

FIFTY

WORDS

FOR

RAIN

ASHA

LEMMIE

BOOK
CLUB
KIT

Dear Reader,

I decided to write *Fifty Words for Rain* because I wanted to read about someone who, like me, is a crooked puzzle piece in an otherwise tidy world; the kind of character who is so often overlooked in literature and forgotten in history. For as long as I can remember, I have been asked, "What are you?" "Because your eyes . . ." "Your hair . . ." "The way you speak . . ." "Where are you from?" "You're . . . not quite right, Asha. What's the story?" My response to these questions was always: "What do you think I am?" The responses—and the subsequent expectations—varied wildly, and so with this story I want to tell people what I have learned; that the world often defines us the most by the things we have the least control over: who our parents are, where we come from, and the way that we look. Neat little involuntary boxes that, to me, felt suffocating. *Fifty Words for Rain* is, in part, about a dynasty—which is ultimately another word for family—that is struggling to survive in a rapidly changing world. The familial bonds that arise from such circumstance can be fickle or transcendent, kind or monstrous, but they are often a mixture of both. They don't fit in neat little boxes either.

I created Nori because I wanted to explore the journey of a character who blossoms in isolation. The setting was built to fit the character as opposed to the other way around. I have had an interest in Japanese poetry since I was a little girl, and an interest in the culture, history, and language soon followed. It felt natural and familiar to place her in Japan, especially during a period in history that has always fascinated me, and that provided me with so many levels to explore.

Nori is a reflection of both who I am and who I want to be—lonely and curious, clever and kind. Like her, I have accumulated cuts big and small, and I have a profound respect for the understated strength that is resilience. I wanted to celebrate people who remain kind in the face of cruelty, which I believe takes an incredible kind of bravery—one I think is too often disregarded. My deepest gratitude to all who are willing to give this story a chance.

If I had one hope for *Fifty Words for Rain*, it is that we may all realize that the boxes imposed upon us are an illusion. The life we choose, the people we choose, the character we choose to uphold—that's what truly defines us. And no matter who we are, there is always hope we may find wings.

Asha Lemmie

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



1. What do you think the title *Fifty Words for Rain* means? What role does nature play in Nori's life?
2. For Nori, watching Akira play the violin is captivating, and she wants to be able to make people feel that way too. Why do you think music has such a strong effect on Nori? Aside from, bringing her and Akira closer, what does playing the violin mean to Nori?
3. Have you previously read a World War II novel set in Japan? How does setting a story outside Europe change the way you think about this period? What are some of the lasting effects from the war that you see in the book?
4. Discuss Akira and Nori's relationship. Despite the vastly different ways they are treated, they form a very powerful bond. Why do you think they are able to be close? How does their relationship change the course of their lives?
5. There are many examples of female relationships in the book. Look at how Nori interacts with her mother, her grandmother, Alice, Kiyomi, and Miyuki. How do these women's relationships reflect and resist Japanese culture in the 1950s?
6. What does Nori learn from reading her mother's diaries? How do you think this influences her own trajectory?
7. How does Nori transform throughout the book? In one regard, she moves from not fighting her confinement to resisting other people's control over her life. What inspired those changes within her? Are those changes reflected in the rest of society?
8. This is a book about family, love, duty, and isolation. Do you see any parallels between the views in the book and those of today, especially about our attitudes toward women and other marginalized people?
9. What do you think Nori's Obaasama (grandmother), Yuko, means when she says "Many, and none" in response to Nori's question about whether she has any regrets?
10. Do you agree with Nori's decision about her future? When considering what to do in your own life, how do you balance your desire for happiness, purpose, and sense of responsibility, whether it be to your family, friends, or society?

Learn FIFTY WORDS for RAIN

RAIN

雨 あめ *ame* rain

白雨 はくう *hakuu* rain shower

急雨 きゅう *kyuu* rain shower

俄雨 にわかあめ *niwakaame* rain shower

降雨 こうう *kouu* rainfall

COLD RAIN

涼雨 りょうう *ryouu* cool rain

冷雨 れいう *reiu* chilly rain

寒雨 かんう *kanu* cold winter rain

氷雨 ひさめ *hisame* very cold rain
or hail

BOOK PLAYLIST

Find tunes that inspired the book
by scanning the QR code
below in the Spotify search feature,
or by clicking here.



RAIN BY INTENSITY

弱雨 よわあめ *yowaame* weak rain
小雨 こさめ *kosame* light rain
小降り こぶり *koburi* light rain
微雨 びう *biu* light rain
小糠雨 こぬかあめ *konukaame* fine rain
煙雨 えんう *enu* misty rain
細雨 さいう *saiu* drizzle
多雨 たう *tau* heavy rain
大雨 おおあめ *ooame* heavy rain
強雨 きょうう *kyouu* severe rain
横降り よこぶり *yokoburi* sideways rain
吹き降り ふきぶり *fukiburi* driving rain
篠突く雨 しのつくあめ *shinotsukuame*
intense rain
集中豪雨 しゅうちゅうごう *shuuchuugou*
severe localized downpour

RAIN COMBOS

風雨 ふうう *fuuu* wind and rain
雨氷 うひょう *uhyou* freezing rain
雪交じり ゆきまじり *yukimajiri*
snow and rain
みぞれ混じりの雪 みぞれまじりのあめ
mizoremajirinoame snow and rain
晴後雨 はれのちあめ *harenochiame*
clear then rain
雨露 うろ *uro* rain and dew

TYPES OF RAIN

夜雨 やう *yau* night rain
梅雨前線 ばいうぜんせん *baiuzensen*
seasonal rain
春霖 しゅんりん *shunrin* spring rain
春雨 はるさめ *harusame* gentle spring rain
緑雨 りよくう *ryokuu* early-summer rain
五月雨 さみだれ *samidare* early-summer rain
秋雨 あきさめ *akisame* autumn rain
秋霖 しゅうりん *shuurin* long-lasting
autumn rain
凍雨 とうう *touu* winter rain
十雨 じゅうう *juuu* refreshing rain once in
ten days
恵雨 けいう *keiu* welcome rain
人工雨 じんこうう *jinkouu* artificial rain
放射能雨 ほうしゃのう *houshanouu*
radioactive rain
天泣 てんきゅう *tenkyuu* rain from a
cloudless sky

TIME AND RAIN

雨模様 あまもよう *amamoyou* signs of rain
雨催い あまもよい *amamoyoi* threat of rain
雨上り あめあがり *ameagari* after the rain
雨後 うご *ugo* after the rain
雨間 あまあい *amaai* break in the rain
晴一時小雨 はれいちじこさめ *hareichijikosame*
brief light rain
霖 ながめ *nagame* long rain
霖雨 りんう *rinu* long rain
長雨 ながあめ *nagaame* long rain
陰霖 いんりん *inrin* long rain
夕立 ゆうだち *yuudachi* sudden evening rain