



# Pashmina Study Guide

## Pre-reading Activities

The following questions could be used for small group discussions, whole class discussions, or short answer written questions.

<u>What I Know</u>	<u>What I Wonder</u>	<u>What I Learned</u>

Think of a time where you had to make a big decision in your life. Write a personal narrative in graphic novel style to tell your story. Share your work with a classmate and then share it with the entire class.

With the book in hand, analyze the title, *Pashmina*, and the cover of the book. Make predictions about the story. What is a pashmina? What could be in a story about pashminas? What about Nidhi Chanani's background helped her to write this story? Allow students to share their answers and predictions.

Choose a category and conduct a mini research project to produce a summary of India:

- Geography and climate
- Flora and fauna
- Architecture – Taj Mahal
- Religion/Culture – Diwali and Holi, Hinduism and Shakti
- History – Mughal Empire and British Raj
- How is a pashmina embroidered in India?

## Discussion Questions

The following questions could be used for small group discussions, whole class discussions, or short answer written questions.

P. 4 – What do you do when feeling scared or anxious? What are your strategies?

P. 7 – Have you ever shied away from doing something you wanted because of anxiety or lack of confidence? Discuss “imposter syndrome.”

Pp. 14-15 – Why do you think Pri's mom doesn't want to talk about her father? Using visual evidence, describe how her mom feels about her father. What's the relationship between Priyanka and her mother? What are some of the issues that create tension between them? Cite visual cues and compare and contrast Pri and her mom using a table or Venn diagram.

P. 19 – How does Pri feel about her aunt’s pregnancy? What visual evidence backs up your answer?
P. 52 – Why does Pri avoid visiting the sick baby?
Pp. 97-99 Pri states that India is “different” – what do you see that makes her think this way? Compare and contrast the India Pri experiences with the pashmina versus the one she experiences with her aunt. Use visual and textual references.
Pp. 107-108 What happened when Meena put on the pashmina? What is the purpose/power of the pashmina?
Describe what is happening on pg 114. Describe the cultural similarities and differences between Pri and the students. How does Pri’s reaction to the rat differ from that of the students? (pg 114 &115).
P. 119 - Despite Mause-Ji’s disapproval, what causes Meena Mause to change her mind and decide to go to Nagpur? Cite pages to support your analysis.
P. 123 – Why did Pri’s mom leave India? What is your reaction to these events?
P. 124 – How do you think Pri feels now that she knows why her mom left India?
P. 134 – Who/what does the shadow represent? Why do you think Kanta and Mayur keep pushing it away even if Pri seems open to it (pg69)? Did you think the shadow was a threat? What will happen when Pri wears the pashmina this time?
P. 136 – We find out who the shadow is – did this match your predictions?
P. 142 – Why does Shakti want the Pashmina made? What is its purpose? Why do you think Rohini made it despite the danger? How does this purpose connect to when Pri and Meena wear it?
P. 160 – Why does Pri now want to be called Priyanka?
P. 162 – Without the pashmina, how will Pri fulfill her task from Shakti?
What is the power of vision? What do you think the pashmina is showing to those that wear it? What are the limitations of the pashmina, if any?
Shakti is a recurring character in this graphic novel. Who is she and what does her role in Pri’s story convey? What messages does Shakti give Pri? How does religion function in this graphic novel?
After visiting India with the pashmina a couple of times, Pri ends up with a white thread in her hair (pg58). Why do you think this is? How does thread tie into the story? Could this change also lead to a change in character behavior?
Kanta and Mayur can tell and show Pri everything about fantasy India. Why do you think Pri still wants to spend her money on a plane ticket there when she can visit India with the pashmina at any time? What do you think is driving her character? Use references.



## Visual Analysis

The following questions could be used for small group discussions, whole class discussions, or short answer written questions

Most of pg 8 is visual. Describe the emotion Priyanka is feeling. What visual and textual evidence can you use to support your theory? Where does the artist lead your focus?



