



# Naomi Shihab Nye

## 2013 NSK Neustadt Laureate and NSK Children's Prize Award Winner

Lesson plans for teaching the writing of poetry to secondary school students

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## **Introduction**

These lessons include writing ideas based on poetry by Naomi Shihab Nye Poetry using *19 Varieties of Gazelle* and other poems (available online); the lesson plans crafted guide students to create their own pieces based on her work. We created these lessons in honor of Naomi receiving the NSK Neustadt Award for Children's Literature. Students from Colorado and Oklahoma will follow these lessons and be recognized for creative writing based on Naomi Shihab Nye's works.

Students are required to write the following problems:

- 1) Portrait
- 2) Found
- 3) List
- 4) Choice: Famous For *or* Remembered For
- 5) True Somebody *or* Headlines
- 6) CHOICE: Childhood Experience *or* What you inherit from your parents
- 7) You as inanimate object using the poem "Sifter"

Teaching how to write poetry is about encouraging students to write with vivid detail, create big images, communicate things in a not-so-obvious way, and to develop (or find) their voice as writers. After students write and present their pieces to their peers, a list of finalists will be nominated by the students. The teachers and/or department members will then nominate one poem written by a student. That student will have the opportunity to travel to the University of Oklahoma for the Neustadt Award Banquet and festivities, at which he or she will be recognized for their work and have the opportunity to spend time with Naomi Shihab Nye.

### **Student Award Criteria**

Neustadt NSK Award for Children's Literature -  
Student Selection Criteria, 2013

Step 1 - after hearing and/or reading the poems of their peers, the CA 9th grade students nominate one poem using criteria will be provided. Accompanying each nomination will be an articulation written by the student nominating the poem. The criteria will help with writing the articulation of why he/she nominated the poem.

Step 2 - 9th grade English teachers will read the nominations, and identify the top 10 - 20 nominations.

Step 3 - members of the English department and faculty, excluding the two 9th grade English teachers, will receive the 10-20 poems along with only one of the student articulations. The faculty members will also be given a criteria to vote on one finalist. These faculty members will be asked to articulate why they selected the poem they did as the finalist based on the criteria.

Step 4 - the 9th grade English teachers will collect all of the selections and articulations. Then, the winner will be announced. The winner will travel to the University of Oklahoma for the NSK Neustadt Prize for Children's Literature award ceremony to meet Naomi Shihab Nye, to participate in a workshop, and to receive public recognition for the poem he or she wrote.

**Lesson # 1 - PORTRAIT/Photograph Poems** (assigned second; 3rd poem due):

“Words under Words”, “My father and The Fig Tree”, or possibly others. Credit for this lesson plan goes to PBS link: <http://www.pbs.org/now/classroom/poet.html>

1. Using Naomi Shihab Nye's poems as models, students write their own original poetry about a family member. Students bring in a photograph and share photographs and family stories in small groups.
2. They have them "web" ideas about the person who will be the subject of the poem: physical appearance, clothing, setting, likes and dislikes, significant memories. Remind them that a poem will *show not tell*, and that imagery is the key to this.
3. Have students write first drafts, then have peers read to make suggestions and ask questions.
4. Possible extension: Final copies could be submitted on a small poster with the subject's photo displayed for a class "family" album.

