

Chapter 15: Cinema, Cricket, and Pop Culture

Summary

Movies, songs, TV dramas and sports are how many people around the world first meet South Asian culture, and how many South Asian families spend their evenings. This chapter shows that "Bollywood" is only one of many film industries, introduces the filmmaker Satyajit Ray and the cinemas of Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Bhutan, and explains playback singing, Pakistani dramas and Coke Studio. It follows South Asian pop as it goes global and asks how South Asians are shown in Western media. Then it teaches the basics of cricket and the India-Pakistan rivalry, plus field hockey, kabaddi and carrom.

Concepts Covered

1. Bollywood
2. Regional Cinemas
3. Satyajit Ray
4. Pakistani Cinema
5. Playback Singing
6. Pakistani Dramas
7. Coke Studio

8. Global South Asian Pop
9. Streaming Era
10. Representation in Media
11. Cricket
12. India–Pakistan Rivalry
13. Field Hockey
14. Kabaddi
15. Carrom

Prerequisites

- **Chapter 6: Languages and Scripts**, because each film industry is built around a language.
- **Chapter 9: Music**, for film music (filmi) and the classical and folk traditions it borrows from.
- **Chapter 4: Colonialism, Independence, and Partition**, for the history behind cricket's arrival and the India–Pakistan rivalry.

Lights, Camera, Cricket!



Hi, I'm Mora! The movies your family watches on weekends, the songs at every wedding, and the cricket match that makes your uncle shout at the TV are culture too, and they're the culture your friends are most likely to ask you about. This chapter gives you the background to explain them, and to enjoy them more.

15.1 "So What's an Over?"

It's a Sunday morning, and the South Asian Student Association is having a watch party in Ms. Okafor's classroom. A cricket match is streaming on the projector, and two club members are already arguing. Ayesha Qureshi, whose family is from Lahore, Pakistan, says the best India–Pakistan match ever was the 2017 Champions Trophy final, when Pakistan beat India by 180 runs in London. Simran Kaur Gill, the club's treasurer, whose grandparents are from Ludhiana, India, insists it was the 2007 T20 World Cup final, which India won. They have clearly had this argument before.

Ben Lindqvist has been watching for twenty minutes. He plays hockey and understands periods, power plays and penalty boxes. But he has no idea what's happening on the screen. "Okay," he finally says. "What's an over? Why did everyone cheer when nothing happened? And why does your whole family, Zara, know the words to every song in that movie you made me watch?"

Zara Hossain laughs. Her Nanu watches Bangladeshi films, her dad follows cricket scores from Dhaka at 3 a.m., and her cousins in London send her Pakistani dramas and Coke Studio songs. She realizes Ben is asking a real question: how do movies, music and sports tie together a region of eight countries, and millions of people far from home?

15.2 Not Just Bollywood

Start with something Ben already knows. "Hollywood" means the big American film studios in Los Angeles. But nobody thinks Hollywood is the same as all film made in English, or all film made in North America. Britain, Canada and Australia have their own film industries, and so do Sweden and Norway, where Ben's family comes from.

South Asia works the same way, only with many more languages.

Bollywood is the popular name for the Hindi-language film industry based in Mumbai (formerly Bombay). The word blends "Bombay" and "Hollywood." Bollywood is the best known South Asian film industry outside the region, famous for big stars, long running times, and song-and-dance numbers. But Bollywood means Hindi films only. It is a common mistake to use "Bollywood" for all Indian films, or all South Asian films.

Indian film history starts before sound. Raja Harishchandra (1913), a silent film by Dadasaheb Phalke, is often considered the first full-length Indian feature film. Alam Ara (1931), directed by Ardeshir Irani, was India's first sound film, and it opened the way for songs to become a central part of Indian movies.

Regional Cinemas

Regional Cinemas are the film industries that make movies in South Asia's many other languages, each with its own stars, studios, history and fans. Many have their own nicknames, often built on the "-ollywood" pattern.

Industry	Language	Main center	One early landmark
Bollywood	Hindi	Mumbai, India	Raja Harishchandra (1913, silent); Alam Ara (1931, first Indian sound film)
Telugu cinema ("Tollywood")	Telugu	Hyderabad, India	Bhishma Pratigna (1921), generally called the first Telugu feature

Industry	Language	Main center	One early landmark
Tamil cinema ("Kollywood")	Tamil	Chennai, India	Kalidas (1931), the first sound film with Tamil in it
Kannada cinema ("Sandalwood")	Kannada	Bengaluru, India	Sati Sulochana (1934), the first Kannada talkie
Malayalam cinema ("Mollywood")	Malayalam	Kerala, India	Vigathakumaran (released 1930), the first Malayalam feature
Bengali cinema ("Tollywood")	Bengali	Tollygunge, Kolkata, India	Pather Panchali (1955) by Satyajit Ray
Bangladeshi cinema ("Dhallywood")	Bangla	Dhaka, Bangladesh	Mukh O Mukhosh (1956), first Bengali feature made in what is now Bangladesh
Pakistani cinema ("Lollywood")	Urdu and Punjabi	Lahore, and now Karachi, Pakistan	See Section 15.4
Nepali cinema	Nepali and other	Kathmandu, Nepal	Aama (1964), first film produced in

