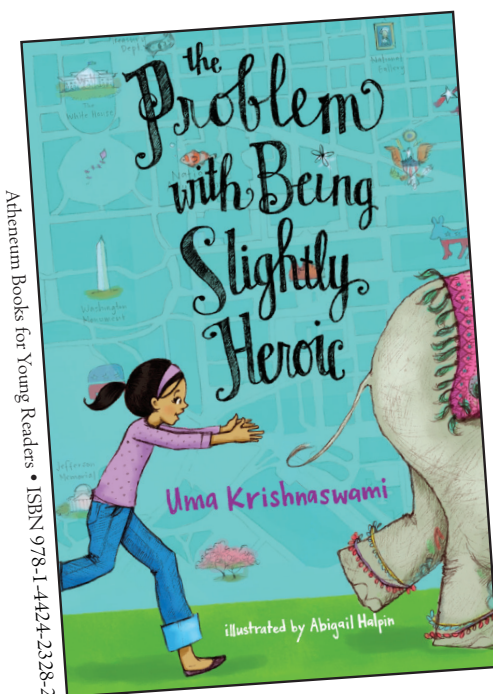


# A GRAND AND HEROIC Activity Kit!



The Grand Plan to  
Fix Everything

The Problem  
with Being  
Slightly Heroic

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DINI AND HER BEST FRIEND, MADDIE, love Bollywood movies. Their favorite actress of all time is the amazing Dolly Singh. In *The Grand Plan to Fix Everything*, Dini's mother drops a bombshell—Dini and her parents are moving to India for two whole years! And not to Mumbai, which true fillum fans like Dini and Maddie still refer to as Bombay, the home of Bollywood. No, Dini is moving to a tiny town far from the fillum universe—Swapnagiri! But could it be true that Dolly herself is in Swapnagiri? Can Dini hatch a plot to save the day when all hope seems lost?

In *The Problem with Being Slightly Heroic*, Dini and Maddie are together again when Dini travels home to attend Dolly's US premiere. The two girls will be part of the festive opening ceremonies and everything seems as perfect as a rose petal milk shake. So why can't Dini untie the knot in her stomach? Because there is so much that can go wrong when a big star like Dolly is in town. Is that an elephant walking down a Washington DC street?

Uma Krishnaswami's charming novels will have young readers tap-tap-tapping their toes as the colors and music of Bollywood dance through the madcap romps that are *The Grand Plan to Fix Everything* and *The Problem with Being Slightly Heroic*.

[www.umakrishnaswami.com](http://www.umakrishnaswami.com)

# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

## The Grand Plan to Fix Everything

- ✿ Maddie and Dini love Bollywood movies, even though they can't understand all the words of the songs and read the dialogue in subtitles. Have you ever watched a foreign film? What universal themes can be found in movies regardless of where they're made or what language they're in?
- ✿ Dini has to move half a world away from her best friend, Maddie. Have you ever had to leave friends behind or have you had friends move away? How did you feel? Did the friendship survive the distance?
- ✿ Coincidence is a big theme in *The Grand Plan to Fix Everything*. It's a coincidence that Dini's incompletely addressed letter to Dolly falls into Lal's hands, the postal carrier in Mumbai who also happens to be a huge Dolly fan and knows her apartment is on his route. It's a coincidence that Dolly happens to be in Swapnagiri, the tiny town Dini is moving to.

"There it is again, that thing that most people call coincidence. Lal prefers to think of it as kismet. Some people would say kismet means fate, but really it is a far more beautiful idea—it is the idea that in spite of all the obstacles, some things are meant to be."



- Discuss the difference between coincidence and kismet. What other examples of coincidence or kismet can you find in the story?
- ✿ How does Dini react when Dolly Singh comes to her house for the party? How would you feel if you just met your favorite movie star? Did you expect Dolly to come to the party? Why is the party a disaster?
  - ✿ Dini sees her world like a movie script. The problems between Dolly and Mr. Chickoo Dev can be solved if Dini can get the story line to where it needs to go. Discuss how the film metaphor runs throughout the novel. Who are the stars of this story? How do the various plot lines intersect?