**Helpful guidelines and models for writing poetry based on photographs of family members:**

**Techniques/ Ideas for writing poem based on a photograph (or two!) -**

- Who is the narrator/speaker?
- What is the narrator/speaker's relationship to the subject of the poem?
- What tone will you use- angry, rueful, objective (just says what happens), warm?
- What is the “guesswork” the before and after the poem? (emotions suggested by pictures, thoughts of characters)
- How will you begin the poem? (Will you be speaking to an audience? “My wicked Wicked Ways” Will you be in a setting and finding the photo? “Photograph of My Father” or will you be describing from the outset what is in the picture “The Car in the Picture”)
- What meaning will your title have?
- How will you use sensory detail?
- Will your last line have impact, a twist?
- How will you use setting? Multiple settings? (“Mementos, I”)
- How will you handle time? (“Fifth Grade Autobiography”?)
- Will speaker/narrator be in poem?
- Will the subject matter of your poem be emotionally intense?
- Will you use direct address?
- Will you use dialogue?
- Will you use questions?
- Will you use historical/social background?
- Will your poem say a lot about you or nothing about you?
- What point of view will you use? (Compare the use of the first person point of view in “Mementos, I” with the point of view in “Daguerreotype.”)
- How will you use similes, metaphors, personification, alliteration, and sound devices, repetition?
- What language /style will you use? Will you create a persona? (Compare “Wicked Wicked Ways” with “Mementos, I”)
- What tense /tenses will you use and why? present, past, mixture

## **Student Models -**

### **Mystery Man by Poone Shoureshi**

Shuffling through oceans of paper, envelopes, and stamps,  
there it was.

A picture of three men,  
two of whom I didn't know,  
but the middle one was hard to miss.  
It stuck out like a fish out of water,  
the picture of him, the picture of my father.

He stood there, leaning on two chairs,  
smiling about something

-a date

-a joke

-pure excitement

Must have been the era of disco balls,  
the Bee Gees, and gold medallions;  
judging by the suit he was wearing.

A mustache and combed back hair.

He was James Cagney in Smart Money,  
and Clark Gable in Gone with the Wind.

Where was he?

Was he in his house?

Perhaps, but it didn't matter.

All I could focus on were the shutters in the background;  
the shutters that put a cloak over the rest of the world  
so that this moment was the only thing that mattered.

I put the picture back,  
and I walked away.

Questions lay in my mind,  
but some things are better left untold.

### **Horizon by Kelly Wehrle**

Father and daughter look so intently  
at the entire world laid out on a map. Its creases reflect the sun like a mountain ridge,  
and the paper is soft and sunscreen-scummified, like  
the napkin cast into the backseat

At the mercy of the violent white Californian sun.

The day is at standstill, watching the figures in the car—

Both are bedraggled, anxious, sweat drips down her curling hair and

His too-small khaki hat flails to shield the stickiness.

They are fugitives on the sly, running from the law,

Deciding where they should run to and wondering

If this car will lead them there,  
Looking for the location of the horizon  
and when will they reach it. And  
after the car passes it by,

(just another truck stop offering a two-for-one  
special on soggy apple pie)  
Will they just fall off the edge of the earth?  
Only to land next to the napkin in the backseat,  
Doomed to look over the shoulders of more  
Travelers, who sit, sweating  
on the new leather seats,  
in the convertible, (plastered with those  
disturbing warning stickers about death  
or serious injury that may occur)  
Looking over the map.

**Photograph of My Father in His Twenty-Second Year by Raymond Carver**

October. Here in this dank, unfamiliar kitchen  
I study my father's embarrassed young man's face.  
Sheepish grin, he holds in one hand a string  
of spiny yellow perch, in the other  
a bottle of Carlsbad Beer.

In jeans and denim shirt, he leans  
against the front fender of a 1934 Ford.  
He would like to pose bluff and hearty for his posterity,  
Wear his old hat cocked over his ear.  
All his life my father wanted to be bold.

But the eyes give him away, and the hands  
that limply offer the string of dead perch  
and the bottle of beer. Father, I love you,  
yet how can I say thank you, I who can't hold my liquor either,  
and don't even know the places to fish?

