



# Nejma

*Nayyirah Waheed*

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**Nejma** Nayyirah Waheed

all

of the

unsleeping. gold sweeping. poems.

i have in my hands.

## Nejma Details

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Author : Nayyirah Waheed

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# From Reader Review Nejma for online ebook

## Whitney Atkinson says

Gorgeous. I always say I hate short, sentence-like poetry, but this is injected full of meaning and empowerment and I can't recommend it enough.

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## gingerbread says

That was so beautifully written at some points but so lame and repetitive at others. I'm confused about this book. I think I liked it but not enough.

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## Tudor Vlad says

**“the truth is  
you were born for you.  
you were wanted by you.  
you came for you.  
you are here for you.  
your existence is yours.  
yes.”**

---

## Anya says

Let me just say it, I fucking ADORE Nayyirah Waheed. If that woman were to publish a shopping list, I'm certain I'd read it because her words reek of tenderness and grief and anger and ache and longing and love and hurt and pain and joy and life and everything that is beautiful and hideous in this world.

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## Yamna Rashid says

**i sang a god alive for you**

*every poem. here.*

*is an unwrite.*

*of all that has been written in me without. permission.*

Once again, posting a book review with Dear Old Koko Kohli  
'Sup, matie?

And of course, credits of the book recommendation go to Ms Koko XD

I LOVE POETRY. I LOVE POETRY. I. FREAKING. LOVE. POETRY.

Just wanted to put it out there that I absolutely, completely, inherently, charismatically, willfully, unconditionally *adore* good poetry. It has probably become one of my most favorite genres (which I think is a bit of a paradox and bit funny since my other favorite genres are murder and dark-fiction) and who else to thank but dear Nayyirah Waheed, one of the greatest poets the walk this unworthy soil and one with possibly the most haunting yet intriguing minds of all time.

Till the day I take my last breath, I shall recount Nayyirah's beautiful, beautiful words and pray they nourish my soul just a bit more.

And how can they not nourish when they hold such words?

*the sun cleanses itself.*  
*i cleanse myself.*  
*for both of us.*  
*it is morning.*  
— *wud?*

Or

*when words take off their clothes. for me.*  
*so i can write. them*  
*exactly. as they are.*  
— *skin*

Or

*drop a name in the water.*  
*drop a name in the water.*  
*and a name in the water.*  
*drop another name in the water.*  
*and another.*  
*and another.*  
*and another.*  
*and another.*  
*and another.*  
*and another.*  
*and another.*  
*and another.*  
*and another.*  
*and another.*  
*until*  
*there are no more bodies in your body.*  
— *the rivering*

In all sense, this book is a continuation of *Salt*, an equally beloved book. Each piece of poetry weaves into the other one, the emerging pattern one that presents a sight to behold, and I call that Nayirrah's ability to portray magic through words.

*there is prayer in poem.  
when i am writing  
i am praying.  
all the prayers that are too soft.  
too young.  
too old.  
to say.*

And if anyone is skeptic of her power, I'd say take a look at the book through the eyes of a lost adult, and through her poems, you'll find yourself a bit less lost in the world.

*sometimes  
i smell my parents  
on my words.  
and i weep.*

And just when you think the woman's capabilities are limited to a prowess in words, Nayirrah surprises you with bold connotations subtly hidden in her words

*and so. we are here. brown babies. worshipping. feeding. the glutton that is white literature. even after it dies.  
— the hot wash  
(years later. the conclusion:  
Shakespeare is relative.  
white literature is relative.  
that we are force fed the meat of  
an animal  
that our bodies will not recognize. as inherent nutrition.  
is not relative.  
is inert.)*

Or

*there is a small bee in my writing.  
it is a small gift. from the ancestors.  
to keep my work pure.  
— bee*

To be very honest, I could keep on quoting every single piece from her book just to show you how much of an impact she has had on me and how much of an *impressive* influence she could have on adults and teens alike.

I'd like to end this review by saying that I hope bright stars with the ocean's worth of light in them like Nayirrah never, ever *ever* stop writing. The world would continue to portray the chance of redeeming itself

just then

*'as you are.'* says the universe.  
*'after...'* you answer.  
*'as you are.'* says the universe.  
*'before...'* you answer.  
*'as you are.'* says the universe.  
*'when...'* you answer.  
*'as you are.'* says the universe.  
*'how...'* you answer.  
*'as you are.'* says the universe.  
*'why...'* you answer.  
*'because*  
*you are happening now.*  
*right now.*  
*right at this moment*  
*and*  
*your happening*  
*is beautiful.*  
*the thing that both keeps me alive*  
*and*  
*brings me to my knees.*  
*you don't even know how breathtaking you*  
*are.*  
*as you are.'* says the universe through tears.  
— *as you are / you are the prayer*

And

*we*  
*return to each*  
*other*  
*in waves.*  
*this is how water*  
*loves.*

*there is a god in writing.*  
*a soft. roaring. unconditional. home of a god.*  
*who prays to me.*

**Book soundtrack: Petal by Bibio**

this whole book is weeping.  
and  
every pore of this book is joy.  
and  
that is the feast.

