

## Poet finds stories in everyday life

November 21, 2011 11:45 AM Alicia Duplessis Jasmin  
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Her father, a child's artwork and a stranger in an airport terminal are all things compelling enough to jolt poet Naomi Shihab Nye into a writing mood. "Life is full of stories," she told the audience at her poetry reading and book signing in the Lavin-Bernick Center on Thursday (Nov. 17).



Talking about the importance of poetry, Naomi Shihab Nye meets with a class of Tulane students during her visit to campus. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

Nye, who was born to an American mother and a Palestinian father, uses her writing and wit to simplify some of life's seemingly complicated moments. Politics, social issues and family vacations ? nothing is off-limits.

With great enthusiasm, Nye read a poem about her father's arrival in America where he was often approached by evangelicals seeking to teach him about Jesus Christ. "Listen, Bethlehem used to be right next door," she read, mimicking her father's sarcastic impression. "It was my suburb. I walked there from home as a boy."

The crowd burst into laughter.

Her father was a common theme in several of the poems read by Nye. In “Knowing” she tells of a letter she found in his closet after he had died. It was addressed to him from Eleanor Roosevelt.

“It was a shocker that my father had never mentioned that Eleanor Roosevelt had written to him,” Nye said before reading the poem. “He was a big talker and it doesn't seem like something he would have kept secret.”

Nye concluded the evening by reading “Kindness,” a poem requested by an audience member. The poem is about the considerate deeds of a stranger toward Nye after she and her husband had been robbed while on their honeymoon in Colombia.

Nye is the author and editor of more than 30 books. Her appearance at Tulane was part of the Poet Laureate Series presented by the Creative Writing Fund of the [Department of English](#).