## **Lesson #2** - Found Poems based on what some people say (assigned first, 4<sup>th</sup> poem due)

### 1. Brainstorm situations:

- a) Family dinner table conversations
- b) Conversations overheard at school
- c) Politicians conversations
- d) What teachers say
- e) Siblings
- f) Boyfriend/girlfriend
- g) Starbucks and places you might overhear conversations (multiple conversations)
- h) In the mall
- i) At a game (parents, parents, players, coaches)

### 2. Watch Naomi's video reading of "One Boy Told Me" Found Poem Assignment: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=biJ3FP8aDjY> or <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/poetryeverywhere/nye.html>

### 3. By selecting words and phrases directly from the situation(s) and juxtaposing them in their own way (using words from the other articles we have read) students find words that catch attention and use them to assemble a poem. Their "writing" should have a focus and work towards creating a specific impression. However, within this framework, students should really play with the words.

### 4. Crossing Out: Cross out words until only the most important thoughts and images remain. Think about your choices. Why do those words matter to the message of the text? Transcribe your chosen words onto a piece of paper, deciding on appropriate line breaks and punctuation.

### 5. **"Found" poems** are essentially built from bits of broken text. The poems are original poems; their themes and their orderings are invented, but the sentences are not. Words can be dropped but not added. In the course of composing such poems, the author's intentions are usually the first to "go." A nineteenth century Russian memoir of hunting and natural history yields a poem about love and death. A book of nineteenth century oceanographic data yields a poem about seeing. This is editing at its extreme: writing without composing.

1. Choose strong, vivid and important words, phrases, and ideas.
2. Think about the big ideas presented in the article.
3. Choose words and phrases that will help you capture an impression, reaction to, perspective on, or summary of the article.
4. Break the sentences/ideas/phrases into poetic lines, arranging words and phrases in the most meaningful and surprising way.
5. Beneath your title, Found Poem, write in parentheses "words from", then the title of the article, and publication date, example: Found Poem (words from Time Magazine, "The Child Solider," December 10, 2001)

## **Sample Found Poems -**

### **"Coming Home, Again" Prose Selections from Chang-rae Lee's**

From that day, my mother prepared a certain meal to welcome me home. It was always the same. Even as I rode the school's shuttle bus from Exeter



to Logan airport, I could already see the exact arrangement of my mother's table. I knew that we would eat in the kitchen, the table brimming with plates. There was the kalbi, of course, broiled or grilled depending on the season. Leaf lettuce, to wrap the meat with. Bowls of garlicky clam broth with miso and tofu and fresh spinach. Shavings of cod dusted in flour and then dipped in egg wash and fried. Glass noodles with onions and shiitake. Scallion-and-hot-pepper pancakes. Chilled steamed shrimp. Seasoned salads of bean sprouts, spinach, and white radish. Crispy squares of seaweed. Steamed rice with barley and red beans. Homemade kimchi. It was all there-the old flavors I knew, the beautiful salt, the sweet, the excellent taste. (p. 5)

I wish I had paid more attention. After her death, when my father and I were the only ones left in the house, drifting through the rooms like ghosts, I sometimes tried to make that meal for him. Though it was too much for two, I made each dish anyway, taking as much care as I could. But nothing turned out quite right-not the color, not the smell. At the table, neither of us said much of anything. And we had to eat the food for days.

### **Found Poem Based on the Prose Selection**

My mother prepared  
A certain meal  
To welcome me home.  
We would eat in the kitchen  
Table brimming  
Kalbi, leaf lettuce to wrap the meat  
Garlicky clam broth with miso and tofu and fresh spinach  
Shavings of cod  
Scallion and pepper pancakes  
Chilled steamed shrimp  
Steamed rice.  
The old flavors I knew  
Beautiful, salt, sweet, excellent.  
I wish I had paid more attention.

### **Assessment/Guidelines for the Found Poem:**

**Relationship to Topic** - The entire poem is related to the topic. The \_\_\_\_\_ presented in the poem stands out.

**Use of Details** - The poem uses effective details from the original prose passage that go beyond the obvious or predictable.

**Logical Progression or Sequence** - The poem is presented in a logical sequence.

**Clear, Consistent Tone** - The poem maintains a consistent tone that clearly and effectively communicates the writer's attitude toward the subject.