Till next time.

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### **Shatha says**

"the whole book is weeping.  
and  
every pore of this book is joy.  
and  
that is the feast."

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### **Ammara Abid says**

*"this whole book is weeping.  
and  
every pore of this book is joy.  
and  
that is the feast. "*

Painstakingly-beautiful. I really love Nayyirah Waheed's writing style, she persuasively describes the throes of life, colour & race discrimination & the whole story in few stanzas.

I like this one too but her previous book 'salt' had a stronger impact on me.

Few of my favorite lines are:

*"a poem can eat a person  
whole.  
for years. "*

*"melanin is memory.  
future memory.  
past memory.  
your memory.  
the memory of life. all.  
in your skin.  
— melanin"*

*"a friend. is someone who supports your breath".*

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### **Sarah says**

Stunningly painful, dazzlingly bitter, angst-ridden at times, and soul touching collection.

I liked this one as well, but *Salt*. hit me harder.

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## Manisha says

*(what is the necessity of a black child being this high off of whiteness.)*

*and so. we are here. brown babies. worshipping. feeding. the glutton that is white literature. even after it dies.*

I really loved reading these poems. It is definitely meant for people of colour, since on some level, we could all understand what Waheed is trying to communicate. They focused a lot on identity. On being who you are no matter what others say who you are.

*i am mine.  
before i am ever anyone else's.*

I especially loved the letters to Nelson Mandela. They were gut-wrenching and raw.

Personally, I wasn't a fan of the poems about poems. I found them too on the nose, but that's just my subjective opinion. After all...

*there is no healthier drug than creativity.*

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## Anish Kohli says

“i am writing this book.  
i am writing a daughter”

This is another BR with **THE** most ~~crazy and weird~~ awesome Sillyheaded lady. And no, by BR, I do not mean buddy read. I mean this is a **Buddy Review!!** We read the book months apart but we're posting our reviews together. Let's do this, yo!!

This book! This damn book! This damn author! I love her! I have no words to explain just how beautifully she writes and how she reaches deep inside and just changes and makes you feel something, a thing you didn't even know was there to begin with! All I can say and think about is, what a beautiful and haunted place must the author's mind be, to have such thoughts! What a beautiful soul she must be, to have written such things!

While reading this book, I was discussing it with a colleague who also reads and writes poetry. I told them how racism is a strong topic in this. And they said to me and I quote: “Oh come on, racism is a thing of the past. Things don't work like that anymore.”

I bring this up bcz if your thoughts chime in with that statement, you might not want to read this book bcz if racism was a strong topic in *Salt*, here it is even stronger, to a point that one who doesn't agree might take



offence. So steer clear of this, if you don't believe in the concept.

“my blackness came to save you. came to help you escape. the clutches of racism. of having that beast anywhere inside you. around you. next to you. your comfort. intimacy. proximity. with my blackness confirms. and affirms. your nonracism. your lack of hate. it is this heady trip. this painful awesome tryst. that brings you. flushed and moon eyed. to my door with thank yous. and i love yous. you have taught me to be a better person. you have changed my life. but this was never a relationship. i have no idea who you are. and i laugh incredulous and insulted. at the notion that my blackness could ever be your first love. that my blackness is your freedom. that my blackness is yours.  
—fetish”

After reading Salt, I had *REALLY* high expectations from Nejma! Unfortunately, those were not met. Not even by a long shot. That's mostly bcz Salt was much better-rounded and it was more of a complete package in terms of variety and topics touched by the author. This one is not as impressive in that context but on the whole, this is something beyond the words or reviews of mere mortals like me.

Often I have seen hurt people cursing the ones who brought them pain and tears. I've done that too. Even recently, I had a friend breakdown and curse people they couldn't, wouldn't, ever want to be in harm's way and I was left wondering if we pay for such an act. It may not be true what the author said here in this context but I hope it is true bcz it's something that brings me peace.

“the prayers where we do not wish others well. for all the brilliant. fetid. noxious. reasons. the prayers we want to wash from the sky. as soon as they leave our imagination. the ones born with no bones. so they leave no trace. the harmful prayers. we pray. because we have been harmed. we are forgiven those too.”

I cannot say how glad I am that I picked these books from Nayyirah Waheed on impulse. I absolutely love the books and I absolutely love her! And this book is just so damn beautiful and sad at the same time! I wish it never ended! And I know for a fact that I will be re-reading both her books soon and I will probably find even more depth than I did the first time around.

“this whole book is weeping. And every pore of this book is joy. and that is the feast.”

