

# The Henna Wars

## Discussion Questions

1. When Nishat discovers Flavia and Chyna are also doing henna designs for their business project, she accuses them of cultural appropriation. What is cultural appropriation and why do you think Nishat was upset about it?
2. Chaewon and Jess sell cute Korean trinkets for their business project. Chaewon says this isn't cultural appropriation. Do you agree?
3. When Nishat is outed as a lesbian at school, Priti is the only person who tries to support her. How do you think Nishat felt about this? If you were one of her friends, what might you have done differently?
4. Chyna calls selling Korean trinkets and henna 'trendy'. Nishat and her friends feel strongly that these aren't trends. Why do you think they take issue with the word 'trendy'? What implications does it have?
5. Flavia realises she may have been distancing herself from her own Afro-Brazilian culture, as she feels she has to fit in/assimilate with her father's side of the family. Can you discuss what impact this may have had on Flavia?
6. Nishat's friend Jess doesn't believe when she says Chyna is being racist and that she's appropriating her culture. Jess goes on to say Nishat is overreacting and is 'playing the race card' (pg. 160). What do you think Jess is implying and why do you think Nishat is so upset by it? If you were Jess, how would you have responded differently?
7. Identity impacts Nishat in so many ways - her sexuality, her religion, her family role (sister, daughter, etc.). Which identities impact your life the most and how so?
8. We only ever get to see Nishat's perspective; how do you think the story would have been different if we'd seen Flavia's side? Or Priti's?
9. When Nishat comes out to her parents, they tell her they understand but it becomes clear that they don't. Why do you think they said this? What are they worried about? Can you understand their point of view?
10. Nishat says practising henna makes her feel closer to Nanu, who lives far away. Do you have any family traditions that connect you? How do you maintain a relationship with family members who don't live close by?
11. Priti and Nishat have a close sibling relationship and they go through a lot over the course of the book. Priti is a big part of Nishat's support system but do you think Nishat could be more supportive of her sister?

*A gorgeous, heart-warming,  
sapphic, YA love story*