## The Problem with Being Slightly Heroic

- ✿ Dini and Maddie have been separated for ten months while Dini is in India. In the beginning of *The Problem with Being Slightly Heroic*, the two best friends are reunited. How has the time apart affected their friendship?
- ✿ Dolly dazzles everyone she meets. What effect does her star power have on the various characters in the novel? How does Dini view Dolly and her behavior? What adjectives would you use to describe Dolly?
- ✿ How does Brenna change the dynamic of Dini and Maddie's friendship? How does Dini feel about Brenna? At one point in the story, Dini thinks, "It is simply impossible to choreograph things like friendship, no matter how hard you try." What does this mean in relation to the characters? Does it hold true for your personal friendships as well?
- ✿ Is Dini "slightly heroic?" What are the qualities of a hero? At what points in the story does Dini act heroic? Which other characters have heroic moments? Why might it be a problem to be "slightly heroic?"



# ACTIVITIES



## WRITE A FAN LETTER

Dini and Maddie are huge fans of Bollywood star Dolly Singh. Dini decides to write a fan letter to Dolly in the hopes of finding out more about her. Are you a fan of a musician? An actor or actress? A famous athlete? Write a fan letter to someone whom you really admire. Dini just addresses her letter to Dolly Singh, Famous Movie Star, Bombay, India. You will need a real address in order to mail your letter! Check out the website of the person you admire. There may be an address that you can use to mail your fan letter. Who knows? The person you admire may write back to you!



## DESIGN A PAGE IN A FILM FAN MAGAZINE

Dini keeps updated about the life and work of her favorite actress Dolly Singh through a popular Indian film magazine. Create a magazine article about a person you admire. What is new in the person's life? What are fans' opinions about your favorite person's latest accomplishments? Add photos of your person from the Internet or from other magazines to illustrate your article.

## YOU OUGHT TO BE IN PICTURES

Dini views life as if it were a movie with plot twists and possible happy endings. Dolly Singh provides a happy ending with a big Bollywood-style dance number on the rooftop at the end of *The Grand Plan to Fix Everything*. Create a colorful illustration of this happy ending using the following excerpt from the book as your guide:

“And soon there is Dolly leading the entire company in a giant extravaganza of a group dance on the roof of cottage number I, Sunny Villa Estates. People and goats, peacocks and babies, everyone is stepping along. . . . Mrs. Chellapa's little dog, Inji, barks in time. Even the miniature green birds that hang upside down in the bottlebrush trees are flapping their wings in time to the beat.”

## BOLLYWOOD DANCE STEPS

With an adult's help, rent a Bollywood film that's appropriate for your age or watch dance scenes from Bollywood films on the Internet. Look for *Aladin* starring Amitabh Bachchan or even one of the many Bollywood dance workout videos available. Try your hand—and feet—at traditional Indian dance moves! Can you choreograph your own Bollywood dance, like Dini and Maddie do in *The Problem with Being Slightly Heroic*?

## PETAL POWER

Roses have special significance to Chef Armend in *The Problem with Being Slightly Heroic*, and they are a source of comfort to Dolly Singh in her beloved rose petal milk shakes. Research roses and discover ten facts you previously didn't know about these amazing flowers.

## LIGHTS! CAMERA! ACTION!

Dini and Maddie are true fillum fans. Pick an exciting scene from *The Grand Plan to Fix Everything* or *The Problem with Being Slightly Heroic*, and create a mini film with your friends. Write dialog for the characters, plan how you'll shoot the scene, and find props and a setting to enhance your dramatization. *Filmi Kumpnee: Your Magazine of the Stars* may come calling for an exclusive!



