



## **Voices in the Air: Poems for Listeners**

*Naomi Shihab Nye*

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## **Voices in the Air: Poems for Listeners** Naomi Shihab Nye

Acclaimed and award-winning poet, teacher, and National Book Award finalist Naomi Shihab Nye's uncommon and unforgettable voice offers readers peace, humor, inspiration, and solace. This volume of almost one hundred original poems is a stunning and engaging tribute to the diverse voices past and present that comfort us, compel us, lead us, and give us hope.

*Voices in the Air* is a collection of almost one hundred original poems written by the award-winning poet Naomi Shihab Nye in honor of the artists, writers, poets, historical figures, ordinary people, and diverse luminaries from past and present who have inspired her. Full of words of encouragement, solace, and hope, this collection offers a message of peace and empathy.

*Voices in the Air* celebrates the inspirational people who strengthen and motivate us to create, to open our hearts, and to live rewarding and graceful lives. With short informational bios about the influential figures behind each poem, and a transcendent introduction by the poet, this is a collection to cherish, read again and again, and share with others. *Includes an index.*

## **Voices in the Air: Poems for Listeners Details**

Date : Published February 13th 2018 by Greenwillow Books

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Author : Naomi Shihab Nye

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## From Reader Review Voices in the Air: Poems for Listeners for online ebook

### Michelle says

One thing I love about Naomi Shihab Nye's poetry collections is that her introductions are as nourishing as the poetry itself. In Voices, she talks about the need to listen better—how to reclaim a quiet, slower pace in our lives in order to become more receptive.

"Reminding ourselves of what we love feels helpful. Walking outside—it's as quiet as it ever was. The birds still communicate without any help from us. In that deep quietude, doesn't the air, and the memory, feel more full of voices? If we slow down and intentionally practice listening, calming our own clatter, maybe we hear those voices better. They live on in us." —NSN

The 95 poems that follow are organized into three sections: Messages, Voices in the Air, and More Worlds. While I've read several of her collections, Voices in the Air: Poems for Listeners is special to me. Judging by reviews, I'm not the only one who feels that way. I love the range of poems included—the breadth of tone, style, and subject matter—but perhaps most of all, I strongly connect with the book's purpose—

"[to] honor the artists, writers, poets, historical figures, ordinary people, and diverse luminaries from past and present who have inspired her. Full of words of encouragement, solace, and hope, this collection offers a message of peace and empathy." —NSN

This is a book that celebrates inspiration, yes; but for me, Voices in the Air also is also a book of love poems. Not the romantic sort, but poems that honor the deep connection and heartfelt respect for the subjects of these poems. Sometimes grateful, other times searching, Nye's poems are, at all times, mindful conversations with people, places, and events that have accompanied her on her journey thus far. You'll also find biographical notes at the back of the book for each person referenced, as well as recommendations for where you might turn for further exploration.

As I read through these poems again and again, I find myself connecting with Voices on a profoundly personal level. I discovered sources of inspiration that she and I have in common, as well as stories and relationships that echo my own. Listening for the wisdom of these voices, Nye asks questions, seeks understanding, uncovers beauty, comes to terms, and, through her poems, we, too, are strengthened and motivated to open our hearts and live more connected and fulfilling lives.

"The poem is not a closed experience, it remains open. It invites you in, hopefully." —NSN

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### Dianna Rostad says

A beautiful collection of poems!

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## **Briana says**

The book is about many different stories combined together. It gives you a variety of culture and living along with in depth details about the characters along with their feeling.

I would say my favorite thing about this story is how in depth they go with all the characters feeling. I enjoyed reading this book because I felt like the feelings and stories were realistic and very intriguing. The most enjoyable part for me was when they talked about peace and loving the world. Another thing I enjoyed was that they kept the short stories with similar topics together and how they created a picture in your mind about what was happening just by using their words.

Although I did enjoy parts of the book I was not a huge fan of it. The stories were too short and it seemed as if the book left almost all the short stories on cliffhangers which I do not like. It also seemed like they moved on to quick with certain topics and it did not really make any sense.

