

## Overview

This lesson is based on scenes from David Lean's 1984 film, *A Passage to India*. The novel *A Passage to India*, published in 1924, was E. M. Forster's first novel in fourteen years, and the last novel he ever wrote. Subtle and rich in symbolism, the book works on several levels. On the surface, it is about India – which at the time was a colonial possession of Britain – and about the relations between British and Indian people in that country. It is also about the necessity of friendship, and about the difficulty of establishing friendship across cultural boundaries. On a more symbolic level, the novel also addresses questions of faith (both religious faith and faith in social conventions). Forster's narrative centres on Dr. Aziz, a young Indian doctor whose attempt to establish friendships with several British characters has disastrous consequences.

Based on the novel, the film, an expansive and meticulously designed period drama, centres on the changing dynamic between British colonials and native locals in India during the 1920s. When an outing to explore scenic caves ends in disaster, the incident results in a major court case, one that reinforces tensions between the British Empire and the growing movement towards Indian independence.

Topics relating to culture, integration, separation, race, ethnicity, identity and humanity can easily be raised and discussed via the materials and the film scenes. There are many ways of using this resource. The activities below are some ideas that have worked with my L2 and [even] L1 students.

**Pin-script** is a full editable .txt script of the film and is available separately on [skillsworkshop.org](http://skillsworkshop.org) along with the PowerPoint file needed for Activity 1.

The best (quality) online link to the film is:

[http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x43osj2\\_a-passage-to-india-1984\\_shortfilms](http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x43osj2_a-passage-to-india-1984_shortfilms)

## Basic Procedure

- 1] Activity 1. Hand out or display photo sheet **01** (see slide 2 of separate PPT) to small groups. Ask learners to construct a possible narrative based on the photos. Each group presents their story line to the class. Learners can use the individual photographs (slides 3-14 of PPT) to highlight their presentations. Encourage feedback and discussion afterwards.
- 2] Activity 2 (page 2 of this document). Link the sentences to the characters depicted in the PPT.
- 3] Activity 3 (page 3). First check learners' understanding of the questions before they watch Excerpt 1 09:28 – 15:38 & Excerpt 2 15:39 – 17:07. Follow up with feedback and discussion.
- 4] Activity 4 (pages 4-6). Mosque Scene 19:32 – 25:45 – fabulous scene where Mrs Moore encounters Dr Aziz. A selection of differentiated worksheets based on adjectives.
- 5] Activity 5 (pages 7-8). Depending on the type of class and age of students, this dialogue transcript may be used in a variety of ways: comprehension / gap-fill / role-play / dialogue prediction etc. Even if not used, it is something learners can take away and read/study after the class.

# A Passage to India

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Activity 2 – Match each description to the correct image(s).

a They want to see something of the country and to meet every day Indians, but are frustrated by the British community's insistence that relations with the locals are best experienced from a distance.

b He is Dr Aziz, who was born and brought up in India.

c Adela Quested, a young Englishwoman, travels to India in the late 1920s to visit her fiancé, a British magistrate posted in a small town.

d Her travelling companion is his mother Mrs. Moore.

e He offers to take them on an outing to some nearby caves (a local attraction).

f Finally, a friend, Mr Fielding, the college teacher, introduces them to a Muslim doctor whom Mrs. Moore had seen briefly on her visit to a mosque.

g He is proficient in English, and dresses in a western style.

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## Activity 3 – Watch the excerpts, then answer the questions and discuss.



### A Passage to India

Adela Quested is a young English woman engaged to Ronny Heaslop, the Chief Magistrate of Chandrapore, a small town in India. The two young people have not seen each other for over a year. She is visiting India together with her fiancé's mother in order to stay and marry Ronny.

#### Excerpt 1 (09:28 – 15:38)

In the first excerpt you will watch the train from Bombay, arriving at Chandrapore. On the train is the governor of Chandrapore, Mr Turton and his wife, Mrs Turton.

3a)

- 1 Describe the re-union of Ronny and Adela.
- 2 Why did Ronny have to leave his mother and fiancée at the station?
- 3 What is your impression of Mr and Mrs Turton?
- 4 Why does Mrs. Moore become excited on the journey to the house?
- 5 Describe Chandrapore.
- 6 A young Indian lawyer, Hamidullah and a doctor, Aziz, are knocked off their bicycles by the British cortege. What is your first impression of Dr Aziz?
- 7 Describe the district in which the British live? What are the differences between this district and the centre of Chandrapore?
- 8 Describe Adela.
- 9 Describe Ronny.
- 10 Describe Mrs. Moore.



#### Excerpt 2 (15:39 – 17:07)

In the second excerpt you will watch Adela and Mrs Moore visiting all the 'important' places of Chandrapore; the school, church, hospital, the court, including the Club.

3b)

- 1 Why is Mrs Moore surprised by Ronny?
- 2 How do you think Adela is feeling?
- 3 How do you think Mrs Moore is feeling?
- 4 What kind of lifestyle do the British have in India?



