

EXAMEN DE FIN D'ÉTUDES SECONDAIRES – Sessions 2024**QUESTIONNAIRE**

<i>Date :</i>	23.05.24	<i>Horaire :</i>	14:15 - 16:45	<i>Durée :</i>	150 minutes	
<i>Discipline :</i>	ANGLA - TXINC	<i>Type :</i>	écrit	<i>Section(s) :</i>	CA / CA-LLCO / CA-MALA / CA-MALF / CA-MAT / CA-MATT / CA-PSYA / CA-PSYF	
					<i>Numéro du candidat :</i>	

The narrator is nine-year-old Meena Kumar, the daughter of Indian immigrants, who grows up in a small English town called Tollington.

My brother had the distinction of being the tallest baby ever born at New End Hospital in Wolverhampton. 'The child was twenty-one inches long, can you imagine!' Auntie Shaila said excitedly on the telephone, whilst papa hid his head uncomfortably in a newspaper.

5 I disliked him on first sight, a scrawny, yowling thing with a poached egg of a face, his long fingers clinging gecko-like to mama's nightgown front whilst she held him up to me for a first sister's kiss. I brushed his cheek sullenly with my mouth, it felt downy and damp, a strange smell of custard and roses made my nostrils twitch and for a second, he stopped crying and looked straight at me with wise, old man eyes. The knowledge in them made me step back a moment. He had the face of a travel-weary prodigal, ancient dust and the maps of several continents lay on his brow, he had comet
10 trails in his nappy and sea shells crushed between his toes. He was only a day old and I knew he had already seen places I would only ever dream of.

Papa laughed. 'Look at him! He already loves you, Meena. He's saying hello to you.' Mama offered him to my arms. She looked transparent, ethereal. A long tube ran from a drip into a needle taped to the front of her hand, surrounded by a livid green-blue bruise. I shook my head, afraid I would
15 drop this terrifyingly powerful, chicken-legged bundle.

[...]

But nothing was the same for me and mama once Sunil was born. Before he arrived, papa and I spent a few glorious mad weeks together when we had tinned spaghetti hoops and biscuits for breakfast, fish and chips or jam tarts for supper and in between I was sent to school in crumpled, uncoordinated clothes, hyperactive from sugar overdose and a series of late nights of watching the
20 television until the small white dot appeared to send us to bed with a wink. Papa let his stubble grow and spent hours in the outside toilet with his newspapers whilst I tried on all mama's make up and

occasionally slipped into her wardrobe where I would sit amongst her cardigans and saris recalling her fresh, lemony smell.

25 And then one day, when I had almost forgotten she was coming back, mama appeared on the
doorstep with a cooing bundle. All past habits and rituals were forgotten, swept away with a swipe
of a tiny fist. Days passed in a cyclone of feeds, nappies, scattered toys and endless visiting relatives
bearing gifts and sweetmeats for the Kumars' new son. Days even bled into night when I would
awake with a jerk to his banshee wailing, unsure whether it was sunshine, moonlight or street lamp
flare on the other side of my curtains, sometimes grateful to be dragged away from my now familiar
30 nightmare where I pursued mama through endless winding cobbled streets, calling for her to look
round. She sat in the back of a taxi, staring straight ahead, the set of neck told me she was willing
the driver to go faster and everywhere I placed my feet, there was nothing but clinging wet clay.

shortened and adapted from *Anita and Me* by Meera Syal (Chapter 6, pp. 131-132 & p. 134
532 words)

Glossary:

scrawny (l.4): unattractively thin and bony

yowl (l.4): make a loud, wailing cry

downy (l.6): covered with fine, soft hair

banshee (l.28): a female spirit in Gaelic folklore whose wailing warns a family that one of them will soon die

Analysis (46m):

1. How does the narrator, Meena, show that she doesn't feel happy about having a new baby brother? (12m)
2. Focus on the description of Meena's father. What impression does the reader get of the protagonist's father **and** mother? (12m)
3. Outline how the birth of her little brother affects Meena's feelings for her mother. (12m)
4. Comment on the use of narrative style. What does it reveal about Meena's personality? (10m)

Personal response (14m):

Your family is the compass that guides you.

To what extent do you agree with this statement?