



**[The Poet X](#) by Elizabeth Acevedo**

Quill Tree Books, HarperCollins, 2018

ISBN: 9780062662811 (Paperback)

\*Age Range: 13 up (Suggested by Publisher)

Grade Range: 7 up (Recommended by *School Library Journal*)

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**BOOK SYNOPSIS**

Xiomara Batista feels unheard and unable to hide in her Harlem neighborhood. Ever since her body grew into curves, she has learned to let her fists and her fierceness do the talking.

But Xiomara has plenty she wants to say, and she pours all her frustration and passion onto the pages of a leather notebook, reciting the words to herself like prayers—especially after she catches feelings for a boy in her bio class named Aman, who her family can never know about.

With Mami’s determination to force her daughter to obey the laws of the church, Xiomara understands that her thoughts are best kept to herself. So when she is invited to join her school’s slam poetry club, she doesn’t know how she could ever attend without her mami finding out. But she still can’t stop thinking about performing her poems.

Because in the face of a world that may not want to hear her, Xiomara refuses to be silent.

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**REVIEWS AND PRAISE**

“The force and intensity behind her words practically pushes them off the page, resulting in a verse novel that is felt as much as it is heard. This is a book from the heart, and for the heart. I wouldn’t be surprised if I put my ear to its cover and found it had a heartbeat all its own.”

— *New York Times Book Review*

“A story that will slam the power of poetry and love back into your heart.”

— Laurie Halse Anderson, author of *Speak* and *Chains*

“*The Poet X* crackles with energy and snaps with authenticity and voice. Every poem in this stunningly addictive and deliciously rhythmic verse novel begs to be read aloud. Xiomara is a protagonist who readers will cheer for at every turn. As X might say, Acevedo’s got bars. Don’t pass this one by.”

— Justina Ireland, author of *Dread Nation*

“In *The Poet X*, Acevedo skillfully sculpts powerful, self-contained poems into a masterpiece of a story, and has amplified the voices of girls en el barrio who are equal parts goddess, saint, warrior, and hero.”

— Ibi Zoboi, author of *American Street*

**Updated 12.28.23**

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“Though vivid with detail about family, love, and culture, *The Poet X* is more of an exploration of when the poet becomes the poem. Xiomara teeters between verbosity and restraint, shape and form, rewriting and sharing. Most importantly, the poet (and poem) searches for the freedom to stand on her own. Acevedo delivers an incredibly potent debut.”

— Jason Reynolds, author of National Book Award Finalist *Ghost*

“I devoured this magnificent work of art. Elizabeth Acevedo gets everything right, bringing the magic of the verse novel to stunning new heights. A glorious achievement. This is a story about what it means to be a writer and how to survive when it feels like the whole world’s turned against you. Required reading for everybody alive today.”

— Daniel José Older, author of the Shadowshaper Cypher series

“Sitting on stoops, brushing elbows with boys, battling parental expectations: these are the quotidian realities of being a teenager in Harlem. But when told through the verses of Xiomara Batista, they take on a mythical tone, allowing the reader to glimpse the creative force pulsing beneath the surface of a face whom the world sees as just another girl with brown skin and big hips that everyone is invited to comment on. ‘The Poet X’ is the question and the answer. Do words matter? Can the stories we tell make a difference? Words are power. Stories are exploration, affirmation, and incantation all at once. Elizabeth Acevedo’s novel in verse is a testament to the struggle to find your own voice and the freedom in using it.”

— Lelia Nebeker @ One More Page Books, VA

“A powerful, heartwarming tale of a girl not afraid to reach out and figure out her place in the world.”

— [Booklist](#)

★ “Themes as diverse as growing up first-generation American, Latinx culture, sizeism, music, burgeoning sexuality, and the power of the written and spoken word are all explored with nuance. Poignant and real, beautiful and intense, this story of a girl struggling to define herself is as powerful as Xiomara’s name: ‘one who is ready for war.’”

— [Kirkus Reviews](#) (starred review)

★ “Debut novelist Acevedo’s free verse gives Xiomara’s coming-of-age story an undeniable pull, its emotionally charged bluntness reflecting her determination and strength. At its heart, this is a complex and sometimes painful exploration of love in its many forms, with Xiomara’s growing love for herself reigning supreme.”

— [Publishers Weekly](#) (starred review)

★ “In nearly every poem, there is at least one universal truth about adolescence, family, gender, race, religion, or sexuality that will have readers either nodding in grateful acknowledgment or blinking away tears.”

— [Horn Book](#) (starred review)

★ “In her debut novel-in-verse, poet Elizabeth Acevedo...takes on the universal push-pull of parents and teens with gritty elegance. Readers will relate to X’s frustration over her parents’ tight reins on her activities and her longing for the mental, emotional and physical space to discover who she is in her world. *The Poet X* is beautiful and true—a splendid debut.”

— [Shelf Awareness](#) (starred review)

“This title seamlessly weaves the intricacies of adolescence with the nuances of Dominican culture in New York City. Acevedo plays with language, form, and space in a way that commands attention, pulling readers from one emotional extreme to the next without pause or remorse. Xiomara’s complex character—her strict religious home life, her fiery resistance to unwarranted sexual attention, and her curiosity about boys—is developed with care. Readers will applaud Xiomara as she journeys from a place of cautious defensiveness to being confident in the power of her voice.”