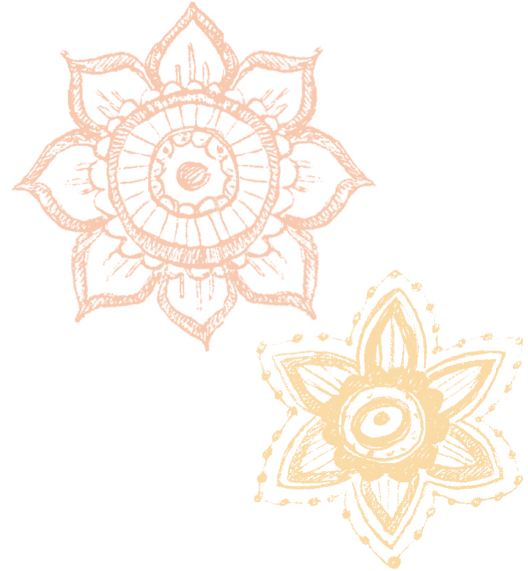
# A RECIPE FOR CURRY PUFFS



Mr. Mani makes delicious curry puffs in the Dreamycakes Bakery. With an adult's help, try making your own curry puffs. Put on some Indian music—a Bollywood fillum soundtrack, perhaps—to put you in the proper mood while you cook! You can buy Indian spices (masala) in specialty grocery stores or from websites such as [www.ishopindian.com](http://www.ishopindian.com).

## Ingredients

A package of puff pastry sheets from the freezer section of your grocery store  
¼ cup all-purpose flour  
2 potatoes, peeled and chopped  
2 tsp oil  
½ Tbsp curry powder  
1 small package of frozen mixed vegetables (carrots, peas, green beans, corn, or any combination you like)  
½ Tbsp garam masala  
½ Tbsp chat masala  
A pinch of red chili powder (optional)  
A pinch of unsweetened cocoa (Mr. Mani's secret ingredient!)  
Salt, to taste



Preheat oven to 400°. Thaw the puff pastry sheets and sprinkle with flour. Roll with a rolling pin until they are each about doubled in size, approximately half as thick as they were originally. Cut each sheet in thirds along the fold lines; cut each section into three squares. You should have 18 squares after preparing both sheets of pastry.

Boil the potatoes in water until just tender; drain. Heat oil in a large skillet or frying pan. Add the curry powder to the oil. Add potatoes and frozen vegetables and stir to mix. Cover and let them cook for a few minutes on medium heat. Toss vegetables with the remaining spices and a pinch of cocoa and stir to coat. Once the vegetables are cooked, remove from heat.

Put a spoonful of filling on the top half of a square of pastry. Use a finger dipped in water to wet the edges of the square. Fold one half over the other and seal the edges. You should have a rectangle of pastry dough with the filling in the middle. Repeat with the rest of the pastry squares and filling. Move the prepared puffs to a parchment-lined baking sheet, leaving approximately one inch between puffs. Bake for 20 minutes or until golden brown.

Serve hot with chutney!