P. 36 – What is Pri thinking about? How is she feeling? Create a thought bubble for her, cut it out, and place it on the image. Share with a partner.



Analyze the way the artist used color in this graphic novel. Why do you think she chose to do this? Describe the function(s) color serves in this book and reference pages to support your analysis. (pg 3 - start of true color)

P. 93- Compare this image to the one on p. 4. What is the significance?



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## Core Activities

**The following questions are designed to be individual writing projects or small group writing projects depending upon the needs of your classroom.**

### **What Happens Next?**

At the end of Pashmina, one of the hospital workers picks up the pashmina and activates its magic. Using details from the story, create another chapter immediately following the conclusion of the story. Write in prose and include illustrations or create your own graphic novel version. Name your sequel and decide what happens following Pri publishing Pashmina.

### **In Sync with Symbolism**

There are many recurring images throughout the book. Split the class in half or assign students into groups. Assign each group a symbol from the book. Within each group students can note and analyze their designated symbol over the course of the story, using textual and visual evidence to support their analysis. Groups can then create a digital presentation that explains the significance throughout the novel. Groups can discuss how these symbols relate to one another. \*Possible symbols - shadows, Shakti, thread, pashmina, patterns (paisley)

### **The Power of Choice**

When Shakti reveals herself to Rohini, the function of the Pashmina is revealed: "That pashmina will allow women to see their choices. You shall no longer be bound by fear" (pg 142). Ask students to cite specific examples of the power of choice (via pashmina) in this book. Analyze how interaction with the pashmina changes the character(s). Use specific text to support their findings. Or rewrite a pivotal scene from the novel supposing the character made a different choice.

### **Swapping Perspective**

This graphic novel follows Priyanka, but is told through a limited point of view. Create a paragraph or poem writing the story from a secondary character's POV (Mom, Shakti etc). Write in first person POV based on character traits from the book. What would they see, think, feel? Be prepared to explain the perspective you chose to give your character.

### **Sharing Traditions**

Create a graphic biography of you and your family. Include your family's culture and traditions. You can either hand draw or use online tools, such as Pixton.

### **Driven**

Are women not allowed to drive in India (p. 2)? Legally, they are, but few do\*. What are some other restrictions placed on women around the world? Give two examples and cite your sources.

*\*See Times of India article "No ban but plenty of bias" dated July 1, 2018.*



## About Pashmina

Priyanka Das has so many unanswered questions: Why did her mother abandon her home in India years ago? What was it like there? And most importantly, who is her father, and why did her mom leave him behind? But Pri's mom avoids these questions--the topic of India is permanently closed.

For Pri, her mother's homeland can only exist in her imagination. That is, until she finds a mysterious pashmina tucked away in a forgotten suitcase. When she wraps herself in it, she is transported to a place more vivid and colorful than any guidebook or Bollywood film. But is this the real India? And what is that shadow lurking in the background? To learn the truth, Pri must travel farther than she's ever dared and find the family she never knew.

In this heartwarming graphic novel debut, Nidhi Chanani weaves a tale about the hardship and self-discovery that is born from juggling two cultures and two worlds.



Nidhi at work (home studio)



vs. Out in public

## About the author – Nidhi Chanani

Nidhi Chanani is a freelance illustrator, cartoonist and writer. After completing her undergrad literature degree at the University of California at Santa Cruz, Nidhi pursued a career in non-profits. The desire to draw kept pulling her away and in 2008 she enrolled in art school. In 2009 she began completing one illustration every day of the week. She called this Every Day Love and developed her narrative style and voice with three years of daily practice. Thus began her art career and business.