Industry	Language	Main center	One early landmark
	languages of Nepal		Nepal
Sri Lankan cinema	Sinhala and Tamil	Sri Lanka	Kadawunu Poronduwa (1947), first Sinhala-language film
Bhutanese cinema	Dzongkha	Thimphu, Bhutan	Gasa Lamai Singye (1989), first Bhutanese feature

Notice the two "Tollywoods." The Telugu industry and the Bengali industry in Kolkata (named for the Tollygunge studio neighborhood) both use the nickname, which is a good reminder that these labels are informal. The Tamil nickname "Kollywood" comes from Kodambakkam, a Chennai neighborhood full of film studios.

How big are the regional cinemas? In 2023, India's film certification board (the Central Board of Film Certification, CBFC) listed feature films in more than 25 languages. By our count of its 2023 list (which includes dubbed versions), Telugu, Tamil, Kannada and Malayalam films together outnumbered Hindi films by more than two to one. Bollywood gets the attention abroad, but it is only one part of Indian film.

Regional films also cross borders. Telugu director S. S. Rajamouli's *RRR* (2022) became a worldwide hit, and its song "Naatu Naatu," composed by M. M. Keeravaani with lyrics by Chandrabose, won the Academy Award for Best Original Song in 2023. That same year, the Indian documentary *The Elephant Whisperers* won the Oscar for Best Documentary Short Film.

Name it right



If a friend recommends a movie, ask which language it's in instead of calling it "a Bollywood movie." A Malayalam thriller and a Hindi musical are as different as a Swedish crime drama and a Hollywood blockbuster.

15.3 Satyajit Ray

Not all South Asian cinema is about stars and songs. **Satyajit Ray** (1921 to 1992) was a Bengali filmmaker from Kolkata who is widely considered one of the greatest directors in the history of cinema. He was also a writer, illustrator, magazine editor and composer.

Ray's first film, *Pather Panchali* ("Song of the Little Road," 1955), is based on a Bengali novel and follows a poor family in a village through the eyes of a young boy, Apu, and his older sister, Durga. Ray shot much of it outdoors with a small budget and mostly amateur actors, and the sitar player Ravi Shankar wrote the music. Production stopped again and again for lack of money; the West Bengal government finally helped fund it. *Pather Panchali* became the first part of the Apu Trilogy (1955 to 1959), which follows Apu into adulthood.

Ray's films are quiet, realistic and close to everyday life, and they have influenced filmmakers around the world. In 1992 the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences gave him an honorary Oscar for lifetime achievement. Ray was too ill to travel, so he accepted it by video from a hospital bed in Kolkata. He died a few weeks later, on 23 April 1992.

Ray belongs to a wider tradition of art and "parallel" cinema in South Asia: films that focus on real social problems and often skip the big song numbers. Sri Lanka's Lester James Peries is another example. His film *Rekava* (1956),

about village life and beliefs, is often described as the first Sinhala film shot entirely in Ceylon (as Sri Lanka was then called), and it was selected for the main competition at the 1957 Cannes Film Festival.

15.4 Pakistani Cinema and Pakistani Dramas

Pakistani Cinema

Pakistani Cinema is the film industry of Pakistan, making films mainly in Urdu and Punjabi, with Pashto films made in Peshawar. From independence in 1947 until the 2000s, its center was Lahore, and the industry there was nicknamed "Lollywood" (Lahore plus Hollywood). Lahore's studios struggled badly by around 2000, and many filmmakers moved to Karachi, which has since become a major center of new Pakistani film.

In the 2010s and 2020s, a new generation of Pakistani filmmakers drew attention at home and abroad:

- **The Legend of Maula Jatt** (2022), directed by Bilal Lashari, is a Punjabi-language action epic based on characters from a famous 1979 film, *Maula Jatt*.
- **Joyland** (2022), directed by Saim Sadiq, became the first Pakistani film in the official selection of the Cannes Film Festival, where it won the Jury Prize in the Un Certain Regard section.

Pakistani Dramas

Many South Asians would say Pakistan's biggest screen export is not its films but its TV. **Pakistani Dramas** are Pakistani television serials, usually in Urdu, known for family stories, romance and social issues, and for running a set number of episodes instead of going on for years.

One famous example is **Humsafar** (2011 to 2012), a 23-episode drama on Hum TV based on a novel by Farhat Ishtiaq and starring Fawad Khan and Mahira Khan. In 2014 an Indian channel called Zindagi launched and began airing Pakistani dramas, including Humsafar, for Indian audiences, and promoted their short runs compared with India's very long serials. Today many families in the diaspora, like Zara's cousins in London, watch Pakistani dramas online.

