



I'll Ask You Three Times, Are You OK?: Tales of Driving and Being Driven

Naomi Shihab Nye

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"I am a poet," I said. "It is my destiny to do strange things."

My father gripped the wheel of his car. "I am the chauffeur for foolishness."

We said no more.

Foolhardy missions. Life-altering conversations. Gifts—given and received. Loss. Getting lost. Wisdom delivered before dawn and deep into the night. Love and kissing (not necessarily in that order). Laughter. Rides on the edge. Roses. Ghosts.

As a traveling poet and visiting teacher, Naomi Shihab Nye has spent a considerable amount of time in cars, both driving and being driven. Her observations, stories, encounters, and escapades—and the kernels of truth she gathers from them—are laugh-out-loud funny, deeply moving, and unforgettable. Buckle up.

I'll Ask You Three Times, Are You OK?: Tales of Driving and Being Driven Details

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Author : Naomi Shihab Nye

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Memoir



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Julie says

There are some people that are energized and recharged by travel. They talk to people, they're interested in people - this is a book for those people (who have been homebound a little too long). A joy, a delight, prose from a poet and it set my heart to soar.

Barbara says

This is a wonderful little book of short essays/stories drawn from the author's experiences of "driving & being driven"—from conversations with taxi drivers to the random woman who gets in her car at the drugstore. I love Nye's poetry, and from reading articles she's written & hearing interviews with her, I just love the way she is. She has a wonderful curiosity about people, and a way of connecting with others that comes across beautifully here.

Kris Dersch says

Every bit as delightful as its title. I love this author, and her stories about life on the road are well worth the read.

Rebecca says

Reading this collection of essays and vignettes made me want to travel, see more of NYC, ride in more cabs, and see the world more like Naomi Shihab Nye. I have innumerable favorite quotes, but they would not translate here without their context. I think that is because the author is a poet. Every word is there for a reason and is connected to the words around it. The first lines draw you in; the last lines are perfect and unexpected and make you say "ohhhhh." The last lines are the main reasons to read this book.

Favorite pieces: "Fabric Thrown Over the City," about the New York taxi driver who loves how each day is "exquisitely singular"; "Monsters," about the Scottish cabbie who believes in monsters but not that poets are everywhere; and "Gifts," about the Lebanese driver who cries when Naomi tells him that his favorite Bedouin storyteller is performing right in NYC that night.

I'm adding a quote after all:

"There's hardly any traffic. The streets are ripe with that pre-buzz emptiness, pre-crowd, pre-everything. The streets feel like childhood, like our lives before things happen. There's so much that belongs to no one and to all of us, and mornings are rich enough to remember this."

Elizabeth Andrew says

I'm not sure how to categorize I'LL ASK YOU THREE TIMES because I've never read a book like it. Which makes me extra glad the publisher took it on; so few are willing to take risks like this. Shihab Nye's slender volume is a quirky collection of narratives, most of which are encounters with taxi drivers on her travels, all of which take place in or around cars. Even though most of the stories are from her adulthood, I suspect they're aimed at teens--they're mostly fun, although a few push the edge of emotion and risk-taking but in a wonderfully safe way. I'm always game to inhabit Shihab Nye's warm sensibility.

Beth says

I first heard Nye read her poems on Prairie Home Companion some years ago. I thought she was terrific and meant to go out and find her books...and didn't. This one was recommended to me, and while it's not her poetry but instead a kind of book of essays (really, lots of stories), it's highly entertaining. I'm not sure exactly why it's being marketed as YA. I think my teenage niece, just learning to drive, might enjoy it, but it is still strongly an adult voice, that is, a little nostalgic for youth, with a grown-up view of the world. That could certainly work for some teen readers, of course, but it's a bit unusual for that genre in my experience. Nonetheless, a great read.

Joan Anderson says

Mildly entertaining look at both national and international travel mainly in cabs by a poet. Nye sees things differently from the average American traveler and is able to connect with almost every cab driver she meets.

Susan says

This book made me so happy. Each story had humor and pathos and longing and humor...did I say humor?

I want to stand on a street corner all day and just tell people to read this book.

Toni Moore says

This is a slight, but entertaining, book by noted poet Naomi Shihab Nye. It's a series of vignettes about her many travels by taxi in cities throughout the world and the adventures she had on these taxi rides. Most entries are just two or three pages (in big type) long. I read the entire book in a couple of hours. At one point, I almost stopped reading it because it was so superficial. But then the short stories started to draw me in. Many of the taxi drivers Nye meets are real characters. Often they are very insightful; sometimes she discovers that she and the taxi driver have an interest in common, like the one in New Jersey who often drives celebrities around but is in awe of Bruce Springsteen because of his music and because he's a down-home kind of guy. Somehow the cumulative effect of these vignettes comes together at the end of the book. I'm glad I read it.

Barry Bridges says

Our family has this weird thing about accidentally having meaningful conversations in cars. Then to my surprise I discover another San Antonio resident who has life-altering, deeply meaningful conversations in cars. A pleasurable and thought-provoking collection of car experiences well worth the ride along.

Jmp says

Lively collection of essays of being on the road -- driving, taxis, people met, trips taken. Some joyful. All thoughtful & touching. Yay

Rachel says

I'm not sure what I was expecting from this book, but it wasn't terrible, but not my favorite either. I love how Nye talks about the many different places she's travelled, and it made me want to see more of the world and learn more about the people we have brief contacts with, but other than that, it was okay. I'm not sure if all of her writing is similar to this, but it's very conversational and you definitely get the feeling that she makes an effort to connect with her audience, which is nice.

Sam says

The author is perceptive but a tad self righteous. I also feel like the class aspect of riding around in cabs is never addressed. She's a respected, name dropping poet paying immigrants and demanding their stories without acknowledging the circumstances that have lifted her above the working class while still sympathizing with them.

I enjoyed the book but felt irritated throughout the second half.

Robyn Roscoe says

I don't recall how I came to this book - likely another Facebook item. This is a well done collection of personal essays and memoirs by an active writer, teacher and poet based on her travels throughout the US and world. She writes here primarily about her experiences with taxis, especially their drivers - what they say, where they're from, and how they affect her. Although this collection is from 2007, it was very relevant to read it now, as many of the drivers she meets and describes are immigrants (and many from the Middle East); their stories are especially poignant in the current environment. There also a memorable driver from New York with a pretty low opinion of now-President Trump. Her stories about her own driving are also highly entertaining. An elegant and engaging writing style, with well crafted vignettes of life as a passenger, made this a delightful read.

Tiffany Wilbourn says

I really enjoyed this book...very interesting and thought provoking. Makes me want to experience things and write about them. I love how little vignettes (sp?) can make you think a long time and can leave a lasting impression!! Some of my fav quotes:

"Mystery: Everything felt better before you got there than when you actually got there. When you actually got there, you didn't quite have the energy to be there."

" I told him the poets said something very interesting about politics. They said, " In Scotland, we never take ourselves too seriously, we're just a satellite of a monarchy, you know, so how could we? And we think anyone who runs for political office can't really have good intentions up his sleeve. Surely he or she is doing it for some ulterior motive. So we're pretty cynical in general about politics and if someone turns out to be good and honorable, we're pleasantly surprised. But you, in the United States, you want to believe in your politicians and that's why you're always so depressed and disappointed."
