This excerpt is from the short story “The Third and Final Continent” found in the book Interpreter of Maladies. It tells about the life of a young Indian man who is looking back on when he first immigrated to the United States. The man fondly speaks of Mrs. Croft, an elderly lady from whom he rented a room for six weeks before his new wife, Mala, arrived. The excerpt begins as the narrator reflects on his wife’s arrival in America. Read the excerpt and answer the questions that follow.

The Third and Final Continent

By Jhumpa Lahiri

1 I like to think of that moment in Mrs. Croft’s parlor as the moment when the distance between Mala and me began to lessen. Although we were not yet fully in love, I like to think of the months that followed as a honeymoon of sorts. Together we explored the city and met other Bengalis, some of whom are still friends today. We discovered that a man named Bill sold fresh fish on Prospect Street, and that a shop in Harvard Square called Cardullo’s sold bay leaves and cloves. In the evenings we walked to the Charles River to watch sailboats drift across the water, or had ice cream cones in Harvard Yard. We bought an Instamatic camera with which to document our life together, and I took pictures of her posing in front of the Prudential building, so that she could send them to her parents. At night we kissed, shy at first but quickly bold, and discovered pleasure and solace in each other’s arms. I told her about my voyage on the SS Roma, and about Finsbury Park and the YMCA, and my evenings on the bench with Mrs. Croft. When I told her stories about my mother, she wept. It was Mala who consoled me when, reading the Globe one evening, I came across Mrs. Croft’s obituary. I had not thought of her in several months – by then those six weeks of the summer were already a remote interlude in my past – but when I learned of her death I was stricken, so much so that when Mala looked up from her knitting she found me staring at the wall, the newspaper neglected in my lap, unable to speak. Mrs. Croft’s was the first death I mourned in America, for hers was the first life I had admired; she had left this world at last, ancient and alone, never to return.
As for me, I have not strayed much farther. Mala and I live in a town about twenty miles from Boston, on a tree-lined street much like Mrs. Croft's, in a house we own, with a garden that saves us from buying tomatoes in summer, and a room for guests. We are American citizens now, so that we can collect social security when it is time. Though we visit Calcutta every few years, and bring back more drawstring pajamas and Darjeeling tea, we have decided to grow old here. I work in a small college library. We have a son who attends Harvard University. Mala no longer weeps at night for her parents, but occasionally she weeps for our son. So we drive to Cambridge to visit him, or bring him home for a weekend, so that he can eat rice with us with his hands, and speak in Bengali, things we sometimes worry he will no longer do after we die.

Whenever we make that drive, I always make it a point to take Massachusetts Avenue, in spite of the traffic. I barely recognize the buildings now, but each time I am there I return instantly to those six weeks as if they were only the other day, and I slow down and point to Mrs. Croft's street, saying to my son, here was my first home in America, where I lived with a woman who was 103. "Remember?" Mala says, and smiles, amazed, as I am, that there was ever a time that we were strangers. My son always expresses his astonishment, not at Mrs. Croft's age, but at how little I paid in rent, a fact nearly as inconceivable to him as a flag on the moon was to a woman born in 1866. In my son's eyes I see the ambition that had first hurled me across the world. In a few years he will graduate and pave his way, alone and unprotected. But I remind myself that he has a father who is still living, a mother who is happy and strong. Whenever he is discouraged, I tell him that if I can survive on three continents, then there is no obstacle he cannot conquer. While the astronauts, heroes forever, spent mere hours on the moon, I have remained in this new world for nearly thirty years. I know that my achievement is quite ordinary. I am not the only man to seek his fortune far from home, and certainly I am not the first. Still, there are times I am bewildered by each mile I have traveled, each meal I have eaten, each person I have known, each room in which I have slept. As ordinary as it all appears, there are times when it is beyond my imagination.
Teacher Guide for FAST-R Passage: The Third and Final Continent
Fiction

The annotated answer key below highlights common reasons students might choose each answer, and the sidebar gives more insight into the question types, to help you understand patterns of student responses. Always make time to follow up with students in conferences or small groups to probe their thinking, teach in response to patterns, and help them apply effective reading and thinking strategies to their everyday reading.

Note: You may find it helpful to refer to the “Types and Levels of Thinking Assessed on FAST-R” sheet from your teacher resource folder as you examine your students’ responses. The icon in the right-hand column, below, corresponds to that sheet’s more detailed explanations of the kinds of thinking each type of question asks of readers.

