



# Naomi Shihab Nye

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*Anyone who feels poetry is an alien or ominous force should consider the style in which human beings think. ‘How do you think?’ I ask my students. ‘Do you think in complete, elaborate sentences? In fully developed paragraphs with careful footnotes? Or in flashes and bursts of images, snatches of lines leaping one to the next, descriptive fragments, sensory details?’ We think in poetry. But some people pretend poetry is far away.*

— ALAN Review Web site

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## Quick Facts

- \* Born in 1952
- \* Arab-American poet, essayist, and children’s book author
- \* Her first published work was *Different Ways to Pray*

## Biography

Naomi Shihab Nye was born on March 12, 1952, in St. Louis, Missouri to an American mother and a Palestinian father. At the age of seven, she published her first poem, and at age 14, her family moved to Jerusalem, where she attended a year of high school. Her family then moved to San Antonio, Texas, where she lives today with her husband and son. In her writing, she draws on the voices of the Mexican-Americans that live near her, as well as the perspectives of Arab-Americans like herself and the ideas and practices of the different local subcultures of America.

Nye has gained a reputation for poetry that shows ordinary events, people and objects from a new perspective. She says, “For me the primary source of poetry has always been local life, random characters met on the streets, our own ancestry sifting down to us through small essential daily tasks” (*Contemporary Authors*).

This page was researched and submitted by: Mindy S. Howie on 4/9/99.



# Naomi Shihab Nye

## Biography continued

After getting her B.A. from Trinity University in 1974, Naomi Shihab Nye began her career as a freelance writer, editor, and speaker. She has earned numerous awards for her writing, including four Pushcart Prizes, the Jane Addams Children's Book award, the Paterson Poetry Prize, and many notable book and best book citations from the American Library Association.

In her first collection of poetry, *Different Ways to Pray*, Nye explores the shared experiences and differences between cultures. She continues this focus in her second collection, *Hugging the Jukebox*, writing about the ordinary and the perspectives of people in other lands. Nye creates poetry from everyday scenes, celebrating the similarities between us all, as well as our diversity.

Nye's third collection of poetry, *Yellow Glove*, reflects a new, more mature perspective, influenced by the continuing unrest in the Middle East and the amounts of tragedy and sorrow found there. Still, she maintains an undertone of hope, realizing that facing sorrow and adversity only makes us stronger.

Besides her collections of poetry, Nye has also written children's books, music and poetry recordings, and translations of poetry. In addition, she has written a book of essays, called *Never in a Hurry*, and edited several poetry anthologies, including *This Same Sky: A Collection of Poems from around the World*, which contains some of the translated work of 129 poets from 68 different countries. In 1997, Nye published her first young adult novel, entitled *Habibi*, which is the autobiographical story of an Arab-American teenager who moves to Jerusalem during the 1970s.



# Naomi Shihab Nye

## Selected Bibliography

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