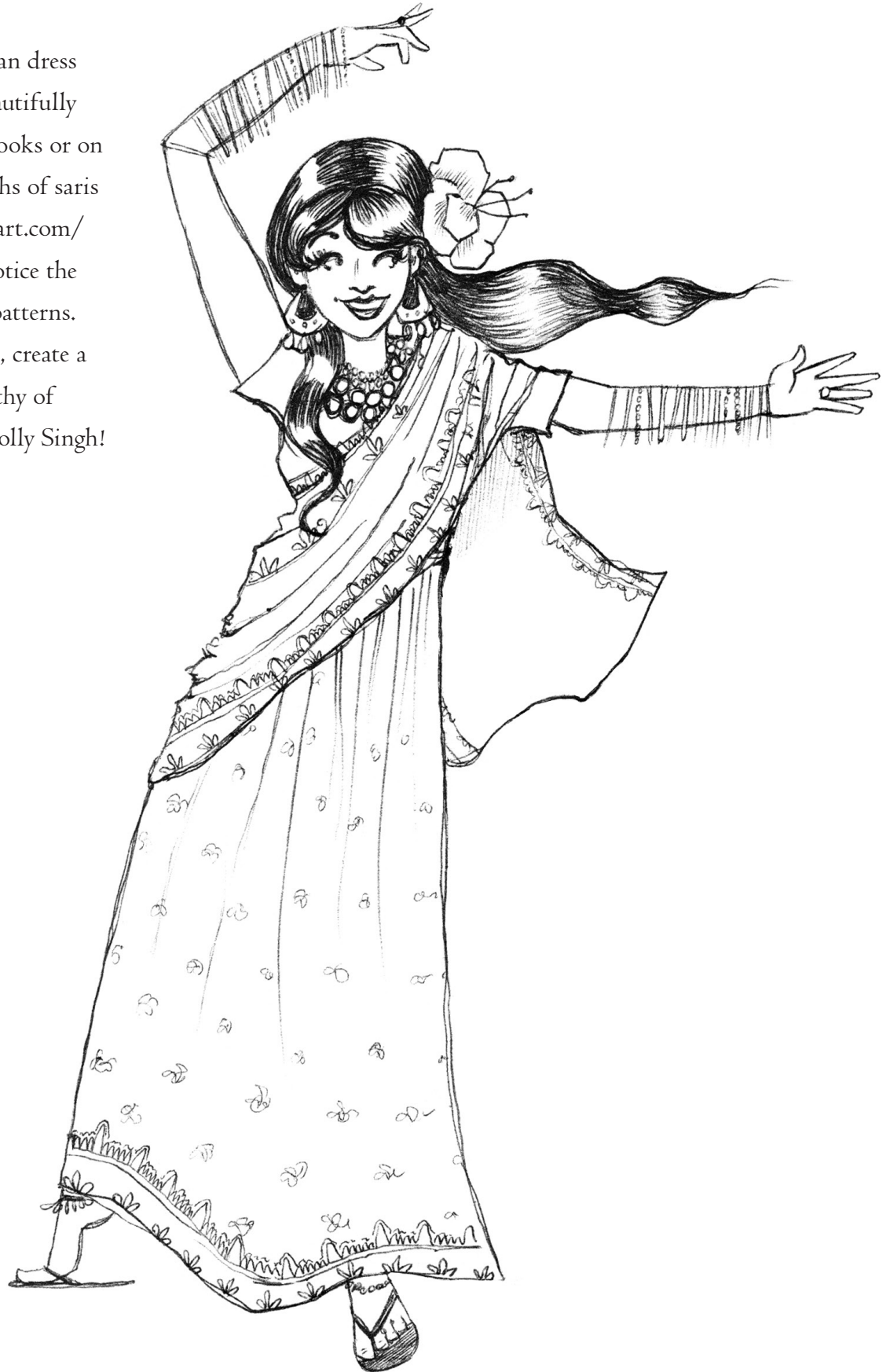
# NIFTY EXPRESSIONS

Dini's father is fond of using idioms or figures of speech when he speaks with her. Complete the chart below to discover the difference between an idiom's literal and figurative meanings.

Idiom	Draw a <i>sketch</i> of the literal meaning of the idiom	Describe in words what the idiom means in concept
Two peas in a pod		
The trail had gone cold		
Facing the music		
Turn over a new leaf		
(Being a kid in a grown-up world is) no bowl of mangoes		
A needle in a haystack		
(Feeling) right as rain		
Mending broken fences		
A sight for sore eyes		

# SARI ART

The traditional Indian dress for women is the beautifully colored sari. Look in books or on websites for photographs of saris (try [www.exoticindiaart.com/textiles/saris](http://www.exoticindiaart.com/textiles/saris)) and notice the striking colors and patterns. Using colored pencils, create a beautiful sari worthy of Bollywood sensation Dolly Singh!



# A GRAND WORD SEARCH



The key words and phrases from *The Grand Plan to Fix Everything* that are listed at the bottom of this page are hidden within the letters below. Words can appear backward, forward, and diagonally. Can you find them all?

