

Write a paper of no more than 500 words in which you discuss one or more possible themes in Hanif Kureishi's "My Son the Fanatic". Make sure to refer to or quote from the story itself to support your observations.

Note: Do *not* write summaries; your reader has read the story.

Upload your paper as a Word doc.

Themes in "My Son the Fanatic"

"*My Son the Fanatic*" is a short story written by Hanif Kureishi. The main conflict in the story is Ali and how he has changed his way of life, which makes his father, Parvez very confused and frustrated. We also get to know one of Parvez's friends; Bettina who is a prostitute. The story explores and questions the themes about **religion**, **family** (especially the relationship between father and son) and **change**.

We can see in the restaurant scene how their differences is crashing. Parvez cannot help himself with the drinks, which makes them question important topics like "is it legal to drink alcohol?", "what is the meaning of life?", "is there a life after death? And do you have to live this life a certain way to get there?" That is why "**religion**" is an important theme here. The fact that Ali has decided to follow the rules of Islam makes him think less of his father for "living his life wrong" according to the Koran. Parvez thinks Ali is making a mistake because he had such good potential in school and sports.

The collision between Parvez and Ali are setting their relationship on a thin line. Everybody can change somehow and sometimes it is hard to accept or deal with it. The themes "**change**" and "**family**" are in this story, plotted where Parvez is having a hard time to deal with Ali's change in beliefs and what he thinks is all right. He does not know how to connect with his son again. He tries but fails. Ali is in the spotlight as a cold-hearted and cruel person from the reader's perspective. We notice his cruelty especially in the taxi scene where he asks Bettina: "who are you to ask me these questions?" He disrespects her because she is a prostitute, which is a sin according to his religion. After this event, Parvez loses his temper. He has now given up on his son, which makes him want to kick him out of the house and even kick him over.

Overall, we can see that there are big problems between the characters Parvez and Ali. They believe in life in two different ways, which seems wrong for one another. At the end of the story Parvez has had enough and starts to beat his son. Ali is still not afraid of him and he does not react worse than saying, "who is the fanatic now?" They have not found a solution for the questions within the themes, but since it is an open ending; we have to find an answer to them for ourselves.