1. Which of the following lines from the excerpt MOST suggests a nostalgic tone?
   A. “I took pictures of her posing in front of the Prudential building” (OOP1, ¶1)
   B. “I told her about my voyage on the SS Roma” (OOP1, ¶1)
   C. “Mala and I live in a town about twenty miles from Boston” (OOP1, ¶2)
   ✓ D. “I return instantly to those six weeks as if they were only the other day” (¶1)

2. If the narrator and his wife had not become American citizens, they would not be able to
   A. visit Calcutta. (OOP1)
   ✓ B. collect Social Security.
   C. attend Harvard University. (OOP2; their son does)
   D. get married. (OOP1)

3. Which of the following details from the excerpt BEST shows that the narrator has accepted life in America?
   A. “I like to think of that moment in Mrs. Croft’s parlor” (OOP2, ¶1)
   B. “We bought an Instamatic camera with which to document our life” (OOP1, ¶1)
   ✓ C. “We have decided to grow old here.” (¶2)
   D. “There are times when it is beyond my imagination.” (OOP2, ¶3)

4. What is Mala and her husband’s greatest worry?
   ✓ A. That their son will lose his Indian culture.
   B. That they will not be able to collect Social Security when it is time. (OOP2, ¶2)
   C. That Mala’s parents will die in India before they can say goodbye. (OOP2, ¶2; Mala “weeps at night for her parents” but there’s no evidence that supports this idea)
   D. That their son will not respect his parents’ achievements. (OOP2, ¶3)

5. The narrator’s son is astonished by
   A. Mrs. Croft’s age. (OOP1, ¶3)
   ✓ B. the cost of rent when his parents lived with Mrs. Croft.
   C. the astronauts landing on the moon. (OOP1, ¶3)
   D. his mother’s memories. (OOP2)

MI5: Determine meaning by incorporating an understanding of literary concepts

FE1: Identify evidence explicitly stated in the text

MI3: Determine implicit meaning by understanding the organization of information in the text
### Grades 9-11 • Fiction • “The Third and Final Continent”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Correct Answer(s)</th>
<th>Points of Interest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6. Which of the following is the BEST definition of the word inconceivable as it is used in paragraph 3?</td>
<td>✓ C. impossible to believe</td>
<td>MI1: Determine implicit meaning from words in context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. not thought out (OOP2)</td>
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<td>B. lacking in importance (OOP2)</td>
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<td>D. unlikely to change (OOP2)</td>
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<td>7. When the narrator expresses that a “flag on the moon” was an inconceivable fact to a woman born in 1866, the woman to whom he refers is</td>
<td>✓ B. Mrs. Croft</td>
<td>FE2: Recognize the explicit meaning from varied wording in the text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Mala (OOP2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>C. Mrs Finsbury (OOP2; Finsbury Park is mentioned in ¶1)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>D. his mother (OOB)</td>
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<td>8. Based on the excerpt, how are the narrator and his son alike?</td>
<td>✓ B. Both are ambitious.</td>
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<tr>
<td>A. Both knew Mrs. Croft. (OOP2 ¶3)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>C. Both went to Harvard. (OOP1, ¶3)</td>
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<td>D. Both are adventurous. (OOB)</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. The narrator compares his 30 years in America with</td>
<td>✓ A. the heroism of astronauts who visited the moon for several hours.</td>
<td>FE2: Recognize the explicit meaning from varied wording in the text</td>
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<td>A. the heroism of astronauts who visited the moon for several hours.</td>
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<td>B. being married to a 103 year old woman. (OOB)</td>
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<td>C. traveling three continents. (OOP2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>D. growing up in India. (OOP1)</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. What do the author and the narrator have in common?</td>
<td>✓ B. Both have lived on more than one continent. (see author spotlight)</td>
<td>FE2: Recognize the explicit meaning from varied wording in the text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Both are men. (OOP2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>C. Both are Japanese. (OOB)</td>
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<td>D. Both are writers. (OOP2)</td>
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Directions: Answer the following multiple-choice questions by filling in the circle for the best answer on your answer sheet.

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### FAST-R Answer Sheet

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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<th>Passage Title</th>
<th>Teacher Name</th>
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Completely fill the circle for the correct answer.

1. [A] [B] [C] [D]
2. [A] [B] [C] [D]
3. [A] [B] [C] [D]
4. [A] [B] [C] [D]
5. [A] [B] [C] [D]
6. [A] [B] [C] [D]
7. [A] [B] [C] [D]
8. [A] [B] [C] [D]
9. [A] [B] [C] [D]
10. [A] [B] [C] [D]

Write your answer to the open response prompt in the lined space below if your teacher directs you to do so.

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Teachers: Please duplicate and use this answer sheet only for students for whom you did not receive a pre-printed answer sheet!

**OFFICE USE ONLY**

**RESEARCH:**

- [Y] [N]

**OPEN RESPONSE:**

- [1] [2] [3] [4]