Whose Story?

The same films and songs mean different things on different sides of a border. Many films made in Lahore and Bombay before 1947 belong to the shared history of both India and Pakistan, and stars, singers and writers crossed between the two industries in the early years. Before 1971, films made in Dhaka were part of Pakistani cinema; in Bangladesh today, that period is remembered as the start of Bangladeshi film. Politics has often decided who could watch what: after the 1965 war, for example, Pakistan banned Indian films in its cinemas, and political tensions have shaped what audiences on both sides could see ever since. Fans in the diaspora, watching on the same streaming services in Minnesota or London, often feel these borders less sharply than their grandparents did.

15.5 Playback Singing

In most song scenes in South Asian movies, the actor on screen isn't really singing. That surprises a lot of people who are new to these films.

Playback Singing is the practice of recording songs with professional singers, called playback singers, whose voices are then played back while actors lip-sync on camera. Playback singers don't appear in the scene, but in

South Asia many of them are as famous as the actors, sometimes more. Many Indian and Pakistani films typically include six or seven songs.

A few of the best known:

- **Lata Mangeshkar** (India) recorded songs in more than 36 Indian languages over a career of decades and received the Bharat Ratna, India's highest civilian honor, in 2001.
- **Asha Bhosle** (India), Lata Mangeshkar's sister, was recognized by Guinness World Records in 2011 as the most recorded artist in music history.
- **Noor Jehan** (Pakistan) was a singer and actress whose career began before Partition and continued for decades in Pakistan. She recorded songs in Urdu, Punjabi and Sindhi, and in 1951 became Pakistan's first female film director.
- **Runa Laila** (Bangladesh) began her career in Pakistani films in the late 1960s and became popular across Bangladesh, Pakistan and India.
- **Mohammed Rafi** (India) and **Ahmed Rushdi** (Pakistan) are often named as two of the most influential male playback singers.

Film songs, often called *filmi* (फ़िल्मी, *FIL-mee*, "of the films") music, have been South Asia's main pop music for most of the last century. They play at weddings, on buses, in shops and in cars, which is why Zara's family knows every word. (You'll find more on filmi music in [Chapter 9](#).)

15.6 Coke Studio, Global Pop, Streaming and Representation

Coke Studio

Coke Studio is a TV and online music series in which established and new artists perform live studio recordings, often mixing folk, Sufi, classical, rock and pop. The idea started in Brazil, but **Coke Studio Pakistan**, launched in 2008 and first produced by Rohail Hyatt, a former member of the band Vital Signs, became the most famous version. It is the longest-running annual TV music show in Pakistan. Its songs, which often pair singers from different regions and generations, have drawn huge audiences online across South Asia and the diaspora.

Global South Asian Pop

Global South Asian Pop is South Asian music, film and entertainment that reaches audiences around the world, including people with no South Asian background. Some milestones:

Year	Milestone
2009	Slumdog Millionaire, a British film set in Mumbai, wins eight Oscars; A. R. Rahman wins two (Original Score, and Original Song for "Jai Ho" with lyricist Gulzar), and Resul Pookutty shares the award for Sound Mixing
2022	Pakistani American singer Arooj Aftab wins a Grammy for Best Global Music Performance for "Mohabbat," widely reported as the first Pakistani woman to win a Grammy
2022	Bhutan's Lunana: A Yak in the Classroom is nominated for the Oscar for Best International Feature Film
2023	"Naatu Naatu" from RRR wins the Oscar for Best Original Song

Year	Milestone
2023	Punjabi singer Diljit Dosanjh performs at the Coachella music festival in California, widely reported as the first Punjabi artist to do so

Bhangra beats, Punjabi pop and Bollywood dance have also become regular parts of college dance competitions and weddings across North America and the UK, performed by teams that include plenty of people like Ben.

The Streaming Era

Streaming Era describes the period, mainly since the late 2010s, when films and TV shows began reaching audiences through online services such as Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, Disney+ and YouTube instead of only through theaters and TV channels. For South Asian entertainment, streaming changed two things. First, a Malayalam thriller or a Pakistani drama can now be watched with subtitles anywhere in the world on the day it comes out. Second, streaming services began paying for new South Asian shows, so audiences abroad can find stories in many languages, not just Hindi.

For diaspora families, streaming has replaced the stacks of rented DVDs and videotapes that many parents remember. Zara's Nanu watches Bangladeshi films on her tablet, with Zara helping her find them.

Representation in Media

Representation in Media is about how a group of people is shown on screen and in the news: how often they appear, what roles they play, who writes their stories, and whether the portrayals are accurate or rely on stereotypes.

