Read the text again and choose the best answer, A, B, C or D.

1 What is the writer's main purpose in writing the text?
- A to explain who Meera Syal is and what she has achieved
- B to persuade people to watch Meera Syal's latest television show
- C to describe Meera Syal's childhood
- D to inform people about Indian culture

2 The writer says that when Meera's mother became ill
- A Meera decided not to go to university after all.
- B Meera decided that she mustn't waste her life.
- C Meera decided to become a doctor.
- D Meera wrote an award-winning play.

3 Why did Meera write *One of Us*?
- A to become a professional actor
- B to win a Student Drama Award
- C because she wanted to be a drama therapist
- D because she hadn't done much acting before

4 What does the writer find surprising about what happened in 1996?
- A Meera wrote a semi-autobiographical novel.
- B Meera became famous both as a writer and comic actor.
- C Meera won an award.
- D Meera received an MBE from the Queen.

5 Which of these could be Meera's daughter speaking?
- A It's really cool to be Asian.
- B I wish I had blonde hair.
- C It's a bit embarrassing to have a famous mother.
- D I hate Indian music.

Recently, **Meera Syal** was named as the most influential black or Asian woman in Britain by *Good Housekeeping Magazine*. Born in Wolverhampton in 1962, soon after her highly-educated parents arrived in the West Midlands from Delhi, she was the only Punjabi girl in the village and she was desperate to fit in. She often tells interviewers that she used to really want to be blonde and called Sharon. She was far from happy with who she was. Yet today she is one of the best-loved actresses and writers in Britain.

Her parents had expected she might become a doctor or a pharmacist. But Meera was determined to follow her own path. When she was just eighteen, her mother developed cancer and was given six months to live. Luckily, she survived, but the experience left Meera even more determined to make the most of life. Meera studied Drama and English at university but, oddly, didn't actually do much acting, saying that she wasn't picked for the good parts. When she finished her first degree, she decided to write a play for herself to take to the Edinburgh Festival. The play, *One of Us*, won a national award that same year.

Her big breakthrough came in 1996 when she teamed up with friends to write and perform in the hit comedy show, *Goodness Gracious Me*, which laughed at both Indian traditions and British prejudice. That same year she published her first novel, *Anita and Me*, based on her childhood. Amazingly, both won awards and Meera became famous twice over. The following year she was awarded an MBE (Member of the order of the British Empire) by the Queen.

Since then, Meera has written another best-selling novel and both of her novels have been turned into films. She and her husband, Sanjeev Bhaskar, have also created another popular comedy series, *The Kumars at no. 42*, and she has appeared in countless television roles. Sanjeev Bhaskar recalls that when they first had the idea for *Goodness Gracious Me*, people were very reluctant to believe that Asians could be funny – so things have really changed.

Perhaps surprisingly, given rumours that she and her husband are now worth at least four million pounds, she lives quite modestly in Essex, with her daughter, Chameli. Her childhood and that of her daughter could not be more different. Nowadays, she says, everyone is interested in Indian culture. When she was little she used to hide her culture, not wanting to eat with her fingers in front of English kids, or listen to Indian music. Her daughter, however, is not surprisingly, proud to be who she is.

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