

**Title:** *The Night Diary*  
**Author:** Veera Hiranandan  
**Perspectives Category:** Religion and Belief

**Reviewer Name and Grade:** Yaseen V., Grade 10

**Date Reviewed:** 8/16/21

*1. What is the main plot of this book?*

The main plot of this book takes place in 1947, right after India wins its independence from British rule and the subcontinent is separated into two countries: India and Pakistan. This historical time period plays a valuable part of the plot because tensions are high between Hindus and Muslims. The main character is a twelve year old girl named Nisha who is half-Hindu and half-Muslim. The story focuses on her journey as a refugee and discovering who she really is. The story is uniquely told in the form of diary entries written by Nisha to her late mother.

*2. Which character did you most identify with and why?*

I identify most with the main character, Nisha because her character traits are very relatable. For example, instead of expressing her emotions outright to others, she writes heartfelt letters to her mother who died when she was a baby. I also identified with Nisha's twin brother, Amil.

*3. What do you believe is the main message of this book?*

I think the main message of this book is to understand how differences between two groups of people can be used to lift each other up instead of tear them down. The plot of this novel talked greatly about the partition that made India into two different countries and how this affected Hindus and Muslims living in the region.

*4. Do you think the main message of this book was effectively integrated into the story, or did it come across as too "preachy"?*

No, this book was not too "preachy". In fact, I believe this story is incredibly unique because I have never read a book targeted for a teenage audience that dealt with the tensions between India and Pakistan and how the partition affected children and families during that time period. I believe the main message was effectively integrated into the story because it kept my interest.

*5. If two or more perspectives on an important topic were explored/presented in this book, which one did you agree with and why?*

There were many different perspectives shown in this book. For example, there was a clear divide among Hindus and Muslims and those who identified with India and Pakistan. Overall, I agree with Nisha and her struggle to balance her identity as a half-Hindu and half-Muslim because she is able to see both sides and understand that both groups are beautiful.

*6. In what ways (if any) were your beliefs about a topic changed or reaffirmed through reading this book?*

My beliefs about the partition and the fact that our differences can bring people together rather than tear them apart was reaffirmed while reading this book. I love that this book explores topics of refugees and immigrants that does not involve America because these stories are not often made mainstream.

*7. What perspective, if any, do you think was missing from this book?*

I do not think any perspective was missing from this book. The author did an amazing job at portraying Nisha's struggles being half-Hindu and half-Muslim. I also think the author did a good job at showcasing Nisha's selective mutism and how this affects her day to day life.

8. *Did this book encourage you to pursue any topics further through more reading, research, action, etc., and if so, how?*

Yes, this book implored me to conduct my own personal research about the partition that created India and Pakistan. After reading this book, I wanted to learn more about how British imperialism caused tensions to rise in the region that book took place and how this affected families who were Hindu, Muslim, or half-half like Nisha.

9. *What type of reader (based on age, interests, perspectives, etc.) would you suggest this book to?*

I would recommend this book to people who enjoy historical fiction and are Indian or Pakistani because this book does a great job at portraying the two nations' beauty and culture. I would also recommend this book to readers who want to learn more about this historical time period and see how Nisha navigated life in such a stressful time.

10. *What other book(s) have you read that you think would make a good addition to this category of the Perspectives Bibliography, and why?*

Another book I think would make a good addition to this book list is Whole Story of Half a Girl, as it tells the dejecting story of a girl after her father loses his job, as well as being thrown out of private school. I think the main character of this book and Nisha are very similar because they deal with being uprooted from what they've known their whole life and being put in a totally new environment where they have to cope with the numerous changes around them.

**Reviewer Name and Grade: Tatjana T., Grade 11**

**Date Reviewed: April 10, 2023**

1. The main plot of "The Night Diary" is about a young girl named Nisha, who is half-Muslim and half-Hindu, living in pre-partition India in 1947. The story is written in the form of diary entries by Nisha, as she navigates the challenges of identity, religion, and family amidst the turmoil of the partition of India and Pakistan.

2. I most identify with Nisha, the main character, because like her, I have struggled with questions about identity and religion. Nisha's internal conflicts and challenges in reconciling her Muslim and Hindu heritage resonated with me, as I have also grappled with questions of self-identity and belonging.

3. The main message of this book is about the impact of partition on ordinary people, particularly children, and the importance of empathy, compassion, and understanding amidst religious and cultural differences. It also highlights the power of writing and self-expression as a means of coping with challenging situations.

4. I believe the main message of this book was effectively integrated into the story. It did not come off as preachy, but rather as a poignant portrayal of Nisha's personal journey and the historical events she witnesses. The author portrayed Nisha's emotions, experiences, and relationships in a sensitive and realistic way, without imposing any particular belief system.

