

Discussion Questions for Bookclubs or Classrooms: Discussion starters

1. How many cultures in the world practice arranged marriages? It is possibly seventy-five percent, and this practice works very well most of the time. What would turn a happily arranged marriage into a forced marriage?
2. Do you think Ameera made the right choice? Shaukat wasn't an evil man, she said near the end, so could she have grown to love him like her Aunt Khushida loved her husband?
3. Why do you think Ameera's father acted the way he did?
4. Is love is enough in a marriage? What about family customs and the Code of Honour in Ameera's family? Are these more important than the Western view of romantic love?
5. The folktale of *Hir and Ranjha* ends tragically as do most of the love folktales in Pakistan. Why do you think this is? Why do you think Ameera's father told her those tales? Show how Ameera's story follows the pattern in Hir's story. Where does Ameera's differ?
6. Read or watch the DVD of *Romeo & Juliet*, or *Across the Barricades* by Joan Lingard. Do you think it is possible for people from different cultural/religious backgrounds to marry?
7. In Pakistan many families practice the custom of segregation where girls are not allowed to meet boys, have boys for friends, or go on dates. Do you think the mobile phone will change this custom?
8. Why do you think Ameera was different from her friend Raniya?
9. How do the titles of the three different sections relate to the text within the sections? Refer to the story of 'The Lake of Tears' in the third section. How is the 3rd part of Ameera's story similar to, or different from, the folktale?
10. Do you think the old Pakistani folktales are like cautionary tales? Do you think *Marrying Ameera* is also a cautionary tale?
11. Many of the folktales Ameera remembers have water or the Indus River featured in them. Can you comment on why water may be important in the tales, and also in *Marrying Ameera*?
12. Why do the folktales mean so much to Ameera? Find out about folktales and their effect on individuals and on cultures.
13. I enjoyed the award-winning movie, *Arranged** where Rochel, a girl from a secular Jewish background and Nasira from a Muslim background become friends as first year teachers in a high school. The girls find they have much in common and discover they both have marriages being arranged for them. This movie can show much about culture and arranged marriages and how they work. I found the performances very good; it's a beautifully crafted film and would be suitable for discussion in light of *Marrying Ameera*.

*From Arkles Entertainment.

See a few pics below



Here is a photo from Gary Hawke of the powerlines that Ameera noticed in the bazaar. No wonder she could say that Haider was like a faulty powerline, he could burst into flames at the least provocation.



Muzaffarabad was known to be a beautiful city but when we saw it after the earthquake it looked like a broken city. Rubble was still piled by the sides of roads. Huge monuments had been destroyed. There were tents everywhere.



I found this advertisement for mobile phones in a Pakistani newspaper. The Urdu writing at the top says Hum bolen mahabut ki zabaan, i.e. We speak the language of love.

I thought this advertisement amazing in a country like Pakistan and I wonder if technology such as the mobile phone will change the culture in Pakistan.