

Grandpa's Indian summer

Neetu and Sanjay are visiting Grandpa Chatterji in Calcutta, India. In the following extract, they experience the bustling streets of the city for the first time.

The horses set off clip-clopping, their hooves echoing down the broad Calcutta streets. Neetu and Sanjay studied the old lady who sat before them all wrapped up in her shawl.

“Is Great Grandma really going to bathe in the river?” they asked in puzzled voices.

“Oh, yes,” said Grandpa Chatterji. “The river has become the most important place in her life.”

They stared out of the carriage windows as the horses trotted out into the road and joined a human river – a river of people who swept through that huge city, pulling things, pushing things, carrying things – on their backs and on their heads; there were those who were riding on bicycles, mopeds, in rickshaws or in trams and buses; it was a torrent of living creatures among which wandered dogs and pigs and horses and cows, where birds swooped and flapped and squawked and soared over the rooftops with the hundreds of fluttering paper kites.



Then Grandpa cried out, "Look!"

They saw the huge curving girders of a bridge which stretched over a wide expanse of shining water. It looked as though it had been built to carry the weight of the whole of mankind.

When they had crossed to the other side, they made their way along the river until they came to a place where many people had gathered.

The sunlight danced on the water, sparkling and shimmering. All sorts of boats and crafts floated like dreams through the liquid haze. Men, women and children stood at the water's edge, their garments fluttering. They bent and scooped water into their hands and rubbed their arms and faces, then they walked further into the river and finally dipped themselves under completely.

"This is where Great Grandma likes to bathe," said Grandpa Chatterji, as the horses pulled up.



Name: Class: Date:

1 Where is the carriage going?

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2 How is the old lady related to Neetu and Sanjay?

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3 Find and copy the word or phrase that shows how Neetu and Sanjay are speaking when they ask Grandpa Chatterji about their journey.

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4 What do they see that tells them they have reached the river?

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5 The bridge looks as though it has been “*built to carry the weight of the whole of mankind*”. Tick **two** words that you think describe the bridge.

strong

flimsy

wide

beautiful

6 According to the text, which of these would you find in the streets the carriage drives through? Tick all the correct answers.

- trams
- traffic wardens
- cows
- people carrying things on their heads
- water

7 Apart from birds, what can the people in the carriage see over the rooftops?

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8 Do you think Neetu and Sanjay have spent a lot of time with their Great Grandma before this? Explain your answer.

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9 Explain the story in as few words as you can.

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10 Make a list of everyone who we know is in the carriage.

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