Although I enjoyed how the poet used a lot of feelings and true stories to give the readers an enjoyable time I was not a huge fan of the book but I would recommend this book to people who like to read many different stories at once that have similar themes and to people who enjoy reading books that express a lot of feelings.

I would rate this book a two out of five because of the fact I did not find it very enjoyable.

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## **Jeanie Phillips says**

Loved this collection of poems by a favorite poet! There are many many favorites in these pages and I can envision using them with students in a variety of ways. And the final version promises illustrations I've not even seen yet... can't wait to own a hard back copy.

Some of the poems are love poems to beloved poets: Walt Whitman, Langston Hughes, Mary Oliver, Lucille Clifton and so many more. My absolute favorite of these is about visiting John O'Donahue's home shortly after his death.

Some of the poems express gratitude to writers and artists: John Steinbeck, Mark Twain, Joni Mitchell and many others. My absolute favorite: an ode to Vera B. Williams, author of the masterful picture book *A Chair for My Mother*.

And then there are poems to activists and ordinary humans like me, illuminating our experiences beautifully. Here is the one I plan to learn by heart:

### Next Time Ask More Questions

Before leaning into something, remember  
the span of time is long and gracious.  
No one perches dangerously on any cliff  
till you reply. Is there a pouch of rain  
desperately thirsty people wait to drink from

if you say yes or no? I don't think so.  
Never embrace "crucial" or "urgent" - maybe for them?  
Those are not your words.  
Hold your horses and your mania and your  
Hong Kong dollar coins in your pocket.  
I'm not a corner or a critical turning page.  
Wait. I'll think about it.  
This pressure you share is a fantasy, a misplaced hinge.  
Maybe I'm already where I need to be.

The poems about refugees and victims of violence broke my heart wide open. And those about doing what can be done in these troubling times were a balm. I will return to this collection often.

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### **Ashley says**

I want to memorize the introduction and recite it to everyone I know.

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### **Elizabeth Wallace says**

Powerful read.

I was unaware of the issues related to Palestine and the author gently, yet powerfully, provides insights and stories which are powerful and captivating.

I am sold on this poet!

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### **Mary-Stuart Murray says**

What a lovely book of poetry. Naomi really writes with feeling, and I love how so many of her poems are dedicated to those whom she loves or admires. Sometimes her phrases and words would make my heart glow and goosebumps rise on my arms. She really has a way with words. I wish I could hear her read her poems a loud.

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### **Ron says**

Have always loved Naomi Shihab Nye after discovering her at a reading at the Art Institute in Chicago. This new collection really blew me away - fresh, robust, thought provoking. This is one I will be revisiting over time. She touches on themes of our current culture without ramming them down your throat. Her poems about central figures from her interests in music, literature, and religion are downright inspiring, and will prompt you to learn more about those you might not be familiar with.

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## Tricia says

From the poem Small Basket of Happiness: “It would never call your name./But it would be waiting somewhere close,/perhaps under a crushed leaf/turned from pale green to gold/with no fanfare... You would slow down a minute./ You would bend.” Like happiness itself, Nye’s poems steal up on us and take us by surprise. This collection, especially, encourages listening: to nature, to other voices, and to the whispers of our own hearts. Without ever being heavy-handed, the poems urge readers to turn away from life’s endless distractions and attend to the timeless. “A peony has been trying to get through to you”. Brimming with affection, wit and steadfast optimism, these are poems we truly need right now.

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## Jacque says

Shihab Nye’s one and two liners of pocket wisdom are everywhere in this book. I’m new to reading books of poetry cover to cover and am still developing an appreciation for them. Like sips of complex wine, each poem needs time to develop on the palate and reveal themselves to you. I learned to reread and reread and pause and reflect then reread again in a way I haven’t practiced since college. These poems are of invisible and lost things, things that have moved past and moved on. They’re about stopping and seeing and listening to those things with love, curiosity, and an open heart.

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## Robyn says

I had high expectations for this collection.