For decades, South Asians on American TV were rare and often stereotyped. A well-known example is Apu, the convenience-store owner on *The Simpsons*, voiced by a white actor, Hank Azaria. In 2017, comedian Hari Kondabolu made a documentary, *The Problem with Apu*, arguing that the character's accent and storylines reinforced stereotypes. In 2020, Azaria announced he would stop voicing Apu.

Since then, South Asian characters created by South Asian writers have become more common:

- **Never Have I Ever** (Netflix, 2020 to 2023), co-created by Mindy Kaling, followed Devi, a Tamil Indian American teen in California.
- **Ms. Marvel** (Disney+, 2022) made Kamala Khan, a Pakistani American teen in Jersey City, a Marvel superhero on screen.
- British Pakistani actor **Riz Ahmed** was nominated for the Oscar for Best Actor in 2021 for *Sound of Metal*.

Representation is not "solved." Many South Asian Americans point out that most roles still come from a few backgrounds, that some communities (such as Bangladeshi, Nepali or Sri Lankan Americans) rarely appear at all, and that stereotypes still show up.

Count it yourself



Pick the last five shows or movies you watched. How many South Asian characters were there, what languages did they speak, and who wrote them? A simple count like that is how media researchers start.

15.7 Cricket

The basics

Cricket is a bat-and-ball game played between two teams of eleven players on a large oval field. At its center is the **pitch**, a strip 22 yards (20.12 m) long with a set of three wooden stumps, called a wicket, at each end. One team bats while the other bowls and fields, and then they switch.

If you know baseball, a rough comparison helps. The **bowler** is like the pitcher, but runs up and bowls the ball with a straight arm, usually bouncing it off the pitch. The **batter** defends the wicket and tries to hit the ball. Unlike baseball, there's no foul territory: the batter can hit the ball in any direction, all the way around the field.

Scoring works like this:

- After hitting the ball, the two batters can **run** between the wickets. Each time they swap ends, they score **1 run**.
- If the ball reaches the **boundary** rope after bouncing, that's **4 runs**. If it crosses the boundary without bouncing, that's **6 runs**.
- A batter is **out** in several ways. For example, they're **bowled** if the ball hits the stumps, and **caught** if a fielder catches the hit before it bounces.

And here's the answer to Ben's question. An **over** is a set of **6 legal balls** bowled by one bowler from one end of the pitch. After each over, the next over is bowled from the other end, and the rules say the same bowler cannot bowl two overs in a row. If a bowler sends down a **wide**, a ball too far from the batter to hit, the batting side gets **1 extra run** and the ball doesn't count toward the six, so it has to be bowled again. That's why everyone cheered when "nothing happened": a dot ball (no runs) under pressure, or a wide that gave away a free run, can be a big moment.

Three formats

Cricket comes in different lengths, which is why some matches take an evening and others take days.

Format	Overs per side	How long it takes
Test cricket	No limit (up to two innings each)	Up to five days
One Day International (ODI)	50 overs	About a day
Twenty20 (T20)	20 overs	About three to four hours

Cricket across South Asia

The British brought cricket to South Asia during colonial rule, and over the 20th century people across the region made it their own. Today it is a national passion in India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, and it has a growing following in Afghanistan and Nepal.

- **Bangladesh** became the tenth Test-playing nation on 26 June 2000, and played its first Test against India in Dhaka that November.
- **Afghanistan's** team grew up largely among refugees: many of its first players learned the game in camps in Pakistan in the 1980s and 1990s. Afghanistan became a full member of the International Cricket Council (ICC), with Test status, in 2017, and reached the semi-finals of the 2024 T20 World Cup.
- **Nepal** played its first One Day International, against the Netherlands, in August 2018.

South Asian teams have won many of cricket's biggest titles (as of October 2026):

Tournament	South Asian winners
Men's Cricket World Cup (ODI)	India (1983, 2011), Pakistan (1992), Sri Lanka (1996)
Men's T20 World Cup	India (2007, 2024, 2026), Pakistan (2009), Sri Lanka (2014)
Women's Cricket World Cup (ODI)	India (2025, its first title)

The 2024 Men's T20 World Cup was co-hosted by the United States and the West Indies, and the India–Pakistan match was played at a new stadium in Nassau County, New York. Many of cricket's fans in the US are South Asian Americans, and you might find a cricket league in your own city.

Try it out



You don't need a real pitch to learn cricket. A tennis ball, a flat piece of wood and a trash can for a wicket is how millions of kids in South Asia learned in streets and parking lots.

The India–Pakistan Rivalry

The **India–Pakistan Rivalry** is the competition between the national cricket teams of India and Pakistan, often called the most intense rivalry in the sport. The two teams first played Test matches in 1952, when Pakistan toured India. Politics has shaped the rivalry ever since. No cricket was played between

them from 1962 to 1977, a period that included the wars of 1965 and 1971. Cricket has also been used for diplomacy, with leaders and fans crossing the border for matches.

