

A stylized illustration of a woman with dark hair, smiling and looking upwards. She has intricate henna designs on her hands and forearms. Her hands are clasped together in front of her chest, forming a heart shape. She is wearing a red top. The background is a mix of teal and black with white dots, suggesting a night sky or a festive setting.

*EDUCATORS'  
GUIDE*

A MATCH MADE  
IN  
MEHENDI

## ABOUT THE BOOK



Fifteen-year-old Simran “Simi” Sangha comes from a long line of Indian *vichole* — matchmakers — with a rich history for helping parents find good matches for their grown children. When Simi accidentally sets up her cousin and a

soon-to-be lawyer, her family is thrilled that she has the “gift.”

But Simi is an *artist*, and she doesn’t want to have anything to do with relationships, helicopter parents, and family drama. That is, until she realizes this might be just the thing to improve her and her best friend Noah’s social status. Armed with her family’s ancient guide to finding love, Simi starts a matchmaking service-via an app.

But when she helps connect a wallflower of a girl with the star of the boys’ soccer team, she turns the high school hierarchy topsy-turvy, soon making herself public enemy number one.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Nandini Bajpai** is a Boston area based but internationally known author of fiction for children and young adults. She grew up in New Delhi India, immigrated to Australia as a young adult, and later moved to the Boston area where she now lives with her family, two cats, and a dog. Prior to her writing career, Nandini worked as a systems analyst in the financial industry. Nandini is an active volunteer for local organizations and animal rescue groups and serves on the board of the Boston Authors Club. She was also a bookseller with Barnes & Noble and the independent bookstore Wellesley Books. In India, her books have been published by Scholastic India, Rupa Publications and Pratham Books. She has also written (in Hindi) for *Sesame Street India*. *A Match Made in Mehendi* is her US debut. You can find her on Twitter @nandinibajpai on Instagram @nandinirb or at nandinibajpai.com

# ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This guide will push readers to look closer when reading *A Match Made in Mehendi* including examining author's craft, analyzing narrative elements, and connecting & applying aspects of the novel to life. Bajpai's novel includes complex characters, tough topics, specific word choice, STEAM components, and a well-crafted plot that allows the reader to deeply delve into the text. This teaching guide includes discussion questions and language arts activities to be used in grades 9-12 as this text is read as a whole group, small group, or a combination. This guide could also be modified to be used with a student who is reading the novel independently.

The Common Core Anchor Standards in English Language Arts and National Core Art Standards Anchors that can be addressed using the discussion questions and activities in this guide are:

## English Language Arts

- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.1**  
Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.2**  
Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.3**  
Analyze how and why individuals, events, or ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.4**  
Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.10**  
Read and comprehend complex literary texts independently and proficiently.

## Art

- **Creating:** Anchor Standard #1: Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.
- **Connecting:** Anchor Standard #10: Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to art.

# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Use these questions as reading check-ins, writing prompts, or classroom discussions throughout *A Match Made in Mehendi*.

1. Why does Noah want to make a change this year? Do you think that Noah and Simi successfully meet this goal?
2. Because of Amanda's bullying, Noah is public outed. Why is this something that is unforgivable?
3. Did Aiden's betrayal surprise you? Did you see it coming?
4. How did the author's use of texting and emails add to the story? How would it have been different if those scenes were done in traditional prose?
5. Do you view Simi's parents' expectations on her as unfair? What do you think their intentions are?
6. How does family play a role in the book? What are examples throughout the book of bonds between family, immediate and extended?
7. How did the author tie Simi's clumsiness into the plot in clever ways? How did it drive the narrative?
8. How does Mehendi play a role in the book, both figuratively and literally?
9. At the beginning of the book, the reader may make assumptions about Ethan because of his relationship with Amanda. How did Ethan prove these assumptions wrong?
10. How did the author's choice of 1st person point of view make the book more personal?
11. How did Simi's mom's behavior in the principal's office (p.263) change your point of view about her?
12. What did the author hope to show by breaking up social groups when matchmaking in the book?
13. What job do you hope to have when you grow up? Is there one that your parents or others hope you have?
14. How did the difference in generational (traditional vs. modern) values play a role in the novel? What did this contrast show the reader about both values?
15. What are some themes supported by the novel? What do you think the main theme of the entire novel was?

# CLASSROOM EXTENSIONS

Use these activities to extend your students' thinking and experience with *A Match Made in Mehendi*.

## Chapter Quotes

- Throughout the book, Nandini Bajpai included quotes from The Shagun Matchmaking Guide. While reading, have students connect the quote with the plot of *A Match Made in Mehendi*. When finished with the book, have students re-address each quote for any ah-ha moments.

