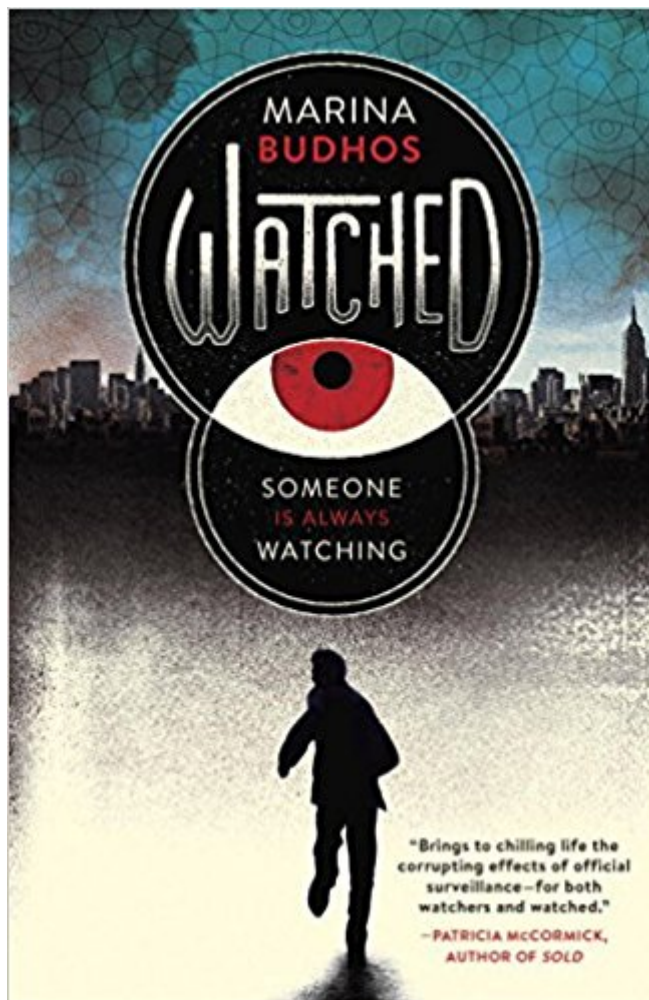


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# Watched



## Synopsis

Marina Budhos's extraordinary and timely novel examines what it's like to grow up under surveillance, something many Americans experience and most Muslim Americans know. Naeem is far from the "model teen." Moving fast in his immigrant neighborhood in Queens is the only way he can outrun the eyes of his hardworking Bangladeshi parents and their gossipy neighbors. Even worse, they're not the only ones watching. Cameras on poles. Mosques infiltrated. Everyone knows: Be careful what you say and who you say it to. Anyone might be a watcher. Naeem thinks he can charm his way through anything, until his mistakes catch up with him and the cops offer a dark deal. Naeem sees a way to be a hero—a protector—like the guys in his brother's comic books. Yet what is a hero? What is a traitor? And where does Naeem belong? Acclaimed author Marina Budhos delivers a riveting story that's as vivid and involving as today's headlines. Praise: Asian/Pacific American Award for Literature Honor Book, The Walter Award, Honor Book for YAA, Notable Book for a Global Society (NBGS), CCBC Choices Award Selection for Young Adult Fiction, YALSA Quick Pick, YALSA Best Fiction for Young Adults, Chicago Public Library's Best of the Best, A Junior Library Guild Selection, Maine Student Book Award Reading List

## Book Information

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Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