The last full tour with Test matches was Pakistan's tour of India in 2007. After the 2008 Mumbai attacks, bilateral cricket almost stopped: the only series since then was a short one-day and T20 series in India in 2012 to 2013, so the two teams now meet mostly at ICC tournaments and the Asia Cup.

When they do meet, huge audiences watch, and families in the diaspora, including Indian and Pakistani families who are friends and neighbors, often watch together. Ayesha and Simran's argument is part of the fun: each side has its favorite victories, like Pakistan's win in the 2017 Champions Trophy final and India's in the 2007 T20 World Cup final.

Cricket's history in South Asia also includes hard stories about caste and community. Palwankar Baloo (1876 to 1955), born into a Dalit family, was one of the best Indian bowlers of the early 1900s and toured England in 1911. Yet at some matches he was served tea outside the pavilion in a disposable cup while his teammates drank inside. Historians use his story to show how caste discrimination (see [Chapter 13](#)) reached even the cricket field.

15.8 Hockey, Kabaddi and Carrom

Cricket isn't the only sport people love in South Asia.

Field Hockey

Field Hockey is a team sport played on grass or artificial turf with curved sticks and a hard ball, eleven players a side. (Ben's ice hockey is a cousin.) For decades, India and Pakistan dominated Olympic field hockey. India's men's team won Olympic gold eight times (1928, 1932, 1936, 1948, 1952, 1956,

1964 and 1980), and Pakistan's men's team won gold three times (1960, 1968 and 1984). In the 1960 final in Rome, Pakistan beat India. After a long gap, India's men won bronze medals at the Tokyo 2020 and Paris 2024 Olympics.

Kabaddi

Kabaddi (Hindi कबड्डी, Bangla কাবাডি, *kuh-BUD-dee*) is a contact team sport, seven players a side, that combines tag and wrestling. One player, the **raider**, runs into the other team's half, tries to tag defenders, and must get back to their own side without being tackled, traditionally while chanting "kabaddi, kabaddi" in one breath. Kabaddi was named the national sport of Bangladesh in 1972. It became part of the Asian Games in 1990, and India's professional Pro Kabaddi League, launched in 2014, turned it into a TV sport with big crowds. A circle-style version, often called Punjabi kabaddi, is played on a round field and is popular in Punjab and the Punjabi diaspora.

Carrom

Carrom is a tabletop game of Indian origin in which players flick a heavy disc, the striker, to knock smaller wooden pieces into the four corner pockets of a square board. It's a bit like pool played with fingers. Carrom is played by families, at parties and in clubs and cafés across South Asia. Sri Lanka and India both formed carrom federations by 1958, and the International Carrom Federation was founded in Chennai in 1988. Many South Asian American families keep a carrom board in the basement, and it's an easy game to bring to a club meeting.

Sport	Players per side	Where it's especially popular	One fact
Cricket	11	India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Nepal	An over is 6 legal balls
Field hockey	11	India, Pakistan	India: 8 Olympic golds; Pakistan: 3
Kabaddi	7	Bangladesh, India, Punjab region	National sport of Bangladesh since 1972
Carrom	2 or 4 players	Homes and clubs across South Asia	International federation founded in Chennai, 1988

Diagram: Film Industries Map and Cricket Basics

Film Industries of South Asia

Click a tile to meet a film industry. Bollywood is only one of them.



Schematic map, not to scale. Not an official depiction of borders.

Bollywood (Hindi cinema)

Language: Hindi

Center: Mumbai, India

Landmark: Raja Harishchandra (1913), often called the first full-length Indian feature film; Alam Ara (1931), the first Indian sound film.

"Bollywood" blends Bombay and Hollywood. It means Hindi films only, not all Indian film.

In 2023, India certified films in 25+ languages. Telugu, Tamil, Kannada and Malayalam films together outnumbered Hindi films more than 2 to 1.

Film industries

Cricket: one over

[Back to Film Industries Lesson Plan](#)

Interactive simulation: <https://aaryavvatts-lab.github.io/south-asian-culture-textbook/sims/ch15-film-industries/main.html>

[Open the Film Industries Map fullscreen](#)

MicroSim specification: Film Industries Map and Cricket Basics

sim-id: ch15-film-industries

Library: p5.js

Status: Implemented

Bloom Level: Understand

Bloom Verb: explain

Learning Objective: The learner will explain that Bollywood is one of many language-based film industries in South Asia, and describe the basic structure of a cricket over (6 legal balls, with runs adding up).

Canvas: responsive width; 630 px drawing area plus 90 px control area.

Controls: "Film industries" and "Cricket: one over" tabs; Start/Pause and Reset buttons on the cricket tab; click or tap any film tile.

Behavior: The film tab shows eleven schematic tiles placed roughly where each industry is based, with no borders. Selecting a tile shows the language, center, a landmark film or figure with its year, and a short note. The caption "Schematic map, not to scale. Not an official depiction of borders." is drawn inside the drawing area. The cricket tab starts paused; Start animates one over: a single, a dot ball, a four, a wide (1 extra run, not counted), two runs, a wicket and a six, for 14 runs and 1 wicket from 6 legal balls.

