

Handout: “A Pair of Jeans”

A short story by Qaisra Sharaz

Characters:

- **Miriam** - main character, a young girl who grew up in a Pakistani society in England and adapted the western culture as well as the Pakistani culture
- **Fatima** - Miriam’s Mother, accepts Western way of living, but expects her to behave as a Muslim for her parents-in-law
- **Ayub** - Farook’s father, dominates the relationship, traditional role
- **Begum** – Farook’s mother, traditional Pakistani wife
- **Farook** - son of Ayub and Begum and Miriam's fiancé

Plot:

When Miriam comes back from a trip with her university friends, she wears her western-style clothes. She arrives at home where her future in-laws are paying a visit to discuss her wedding with their son Farook. They are shocked when they see Miriam in her jeans, and instead of discussing the details of the wedding with Miriam’s parents, they leave as soon as possible. Back at home, the in-laws discuss whether Miriam would be an appropriate wife for their son. They decide against Miriam and cancel the engagement the next day. Telling Fatima that they have to cancel the wedding because Farook is committed to a friend’s daughter makes Miriam furious and she retires to her room.

First ending:

She pulls the jeans from her wardrobe and throws them away as if they were to blame for her desperate situation.

Second ending:

She dresses in the same clothes that scandalized her future in-laws and sets out to inform her fiancé about his parents’ decision

Themes:

- clash of cultures
- role of women
- traditional values of different cultures

Quiz :

1. What happens in the first and second ending?
2. Which one do you think is the more realistic ending?
3. What is the apparent reason for the cancellation of the wedding?
4. Who tells Begum the bad news?

5. Could you think of a potential third ending?