EAST IS EAST

Great Britain 1999, 92 min.

German certification: minimum age 6
Recommended for 14 years and older

Language: English with German subtitles

Director         Damien O’Donnell
Script           Ayub Khan-Din
Cinematography   Brian Tufano
Editing          Michael Parker
Music            Deborah Mollison
Cast             Om Puri, Linda Bassett, Ian Aspinall, Jimi Mistry, Raji James and others

About EAST IS EAST
George Khan, a Pakistani Muslim, has lived for decades in Salford, a suburb of Manchester, with his English wife Ella, a Catholic, and their seven children. He’s determined to raise them as traditional Muslims, but his children, with the exception of one son, don’t submit quietly and see themselves as British. He disowns his eldest son after he leaves the altar at his arranged wedding and moves in with another man. The defiance of his other children and his wife is subtler. The youngest son has thus far been able to avoid circumcision, his daughter plays football, one son is the local ladies’ man, and another is secretly studying art. Anarchy erupts when George makes plans to marry off two of his next two sons.

Damien O’Donnell’s culture clash comedy takes the viewer back to 1971. The film addresses the tensions of living between two cultures with humour and irony. The affinity to the characters and their nuances makes this a convincing family story and gives the viewer some food for thought on questions of identity, integration and prejudices.

The worksheets address the following

- George Khan as a polemic figure
- The children’s rebellion against George
- The meanings of family roots and freedom
- The film title’s reference to a Rudyard Kipling poem

Publishing information

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Photo credits: Senator Home Entertainment
(All the stills are from the DVD EAST IS EAST, released in Germany by Senator Home Entertainment. They serve as image quotations, to enable study of the film’s content, and not as illustrations.)
George Khan – A Profile
Compile a short profile of George Khan, the head of the family. Consider the following aspects:

- What is his attitude to his family
- What is his relationship to his second wife Ella
- What meaning does his native country have for him
- What does tradition mean for him
- What prejudices does he hold (against white Britons, Indians, gay people)
- How does he contradict himself
- When does he cross boundaries

Discuss together with the class: Is George Khan likeable or unlikeable? Do you understand his actions and wishes?

Life between Two Cultures
The film opens with images from a Catholic procession. Here are two stills from the first scenes of the film:

What conflict is humorously portrayed here?
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__________________________________________________________________________________________

What techniques are used to make these images so amusing?
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__________________________________________________________________________________________

What tone is set in the opening scene?
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__________________________________________________________________________________________

Discuss together: What is Ella’s role in the family?
Name three examples that show how George’s children reject his rules and customs in their behaviour. Also explain why their father doesn’t agree with this behaviour.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Children’s behaviour</th>
<th>Rebel against their father because ...</th>
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**Freedom**

Choose one of the following characters.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Irony</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sajid, the youngest with the parka</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meenah, the football player</td>
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<tr>
<td>Saleem, the artist</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tariq, the playboy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maneer, the religious one</td>
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<td>Abdul, the silent one</td>
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<td>Nazir, the gay hat retailer</td>
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Compose a short text from the perspective of your chosen character. The text should express how you feel about your father, how you come to terms with your Pakistani roots, and what freedom means to you.

**Racism and Prejudices**

EAST IS EAST incorporates a number of self-ironic racist statements and prejudices into the plot.

Give four examples of such prejudices and name the character that expresses the statement. Describe how the statement is ironic.

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<thead>
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The film’s title: EAST IS EAST

Oh, East is East and West is West, and never the twain shall meet,
Till Earth and Sky stand presently at God's great Judgment Seat;
But there is neither East nor West, Border, nor Breed, nor Birth,
When two strong men stand face to face, though they come from the ends of the earth!

From the poem “The Ballad of East and West” (1889)
By Rudyard Kipling

Give an interpretation of this excerpt with regard to the film.

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__________________________________________________________________________________________

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Which lines in the poem refer to the film? What development does the film no longer consider?

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In your opinion, how appropriate is Kipling’s quote for the film’s title?

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