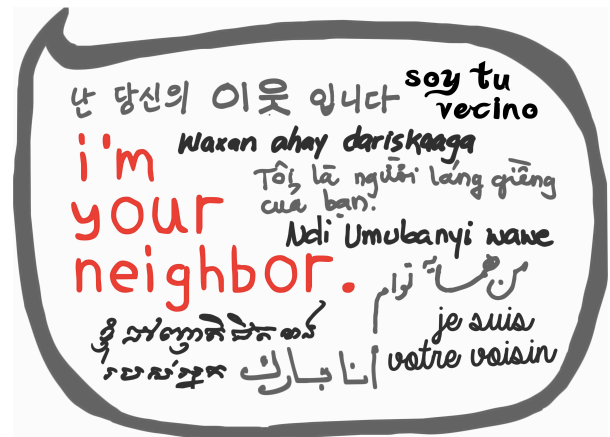


Thank you for reading this *I'm Your Neighbor, Portland* book.

"The true meeting takes place when the book opens, and a stranger reads about — and comprehends — a stranger." —Amit Majmudar, author of *The Abundance*.

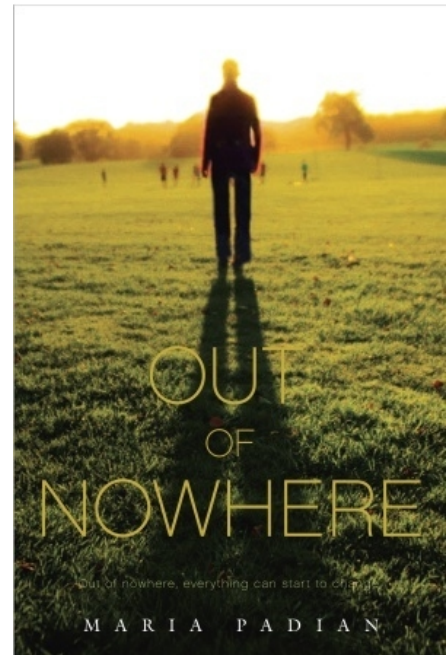
We hope that this book has introduced you to some of your neighbors' stories and as Amit Majmudar said, allowed you to "comprehend a stranger."



Discuss

Consider exploring these questions after reading *Out of Nowhere* by Maria Padian.

- Tom and his family take pride in their French-Canadian heritage. What is your heritage and where did your ancestors come from?
- Tom's Uncle Paul and Aunt Maddie have opposite views about the Somalis living in Enniston and the mayor's letter in the paper. Are there issues that sometimes divide your family?
- Saeed and the other Somalian players are vital to winning the most important game in Enniston's season, however it falls during Ramadan. They choose to observe the fast and honor their faith even though they know they know playing soccer will be more difficult and the rest of the team might not understand their decision. Have there been times when you have had make a difficult decision or make a sacrifice even though you know others will likely disagree with you?
- Tom comes to realize that many of the things he does, such as eat pork or take Communion, may seem just as foreign to the Somalis as their eating goat or fasting for Ramadan seem to him. Are there practices or things that you do and think are normal that others might find unusual?
- Soccer provides an opportunity for the Somali players to feel welcome and be part of a team even though they have different backgrounds and speak different



languages. Tom and Saeed become friends because they both love the game. Have you ever made an unlikely friendship because of a commonality?

- Tom tries to defend Saeed when other soccer teams start questioning his age. When have you stood up and supported a friend?
- When Saeed is taken off the team he is disappointed and crushed. Has there been a time when you have been unable to do something you loved?
- Tom's mistake at the hospital causes big changes for Samira and her family. Have you ever accidentally gotten a friend in trouble? How did they react?
- Cherisse's Facebook post and text message starts a vicious rumor that damages Samira's reputation in the Somali community. Have you seen something on Facebook that made you uncomfortable? What did you do? Did you confront the person who posted it (either online or in person) or ignore it?
- After reading ***Out of Nowhere***, what have you learned about the Somali American community in Maine?

Explore

Why do Somalis come to Maine?