Start on the film tab. Click every tile and keep a tally: how many different languages do you see, and how many countries? Notice that the Hindi tile, Bollywood, is just one of eleven. Find the two tiles for Bengali-language film, one in Kolkata and one in Dhaka, and think about why one language has two industries.

Then switch to the cricket tab and press **Start**. Watch the scoreboard: the "Legal balls" counter goes up by one for every ball except the wide, which adds a run but doesn't count. Pause after each ball and predict the score before it updates. When the over ends, you should be able to explain to Ben

exactly what an over is, and why the over had seven deliveries but only six balls.

Ask Your Elders

Your interview for this chapter

Talk with a parent, grandparent, aunt, uncle, family friend or community elder about the movies, music, TV and sports they grew up with. If you don't have a South Asian elder to ask, interview a club advisor, a local temple, mosque, gurdwara or cultural center volunteer, or a classmate's family (with permission). Ten minutes is enough.

Before you start: Ask them to pick one favorite song or film scene, and watch or listen to it together before you start your questions. Ask if it's okay to take notes.

Questions to ask

1. What was the first film you remember seeing in a theater? Who took you, and what was the theater like?
2. Who was your favorite actor or singer when you were my age? Why?
3. Do you have a cricket (or hockey, or kabaddi) memory you'll never forget? Where were you, and who were you with?
4. What TV shows or dramas did the whole family watch together?
5. How has the way you watch movies and sports changed, from theaters and TV to videotapes, DVDs and streaming, or after moving to a new country?
6. Is there a film, song or sport you hope I'll love the way you do?

Listen for: whether their favorite films came from Bollywood or one of the Regional Cinemas; names of Playback Singing stars; stories about Cricket or the India-Pakistan Rivalry; and how the Streaming Era changed their habits.

Save it: Write down one quote or story in their words, with their permission. If they agree, you can share it with the [Roots & Rivers Story Archive](#).

? Your turn: compare two answers

Compare your elder's favorite films and songs with a friend's elder from a different country or language group. Did they grow up with the same industry, or different ones? Did any song or star cross the border between them?

"Every family does it a little differently, and there is no wrong answer here."

Common Misconceptions

Myth: Bollywood means all Indian films.

Reality: Bollywood is the Hindi-language industry in Mumbai. India also has large Telugu, Tamil, Kannada, Malayalam, Bengali, Marathi and other industries; in 2023 India certified films in more than 25 languages. Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Bhutan have their own cinemas too.

Myth: Cricket is only an Indian sport.

Reality: Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Afghanistan and Nepal all have national teams, and Pakistan and Sri Lanka have each won the men's World Cup. The game also has big followings in England, Australia, South Africa, New Zealand and the Caribbean, and is growing in the United States.

Myth: South Asian pop culture is only for South Asians.

Reality: "Naatu Naatu" won an Oscar, Arooj Aftab won a Grammy, and Diljit Dosanjh played Coachella. Plenty of fans with no South Asian background

love these films, songs and sports, and many dance teams and cricket clubs welcome everyone.

Myth: Representation of South Asians in Western media is now solved.

Reality: There are more South Asian characters and creators than twenty years ago, but many communities still rarely appear on screen, and stereotypes haven't disappeared.

Check Yourself

? 1. What does the word 'Bollywood' refer to? ✓

The Hindi-language film industry based in Mumbai. The name blends "Bombay" and "Hollywood." It does not include India's other language industries.

? 2. What is an over in cricket? ✓

A set of 6 legal balls bowled by one bowler from one end of the pitch. Wides and no-balls don't count toward the six.

? 3. What is playback singing? ✓

Songs are recorded by professional singers, then played back while actors lip-sync on screen. Many playback singers are as famous as the stars.

? 4. Why did Satyajit Ray receive an honorary Oscar in 1992? ✓

For his lifetime achievement in filmmaking. His realistic films, starting with *Pather Panchali* (1955), influenced directors around the world.

? 5. Which sport is the national sport of Bangladesh, and how does a raid work?



Kabaddi. A raider enters the other team's half, tries to tag defenders, and must return to their own side without being tackled.

Exercises

Remember

1. Name four film industries in South Asia other than Bollywood, with the language each uses.

Answer



Any four, such as Telugu (Hyderabad), Tamil (Chennai), Kannada (Bengaluru), Malayalam (Kerala), Bengali (Kolkata), Bangla (Dhaka, Bangladesh), Urdu and Punjabi (Lahore and Karachi, Pakistan), Nepali (Kathmandu), Sinhala and Tamil (Sri Lanka), Dzongkha (Bhutan).

2. Which South Asian countries have won the men's Cricket World Cup (ODI), and in which years?

Answer



India (1983 and 2011), Pakistan (1992) and Sri Lanka (1996).

