

Discussion Questions: Maya Running

Chapter 1, "On Display"

- What role does language (English and Bengali) play in Maya's life? How does it affect the way she thinks about herself? The way she interacts with other people?
- Often Maya "imagines herself" saying things to people, but she doesn't actually speak. Why might she be reluctant to say what she is thinking? How might her ideas affect the people around her or the way she understands herself?

Chapter 2, "Maya in the Middle"

- Sometimes Maya loves the Indian culture to which she and her parents belong; she seems fascinated by it. Other times, however, it seems to irritate or embarrass her. Maya also loves the Canadian culture and being Canadian. Find examples of each of these occasions.
- Think about the ways in which Maya copes with these conflicting feelings. What are her strategies?

Chapter 3, "The Girl in the Picture"

- There are many examples of imagery and simile in this chapter. Find examples of these literary devices and comment on how they work in the story.

Chapter 4, "Plastic Bubble"

- What kind of tactics does Maya use to convince her parents that Pinky should be allowed to visit? Why is she successful?
- This chapter ends with the sentence: "A lot can happen in a week." What kind of mood does this sentence set up for the story? What expectations does it set up about Maya's life?

Chapter 5, "Good Toes, Bad Toes"

Chapter 6, "A Smile to Die For"

- What kinds of questions does Jamie ask Maya? Why does he seem interested in Maya?

Chapter 7, "Eau de Joy"

- This chapter begins with the metaphor "When the grownups are gone, the rules relax and walk around in their underwear." What does this mean? How does Maya take advantage of this situation?
- On page 42 there are some very distinct contrasts between India and Canada. How are these contrasts revealed?

Chapter 8, "The Maple Leaf Chronicles"

- How does Maya's world change when Jamie says he likes samosas and Indian food?

Chapter 9, “Fragile”

- What does music do for Jamie? Why does he need it so much?
- Describe some of the ways in which Jamie’s home and family life is different from Maya’s. How does this contrast make Maya feel?

Chapter 10, “Music Lesson”

- Maya’s thought that “*Sand and snow are not the same*” sets up another contrast about two ways of life. What is it about the snow that is so important to Maya?

Chapter 11, “Cousins Together”

- A lot of contrasts are set up between Maya and Pinky at the beginning of this chapter. List some of the contrasts. What seems to be at the root of these contrasts?

Chapter 12, “The Golden God”

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Chapter 13, “Nair Girls”

- Maya worries that “Pinky has been cooped up too long in India. She might go wild here in the True North.” What might happen to Pinky?
- At the end of this chapter, the girls become more similar than they have ever been since they met. How? How does the author show this?

Chapter 14, “Yescandy”

- In what ways does Pinky bring the culture of India into Maya’s small town?
- What do you believe is actually happening with the Ouija board?

Chapter 15, “Gandoo”

- Why do you think Pinky wants a “typically Canadian” shirt? What would this be?
- Why is Maya so insistent on the difference between Canadian and American?
- On page 81, Pinky tells Maya and her friends about their Indian family’s accomplishments. These are surprising to the Canadians. Why? What does this say about our expectations of immigrants?

Chapter 16, “Lump of Nothing”

- What does it mean when “there is a subtle change in Jamie. He has not moved, but everything about him leans forward”?

Chapter 17, “Princess Pinky”

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Chapter 18, “Remover of Obstacles”

- Maya is still struggling with her national identity, and says “I’m not Indian, not really.” Why does she feel this way? How does it affect her?

Chapter 19, “Maya in Wonderland”

- In this chapter, Maya gets almost everything she’s ever wanted. How does it make her feel?

Chapter 20, “Snow Day”

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Chapter 21, “Humpty Dumpty”

- At the beginning of this chapter, Maya notices the differences between her own home and the Weston household. These differences show Maya what is important to her about family and home—what does she learn?

Chapter 22, “Closer”

- Back at home, Maya finds perfection. Ganesh has arranged everything exactly to Maya’s liking—how does this make her feel?

Chapter 23, “Magical Mystery Tour”

- The title of this chapter is a reference to a song by the rock band The Beatles. Similarly, the title of chapter 19 is a reference to the classic book *Alice in Wonderland*. This kind of reference to other cultural works, especially books, is called “intertextuality.” Find some other examples of intertextuality in *Maya Running*.

Chapter 24, “Butterfly Wings”

- In this chapter, Maya tests the boundaries of Ganesh’s magical changes. How does she feel about what she experiences?

Chapter 25, “Dreamworld”

- Dad and Jamie have changed almost beyond recognition. What is Maya’s reaction to these changes?

Chapter 26, “Maya and the Wolf”

- Who or what is “the wolf”?

Chapter 27, “What Maya Wants”

- Now Maya can understand Bengali. Does it help her the way she thought it would?
- Maya has wished herself into a state of stasis, of never-ending sameness, and she finally realizes that she does not want this. Change and growth are a theme in *Maya Running*; what does the author seem to be saying about change and growth?

Chapter 28, “Backup Plan”

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Chapter 29, “Domino Ripples”

- Maya realizes that she does not “understand how the universe works or how [her] Ganesh really got here. . . .” She has just made an important realization. What is her next step? What does this reflect about her character?

Chapter 30, “Quelle Idée”

- Why does Maya suddenly feel so differently about Ms. Redburn?

Chapter 31, “Chai, Chai”

- What differences does Maya notice about life in India compared to life in Canada?
- Maya notices that “Ganesh is everywhere,” but “none of these Ganeshes is [her] Ganesh.” Why is this so important?
- The old woman tells Maya that “one must take a few chances, nah? Otherwise life is not worth living.” How does this knowledge affect Maya’s actions?

Chapter 32, “The Heart of Things”

- What clues show Maya her connection to her family?

Chapter 33, “Paus Mela”

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Chapter 34, “Maya Running”

- Maya decides to steal her Ganesh, and then she runs away. Was this a good decision? Was it the right thing to do?
- Maya’s wish to Ganesh is “please restore my family.” She has decided that this is the most important thing to her. Why?
- What is the thing that has been hardest for Maya while she’s been living in the magical state that Ganesh created for her?
- Why does Maya find it so important to remind herself “that the flowers will grow”?

Chapter 35, “Maya and Pinky”

- Maya tells Pinky that “sometimes what you think you want isn’t what you really want at all.” What has she learned from her experiences?

Chapter 36, “They Always Say”

- What decision has Maya come to just before Ganesh begins to communicate with her again? Why is this important?
- What does Ganesh mean when he says “the answer lies within”?

Chapter 37, “On My Own”

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Chapter 38, “Mayasri”

- Ganesh tells Maya that he “only told [her] the truth” and that he “remove[s] illusions”. How has he made her see her life differently?