

# [Passage to india by foster essay](https://assignbuster.com/passage-to-india-by-foster-essay/)

In his novel A Passage to India, Forster uses a series of repeatedmisunderstandings between cultures, which become hardened into socialstereotypes, to justify the uselessness of attempts to bridge cultural gulfs. Inmany instances, the way in which language is used plays a great role in themiscommunication between the English and the Indians, as well as among people ofthe same culture. This is exemplified in the way in which people use the samewords, but do not hear the same meaning. It is also displayed through theBritish characters Aziz meets and befriends, through a series of invitations andthrough time and true mistakes. Upon Meeting the British: Two significantinstances of miscommunication occur when Aziz meets the British characters inthe novel that will end up being very close, yet controversial friends. Upon hisencountering Mrs. Moore at the Mosque, he sees a British woman and right awaydevelops a series of misconceptions about her. He believes that she is like allother British women (bring up conversation on women being alike): Madam, thisis a mosque, you have no right here at all; you should have taken off yourshoes; this is a holy place for Moslems. I have taken them off. Youhave? I left them at the entrance. Then I ask your pardon. I amtruly sorry for speaking. Yes, I was right, was I not? If I remove myshoes, I am allowed? Of course, but so few ladies take the trouble, especially if thinking no one is there to see (18). What Aziz finds is theunexpected fact that she is like Aziz in many ways, or as he describes her, Oriental (21). Yet, when seeing this side of the British woman, he againbreaks his connection with her when she speaks of her son: And why ever doyou come to Chandrapore? To visit my son. He is the City Magistratehere. Oh no, excuse me, that is quite impossible. Our City Magistratesname is Mr. Heaslop. I know him intimately. Hes my son all the same, she said smiling, (19). It does not occur to Aziz that Mrs. Moores son may bepart of the Indian race. It is something that is not understandable at first.

Another British character that Aziz makes a connection with is Mr. Fielding.

When Aziz arrives at Fieldings home to meet him for the first time, he hasthe same type of miscommunication that he does with Mrs. Moore, yet is isdisplayed in an opposite manner: Lifting up his voice, he shouted from thebedroom, Please make yourself at home. The remark was unpremeditated, likemost of his actions; it was what he felt inclined to say. To Aziz it had a verydifferent meaning (66). Aziz understands Fieldings remark as a warminvitation, whereas Fielding has a routine of making the remark. People SayingOne Thing and meaning another, usually just to be polite: A. Invitations Thematter of invitations in the novel creates a cultural misunderstanding betweenthe Indians and the British in the sense that the Indians make invitations justto be polite, which the British take literally. This causes offense in somecases to the British involved, whereas the Indians see it as a normal part oftheir society. This is first apparent at the Bridge Party, where Adela and Mrs.

Moore are introduced to Mrs. Bhattacharya: When they took their leave, Mrs.

Moore had an impulse, and said to Mrs. Bhattacharya, whose face she liked, Iwonder whether you would allow us to call on you some day. When? shereplied, inclining charmingly. Whenever is convenient. All days areconvenient. Thursday Most certainly. What about thetime? All hours. Tell us which you would prefer. Mrs.

Bhattacharya seemed not to know either. Her gesture implied that she had known, since Thursdays began, that English ladies would come to see her on one of them, and so always stayed in. Everything pleased her, nothing surprised. She added, We leave for Calcutta today. Oh do you? said Adela, not at firstseeing the implication. Then she cried, Oh, but if you do, we shall find yougone. Mrs. Bhattacharya did not dispute it. (44). Mrs. Bhattacharya doesntthink of the invitation in the same way Adela does. The same is for Aziz wheninviting the two women to the Marabar caves. He thought again of his bungalowin horror. Good heavens, the stupid girl had taken him at his word! What was heto do? Yes, all that is settled, he cried. I invited you all to see mein the Marabar Caves. (79) Misunderstanding of time: Misunderstanding oftime occurs not only between the two cultures, but is also apparent amongst theIndian society. The difference between the different races of Indians isdisplayed here. The first example of misunderstanding time is given at thebeginning of the novel, when Dr. Lal sends for Aziz. Another case in which thereis a misunderstanding of time occurs at the Bridge Party. The guests, Inidianand British, have different ideas of time, which is displayed in the way theguests arrive. The narration states that the Bridge Party was not a successat least it was not what Mrs. Moore and Miss Quested were accustomed toconsider a successful party. They arrived early but most of the Indian guestshad arrived even earlier, and stood massed at the farther side of the tennislawns, doing nothing, (38). Communication on the same level: There areseveral instances where the British and Indian cultures are communicating on thesame level. The first time this is demonstrated is among the Indian culture, when Aziz dines at Mahmoud Alis house. The servants are asked if the dinneris ready and they reply that it is, when in fact, it is not. Aziz and hisfriends, however, understand the meaning in what the servants say. They theservants meant that they wished it was ready, and were so understood, (8).

Ronny Heaslop, having lived in India, and understanding a slight bit of theIndian culture, does realize the true meaning of the invitation. B. OtherFielding, having lived among the Indian culture for some time, is on the samelevel of communication that Heaslop is, as far as undertanding the invitationgoes. Another invitation that is given to the two True mistakes and gossip: Someof the misunderstandings in the book take place due to flat out mistakes, whichat times involve gossip. This occurs first when Aziz offers his collar stud toFielding in an ‘ effusive’ act of friendship, Heaslop later misinterprets Aziz’smissing stud as an oversight and extends it as a general example: “…thereyou have the Indian all over: inattention to detail; the fundamental slacknessthat reveals the race” (82). We later see Azizs biggest mistake of all, becoming the turning point of his relationship with Fielding. Jump in, Mr.

Quested, and Mr. Fielding. Who on earth is Mr. Quested? Do Imispronounce that well-known name? Is he not your wifes brother? Who onearth do you suppose Ive married? Im only Ralph Moore, said theboy, blushing, and at that moment there fell another pailful of the rain, andmade a mist round their feet. Aziz tried to withdraw, but it was too late.

However did you make such a mistake? said Fielding, (338). The end ofthe novel displays a circular pattern that has developed throughout, in thesense that the cultures are no better in their understanding of one another thanthey are in the beginning. If the British were to really try to understand theIndian, the cultural barriers might weaken and the British might begin to seetheir equal humanity and this of course would make the British role asconquering ruler more difficult. One of the major themes of E. M. Forster’snovel A Passage to India is cultural misunderstanding. Differing cultural ideasand expectations regarding hospitality, social proprieties, and the role ofreligion in daily life are responsible for misunderstandings between the Englishand the Muslim Indians, the English and the Hindu Indians, and between theMuslims and Hindus. This is why Mrs. Moore is so revered by Aziz and the otherIndians. She is too new a visitor to have become hardened, not having been therethe six months Aziz and his friends agree are required for English ladies, andshe still treats the Indians as people. She never advocates British withdrawalbut she doesn’t understand why they can’t be more ‘ pleasant’ to the natives.

Perhaps there is a clue to answering this question in the experience Mrs. Moorehas at the Caves.

English Essays