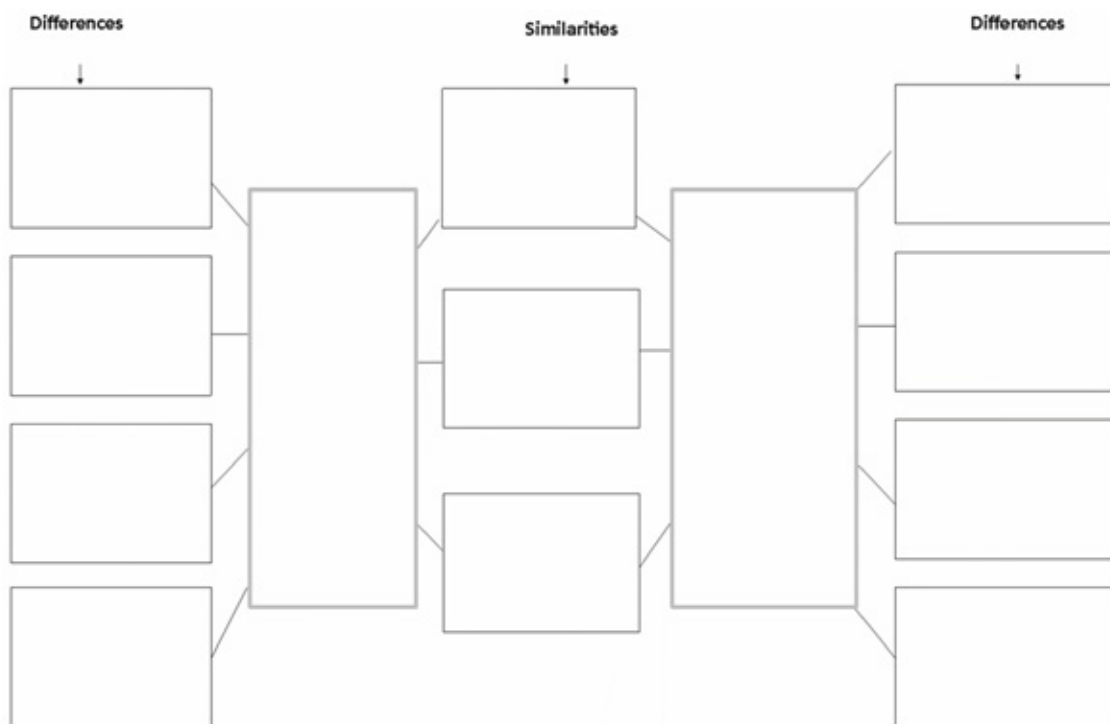


66–67	A peacock feather Punjab	<i>“Nanijee reaches into the trunk and brings out the last of her treasures: a shimmering blue and green peacock feather... which she tickles me with!”</i>	Moranwali – village Rai Jats of Thalla and Maharaja Ranjit Singh; weaving; farming	Moving from Punjab to the UK
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Additional spreads related to more general topics of interest

20–21	Wildlife
28–29	Religious festivals
40–41	Food
48–49	Sports
62–63	Craft
68–69	Thara’s narrative to end her story
70–72	The History of India Timeline, including information about the Indian-Pakistan border at Attari- Wagah
73	Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi and the Indian flag
74–75	Index
76	Find Out More website links

- You might create a purpose for reading – for identifying criteria and information to locate prior to reading. For example, you might invite small groups of pupils to choose two states to compare and contrast. In this case, they will need to consider what one might expect to discover, relating to physical and human geography based on the categories they uncovered in their earlier reading and concept map. They could then use their non-fiction skim-reading skills and strategies to gain an overall gist then scan for specific information in each spread, using the headings and subheadings, numbers or font design, first lines, diagrams and illustrations to navigate and find information. They might record their thinking in new concept maps, specific to each state then summarize key information into a “double bubble” visual organizer such as:



- You might then engage the groups or class in debate and discussion around which state they would prefer to live in and why. Encourage them to support their arguments by drawing on the facts shared in the book as well as wider evidence that they may have found through research. This could lead them to create a piece of persuasive writing through which to share their viewpoint. In preparation, they could explore real-world models of non-fiction texts, analysing what makes each of them particularly effective and drawing on this in their own chosen form of writing.