5. Two perspectives that were explored in the book were Hinduism and Islam, as Nisha comes from a mixed heritage. As an atheist, I appreciated the portrayal of the complexities and

nuances of religious beliefs and practices, as well as the challenges faced by individuals who come from diverse religious backgrounds. I resonated with Nisha's internal struggles and her eventual realization that tolerance, understanding, and acceptance are important values regardless of religious differences.

6. Reading this book reaffirmed my belief in the importance of empathy, compassion, and understanding towards people from diverse religious and cultural backgrounds. It also highlighted the impact of historical events on ordinary people and the need for empathy and kindness in times of adversity.

7. While the book provides a perspective from a young girl's point of view, it would have been interesting to have a perspective from an adult character to provide a broader context and understanding of the historical events of the partition of India and Pakistan.

8. Yes, this book encouraged me to pursue further reading and research about the partition of India and Pakistan, the historical context, and the impact on people's lives. It also inspired me to learn more about the diverse religious and cultural practices in India and Pakistan, and the importance of empathy and understanding in times of conflict.

9. I would suggest this book to young adult readers who are interested in historical fiction, coming-of-age stories, and exploring themes of identity, religion, and cultural diversity. It would particularly resonate with readers who are open to learning about different cultures, religions, and historical events through the eyes of a young protagonist.

10. Another book that would make a good addition to this category of Perspectives biography is "Persepolis" by Marjane Satrapi, which is a graphic novel memoir that offers a perspective on growing up in Iran during the Islamic revolution. It addresses important topics such as religion, culture, politics, and feminism from a unique and personal standpoint, providing insights into the complexities of life in Iran during a tumultuous period of history.

**Reviewer Name and Grade: Kylee K., 11th Grade**

**Date Reviewed: 9/30/2023**

*1. What is the main plot of this book?*

The main plot of "The Night Diary" follows the journey of Nisha, a young girl living in India during the partition in 1947, as she navigates the turmoil of a divided nation and grapples with questions of identity, belonging, and family. The quote "I wish for the old India. The one my mother and father grew up in. But how can we ever go back?" encapsulates Nisha's internal conflict as she longs for stability amid the chaos of political unrest, highlighting the central theme of displacement and longing for a lost homeland.

*2. Which character did you most identify with and why?*

I most identified with Kazi, Nisha's family cook and confidant, whose unwavering loyalty and compassion provide solace amidst the uncertainty of Nisha's world. When Kazi tells Nisha, "You are safe with me," it resonates deeply with her, similar to how I try to comfort and support my friends in their times of need.

*3. What do you believe is the main message of this book?*

The main message of "The Night Diary" revolves around the importance of empathy, understanding, and compassion in overcoming division and prejudice. Through Nisha's journey of self-discovery and acceptance, the book underscores the power of human connection in transcending cultural and religious divides, as exemplified by the quote, "We are all the same, Amil. Inside." This sentiment reinforces the overarching theme of shared humanity and the potential for unity amidst diversity.

*4. Do you think the main message of this book was effectively integrated into the story, or did it come across as too "preachy"?*

The main message of "The Night Diary" was effectively integrated into the narrative, conveyed through nuanced character development and poignant storytelling rather than didacticism. For instance, when Nisha's father advises her, "You must always remember that the world is never as black and white as the borders on a map," it serves as a subtle reminder of the complexities of human experience, avoiding a preachy tone while imparting valuable wisdom.

*5. If two or more perspectives on an important topic were explored/presented in this book, which one did you agree with and why?*

In "The Night Diary," the perspective advocating for understanding and empathy resonated with me the most. When Nisha reflects, "Perhaps if we saw each other as fellow human beings, there would be no more war," it encapsulates the profound insight that empathy and compassion are essential in fostering peace and harmony, aligning with my belief in the transformative power of understanding.

*6. In what ways (if any) were your beliefs about a topic changed or reaffirmed through reading this book?*

Reading "The Night Diary" reaffirmed my belief in the resilience of the human spirit and the capacity for hope amidst adversity. As Nisha grapples with the challenges of displacement and loss, her unwavering courage and determination serve as a testament to the indomitable nature of the human soul, strengthening my conviction in the power of perseverance and resilience.

*7. What perspective, if any, do you think was missing from this book?*

While "The Night Diary" offers a rich tapestry of perspectives, it could have delved deeper into the experiences of marginalized communities, such as those belonging to lower castes or religious minorities, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the partition's impact on diverse groups within Indian society.

*8. Did this book encourage you to pursue any topics further through more reading, research, action, etc., and if so, how?*

This book sparked my interest in learning more about the history of India's partition and its lasting repercussions on the region's social and political landscape. Inspired by Nisha's journey, I embarked on further reading and research to gain a deeper understanding of this pivotal moment in history and its implications for contemporary issues of identity and nationhood.

