

Title: *Thirst*
Author: Varsha Bajaj
Genre: Realistic Fiction

Reviewer Name and Grade: Emily K., 7th Grade

Date Reviewed: 6/20/23

The book Thirst, by Varsha Bajaj, centers around a girl named Minni, who lives with her parents and older brother, Sanjay, in present-day Mumbai, India. In Minni's town, water is scarce, and every day, people of the village gather at shared community taps to fill buckets of water that they hope will last them the whole day. Sanjay, after having come into contact with the infamous water thieves, is forced by his parents, who are concerned for his safety, to leave Mumbai and live with family members on a faraway farm. Meanwhile, Minni's mother, who had fallen ill the previous year from drinking unsanitary water and was experiencing a return of her symptoms, also decides to live with family elsewhere until her health improves. This leaves Minni with a number of new responsibilities, including cooking, cleaning, and taking on her mother's job as a maid in order to provide for her family.

These responsibilities soon become a struggle for Minni, who must also make time for school and academic pursuits in her crowded daily schedule. Especially with finals week approaching, Minni feels the pressure to study, but finds little time to do so, as she is forced to spend most of her after-school hours serving as a maid for a wealthy family, where she faces discrimination because she is of a lower caste. Additionally, Minni must wake up early every morning to fetch water for her family, and the lines to the community taps sometimes stretch on for hours, causing her to often be late for school.

One day, Minni is given the opportunity to participate in a computer class, where she hopes to gain the knowledge that may someday allow for her to escape Mumbai, to a place where water is not a luxury, but a necessity that everybody has access to. It is there that she brainstorms ideas for a new app that would create allotted times for each person to pick up water from the community taps, thus shortening the long lines that often form when the water supply is low. She develops this idea with her computer class teacher and with several others, and although the plan is never seen carried out in the story, it emphasizes Minni's positive and forward-thinking attitude, as well as her desire to help her community.

Not long after, a local man named Ravi, who Sanjay, Minni's brother, had seen upon accidentally encountering the water thieves, is found dead. Minni suspects that his connection to the water thieves may have had something to do with his unexpected passing, and sets out to find the culprit behind it all. Along the way, Minni reveals her true potential, and along with her best friend, Faiza, defies all odds in attempts to avenge Ravi and bring Minni's brother home.

Did the plot (for fiction) or presentation of information (for nonfiction) keep you interested?

Yes, the plot was extremely interesting and kept my eyes glued to the pages from cover to cover. Additionally, the story comes from the perspective of Minni, which allows the reader to gain a better understanding of Minni's thoughts and emotions (such as her desire to obtain a good education, which would not be entirely obvious to be reader, considering the fact that she frequently missed school and did not get ideal grades, had the story not been told from her perspective). The story was also very detailed and the author did a good job in conveying characters' feelings.

Was the pace of the book too fast, too slow, or just right?

The pace of the book was, for me, just right, and the book was not very long (192 pages). I would recommend it to readers who prefer shorter, and average-paced stories.

What grade level(s) is this book appropriate for?

This book would be appropriate for grades 5 and up, as the content is entirely age-appropriate and the vocabulary is not very difficult.

What type of reader would you recommend this book to?

I would recommend this book to readers who enjoy reading about life in other parts of the world, specifically in areas such as Mumbai, India, where conditions are not always ideal for the people who live there, as well as to readers who enjoy realistic fiction novels with subtle hints of mystery and adventure, which is added through

Minni's quest to discover the true identity of the water thief that Sanjay had seen that night, shortly before Ravi was murdered.

5 stars: I'm really glad I read this book; it was awesome!

This story was skillfully crafted and told, as well as interesting and appropriately paced. Not only this, but the author instills positive messages in readers of this book by encouraging them, through Minni's struggle to obtain water for her family, to appreciate what we as people often take for granted, but many others are forced to live without. I especially liked the parts of the story in which Minni would walk with her friend, Faiza, to school. These moments revealed many of Minni's personal thoughts and feelings regarding her life situation to the reader as well as many aspects of her personality. Additionally, Minni's trust and friendship with Faiza later proved to be extremely important in Minni's attempts to find the aforementioned water thief.