

# Reading for Meaning

**Welcome, story supporter!**

**We hope that you and your child  
have fun with this story.**

**Nurturing and supporting  
your child is important for  
their physical, emotional and  
academic development.**

**ZERO  
DROP/OUT**

Part of the Zero Dropout campaign working towards  
halving the rate of school dropout by 2030.

A woman wearing a red hijab and a dark long-sleeved shirt is cooking in a kitchen. She is focused on her task, looking down at a black frying pan on a stove. She is using a white cutting board and a knife to transfer food into the pan. The background is slightly blurred, showing a kitchen setting with a window and some kitchen equipment.

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# Meet Shumeez

# Meet Shumeez

A Mitchell's Plain model set for Vegas



*ABOVE: Shumeez Scott, makes breakfast for the family at home in Mitchells Plain.*

Nineteen-year-old Shumeez Scott from Cape Town is no ordinary teenager. She is an international model who has Down syndrome.

This is a condition that she was born with, so she faces special mental and physical challenges. But her family is her greatest support.

It is morning in the kitchen of her family home in Mitchells Plain, and Shumeez is making breakfast. She dumps a mountain of garlic in the frying pan. “Shumeez! That is too much garlic! Are you trying to kill me?” shouts her sister Zhuqeelah. They both chuckle as she scoops out some of the garlic.

Each morning, Shumeez makes breakfast – eggs with mushrooms and (a lot) of garlic, or, if she’s feeling lazy, porridge.

But Shumeez is no lazy teenager. She has won two beauty pageants and a lifetime contract as a model.

But she never thought she would model professionally. Her career started unexpectedly when she was watching her sister Zhuqeelah during her hijab photoshoot. The photographer

saw Shumeez sitting there and asked to take photos of her, so Zhuqeelah dressed her up with makeup and clothes. They were both surprised at how natural she was in front of the camera.

A few days later, the photographer called Shumeez's mother, Bahia Janodien, asking if she could submit the photos to a beauty competition. Shumeez won the competition and the title of National Miss Down Syndrome Ribbons4Roses South Africa 2017.

The next year, she won another beauty contest in India. Then a year later, she won again in Gambia.

"I love the camera," says Shumeez. "But the first time I modelled on the ramp, I was like 'where's my mother? Where's my sister?' I was so nervous."

After her success in India, her mother asked Shumeez what her dream was; she said she wanted to be a supermodel and open her own

hand massage business.

“I’d never realised that Shumeez has needs of her own,” says her mother. “Always being there to protect her, not realising that she can be independent, and she has dreams like my other two children have. She was saying: ‘I want to live a dream. I have a dream as well, so why can I not live my dream?’”

Her mother decided to start the Shumeez Scott Foundation to empower people with Down syndrome. At the launch of the Foundation, Shumeez was given a lifetime contract with a Modelling Academy.

“I see her changing the perception of beauty in South Africa and we want to be a part of that,” said Bianca Edwards, the Academy Director. “She has the potential to be the new face of beauty. She is a model for those with disabilities, saying ‘we are beautiful and I’m going to show the world who we are.’”

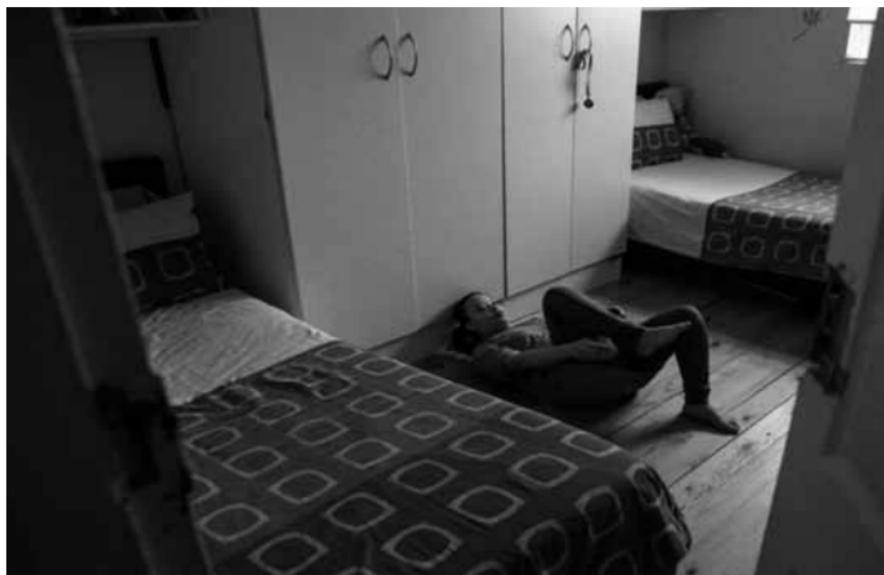
Shumeez also helps other youth with special needs. She promoted a group of young men and women for a contest in Las Vegas in 2020. (Sadly that trip was cancelled because of the Covid-19 virus pandemic.)

### Life with Down syndrome

Before she was born, Shumeez's condition was not picked up on the ultrasound. After the doctors did tests, they told Shumeez's mom that her baby had been born with Down syndrome.

Her mother says that at first she asked herself, "Why me?" Then she accepted that her daughter was different. "I saw it as a blessing coming my way. She was special to everyone. As she grew up, we tried to raise her normally. She must not think that just because her face looks a little different, it makes her different. It's what's inside that makes the person," says Janodien.

At five years old, another child with Down syndrome bit Shumeez's nose at the Red Cross



ABOVE: *Shumeez Scott working out in her bedroom at home.*

Children's hospital. The doctors had to pull the child off her. She has a scar across her nose.

Then, at 11 years old, Shumeez was on the school bus during a national taxi strike when a brick went through the window and hit her in the face. She had two operations on her face and one on her eye. Her eyelid is often partly closed or fluttering because of the injury.

Each day Shumeez does 30 minutes of physical exercises. On Thursdays she has modelling classes and a few times a month she goes with members of the foundation to give people hand massages. If she isn't doing that, she's watching Hannah Montana or listening to Justin Bieber. She loves to cook, play golf, watch Netflix, and talk to her friends from India.

Shumeez said people have started to recognise her. She giggles. "It makes me nervous," she says.

*Adapted from articles featured in GroundUp and Plainsman  
Photographs by Ashraf Hendricks*

**EXTEND THE STORY...**

# Charades



**GAMES**

## **WHAT TO USE**

*Blank paper, pencil or pen*

## **WHAT TO DO**

- Ask your child to write down 8 verbs from the story, each on a separate piece of paper. If you have more people to play with at home, ask them to play the charades game.
- Now one person will have the words and will show the word in action without saying it out loud and the other person has to guess

what the words is. For example, if you pick out the word “**scared**” you must act like you’re scared and the other person/s you are playing with must guess what you are doing and say it out loud.

- You can add more words, it doesn’t have to be words that are in the story.

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