**Lesson #3** - List poem "Daily" "Prayer in My Boot" "Observer"

Daily

These shriveled seeds we plant,  
corn kernel, dried bean,  
poke into loosened soil,  
cover over with measured fingertips  
These T-shirts we fold into  
perfect white squares  
These tortillas we slice and fry to crisp strips  
This rich egg scrambled in a gray clay bowl  
This bed whose covers I straighten  
smoothing edges till blue quilt fits brown blanket  
and nothing hangs out  
This envelope I address  
so the name balances like a cloud  
in the center of sky  
This page I type and retype  
This table I dust till the scarred wood shines  
This bundle of clothes I wash and hang and wash again  
like flags we share, a country so close  
no one needs to name it  
The days are nouns: touch them  
The hands are churches that worship the world

Prayer in my Boot by Naomi Shihab Nye

For the wind no one expected

For the boy who does not know the answer  
For the graceful handle I found in a field  
attached to nothing  
pray it is universally applicable  
For our tracks which disappear  
the moment we leave them  
For the face peering through the cafe window  
as we sip our soup  
For cheerful American classrooms sparkling  
with crisp colored alphabets  
happy cat posters  
the cage of the guinea pig  
the dog with division flying out of his tail  
and the classrooms of our cousins

on the other side of the earth  
how solemn they are  
how gray or green or plain  
how there is nothing dangling  
nothing striped or polka-dotted or cheery  
no self-portraits or visions of cupids  
and in these rooms the students raise their hands  
and learn the stories of the world  
For library books in alphabetical order  
and family businesses that failed  
and the house with the boarded windows  
and the gap in the middle of a sentence  
and the envelope we keep mailing ourselves  
For every hopeful morning given and given  
and every future rough edge  
and every afternoon  
turning over in its sleep

Observer by Naomi Shihab Nye

I watch how other things travel  
to get an idea how I might move.  
A cloud sweeps by silently,  
gathering other clouds.  
A doodlebug curls in his effort to get there.  
A horse snorts before stepping forward.  
A caterpillar inches across the kitchen floor.  
When I carry him outside on a leaf,  
I imagine someone doing that to me.  
Would I scream?  
In the heart of the day  
nothing moves.  
No one is going anywhere  
or coming back.  
The blue glass on the table  
lets light pass through.  
Something shines  
but nothing moves.  
I watch that too.

**Lesson #4** - Choice of “Famous For” *or* “Remembered By” What do you want to be famous for or, What is a True Story...

The poet says that she would like to be famous for shuffling men and sticky children. To whom would you like to be famous? For what are you famous?

### Famous

The river is famous to the fish.

The loud voice is famous to silence,  
which knew it would inherit the earth  
before anybody said so.

The cat sleeping on the fence is famous to the birds  
watching him from the birdhouse.

The tear is famous, briefly, to the cheek.

The idea you carry close to your bosom  
is famous to your bosom.

The boot is famous to the earth,  
more famous than the dress shoe,  
which is famous only to floors.

The bent photograph is famous to the one who carries it  
and not at all famous to the one who is pictured.

I want to be famous to shuffling men  
who smile while crossing streets,  
sticky children in grocery lines,  
famous as the one who smiled back.

I want to be famous in the way a pulley is famous,  
or a buttonhole, not because it did anything spectacular,  
but because it never forgot what it could do.

### “Remembered” (What would you want to be remembered by?)

He wanted to be remembered so he gave people things  
they would remember him by. A large trunk, handmade of  
ash and cedar. A tool box with initials shaped of scraps.  
A tea kettle that would sing every morning,  
antique glass jars to fill with crackers, noodles, beans.  
A whole family of jams he made himself from the figs and berries  
that purpled his land.

He gave these things unexpectedly. You went to see him  
and came home loaded. You said “Thank you” till your lips

grew heavy with gratitude and swelled shut.  
Walking with him across the acres of piney forest,  
you noticed the way he talked to everything, a puddle, a stump,  
the same way he talked to you.  
“I declare you do look purty sittin’ there in that field  
reflectin’ the light like some kind of mirror, you know what?”  
As if objects could listen.  
As if earth had a memory too.

