

Background Information for Library Materials in Review

Book Title: <i>The Poet X</i>	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.
Book Author Acevedo, Elizabeth	
Copyright Year: 2018	

Source: Novelist Plus - accessed via SCDiscus

Professional Reviews of *The Poet X*

Source: Follett Titlewave

Booklist (November 1, 2017 (Vol. 114, No. 5))

Grades 9-12. This coming-of-age story from the streets of Harlem centers on Xiomara Barista, a teenage poet seeking to express herself. X has loved writing down her thoughts from an early age. Unfortunately, she doesn't get to share them with her family, due to her mother's strict dedication to making sure X is focused on being a good Catholic girl. When X starts questioning her faith and realizes her brother is hiding his own secrets from their mother, she starts figuring out how she can stand up for herself and her beliefs. The story, though centered around the family drama, explores other poignant themes facing girls today, diving into human sexuality, the psychological impacts of going through an early puberty, and how girls have to fend off advances from men—as well as the slut-shaming stigma that simultaneously can come from women. Ultimately, though, this is a powerful, heartwarming tale of a girl not afraid to reach out and figure out her place in the world.

Kirkus Reviews starred (January 15, 2018)

Poetry helps first-generation Dominican-American teen Xiomara Batista come into her own. Fifteen-year old Xiomara ("See-oh-MAH-ruh," as she constantly instructs teachers on the first day of school) is used to standing out: she's tall with "a little too much body for a young girl." Street harassed by both boys and grown men and just plain harassed by girls, she copes with her fists. In this novel in verse, Acevedo examines the toxicity of the "strong black woman" trope, highlighting the ways Xiomara's seeming unbreakability doesn't allow space for her humanity. The only place Xiomara feels like herself and heard is in her poetry—and later with her love interest, Aman (a Trinidadian immigrant who, refreshingly, is a couple inches shorter than her). At church and at home, she's stifled by her intensely Catholic mother's rules and fear of sexuality. Her present-but-absent father and even her brother, Twin (yes, her actual twin), are both emotionally unavailable. Though she finds support in a dedicated teacher, in Aman, and in a poetry club and spoken-word competition, it's Xiomara herself who finally gathers the resources she needs to solve her problems. The happy ending is not a neat one, making it both realistic and satisfying. 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." (Verse fiction. 14-18)

Publishers Weekly (January 22, 2018)

Harlem sophomore Xiomara Batista isn't saintly like her virtuous twin brother. And her tough exterior-she's

always ready to fend off unwelcome advances and unkind words-hides questions and insecurities. As her confirmation nears (after two failed attempts), Xiomara begins to voice her uncertainties about the Catholic faith and patriarchal piety pressed on her by her mother and the church. Both intrigued and disgusted by the advances of her peers and older men, she begins a secret relationship with her lab partner Aman, who seems interested in more than her curves ("who knew words,/ when said by the right person,/ by a boy who raises your temperature,/ moves heat like nothing else?"). Xiomara pours her innermost self into poems and dreams of competing in poetry slams, a passion she's certain her conservative Dominican parents will never accept. 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. Ages 13-up. Agent: Ammi-Joan Paquette, Erin Murphy Literary. (Mar.) © Copyright PWxyz, LLC. All rights reserved.

School Library Journal (March 1, 2018)

Gr 7 Up-Magnificently crafted, Acevedo's bildungsroman in verse is a stunning account of a teen girl's path to poetry. Sophomore Xiomara Batista is simultaneously invisible and hyper visible at home, school, and in her largely Dominican community in Harlem-her body is "unhide-able" she tells readers early on, yet she bristles at how others project their desires, insecurities, failures, patriarchal attitudes toward her. Though she is quick to battle and defend herself and her twin brother Xavier, Xiomara's inner life sensitively grapples with these projections and the expectations of her strict, religious mother. Acevedo's depiction of a faith in crisis is exceedingly relatable and teens, especially those going through the sacrament of Confirmation, will deeply appreciate Xiomara's thoughtful questioning of the Church and how it treats women. Forbidden kisses with a crush and an impromptu performance at an open mic prove to be euphoric, affirming moments for Xiomara: "it's beautiful and real and what I wanted." 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. -VERDICT Truly a "lantern glowing in the dark" for aspiring poets everywhere. All YA collections will want to share and treasure this profoundly moving work.-Della Farrell, School Library Journal © Copyright 2018. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.

Horn Book Magazine (March/April, 2018)

Fifteen-year-old Xiomara, whose name means "one who is ready for war," has been fighting her whole life. The self-described "brown and big and angry" Dominican girl from Harlem furiously confronts catcalling boys, chafes under her Catholic parents' restrictive rules, and both adores and resents her "genius" twin brother, who seems to be everything she's not. She finds moments of peace by writing in her poetry journal, joining a spoken-word poetry club, and exploring a blossoming romance with Aman, her science partner. The slow-burning suspense of what will transpire when devout Mami discovers Xiomara and Aman's clandestine relationship is eclipsed only by the devastation that occurs when Mami finds and reads Xiomara's candid journal. But Xiomara must brave Mami's ire if she is ever going to realize her writing dream. Spoken-word artist Acevedo's debut verse novel is an arresting portrait of a young poet coming into her own. 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. "It almost feels like / the more I bruise the page / the quicker something inside me heals." jennifer hubert swan

Awards/Distinctions Awarded to *The Poet X*

Source: NovelistPlus

ALA Notable Children's Books - Older Readers Category: 2019
Amelia Bloomer Lists - Young Adult Fiction: 2019
Boston Globe-Horn Book Awards: Fiction and Poetry
Carnegie Medal
Indies' Choice Book Awards: Young Adult Fiction
Los Angeles Times Book Prizes: Young Adult Literature
Michael L. Printz Award
National Book Awards: Young People's Literature
Pura Belpre Award (Narrative)
School Library Journal Best Books: 2018
Walter Dean Myers Awards for Outstanding Children's Literature
YALSA Best Fiction for Young Adults: 2019
YALSA Quick Picks for Reluctant Young Adult Readers: 2019