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Words Under The Words: Selected Poems (A Far Corner Book)



Synopsis

Words Under the Words gathers into a single volume the finest poems by one of the most exciting, accessible poets in America today. This long-awaited collection draws from Naomi Shihab Nye's three critically acclaimed books: *Different Ways to Pray*, *Yellow Glove*, and National Poetry Series winner, *Hugging the Jukebox*.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Naomi Shihab Nye is Palestinian-American and currently lives in Texas. *Words Under the Words* is a collection of works from three earlier books: *Different Ways to Pray*, *Hugging the Jukebox*, and *Yellow Glove*. In this collection, her poetry celebrates the interconnectedness of the human spirit and the ordinary world. A stranger's eyes, once met, become the eyes of a fellow (*Eye-to-Eye*, p. 11); a serving woman's lined face tells a story of great worth (*The Indian in the Kitchen*, p.4); and images of Guatemala eulogize the passing of indigenous culture in service to the industrial world (*Getting Through the Day*, p. 69). Nye's poetry is informed by her sense of place: *Kindness* (p.42) could have been written nowhere but from Colombia. Before you learn the solemnity of kindness, she writes, you must see a dead person lying roadside. "You must see how this could be you/how he, too, was someone/who journeyed through the night with plans/and the simple breath that kept him alive." Many of the poems in this book have been written from different Central and South American countries-others in the Middle East, in the United States-there is even a poem about being lost in Kansas. In an interview with Rachel Berenblat, Nye said she has written poems from

childhood. "I liked the portable, comfortable shape of poems," she said. "I liked the way they took you to a deeper, quieter place, almost immediately." It is no surprise, then, that these poems are accessible and harmonious, written in the language of empathy and compassion.

Ms. Nye brings together so many elements of her life, one is sure to strike a chord with everyone who reads this book. Her words, while descriptive, never fail to invoke more than just their surface meaning. I find it best to read each poem three times, right in a row. The first to absorb the flavor and place, the second to garner the depths and colors that are only implied, and third to bring its meaning home, to own the poem as if it were my own words. Her beautiful style is simple and clear, yet embroidered with care for meaning and love for language. I highly recommend this book to poetry lovers others who enjoy pictures made with words.

I have always felt that I couldn't "understand" poetry, but these poems spoke to me. I came across this book by accident, but once I started reading it, I couldn't part with it. I felt compelled to buy a copy. The beauty of Ms. Nye's poetry lies in its unpretentious yet eloquent simplicity. The poems are full of everyday events, people, emotions - yet express such profound ideas. They are full of humanity, good-will, and self-discovery. This is a book that would appeal to even the most "unliterary" person.

The Words Under the Words is certainly one of my favorite books of poetry. Nye writes with a warmth and gentleness that is calming, thought-provoking, and increasingly rare in today's poetry. She seems to have an amazingly accurate and poignant understanding of human emotions and presents these so softly and beautifully that it's hard not to fall in love with the stories that grow from these poems. One of the few books of poetry I've read cover to cover that's maintained a sense of freshness and wonder throughout. It held my interest like a hand. I can't imagine anyone not liking this book. A great read.

I was told about this book by a friend at an Artist Retreat. I had the opportunity to read a few poems by Naomi especially "Happiness". I was bowled away by the beauty and honesty of her work. I had to have a copy and ordered one as soon as I got to a computer. It was only later that I found out it was a collection of her best work. I am always finding new poets I like and it's always hard to decide which volume of their work to purchase. Volumes like this make it easy. A poet's best work is always a good choice. This comes with my highest recommendation.

Initially I was attracted to this book because of the photo on the cover, and took it out from the library on a whim. Finding her poetry to be rich, savory, and memorable, I am now always watching for more of her work! Two of my favorites in this volume are "Kindness" and "Happiness." I think you'll enjoy them as well!

If you love William Stafford's poetry - you will find Naomi Nye amazing. She is phenomenal in person. Her poems are a slice of life reflecting her Palestinian heritage, growing up in the midwest. Her focus: the connections we share with one another and to all other living things. Some poems are easy reads; others are obscure, requiring much introspection. I couldn't put her book down and will revisit each poem again over a warm cup of coffee on a cold winter's day.

Naomi is a superb poet and citizen of the world. Her words are at once graceful and authentic. She describes powerful complexities of culture and values in engaging and accessible metaphors. Very, very highly recommended.

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