Chapter	Quote	How it connects to the plot	Ah-ha moments about the quote after finishing the book.
One to Six	Ex. "Sometimes an accident is no accident, but a way to bring hearts together. Those who make such accidents happen are blessed indeed."	Ex. This quote seems to be referring to Simi's accident in the furniture store and how it changed the course of Preet's story. Also, Simi is asked to start helping out with her mother's matchmaking business working on bringing hearts together.	Ex. The last line about those who make such accidents happen being blessed is foreshadowing to Simi's aptitude at matchmaking and her creation of Matched with Noah.
Seven to Eleven			
Twelve to Fourteen			
Fifteen to Seventeen			
Eighteen to Twenty			
Twenty-One to Twenty-Four			
Twenty-Five to Twenty-Eight			
Twenty-Nine to Thirty-One			
Thirty-Two to End			

## Characters

- Many of the characters throughout *A Match Made in Mehendi* grow throughout the story truly finding their place and ability to be themselves. Have students analyze how characters changed and what the motivation was for their change.

Character	How they changed throughout the book	What was their motivation for changing	Do you believe the change is a permanent one
Simi			
Noah			
Ethan			
Amanda			
Aiden			
Mom			
Preet			
Navdeep			
Suraj			
Teá			
Kiran			

- Extension:** Have students write an essay stating which of the secondary characters they believe evolved the most in the book and use evidence from the book to support their analysis.

## Imagery

- Nandini Bajpai’s descriptive writing brings beautiful imagery to the reader throughout the book. Have students first curate examples of imagery throughout the book using a sorting graphic organizer:

Imagery				
Taste	Sight	Hearing	Touch	Smell
89 – “spicy coriander-and-mint chutney”	227 – “her face is the same shade of pink as her manicure.”	301 – call & response wedding song	163 – “letting the sun warm us up”	104 – “fresh air”
Etc.				

- After students have pulled together examples of the different senses from throughout the book, have them answer the following questions:
  - Choose 3 examples that they think most represent the author’s use of imagery. Use these examples to answer: How does the author’s use of imagery throughout the book shape the meaning and tone of the text?
  - What effect does imagery have on the book?
  - What are the author’s intentions in adding imagery to the book?

## Matched

- When Simi and Noah begin making Matched, they determine that they want their questions to truly indicate what type of person the user is. Examples of the questions they come up with are on pages 74-76. They also focused the questions on their school (page 80). Using Simi and Noah’s guidelines, have your students create their own quiz.
  - To eliminate the need for technology, have the students’ quiz’s goal to be to determine if the person taking the quiz has one trait or another. So the quiz may focus on extrovert versus introvert or scholarly versus lackadaisical, etc.
    - **Differentiation:** You can ask your students to make their quiz as intricate (with short answer questions) or simple (multiple choice) as you’d like.
  - Like Simi (page 81), have them create avatars for both sides of their quiz. The avatars should symbolize what the quiz reveals.
    - **Differentiation:** You can ask your students to add color coding like Simi did to indicate another layer of the quiz or keep it simple with two avatars.
- Fun extension: Have students take the 16personalities quiz at [16personalities.com](http://16personalities.com) to find their personality’s avatar.

## Art Signature Piece

- Simi works throughout the book to create a signature piece for her art class. The signature piece had no directions other than that it should embody the artist as art. Have students create their own signature piece. For non-art classrooms, expand the idea of signature art pieces to include many mediums (writing, movie, music, visual arts, drama, etc.) to allow students to truly show themselves in their art.
- Have them present their signature piece to the class.

## Plagiarism

- Aiden breaks Simi's trust by plagiarizing her work when he says it is his own during the signature piece presentation.
- Have students learn about plagiarism using lessons from [plagiarism.org](http://plagiarism.org) that match your grade level. Move from the lessons to a conversation synthesizing all that they've learned and how they can avoid plagiarism.
- To connect it directly to your school, discuss what the punishment for plagiarism is in your school's code of conduct and what the consequence would be.
- **Extension:** Have students get in groups or pairs to examine accusations of plagiarism in real life. The group/pair should read about the accusation, check out the original artwork and the accused plagiarized artwork, and the outcome of the accusation. They then should look at all the evidence to decide if they believe the work was plagiarized or not and prepare a presentation to share with the class showing why or why not they believe the accusation.
- Some websites with options to choose from:
  - <https://www.boredpanda.com/people-caught-copying-plagiarism-stealing-art-knockoffs>
  - <https://www.insider.com/songs-that-allegedly-stole-from-other-songs-2018-3>
  - <https://lithub.com/12-literary-plagiarism-scandals-ranked/>

This guide was created by Kellee Moye, a middle school teacher-librarian in Orlando, FL. Kellee is the author of various teaching guides for all levels; the co-author of the blog [Unleashing Readers](#); a past committee member & chair of the Schneider Family Book Award and Amelia Elizabeth Walden Award; on the 2016-2018 ALAN Board of Directors; and a member of NCTE, ALAN, and ALA. Kellee can be reached at [Kellee.Moye@gmail.com](mailto:Kellee.Moye@gmail.com).