### Discuss

*"East is East; West is West and never the two shall meet"*. On the train from Bombay to Chandrapore, Mrs Turton tells Mrs Moore: "East is east. It's a question of culture."

Do you think different cultures can co-exist?

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**Activity 4 – Watch the excerpt (19:32 – 25:45), then complete the sheets.**



## Mosque Scene

During this scene, Dr Aziz shows a number of different emotions.

4a) Can you list **10 adjectives** describing how his feelings change?

01

06

02

07

03

08

04

09

05

10



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## Mosque Scene

4b) Here are 19 adjectives describing 19 different emotions Dr Aziz displays during this scene. Watch the scene again. Can you work out what the words are?

r\_sp\_ctf\_l

w\_rm

s\_d

w\_rr\_\_d

sh\_ck\_d

r\_fl\_ct\_v\_

s\_rpr\_s\_d

th\_\_ghtf\_l

impr\_ss\_d

\_ppr\_h\_ns\_v\_

j\_k\_ng

\_p\_l\_g\_t\_c

pl\_yf\_l

\_ngry

p\_l\_t\_

c\_r\_\_s

pr\_\_d

fr\_gh\_t\_n\_d

r\_gr\_tf\_l

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## Mosque Scene

4c) Here are 20 adjectives describing 20 different emotions.. Watch the scene again. Which do you think Dr Aziz displays?

**apprehensive**

**joking**

**apologetic**

**playful**

**angry**

**polite**

**curious**

**proud**

**frightened**

**regretful**

**respectful**

**warm**

**sad**

**worried**

**shocked**

**reflective**

**surprised**

**self-rebuking**

**thoughtful**

**impressed**

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## Activity 5 – Study the dialogue between Dr Aziz and Mrs Moore.

### Mosque Scene

It is evening. Dr Aziz has been sitting in the ruins of a mosque, thinking deeply. It is very quiet and there is nobody to be seen. Dr Aziz becomes apprehensive when he thinks he has heard a noise. Suddenly he sees an English woman stepping out of the moonlight. He is suddenly angry.



*[Scene: Evening - in mosque, near the Club]  
(night sounds. dogs bark - leaves rustling)*



Dr Aziz: Madam, this is a mosque. You have no right here. You should have taken off your shoes.

Mrs Moore: But I have taken off my shoes. I left them outside.

Dr Aziz: Then I... I ask your pardon.

Mrs Moore: Let me go.

Dr Aziz: Madam.

Mrs Moore: I am right, am I not? If I remove my shoes,

I am allowed?

Dr Aziz: Of course but so few ladies take the trouble; especially if thinking no one is here to see.

Mrs Moore: God is here.

Dr Aziz: God is here. That is very fine. May I know your name?

Mrs Moore: Mrs Moore.

Dr Aziz: Oh.

Mrs Moore: I came from the club. They're doing a rather tiresome musical play I'd seen in London. It was very hot.

Dr Aziz: I think you ought not to walk alone, Mrs Moore. There are bad characters about, and leopards may come from the Marabar hills. Snakes also.

Mrs Moore: But you walk alone.

Dr Aziz: I come here quite often. I'm used to it.

Mrs Moore: Used to snakes?

Dr Aziz: I'm a doctor, you see. Snakes don't dare bite me. Please. Mrs Moore, I think you are newly arrived in India?

Mrs Moore: Yes. How did you know?

Dr Aziz: By the way you address me. *(points at river)* Look. Sometimes I have seen a dead body float past, from Benares. But not very often. There are crocodiles.

Mrs Moore: Crocodiles? How terrible. Oh, what a terrible

river. What a wonderful river.

Dr Aziz: Please may I ask you a question now? Why do you come to India?

Mrs Moore: I've come to visit my son. He's the city magistrate.

Dr Aziz: Oh, no. Excuse me. Our city magistrate is Mr Heaslop.

Mrs Moore: He is my son all the same. I was married twice.

Dr Aziz: And your first husband died?



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Mrs Moore: He did. And so did my second.

Dr Aziz: Then we are in the same box. And is the city magistrate the entire of your family now?

Mrs Moore: No. I have a daughter in England by my second husband. Stella. She's an artist.

Dr Aziz: Ah. Mrs Moore, like yourself, I have also a son and a daughter. Is not this the same box?

Mrs Moore: But not called Ronny and Stella, surely?

Dr Aziz: No indeed. Akbar and Jamlla. They live with my wife's mother.

Mrs Moore: And your wife?

Dr Aziz: In giving me a son, she died. You have the *most kind* face of any English lady I have met.

Mrs Moore: I think I'd better go back now.

*[scene: On stage, at the Club]*



*[scene: Outside the Club]*

Mrs Moore: I wish I were a member. I could have asked you in.

Dr Aziz: Indians are not allowed.

Mrs Moore: Oh. Good night.

