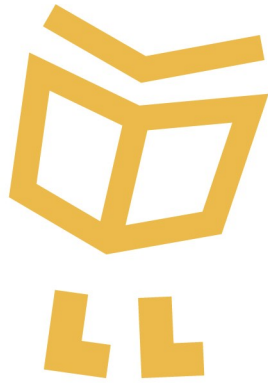


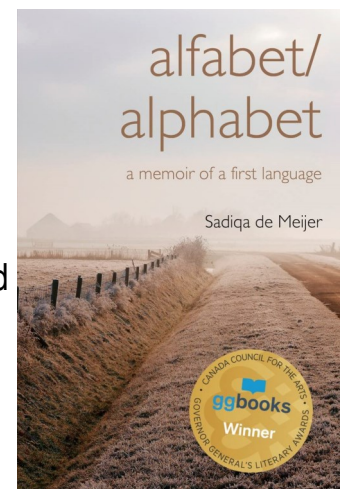
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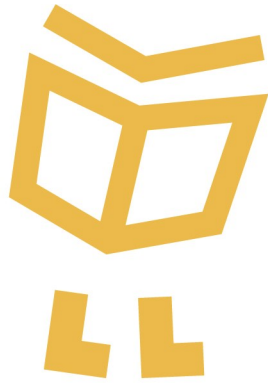
Alfabet/alphabet: A Memoir of a First Language Sadiqa De Meijer

Discussion Questions

1. The work consists of short chapters and includes multiple format types, including vignettes, prose, and poetry. Did you like this style of writing or would you have preferred something more narrative?
2. What do you think about the inclusion of Dutch alongside English? Did this add to the work—a memoir about the author’s first language (Dutch) —or take away?
3. The author is corrected by her English teacher when her family returns to the Netherlands after living in Canada. Is there a “right” way to speak English, or any language for that matter?
4. “Names are an intimate pocket within every language...they progressively signify the close entities they represent” (70-71). Discuss this statement and the author’s story about their brother.
5. The author describes listening to language and being able to conjure more vivid pictures of words when hearing them in Dutch rather than English. Have you ever experienced this with your first language?
6. Do you agree with the following statement made by the author’s father: “Lose your wealth, lose a little. Lose your health, lose a lot. Lose your language, lose everything”? Why or why not?
7. Discuss this thought: “People who speak a language they learned after early childhood live in chronic abstraction.”
8. Do you speak other languages? Do you think the age at which you learned the language(s) affected the difficulty/speed at which you picked it up?



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About the Author

Sadiqa de Meijer is the author of the poetry collections *Leaving Howe Island* (2013) and *The Outer Wards* (2020), as well as a book of essays on her first language, *alfabet / alphabet* (2020). She resides in Kingston, Ontario.

Via Poetry Foundation (<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/sadiqa-de-meijer>)

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