*9. What type of reader (based on age, interests, perspectives, etc.) would you suggest this book to?*

I would recommend "The Night Diary" to readers of all ages who are interested in historical fiction, particularly those intrigued by stories of resilience, identity, and social justice. Its accessible writing style and compelling narrative make it suitable for young adult readers as well as adults seeking a thought-provoking exploration of complex themes.

*10. What other book(s) you have read that you think would make a good addition to this category of the Perspectives Bibliography, and why?*

Another book that would complement "The Night Diary" in the Perspectives Bibliography is "Between Shades of Gray" by Ruta Sepetys, which similarly explores the human impact of historical events, focusing on the experiences of individuals caught in the turmoil of war and displacement. Both books offer poignant insights into the resilience of the human spirit and the enduring power of hope in the face of adversity.

**Reviewer Name and Grade: Kate G., 10th Grade**

**Date Reviewed: March 12, 2024**

*1. What is the main plot of this book?*

The Night Diary by Veera Hiranandani is about a twelve year old girl named Nisha who is half Muslim and half Hindu. She lives in what is now Pakistan with her family, until her father decides that it is too dangerous for them to continue to live there and relocate them. Nisha and her family become refugees as they set off to find a new home and she struggles with where she belongs. The story is told in diary entries that Nisha writes to her deceased mother.

*2. Which character did you most identify with and why?*

I most identify with the main character, Nisha. When confronted with certain situations and people, Nisha doesn't always know what to say and struggles to say anything at all. So, she shares her words in the diary that she keeps, writing to her deceased mother. I can relate to Nisha because there have been many times when it was easier for me to say what I needed to say in writing than speaking. Often, I can express my thoughts, ideas and feelings about certain situations on paper much clearer than I can verbally express them.

*3. What do you believe is the main message of this book?*

The main message of The Night Diary is the importance of family. Nisha lives with her father, her twin brother Amil, her grandmother, and the family's cook, Kazi. Nisha and her family have endured many hardships, starting with the loss of her mother during childbirth. Then, the family is forced to leave their home and relocate as refugees which bring them closer together. During this journey, Amil almost dies as a result of lack of water and the family realizes how horrible life would be without him. Also, the family stays with Nisha and Amil's uncle (their mother's brother) during their travels and they grow closer to him.

*4. Do you think the main message of this book was effectively integrated into the story, or did it come across as too "preachy"?*

I think the main message of this book was effectively integrated into the story. It is clear from the very beginning of the story that family is important and shouldn't be taken for granted. The

development of the family's relationships with one another, as they endure hard times, supports the idea that with family you can make it through even the most difficult situations.

*5. If two or more perspectives on an important topic were explored/presented in this book, which one did you agree with and why?*

In the story *The Night Diary*, India becomes separated into two countries: India and Pakistan. The division causes tension between people of different religions and the Muslims and Hindus are forced to move to different countries. In the story, Nisha feels that she is being forced to choose a side, despite the fact that both sides of her family are different religions. Nisha feels that it is unfair for her to have to pick, and I agree with her. Nisha says "Everyone knows who is Muslim, Hindu, or Sikh by the clothes they wear or the names they have. But we all have lived together in this town for so long, I just never thought much about people's religions before." Like Nisha, I agree with the idea that people should not be judged for their religious beliefs—or anything else.

*6. In what ways (if any) were your beliefs about a topic changed or reaffirmed through reading this book?*

One belief that I have that was reaffirmed while reading this book is how quickly a community can change and how hard the implications can be for those that are affected. For example, at one point Nisha's family doesn't even have the basic necessities, such as water, and as a result her brother and her grandmother become very sick. This part of the story reminded me how many communities there are that are lacking basic resources and how important it is for people to stay updated on these current events and help find solutions.

*7. What perspective, if any, do you think was missing from this book?*

I don't think any perspective was missing from the book as it was written in a diary entry format from Nisha's point of view. However, I do think that it would have been interesting to see how the same experiences were for her twin brother Amil, who is drastically different from Nisha.

*8. Did this book encourage you to pursue any topics further through more reading, research, action, etc., and if so, how?*

One of my favorite parts of this book was Nisha's description of the food that she writes about in her journal. Nisha and her family's cook, Kiza, often prepare meals together. The way that the food is described made me want to try all of these dishes that I otherwise might not have. I did explore recipes similar to some of the ones Nisha writes about and they were delicious!

*9. What type of reader (based on age, interests, perspectives, etc.) would you suggest this book to?*

I would highly recommend this book to a young adult who enjoys adventure, historical fiction, and realistic fiction.

*10. What other book(s) have you read that you think would make a good addition to this category of the Perspectives Bibliography, and why?*

I think the book *Other Words for Home* by Jasmine Warga would make a good addition to the Religion & Beliefs category of the Perspectives category of the Perspectives Bibliography

because like *The Night Diary*, the main character Jude is forced to leave her home when things become dangerous in Syria and start a new life in America.