Understand

1. Explain why there are two "Bengali" film industries.

Answer

Bengali (Bangla) is spoken in both the Indian state of West Bengal and in Bangladesh. Since 1947, and Bangladesh's independence in 1971, each side of the border has had its own film industry: one centered in Kolkata and one in Dhaka.

2. Explain why a wide in cricket gives the batting team a run but makes the over longer.

Answer

A wide is a ball the batter can't reach, so the batting side gets 1 extra run as a penalty, and because it isn't a legal ball it doesn't count toward the six balls of the over, so another ball must be bowled.

Apply

1. In one over, a bowler bowls: 4, dot, wide, 1, 6, dot, 2. How many runs were scored, how many legal balls were bowled, and is the over finished?

Hint: count the wide as a run but not as a ball.

2. Plan a short "South Asian Movie Night" for your school club. Choose three films from three different countries or languages, and write one sentence for each explaining why you chose it.

Hint: use the table in Section 15.2 and the Film Industries Map.

Analyze

1. Compare Bollywood with Pakistani dramas. What does each do best, and why might one be more popular than the other in a particular family?

Hint: think about length, format, language and how people watch.

2. Cricket arrived in South Asia with British colonial rule, yet it is now a source of national pride in India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Afghanistan. What might explain this change?

Hint: think about winning, shared viewing, and stories like Palwankar Baloo's.

Evaluate

1. Is it fair to judge the progress of South Asian representation in Western media by awards like Oscars and Grammys? Make a case for one side, using at least two examples from the chapter.

Hint: consider who wins awards and who is still missing from the screen.

2. Some people say sports rivalries like India vs Pakistan make political tensions worse; others say they bring people together. Which view does the evidence in this chapter support better, and why?

Hint: consider the 1962 to 1977 gap, cricket diplomacy and diaspora watch parties.

Create

1. Design a poster for a cricket or kabaddi demonstration at your school, aimed at students who have never played. Include the basic rules in five bullet points or fewer.

Hint: test your bullet points on a friend like Ben.

2. Write a pitch (one paragraph) for a TV show about a South Asian American teen that avoids the stereotypes discussed in Section 15.6. Who is the main character, what's their family like, and what language(s) do they speak?

Hint: give the character a specific region, language and faith.

Key Takeaways

- **Bollywood** is the Hindi film industry in Mumbai; South Asia's **regional cinemas** in Telugu, Tamil, Kannada, Malayalam, Bengali and other languages, plus the cinemas of Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Bhutan, are just as much a part of the story.
- **Satyajit Ray** showed the world a realistic, quiet kind of South Asian film and received an honorary Oscar in 1992.
- **Pakistani cinema** moved from Lahore toward Karachi, and **Pakistani dramas** and **Coke Studio** became some of Pakistan's most loved cultural exports.
- **Playback singing** made singers like Lata Mangeshkar, Noor Jehan and Runa Laila stars across borders.
- **Global South Asian pop**, the **streaming era** and new South Asian creators have changed **representation in media**, but the work isn't finished.
- **Cricket** is built on overs of 6 legal balls, comes in Test, ODI and T20 formats, and is shared across the region; the **India-Pakistan rivalry** is shaped by history and politics as well as sport.
- **Field hockey**, **kabaddi** and **carrom** are also part of South Asia's sporting life. Hockey brought India and Pakistan Olympic golds, and carrom is played in homes across the region.

That's a wrap!



You can now explain an over, name a dozen film industries, and settle (or start) a debate at the next watch party. Next, in **Chapter 16**, we'll trade the cricket field for the classroom and look at the numbers and ideas that came from South Asia.

Quiz: Cinema, Cricket, and Pop Culture

Test your understanding of Chapter 15. Choose the best answer, then click **Show Answer** to check.

Question 1

What does "Bollywood" refer to?

- A. All films made in India
- B. All films made in South Asia
- C. The Hindi-language film industry based in Mumbai
- D. The Bengali film industry in Kolkata

? Show Answer



The correct answer is **C**. Bollywood, a blend of "Bombay" and "Hollywood," is the Hindi-language industry in Mumbai. Using it for all Indian films (option A) is the most common mistake, since India also has big Telugu, Tamil, Kannada, Malayalam, Bengali and other industries.

Concept Tested: Bollywood **Bloom's Level:** Remember

Question 2

In cricket, how many legal balls make up one over?

- A. 6
- B. 4
- C. 10
- D. 20

 Show Answer

The correct answer is **A**. An over is 6 legal balls bowled by one bowler from one end. Twenty (option D) is the number of overs per side in a T20 match, not the number of balls in an over.

Concept Tested: Cricket **Bloom's Level:** Remember

Question 3

Which Pakistani TV and online music series, launched in 2008, pairs artists from different regions and styles in live studio recordings?

