

## 'AN UNKNOWN GIRL'

### MONIZA ALVI

#### BACKGROUND

Moniza Alvi was born in Lahore, Pakistan. She has a Pakistani father and an English mother. Her father moved the family to England when she was very young, and she did not go back to Pakistan until after her first book of poems had been published. She worked for several years as a teacher in London and is now a freelance writer and tutor.



▲ Henna being used for body decoration

#### BEFORE YOU START READING

- 1 You can find out more about Moniza Alvi and her poetry from reference books or on the internet. You could read some more of her poems, such as 'Presents from my Aunts', which will help you to understand her attitudes toward her Pakistani heritage.
- 2 Think about what Moniza Alvi says about her background and its links to her poetry:

'Presents from My Aunts' ... was one of the first poems I wrote. When I wrote this poem, I hadn't actually been back to Pakistan. The girl in the poem would be me at about 13. The clothes seem to stick to her in an uncomfortable way, a bit like a kind of false skin and she thinks things aren't straightforward for her.'