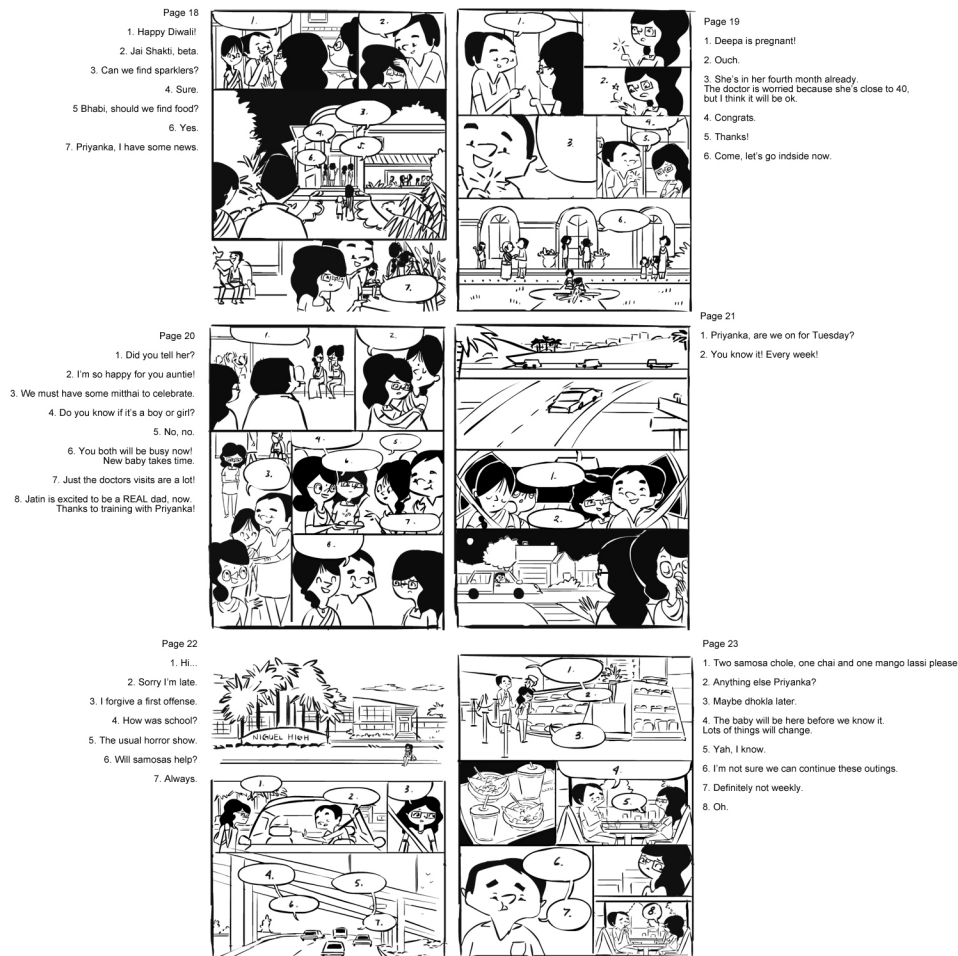
Nidhi was born in Calcutta and raised in suburban southern California. She creates because it makes her happy – with the hope that it can make others happy, too. In April of 2012 she was honored by the Obama Administration as a Champion of Change.

Her debut graphic novel, [Pashmina](#), was released by First Second Books in fall 2017. It received starred reviews in the [School Library Journal](#), [Publisher's Weekly](#), and was reviewed in the [New York Times](#). In March of 2019, the [film adaptation](#) of Pashmina with Netflix was announced. Gurinder Chadha is set to direct.

# The process and inspiration behind Pashmina

My process was very linear. Full script, thumbnails and then final art. I reworked my script 8 times, thumbs at least 3 times and final art was very minimally changed.

It's always hard to trace a line to the exact inspiration behind a story. There were multiple lines for PASHMINA. One experience was opening my parents' suitcase after their trip to India when I was young. The familiar and unfamiliar smells, colors and objects leaving an impression on me. Another was traveling to India with my husband later in life. The shop keepers pushed pashminas on us countless times. That resulted in fun theories about why pashminas were sold and their true origins. Those combined with other ideas to form the magical pashmina.



## Thumbnails



For more information:

Kidsreads.com, Interview with Nidhi Chanani dated February 1, 2018  
 Youtube.com, PBS interview with Nidhi Chanani at the Miami Book Fair 2017