- A. Humsafar
- B. Zindagi
- C. Joyland
- D. Coke Studio

 Show Answer

The correct answer is **D**. Coke Studio Pakistan launched in 2008 and became the longest-running annual TV music show in Pakistan. Humsafar is a Pakistani drama, not a music show.

Concept Tested: Coke Studio **Bloom's Level:** Remember

Question 4

Which statement best describes playback singing?

- A. Actors record their own songs live on set without music.
- B. Professional singers record songs that are played back while actors lip-sync on screen.
- C. Old songs are replayed at the end of a film's credits.
- D. Singers appear on screen next to the actors during song scenes.

? Show Answer



The correct answer is **B**. Playback singers record the songs, and actors lip-sync to them; the singers usually don't appear on screen. Many, like Lata Mangeshkar and Noor Jehan, became as famous as the stars.

Concept Tested: Playback Singing **Bloom's Level:** Understand

Question 5

Why are there two separate film industries working in the Bengali (Bangla) language?

- A. Bengali is spoken in both West Bengal, India, and Bangladesh, which became separate countries' film centers in Kolkata and Dhaka.
- B. One industry makes silent films and the other makes sound films.
- C. One industry makes films for children and the other for adults.
- D. The Dhaka industry only makes films in English.

 Show Answer

The correct answer is **A**. The language is shared across the border, so Kolkata (India) and Dhaka (Bangladesh) each developed their own industry. Mukh O Mukhosh (1956) was the first Bengali feature made in what is now Bangladesh.

Concept Tested: Regional Cinemas **Bloom's Level:** Understand

Question 6

What is a key reason the India-Pakistan cricket rivalry is so intense?

- A. The two teams play each other every week.
- B. It is the only international cricket either team plays.
- C. Politics and shared history shape it, and the teams now meet mostly at major tournaments.
- D. Only fans in the diaspora watch it.

 Show Answer

The correct answer is **C**. The rivalry has been shaped by history and politics, including no matches from 1962 to 1977 and no bilateral series since a short one in 2012 to 2013, so rare tournament meetings carry huge weight. Option A is wrong: they meet rarely, which is part of what makes each match special.

Concept Tested: India-Pakistan Rivalry **Bloom's Level:** Understand

Question 7

In one over, a bowler bowls: 1, dot, 4, wide, 2, wicket, 6. How many runs did the batting team score, and how many legal balls were bowled?

- A. 13 runs, 7 legal balls
- B. 14 runs, 6 legal balls
- C. 13 runs, 6 legal balls
- D. 14 runs, 7 legal balls

 Show Answer



The correct answer is **B**. The runs are $1 + 0 + 4 + 1$ (the wide) $+ 2 + 0 + 6 = 14$, and the wide does not count as a legal ball, so there are 6 legal balls. Option D counts the wide as a legal ball, which is the most common error.

Concept Tested: Cricket **Bloom's Level:** Apply

Question 8

Ben wants to watch a South Asian film that is not from Bollywood, made outside India, and nominated for an Oscar. Using the chapter, which film fits best?

- A. Alam Ara (1931)
- B. RRR (2022)
- C. Pather Panchali (1955)
- D. Lunana: A Yak in the Classroom (2019)

 Show Answer

The correct answer is **D**. *Lunana* is a Bhutanese film in Dzongkha that was nominated for Best International Feature Film at the 2022 Oscars. *RRR* (option B) won an Oscar for its song, but it is an Indian Telugu film, so it doesn't meet the "outside India" condition.

Concept Tested: Global South Asian Pop **Bloom's Level:** Apply

Question 9

Hank Azaria stopped voicing Apu on *The Simpsons* in 2020, and shows like *Never Have I Ever* and *Ms. Marvel* were created with South Asian writers. What does this comparison suggest about representation in media?

- A. Representation is now fully solved.
- B. South Asian characters no longer appear on American TV.
- C. Only awards matter for measuring representation.
- D. Who creates and voices a character has become an important part of how South Asians are shown.

 Show Answer

The correct answer is **D**. The shift from a stereotyped character voiced by a white actor to characters created by South Asian writers shows that who tells the story matters. Option A goes too far, since many communities still rarely appear on screen.

Concept Tested: Representation in Media **Bloom's Level:** Analyze

Question 10

Compare cricket and field hockey in South Asia. Which statement is best supported by the chapter?

- A. India and Pakistan dominated Olympic field hockey for decades, while cricket's biggest titles have been won by India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.
- B. Field hockey is more popular than cricket in every South Asian country.
- C. Neither India nor Pakistan has ever won an Olympic hockey gold.
- D. Only India has won cricket World Cups among South Asian countries.

? Show Answer



The correct answer is **A**. India won eight Olympic hockey golds and Pakistan three, while India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka have all won the men's Cricket World Cup. Option D ignores Pakistan's 1992 and Sri Lanka's 1996 titles.

Concept Tested: Field Hockey **Bloom's Level:** Analyze