At night we propped our feet by the fireplace  
and laughed and showed photographs and the fire remembered  
all the crackling music it knew. The night remembered  
how to be dark and the forest remembered how to be mysterious  
and in bed, the quilts remembered how to tuck up under our chins.  
Sleeping in that house was like falling down a deep well,  
rocking in a bucket all night long.

In the mornings we’d stagger away from an unforgettable breakfast  
of biscuits—he’d lead us into the next room  
ready to show us something or curl another story into our ear.  
He scrawled the episodes out in elaborate longhand  
and gave them to a farmer’s wife to type.  
Stories about a little boy and a grandfather,  
chickens and prayer tents, butter beans and lightning.  
He was the little boy.  
Some days his brain could travel backwards easier than it could  
sit in a chair, right there.

When we left he’d say “Don’t forget me! You won’t forget me now,  
will you?” as if our remembering could lengthen his life.  
I wanted to assure him, there will always be a cabin in our blood  
only you live in. But the need of remembrance silenced me,  
a ringing rising up out of the soil’s centuries, the ones  
who plowed this land, whose names we do not know.

**Lesson #5** - Choice: True... *or* Headlines Poems: A True (American, Student, Teacher, Daughter, Sibling, Soccer Player, Friend, Parent, Listener, Artist, Musician, Actor) Use "Blood"

Model - True...

"A true Arab knows how to catch a fly in his hands,"  
my father would say. And he'd prove it,  
cupping the buzzer instantly  
while the host with the swatter stared.

In the spring our palms peeled like snakes.  
True Arabs believed watermelon could heal fifty ways.  
I changed these to fit the occasion.

Years before, a girl knocked,  
wanted to see the Arab.  
I said we didn't have one.  
After that, my father told me who he was,  
"Shihab"—"shooting star"—  
a good name, borrowed from the sky.  
Once I said, "When we die, we give it back?"  
He said that's what a true Arab would say.

Today the headlines clot in my blood.  
A little Palestinian dangles a toy truck on the front page.  
Homeless fig, this tragedy with a terrible root  
is too big for us. What flag can we wave?  
I wave the flag of stone and seed,  
table mat stitched in blue.

I call my father, we talk around the news.  
It is too much for him,  
neither of his two languages can reach it.  
I drive into the country to find sheep, cows,  
to plead with the air:  
Who calls anyone *civilized*?  
Where can the crying heart graze?  
What does a true Arab do now?

Model Headline poem

Headlines: Holy Land Experiences Biggest Snowfall in 50 Years (Betsey is getting poem)

**Lesson # 6** - CHOICE: “Childhood Experience” *or* “What did You inherit from Your Parents”

**Student Models - Childhood experience: something a parent said or advice**

“Making a Fist”

For the first time, on the road north of Tampico,  
I felt the life sliding out of me,  
a drum in the desert, harder and harder to hear.  
I was seven, I lay in the car  
watching palm trees swirl a sickening pattern past the glass.  
My stomach was a melon split wide inside my skin.

"How do you know if you are going to die?"  
I begged my mother.  
We had been traveling for days.  
With strange confidence she answered,  
"When you can no longer make a fist."

Years later I smile to think of that journey,  
the borders we must cross separately,  
stamped with our unanswerable woes.  
I who did not die, who am still living,  
still lying in the backseat behind all my questions,  
clenching and opening one small hand.

“Boy and Egg”

Every few minutes, he wants  
to march the trail of flattened rye grass  
back to the house of muttering  
hens. He too could make  
a bed in hay. Yesterday the egg so fresh  
it felt hot in his hand and he pressed it  
to his ear while the other children  
laughed and ran with a ball, leaving him,  
so little yet, too forgetful in games,  
ready to cry if the ball brushed him,  
riveted to the secret of birds  
caught up inside his fist,  
not ready to give it over  
to the refrigerator  
or the rest of the day.