First Line:

Poet Galway Kinnell said, “To me, poetry is someone standing up, so to speak, and saying, with as little concealment as possible, what it is for him or her to be on earth at this moment, p.xi.

There are voices all around us, and in this collection, poet Naomi Shihab Nye, invites readers to pause, take a breathe, and listen.

**What Dazzled:** Poetry can be challenging to read, otherwise more people would be reading it, right? It would be flying off the shelves like a Nora Roberts mass market paperback. We wouldn’t have to dedicate an entire month to it, right? What I love so much about Nye’s poetry is she’s not trying to trick you or conceal anything. Usually Nye’s poems are about objects, issues, or moments like the joy of having “A Lonely Cup of Coffee” p. 121. One of my favorite poems by Nye (not included in this collection) is “A Valentine for Ernest Mann”

Poems hide. In the bottoms of our shoes, they are sleeping. They are the shadows drifting across our ceilings the moment before we wake up. What we have to do is live a way that lets us find them.

**What Fizzled:** According to Kirkus review, the target audience for *Voices in the Air* is ages 13-17. I just don’t see that. Nye’s poems are laced with childhood nostalgia that a 13-17 year probably isn’t craving yet.

Some poems taste almost bitter and cynical, which are fine flavors, but not typically ones teens are eager to swallow. It wasn't until my twenties that I developed a palate for coffee that wasn't chocolate milk in disguise.

The poems in *Voices in the Air* take work to unravel. If a teen reader doesn't know anything about Nye, then they'll miss the extra layer in the poem title "For Aziz", Nye's father. Many other poems refer to other poets and artists and if the reader doesn't look in the included biography or do a quick search on the internet the meaning can be lost and confusing. I have to know, was this really intended for teens?

**Jots and Thoughts:** This collection is divided into three sections: Moments, Voices in the Air, and More Worlds.

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### **The Reading Countess says**

Naomi Shihab Nye is a local poetry phenom. She's a national treasure who speaks her truth in a plethora of books. She's my "I Wanna Be HER When/If I Grow Up" model. Her poem, 'Famous' is ripe with personification, metaphor, and repetition and is a hallmark piece when teaching poetry.

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So when I spotted a book I hadn't read by her on the shelves of a bookstore, I immediately snatched it up and read it cover-to-cover. In the store. Sorry, @barnesandnoble

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This book is a must-read. VOICES IN THE AIR is unique in that most of the poems are dedicated toward people, both alive and otherwise. Some are politically charged, some are odes to the beauty and grandeur of West Texas.

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"Little Brother Shot Playing With Pistol" reminded me of @jasonreynolds83 poem just added to poets.org only today, and it got me thinking...What if, after kids have consumed timely articles on current events ala #kellygallagher, they wrote their OWN poem that reflected a current event in our world? What would a student have to say about the world he/she is soon to inherit? How powerful might the voices of the next generation be, and are we willing and able to actively listen to their lense? Hmm...  
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### **RH Walters says**

Technically I didn't finish this before it was due back at the library but it's already put permanent grooves in my brain that the needle of my consciousness will skip back to. Such as:

Recently when I had the honor of visiting Yokohama International School in Japan to conduct poetry workshops, student Juna Hewitt taught me an important word -- Yutori -- "life-space." She listed various interpretations for its meaning -- arriving early, so you don't have to rush. Giving yourself room to make a mistake. Starting a diet, but not beating yourself up if you eat a cookie after you started it. Giving yourself the possibility of succeeding. (Several boys in another class defined the word as when the cord for your phone is long enough to reach the wall socket.) Juna said she felt that reading and writing poetry gives us more yutori -- a place to stand back to contemplate what we are living and experiencing. More spaciousness in being, more room in which to listen.

And the title poem of the collection:  
People do not pass away.  
They die  
and then they stay.

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### **Pam says**

If you like poetry, you can't go wrong with anything by Naomi Shihab Nye.

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### **Rachel Strolle says**

File under: I'm trying to be a poetry person, but I think novels in verse are as close as I can get

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