**By Any Other Name**  
A Summary

**Setting** (where the story takes place): India, 1928. At the girls’ home and at a British school.

**Characters** (people who are in the story):

*Santha* (Cynthia) – The main character in the story. She tells the story (is the narrator) about herself and her sister. In this story she is only five and a half years old. Cynthia is the name she is given when she starts at the British school.

*Premila* (Pamela) – Santha’s older sister. In the story she is eight. Pamela is the name Premila is given at the British school.

*Santha’s mother* – She had been teaching the girls at home, but fell ill and the girls were sent to a British school.

*Santha’s father* – He is not really in the story. He works for the British government and in this story is away on a business trip.

*Headmistress* (rektor) – An English woman who had lived in India for many years, but still could not say any words in Hindi. She is the one who gives the girls “pretty English names.”

*Aya* – The nursemaid, a woman who takes care of the girls at home.

*Nalini (Nancy)* – Another Indian girl who is in Santha’s class. They become friends.

**Plot** (what happens in the story)

Santha and Premila have never been sent to school. Their mother has always taught them at home, for two reasons. First, Indian schools were not good enough and secondly, British schools were too British. As this story begins, the girls’ father has gone away on a long business trip and their mother has become ill. Since her health is bad, the girls will start to attend a British school.
At school the girls are given new names. Santha becomes Cynthia and Premila becomes Pamela. When Santha first meets her new class the teacher asks her about her name and she answers that she cannot remember it. Santha could not remember the name Cynthia, it did not feel like her name. All the time she is at the school she feels that “Cynthia” is someone else and not her.

While at school, the girls try to fit in. They wear dresses rather than Indian clothes, and at lunch they eat sandwiches rather than Indian food. Still there are many things that Santha does not understand about the British and how they do things, such as why they do not take a siesta during the hot part of the day, and how games are supposed to be played.

One day Premila comes into Santha’s class, asks for Santha and says they are leaving school right away. Santha does not know why, but understands that there is some sort of crisis.

At home, Premila tells her mother that they will not be going back to that school. In Premila’s class they had a test. While all of the British students were allowed to stay in their seats, the Indian students had to sit with one desk between them. The teacher said this was because “Indians cheat”. Premila was not going to stay at a school where the teachers felt the Indian students were cheats, and were not given the same respect as the British students.

The girls never returned to that school.

What the story is really about:
This story shows us what it was like to live in India while it was part of the British Empire. The British thought their way of life was best and that they were better than everyone else. The girls encounter this prejudice when they start school and their Indian names and way of life are taken away.

Themes in this story are:

- Prejudice
- Cultures
- Life in India
- The British Empire
- Identity
- Respect

Vocabulary:

- Aya – barnepike
- Headmistress – kvinnelig rektor
- Character – person i en bok, novelle, film, teaterstykke
- Setting – tid og sted for en handling
- Plot – handlingen
- Theme – tema
- Cheat – jukse
- Siesta – pause (sovepause) midt på dagen
- Prejudice – fordom(mer)