**Student Models - What you inherit from your parents -  
“Genetics”**

From my father I inherited the ability  
to stand in a field and stare.

Look, look at that gray dot by the fence.  
It's his donkey. My father doesn't have  
a deep interest in donkeys, more a figurative one.  
To know it's out there nuzzling the ground.

That's how I feel about my life.  
I like to skirt the edges. There it is in the field.  
Feeding itself.

\*

From my mother, an obsession about the stove  
and correct spelling. The red stove, old as I am, must be  
polished at all times. You don't know this about me.  
I do it when you're not home.

The Magic Chef gleams in his tipped hat.  
Oven shoots to 500 when you set it low.  
Then fluctuates. Like a personality.

Thanks to my mother I now have an oven thermometer  
but must open the oven door to check it.  
Even when a cake's in there. Isn't that supposed to be  
disaster for a cake?

My mother does crosswords, which I will never do.  
But a word spelled wrongly anywhere  
prickles my skin. Return to beginning  
with pencil, black ink.  
Cross you at the “a.” Rearrange.  
We had family discussions  
about a preference for the British *grey*.

In the spelling bee I tripped on *reveille*,  
a bugle call, a signal at dawn.  
I have risen early  
ever since.



**Lesson #7** - Write a poem or a paragraph about you as inanimate object using “Sifter” (extended metaphor, **possible** categories: carpentry, artists tools, biology lab implements, kitchen, sports equipment)

When our English teacher gave  
our first writing invitation of the year,  
*Become a kitchen implement*  
*in 2 descriptive paragraphs,*  
I did not think butcher knife or frying pan,  
I thought immediately  
of soft flour showering through the little holes  
of the sifter and the sifter’s pleasing circular  
swishing sound, and wrote it down.

Rhoda became a teaspoon,  
Roberto a funnel,  
Jim a muffin tin  
and Forrest a soup pot.  
We read our paragraphs out loud.  
Abby was a blender. Everyone laughed  
and acted giddy but the more we thought about it,  
*we were all everything, in the whole kitchen,*  
drawers and drainers,  
singing teapot and grapefruit spoon  
with serrated edges, we were all the  
empty cup, the tray.

*This, said our teacher, is the beauty of metaphor.*  
*It opens doors.*

What I could not know then  
was how being a sifter  
would help me all year long.  
When bad days came  
I would close my eyes and feel them passing  
through the tiny holes.  
When good days came  
I would try to contain them gently  
the way flour remains  
in the sifter until you turn the handle.  
*Time, time.* I was a sweet sifter in time  
and no one ever knew.

### Extensions or other activities

- Two **Prose pieces**: An Act of Kindness: Kindness or Advice; Yellow Glove Could do advice poem with orders and imperative poems
- Simple Object Poem: Take a simple object and write a story about it. Supple Chord The Traveling Onion small vases from Hebron OR many hats odd collections
- Symbol/Sign Poem: "Eye Test"

### **Eye Test**

*By Naomi Shihab Nye*

The D is desperate.  
The B wants to take a vacation,  
live on a billboard, be broad and brave.  
The E is mad at the R for upstaging him.  
The little c wants to be a big C if possible,  
and the P pauses long between thoughts.

How much better to be a story, story.  
Can you read me?

We have to live on this white board  
together like a neighborhood.  
We would rather be the tail of a cloud,  
one letter becoming another,  
or lost in a boy's pocket  
shapeless as lint,  
the same boy who squints to read us  
believing we convey a secret message.

*Be his friend.*

We are so tired of meaning nothing.

- Dear Poet: A Letter from Luisa Banchoff to Naomi Shihab Nye (credit for this activity goes to: poets. org)

Friday, February 15, 2013

Dear Ms. Shihab Nye,

My name is Luisa Banchoff. I am one of five inaugural National Student Poets and am representing the Southeast region of the United States. As someone who is constantly looking for

new ways to connect with others through writing, I want to thank you for opening your mailbox to my letter and the letters of many other young poets and writers across the country.