H U I W M Y X H X R S V P F D M N E S Q M M N N A D D Q L Q  
 E K S N W O Q Q A F T G N J S R X M Z W F O R M L R J A K W  
 P K M K D N C W F Z O D B W A U E W L D W N U G L E A L G M  
 Z B O M E Z N U R T V O A K A A C A G P N K G H I A H A F D  
 W H P O F S P D V U A P I F E O Z P M Z L E N M V M B H A D  
 U X U E H Y W M F C N Z T Q I E V S K M C Y U Y Y Y M R X K  
 Z A X S R G M N N A J A K L G Q C G K T O S I W N C Y M G Y  
 M R R R Z N N H G Y E G G P V P R H S W R U H E N A T R M G  
 O I U M R G P I B O M B A Y E Z Q G Y Z H H N M U K G D O U  
 P C W M W X R K S M H W M A A S O O M S T Q O T S E Q S W S  
 U T J M Z I X E M Y B S C S E L G N A B T E D K A S K I M G  
 R E T S A M T S O P L O H K F J I L W J Q Y L R A I G M V V  
 Z R F E X L U B T Y C L L Y S G E W U W Y C S I I X N S F V  
 T C L H K O M J T K X I O O L G F I F E Z K U G O M O A U M  
 J D Y Y N I V C Y R E I S D B Z C V Q S V I J G D U R U U G  
 M F H T I Y Q M Y V Y V N I X C O F T F K G D U S L O N C U  
 N L V Z W R O X Z V U K M Y C W Z T S C J R C Z X L P X V X  
 L G N P H F K D N I Z Y P S E J K H S J U B R T H I B L I D  
 C X Q O B R S H H Z D I K G M X E P R V T W C A B F O L D P  
 N C T I F C V L V A M N Y Z B P F O F N C X P U Y C W M Q A  
 Q U C Z Y I H L L B S P B I P Z C S B Y F Q V I K J F B H F  
 G F Q J M S A O X Q N I J S K O C K R S S M H V T I Y N Y H  
 T I E Y Z G A B C V D L N G K J A L B V K A L U P M X V T G  
 I H K R X I Z Z M O C R P R T T O H Q I P H P W Z I Y E M E  
 C B L D M L A M P U L D H D M Z H N J M O Q N X C C M J Y O  
 I Y N Y A O Y G U O M A D K G O H T B V P K L Z N S A Y S V  
 V I B L B T W L D I D Q T S Q I Y O Y C Y X D Z I E X J W Y  
 K R Z S X X A E A B K A T E O D J J B O O N K K M H H U Q I  
 W E H Z G E D G H T L K Y Q K W V R V G V N B R J P A L L K  
 B O L L Y W O O D Q S I U O T D W Y B B T Q E L X Q G J N N

BANGLES  
 BOLLYWOOD  
 BOMBAY  
 CHOCOLATE

CURRY PUFFS  
 DOLLY SINGH  
 DREAM MOUNTAIN  
 DREAMYCAKES

FILLUM  
 KISMET  
 MONKEYS  
 MUMBAI

PEACOCK  
 POSTMASTER  
 SUNNY VILLA  
 SWAPNAGIRI

# DAZZLE DRAWING

In *The Problem with Being Slightly Heroic*, Dolly Singh comes to America to premiere her new film at Bolly-Dazzle, a festival of films from India held at the Smithsonian's Sackler Gallery. Posters for Bolly-Dazzle grace DC Metro subway cars and stations. Illustrate the Bolly-Dazzle poster below.