— *Bulletin of the Center for Children’s Books*

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“Acevedo’s poetry is skillfully and gorgeously crafted, each verse can be savored on its own, but together they create a portrait of a young poet sure to resonate with readers long after the book’s end. Truly a ‘lantern glowing in the dark’ for aspiring poets everywhere. All YA collections will want to share and treasure this profoundly moving work.”

— [School Library Journal](#) (starred review)

“There is an intense emotional arc to this electrifying novel in poems showcasing the emergence of a gifted writer in fictional Xiomara, and in author Acevedo. As Xiomara faces her mother’s scorn, questions her faith, and deals with complications of friendship and romance, her journey is heart-wrenching. Her triumph comes in daring and then demanding to be seen as she triumphantly asserts her voice within and beyond her family and claims her identity as a poet.”

— [Cooperative Children’s Book Center](#)

“Acevedo has crafted a living, breathing world in Xiomara, and you can tell that from the very first page. Her unique voice, coupled with an engaging story about acceptance, rebellion, and identity in this Dominican-American teen, makes *The Poet X* a powerful read.”

— Mark Oshiro for Latinxs in Kid Lit

“In her debut novel-in-verse, poet Elizabeth Acevedo...takes on the universal push-pull of parents and teens with gritty elegance. Readers will relate to X’s frustration over her parents’ tight reins on her activities and her longing for the mental, emotional and physical space to discover who she is in her world. *The Poet X* is beautiful and true—a splendid debut.”

— [School Library Journal](#) (starred review)

## AWARDS AND ACCOLADES

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- National Book Award Medalist
- Michael J. Printz Award
- Pura Belpre Award for Author
- Carnegie Medal
- *Boston Globe/Horn Book* Award for Fiction
- Golden Kite Award
- Walter Award
- Amelia Elizabeth Walden Book Award
- Los Angeles Times Book Prize
- Odyssey Award Honor Book for best audio
- ALA Best Fiction for Young Adults selection—Top Ten
- ALA Notable Children’s Book
- YALSA Best Fiction for Reluctant Readers
- L.A. Times Book Prize Finalist
- *New York Times* Notable Children’s Books
- *Time* Magazine Top Ten Books of the Year
- *Kirkus* Prize Finalist
- *Kirkus* Best Teen Books of the Year
- *School Library Journal* Best Books of the Year
- *Publishers Weekly* Best Books of the Year
- *Horn Book* Fanfare
- *Boston Globe* best books of the year
- Shelf Awareness Best Books of the Year
- Odyssey Award Honor for Audio
- New York Public Library Top Ten Best Book for Kids & Best Book for Teens

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- Carnegie Medal shortlist
- CBC Teen Choice Awards Finalist
- *New York Times* bestseller
- *New York Times* Editors' Choice
- *Entertainment Weekly* Best YA Books of the Year
- AudioFile Best Audios of the Year
- Starred reviews, *Kirkus*, *Publishers Weekly*, *Horn Book*, *School Library Journal*, Shelf Awareness
- NPR Best Books of the Year
- Waterstones Book Prize finalist
- NAIBA YA Book of the Year
- Muriel Becker Award, NJ Council of Teachers of English
- Keynote speaker, ALA Midwinter
- Amelia Bloomer Project nominee
- Indie Bestseller List
- Publishers Marketplace YA Buzz Book
- Bustle's 25 Best Novels of the Year
- Bustle's 27 Most Anticipated YA Contemporary Books Hitting Shelves In 2018
- Bookscan bestseller list
- Texas TAYSHAS list Top Ten
- Nerdy Book Club Top 15 Diverse YA books
- Audible's best audios of the year—YA runner-up
- Book Riot's Best Audiobooks of the Year
- Cuyahoga County Public Library's list of Great Books for Kids
- Junior Library Guild
- The Nerdies best books of the year
- Pennsylvania Young Reader's Choice Awards
- Illinois Readers' Choice Award nominee
- Georgia Peach Award nominee
- Cooperative Children's Book Center CCBC Choices
- Indies Choice Award nominee
- YALSA Teens' Top Ten Nominee
- Bank Street Best Books of the Year (\*outstanding merit)
- Florida Teens Read Award finalist

## MEDIA AND RESOURCES

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- [Discussion Guide](#)
- ["Slam Poet Elizabeth Acevedo Debuts Novel, 'The Poet X'" \*Teen Vogue\*](#)
- ["Elizabeth Acevedo's Upcoming YA Book Is For Afro-Latina Teens Who Never Feel Seen" \*Remezcla\*](#)
- [Elizabeth Acevedo: 2018 National Book Festival](#)
- ["Elizabeth Acevedo on writing a coming-of-age novel" \*PBS Newshour\*](#)

## RESPONSE TO CHALLENGES

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*Add responses to challenges whenever possible, including links if available. Relevant information includes official responses from a board of education, library statements of support, or other statements of support from relevant organizations like PEN America or the Comic Book Legal Defense Fund.*

## AUTHOR STATEMENT (OPTIONAL)

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*Offer the author an opportunity to provide a statement about the potential impact of banning their book or a link to an existing author statement.*

**\*A NOTE ON AGE RANGES**

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A publisher-suggested age range covers the gamut of readers that publishers envision using the book, whether for independent reading, family sharing, group study, or in other ways. Educators have the best sense of the appropriate age range for the diverse learners they work with and understand these ranges vary depending on a book's intended use.