Revisiting the story as a whole:

- Read the **Author and Illustrator biographies** opposite the **Contents** page (page 6) and discuss the author and illustrator’s personal reasons for writing and illustrating this beautiful book. *Do you think the younger generation can learn from the elder generation?*
- Consider the word **“Incredible”** in the title. *How does this book illustrate how incredible India is? Does “incredible” mean that everything is positive? Did the author and illustrator hint/discuss any negative aspects about India?*
- After discussing these questions, revisit the pre-learning activities completed on the working wall. Annotate/revise some of the content displayed. You may want to provide children with the opportunity to explore their new learning and share this through a variety of ways.
- Revisit the **Contents** page and explore the chapter headings now. *Do some headings resonate more with us now that we have read the book?*

After reading:

- There are a multitude of writing opportunities related to this book:
 - “India, Incredible India” – pupils revisit their favourite facts from the activity based on page 10. Plan a report in the form of a non-chronological report; a letter or a speech about India. Pupils could choose some topics from the **Contents** page to report on why India is incredible. How else would they describe it? They could have some fun with alliteration or choose other powerful adjectives.
 - Use this style of writing (narrative and non-fiction fusion) to describe another place. This could be another place of study, the children’s home town or a place of their choice. Children could choose objects and create a few pages in this style.
 - Postcards from places described in the book
 - Diary entries for Thara or Nanijee about visiting certain locations
 - Interview with Nanijee about a specific aspect of India
 - Letter to the author and illustrator about the book – what they enjoyed; how they chose which aspects of India to include.
 - Poetry based on new knowledge – create a diamond poem. Line 1 – one word; lines 2-4 – two words; line 5 – five words; lines 6-8 – four words: line 9 – one word. Pupils can explore an aspect of India to base their poem on or India in general.
- Some pupils may know additional information about India and be surprised it didn’t feature in the book. Give these pupils an opportunity to share their knowledge and discuss how India is a huge country and why not everything could be included in one book. (If writing to the author and illustrator, add this information in to the letter.)



- Use the double-spreads based on specific topics to explore more activities in the classroom:
 - Pages 20–21 **WILDLIFE** – conduct further research on animals in India. Perhaps look at how animals are used to work and whether this is fair? Look at how animals are represented in religions in India and why this may be. Research animals that are found in specific parts of India due to their habitats.
 - Pages 28–29 **RELIGIOUS FESTIVALS** – read about these festivals and add some more. You could celebrate some festivals throughout the year. “Holi” is a very colourful and exciting festival to re-enact!
 - Pages 40–41 **FOOD** – explore these pages. This is a great opportunity to get some Indian food into school for pupils to taste. Some families may be able to cook some of their traditional foods!
 - Pages 48–49 **SPORTS** – read about the different sports. Research other traditional board games or team games that children play. Perhaps try to play some of these within PE lessons.
 - Pages 62–63 **CRAFT** – read the pages. Creating rangoli patterns; weaving, and tracing henna patterns on paper (if difficult to create on hands) are activities that could be used to add to the curriculum.
 - In art, learn how to mix paints and use techniques to replicate Nina Chakrabarti’s style of art, perhaps to create more illustrations for this book or for books that pupils want to write on India or other countries of interest.
- In music, research what some Indian musical instruments sound like and enjoy their diversity. Children could learn how to play simple percussion instruments. You might even invite in a musician to demonstrate to the children live.
- In PE, look at some traditional Indian dance and some modern-day bhangra dancing – children could explore both and respond creatively. Again, you might consider inviting in Indian dancers.
- Work in pairs or small groups to write songs about India. Pupils could perform their poems/songs using musical accompaniment and dance.
- Pupils could research more about India and create verbal presentations to inform their peers or school community. Useful links to support further research include:
 - Facts and figures: www.britannica.com/facts/India
 - Indian languages: www.omniglot.com/writing/languages.htm
 - Indian music: www.worldmusic.net/collections/asia/indian
 - Indian history: www.dkfindout.com/uk/history/modern-india/
 - Indian wildlife: www.wvfindia.org/ and the David Attenborough documentary series *Secrets of Wild India* (2012, National Geographic)
- Children could be inspired by this book to read *Africa, Amazing Africa* by Atinuke and Mouni Feddag (Walker) together or for independent enjoyment and interest. They could go on to create and publish their own books about a country or continent of interest to them, drawing on the non-fiction features that will help their readers navigate information effectively.



Other titles by Jasbinder Bilan or to support exploration of themes from the book:

- *Tamarind and the Star of Ishta* by Jasbinder Bilan (Chicken House)
- *Aarti and the Blue Gods* by Jasbinder Bilan (Chicken House)
- *Asha and the Spirit Bird* by Jasbinder Bilan (Chicken House)
- *Hello Nature: Draw, Colour, Make and Grow* by Nina Chakrabarti (Laurence King Publishing)
- *My Wonderful World of Fashion: A Book for Drawing, Creating and Dreaming* by Nina Chakrabarti (Laurence King Publishing)
- Stories set in or inspired by India:
 - www.booksfortopics.com/booklist-india
 - www.booktrust.org.uk/news-and-features/features/2020/september/9-brilliant-childrens-books-inspired-by-india-chosen-by-jasbinder-bilan/
- *Africa, Amazing Africa* by Atinuke and Mouni Feddag (Walker)
- *Maps* by Aleksandra and Daniel Mizielinski (Big Picture Press)
- *Children's Illustrated Atlas* by Andrew Brooks (DK Children)
- *City Atlas: Travel the World with 30 City Maps* by Georgia Cherry and Martin Haake (Wide Eyed Publications)



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