I had the opportunity to read several of your poems, including "Famous" and "Shoulders." For me, these two poems capture the essence of what I try to create in my own poetry—a focus on both an individual struggle and a wider collage of images that encompass a variety of subjects (something I really enjoyed in "Famous). I felt a profound connection to the images, especially in the last stanzas of the poem—as if I've known the "shuffling men / who smile while crossing streets" all my life. I was wondering whether or not the images in your poetry come from your own experience—did you witness them in your own life or did they spring out of other ideas or sources of inspiration? Personally, I find it difficult to incorporate elements of my own life into my writing. Do you ever find yourself surprised by how much or how little of your own life is reflected in your poetry?

I am curious to know your thoughts on the role of poetry in today's society. I cannot help but think there is a decline of public interest in poetry today. Most people I talk to tell me they do not read poetry because it requires a great deal of time and effort to understand; they tell me they are not "a poetry person." Yet I truly believe the power of our craft lies in its ability to reach all people by making the very emotions that make us human relatable, oftentimes in surprising and provocative ways. How do you respond to people who do not seem open to the idea of reading poetry? I would love to hear your thoughts on this, since I hope to be in the business for years to come!

Once again, thank you for welcoming my letter and taking the time to read my questions. The sense of encouragement that comes with reaching out to other writers usually leads me to writing another poem, so on behalf of that yet-to-be-written poem and the many others that young writers will pen this April, thank you for giving me this exciting opportunity.

Sincerely,  
Luisa Banchoff

March 25, 2013

Dear Luisa Banchoff,

Congratulations on representing the southeastern region of the U.S. as inaugural student poet! Thanks for your very good letter. I really loved how you closed it, saying "the sense of encouragement that comes with reaching out to other writers usually leads me to writing another poem..." you've tapped a real truth here! I always feel that one act of writing leads to others, positive contagion—so, may that sense of abundance stay with you! Also, *reading* poems you love often leads to more desire to write—

You asked, referring to my poem "Famous," whether the images come from my own life—yes. They do. They always have. But imagining *other* lives is also a part of my life, so—they might or might not be literally in front of *me*. Or ever have been.

You asked about incorporating them—regular note-taking is the best habit many of us find, for this. Scribbling phrases + details—on a *regular* basis — not requiring they be spectacular—very helpful.

You realize, over + over again, how rich you are. I have done this all my life—kept little notebooks. You also asked about the role of poetry in today's society—of course, we poets feel it is HUGE—to humanize us all—keep our minds alive, alert, attuned—help us imagine others' experiences + understand our own—for people who say they have "no time" (very popular excuse in the world), we might suggest that reading a poem takes less time than reading a novel or watching a TV show.

It may sometimes be helpful to suggest they have not yet read enough poems to find the poems THEY LOVE—which could befriend them all their lives.

Poems are also so helpful for slowing us down, reminding us to focus on individual phrases and images—crucial for current sensibilities!

It's so nice to "meet" you—  
Cheers + Thanks!  
Naomi Shihab Nye

- Nye's core message as a poet and as a human being: All of humanity is worthy of respect, deserving of consideration, and in need of kindness.
- Very important essay about creative writing: <http://www.twc.org/resources/lessons/poetry-as-a-part-of-real-life/>
- Her poetry and prose, which places special emphasis on the nuances of the “ordinary,”
- Naomi video [http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/entertainment/jan-june12/poetnye\\_04-12.html](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/entertainment/jan-june12/poetnye_04-12.html)  
new
- <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/art/blog/2012/04/tuesday-on-the-newshour-naomi-shihab-nye.html>
- Students read poetry by Naomi Shihab Nye. They define stereotypes, view and discuss a video interview with Nye, present an oral reading of her poem (watch and listen to her)