## Customer Reviews

Gr 7 Up — Naeem Rahman is a Bangladeshi immigrant and high school senior who lives in a Muslim neighborhood in Queens, where everyone is under surveillance because of fear of terrorist activity. His parents are struggling to make a living from their corner store, and they hope Naeem will be more successful than they are. However, he is more interested in street life and taking chances with the law than he is in studying. When his friend Ibrahim entices him into shoplifting and then abandons him to the cops, the protagonist is offered a deal: he can become an informant and spy on his Muslim neighbors, or he can face charges and most likely go to prison. He chooses the former. At first, this doesn't seem too bad. Naeem is making money, and he rationalizes that this is a way to do something good. He starts attending mosque and participating in a Muslim teen volunteer group, but when he doesn't find anything particularly alarming to report, the cops begin pressuring him to come up with better leads. Eventually, Naeem becomes involved in a scheme to entrap Ibrahim into incriminating activity, and he has to make some hard moral choices. This is a fast-moving, gripping tale that conveys Naeem's restlessness and the sense of paranoia that comes from being watched constantly. Budhos perfectly captures the gritty details of daily life in a Queens neighborhood, as well as the nuances of different immigrant groups. VERDICT Highly recommended because of its very timely subject matter; this would be a great choice for a book club or classroom discussion. — Kathleen E. Gruver, Burlington County Library, Westampton, NJ

“Budhos perfectly captures the gritty details of daily life in a Queens neighborhood, as well as the nuances of different immigrant groups.” — School Library Journal, ★ starred review

Pleased with our purchase.

Naeem was 5 years old when his mother died and his father moved from Bangladesh to New York. He waited for his father to send for him, but it took another 6 years before he found himself on a plane to Queens, New York. There, he was reunited with his father and met his new little brother and stepmother. He loved New York, spending years hanging out and roaming the streets instead of helping his parents in their little store. It's now his senior year of high school and he expects to go to college, but is told he can't graduate due to low grades. His future is staring at him bleakly until he gets arrested. To avoid jail time he agreed to work undercover with cops, as they were sure terrorist attacks were being planned. They felt he could blend in and

pick up information at mosques. Naeem thought by working with them he could prove Muslims were regular law-abiding citizens but, the deeper he got into play acting, the more he realized he enjoyed learning about his culture. As time passed Naeem became more and more anxious. Who was he? Was he a traitor to his people, or was he helping them be seen in a better light? Would his work make the world a better place for his little brother, and for his parents, or would he incriminate innocent people? "Watched" takes readers into the life of a Muslim family and into Muslim neighborhoods, describing an insider's view of what it feels like to always be watched and judged by others. It will cause readers to think about their own prejudices and, perhaps, make them think twice before passing judgment on others. Recommended for ages 16 and older.

This is a very timely book about the difficulties facing immigrants in all communities, but especially the Muslim community. The teenage hero, Naeem, finds himself compromised at every turn. Whom can he trust? The answers are hard to figure out, and that is exactly the reality of this young man's life -- and of most of the people in his Queens neighborhood. "Watched" is young adult novel, but I'm an adult and I couldn't put it down! It's nuanced and quick-paced and the ending is very satisfying without being sentimental or predictable. This would be a great book to read along with your own children or students -- a good book for the whole family to read and talk about over dinner.

Well done on a hot topic. Loved it and pretty sure young ones will enjoy too. It has the most captivating cover this is a must read on any Young Person's bookshelf! The young man, even though he is from the Middle East, still has American qualities since he was raised in the United States. He struggles with motivation in school and choice of friends. He is torn between connecting with his family's culture and wanting to be accepted for who he is. A police officer recruits him to spy on his neighborhood. "For the good of the country" A lot of beautiful lessons and patriotism without hitting you over the head with it

A complex, powerful book that grapples honestly with the impact of surveillance on Muslim-American communities--and by extension, on all of us. The writing is moving and honest, and offers a glimpse into a seldom-seen world. It made me care deeply about Naeem, his family, and his community. I also appreciate the way this book embraces the complexity and humanity of ALL its characters; the detectives and "outsiders" are three-dimensional and relatable as well. We need more books like this, that invite us to understand and have empathy across cultural divides!

Grateful to Budhos for imagining us into what has become a frightening reality of prejudice and paranoia. Written with compassion and great attentiveness to the nuances of every day life under threat, "Watched" is a book to be read right now.

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