According to research by psychology professor Kimberly Huisan at the University of Maine Orono, the majority of Somalis coming to Maine are secondary migrants. This means they were resettled in other cities in the United States, often in large urban areas where they are places in low-income neighborhoods characterized by high crime rates, drugs, and gang activity. They fear for the safety of their families and move to states like Maine, to reunify with relatives, friends, and community members who live here and commend Maine's safe communities, schools, and affordable housing. Secondary migrants come to Maine for the same reasons that many other groups of new residents do. They come here for, "The way life should be."

What is the political, cultural and historical setting of the book?

Many Somalis fled their homeland beginning in 1991 when civil war broke out and continues in present day. Those who escaped the violence and killing lived in refugee camps in Kenya, while they waited to be resettled.

Although Enniston is a fictional town, the characters and events that occur in the book reflect actual events that occurred in Lewiston, Maine. Tom, his family, and many of the long-term residents in Enniston are Franco-American, Maine's largest ethnic group.

French-Canadians settled in areas such as Biddeford and Saco, Lewiston and Auburn, and Waterfield in the 1800s and their descents remain there today.

Large numbers of Somalis began migrating to the Lewiston and Auburn area in 2001 and continued to grow. In 2002, Lewiston mayor Larry Raymond wrote an open letter similar to the one described in *Out of Nowhere*, asking Somali immigrants to slow down their migration to the city. The letter received intense criticism from Lewiston's Somali leaders and from around the state and nation. It also sparked the Many and One rally that took place in February 2003 in support of refugees' rights to live where they chose.

Engage

WATCH the documentary *The Letter* directed by Ziad H. Hamzeh. *The Letter* documents the firestorm of controversy following Lewiston mayor Larry Raymond's letter to the Somali community.

SHOP at East African groceries. **Safari Grocery and Restaurant** at 30 Washington Street in Portland, ME serves Moroccan, African, and Egyptian cuisines. **Al-Amin Halaal Market** at 269 St. John Street in Portland, ME serves Somali cuisine.

VOLUNTEER AND SUPPORT Maine based organizations helping Somali communities

United Somali Women of Maine based in Lewiston assists refugees and immigrant women living in Maine, providing culturally and linguistically appropriate services and promoting a non-sexist, multicultural environment.
<http://www.uswofmaine.org/>

Somali Culture and Development Association in Maine promotes the integration of Somali refugee, immigrant and American born children through providing services such as job assistance, transportation and youth activities.
<http://www.mesom.org/>

Somali Bantu Youth Association based in Lewiston provides literacy courses, interpretation services and youth programs for Somali youth and their families.
<http://sbyam.org/>

Tree Street Youth supports the youth of Lewiston-Auburn through academics, the arts, and athletics while providing a safe space that encourages healthy physical, social, emotional, and academic development while building unity across lines of difference.
www.treestreetyouth.com

Cultivating Community supports refugees and immigrants to become successful and sustainable farmers, who sell their produce under "Fresh Start Farms" at local farmer's markets.
<http://www.cultivatingcommunity.org/nasap/nasap--fresh-start-farms.html>

Read

From *I Remember Warm Rain*:

- “Guy Stuff” by Estella Omal
- “Trouble Walking” by Farah Jama
- “Family” by Mohamed Rashid Isaack

From *New Mainers*:

- Jose Castaneda, El Salvador
- Khadija Guled, Somali

Titles set among East African immigrants and refugees:

Ages 4-8

- *A Somali Alphabet* by Nadifo Ayanle (Set in Somali American community)
- *My Friend Jamal* by Anna McQuinn, An *I'm Your Neighbor, Portland* featured book (Set in Somali Canadian community)
- *My Name is Sangoel* by Karen Lynn Williams and Khadra Mohammed (Set in Sudanese American community)
- *The Color of Home* by Mary Hoffman (Set in Somali American community)
- *The Night You Were Born, Cherished One* by Various (Set in Maine Somali American community)

Ages 13+

- *Memories of the Sun* edited by Jane Kurtz (Set in various communities)
- *Outcasts United* by Warren St. John (Set in Sudanese American community)
- *Of Beetles and Angels* by Mawi Asgedom (Set in Sudan and Ethiopia American community)
- *Refugee Boy* by Benjamin Zephaniah (Set in Ethiopian and Eritrean community)
- *Something About America* by Maria Testa, An *I'm Your Neighbor Portland* book (Set in Maine Kosovo and Somali American community)

Adult

- *Burgess Boys* by Elizabeth Strout (Set in Somali American community)