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## **Desirée Venn Frederic says**

"drop a name in the water.  
drop a name in the water.  
and a name in the water.  
drop another name in the water.  
and another.  
and another.  
and another.  
and another.  
and another.  
and another.  
and another.

and another.  
and another.  
and another.  
and another.  
until  
there are no more bodies in your body."

-the rivering, nayyirah waheed | from 'nejma'

nayyirah waheed is a messenger. nejma is her scroll. her words electric, jolting the Spirit to see it's self anew. in nejma, waheed reveals herself to be a rebel- unafraid of exploring the fullness of life, the dichotomy of being. the complexities of color and the forgetfulness of the colonized tongue. ever mindful of the state this world, nejma features a fitting homage to Baba Mandela and in one of the most memorable pieces, waheed symbolically 'leaves a light on' for each of our missing sisters missing in Nigeria.

i value her presence in the literary world. intentional. searing. provoking. honest. she says for us what our skin screams into the atmosphere. unheard but felt. unseen but seen. i digested nejma in bits. treating it like a delicacy. consuming it with care. with care. appetizing. nourishing. alive.

it is my recommendation that you permit yourself the pleasure of reading nayyirah waheed's nejma. she will captivate you and give to you the words your Spirit yearns to whisper into your ears. into your cells. start with 'emotional porn (the black image industry)'. weep. question. challenge. and give thanks.

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## ellie says

2.5. I loved a lot of them but there were just too many weird one line statements that I scrolled through in like one minute. And maybe some of them were meant to evoke thought for hours, but sentences like :

*"you were three years of water."*

Or

*"there is oil in the water."*

Really ruined the collection for me. I guess I just missed the mark. The two stars are for the two poems I really, really loved:

*whenever i think about  
my mother and father. and the amount of  
cruelty  
i have ate at their  
hands.  
i remember that  
i am the best of them.  
and  
i  
am*

*at peace.*  
*— redeem*

*islam. is still in my life.*  
*we are old soulmates.*  
*who could not work out the knots against skin.*  
*who could not believe in each other. while believing in ourselves.*  
*who could not make each other happy. without.*  
*making each other a sadness.*  
*who*  
*were born to each other. and never fell in love.*  
*but*  
*we still sip tea.*  
*share our hands.*  
*touch hearts.*  
*every now and then.*

I am not a Muslim, but I was born and raised a Hindu, so I can substitute Hinduism there and it completely understands how I feel about it. That was beautiful.

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## **Noura says**

I wanted to love this, because Salt blew me away when I first read it, but sadly I didn't. It was an enjoyable read with some of the most quotable lines I've ever read but still I felt like there was something missing this time around. Like she was just going through the motions.

I don't know what else to say because that's what I got from the book.

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## **Allie Mullin says**

Nayyirah Waheed is brilliant, as always. Before I recommend this book, I would like to point out that her work is intended for POC (people of color). She has been subjected to quite a bit of appropriation lately, and whitewashing her words to fit a broader context is unacceptable. She is okay with non-POCs reading and appreciating, but please do your research on white privilege and appropriation before picking up this very important book.

These are Waheed's own words on the subject:

"appreciate. from afar. from behind the boundary. it is that simple. people of colors' cultures. realities. lives. histories. are sacred. and rife with boundaries. as all sacred things are. decentralize and simply appreciate. the assertion that i do not want non POC engaging with my work is false. engagement is fine. it is the defining of what engagement means. which becomes the issue. what i do not want is non POC appropriating my work. my culture. my experiences. my heritage. my people. and i will not allow salt. or nejma. or for any of my work. to be whitewashed. exploited. exoticized. or to become an educational manual on who we are. these are my boundaries. if anyone is unclear. i wrote salt. and nejma. i write. for the health. the breath. the bone. and the flower. of people of color.

and so i simply assert that my work be appreciated and respected and honored as someone else's truth. when you engage a POC work. the first thought should be about what it means to that POC. what it might mean to their communities. their cultures. their histories. that should be processed. first. the work in the context of themselves and their world. then. and only then. can your next thoughts be informed properly. then. and only then. when your being. comes into the interplay. from behind the boundary of this person first. and you second. can your perspective be honest. and aligned correctly. decentralizing. involves removing yourself from the center. and appreciating someone else's reality. someone else's art. as it is. for what it is. leaving alone what you can not touch. or access. and not engaging for what it can give you. what you can take from it. how you can alter it to serve you. but engaging as an honoring and appreciating. of accepting it. for exactly what it is. exactly as it is. exactly who it is. "

That being said, I am a WOC and find profound healing in her work. She speaks to a part of me that has been quiet (silenced) for a long time.

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### **Riley says**

I love Salt. by Nayyirah Waheed so I was excited for this collection as well. But it didn't pack the same punch as Salt. There were a few lines that I loved, mainly being the famous

**"I am mine before I am ever anyone else's."**

but other than those few I didn't love anything else. I would say you can skip this and just read Salt

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