# BOLLY-DAZZLE!

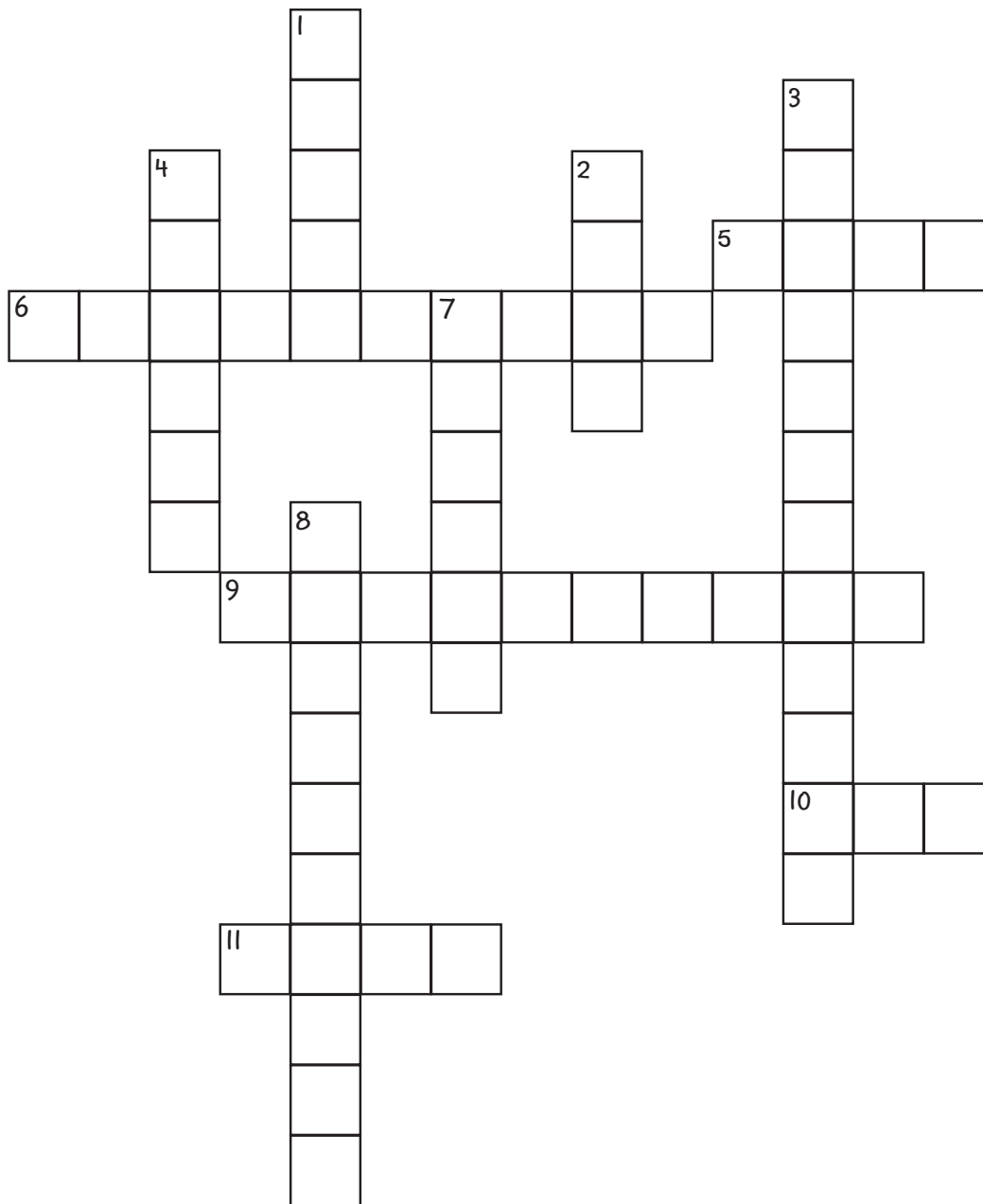
An extravaganza of films from India

GRAND OPENING: *Kahan hai Sunny Villa? (Where Is Sunny Villa?)*  
OPENING DANCE BY YOUNG PERFORMERS ✿ SPECIAL GUEST: DOLLY SINGH  
MUSIC. REFRESHMENTS. FUN.



# CHARACTER CROSSWORD

Solve the clues below to discover several of the characters from *The Grand Plan to Fix Everything* and *The Problem with Being Slightly Heroic*.



## ACROSS

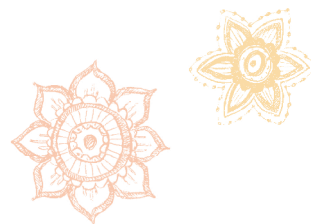
5. A clever and devious young pachyderm
6. The Promenade Hotel's renowned restaurateur (2 words)
9. Manager, owner, and artistic director of Starlite Studios
10. Postman extraordinaire
11. The slightly heroic number one fan of 8 Down

## DOWN

1. Swapnagiri friend of 11 Across
2. Owner of Dreamycakes Bakery, Mr. \_\_\_\_\_
3. Fiancé of 8 Down (and possessor of one very large nose)
4. Maryland friend of 7 Down
7. Very best friend of 11 Across
8. The starriest star in all of Bollywood

# A RECIPE FOR ROSE PETAL MILK SHAKES

There's nothing like a rose petal milk shake to calm the frazzled nerves of Bollywood's number one star! With an adult's help, make your own delicious shake. Stunning.



## Rose Syrup

$\frac{1}{2}$  cup packed organic, untreated rose petals  
2  $\frac{1}{2}$  Tbsp water  
1  $\frac{1}{2}$  Tbsp sugar

Combine ingredients in a saucepan and simmer over very low heat for 2-3 minutes, until the petals soften and the sugar dissolves. Let cool.

## Shake

2 to 3 scoops vanilla ice cream  
 $\frac{3}{4}$  to 1 cup milk  
Rose syrup

Combine ice cream, milk, and rose syrup in a blender and process until smooth. Add additional ice cream or milk until desired consistency is reached. Pour into glasses and top with chocolate sprinkles. Enjoy!

