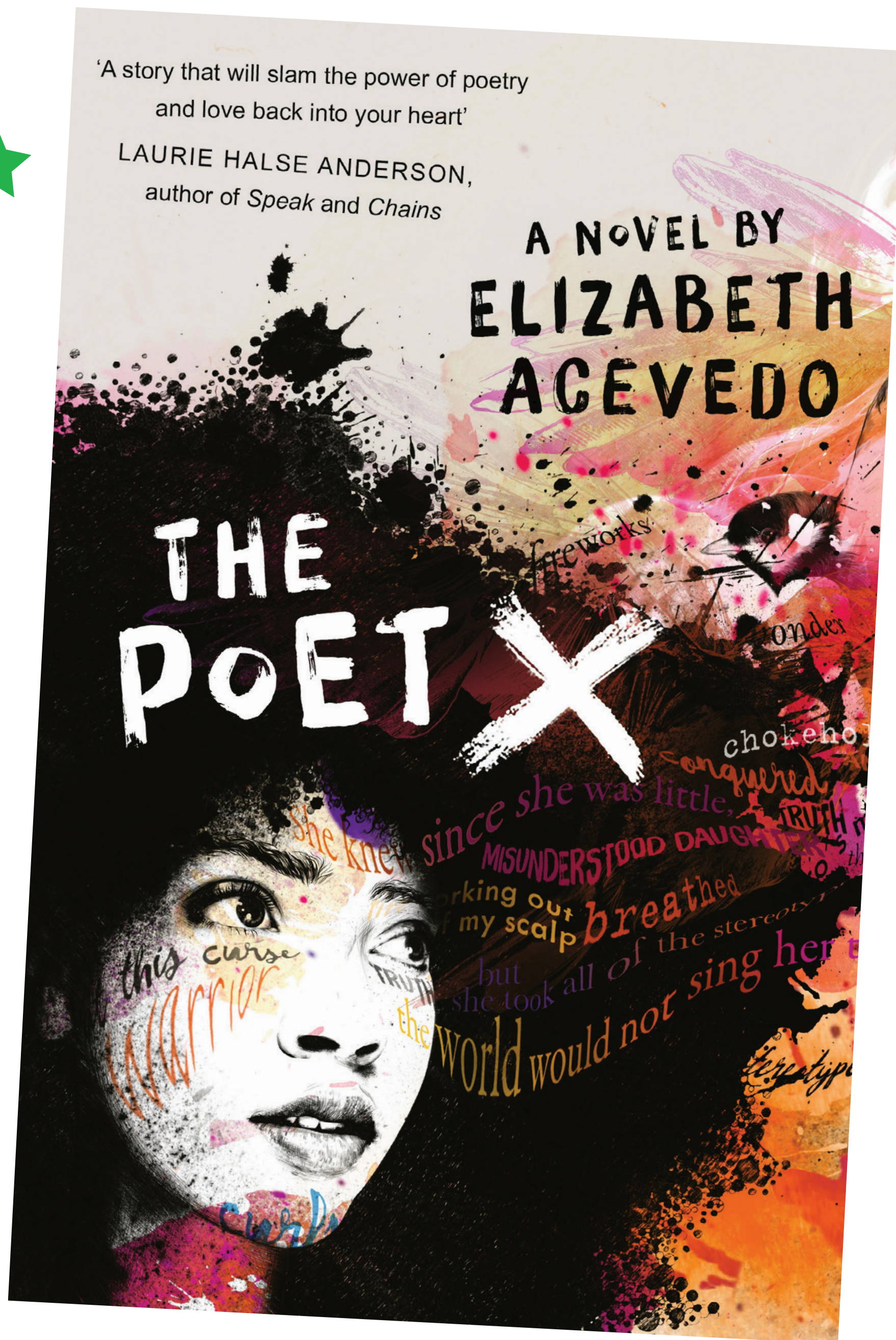


CILIP CARNEGIE SHORTLIST 2019

SHADOWING RESOURCES



The CILIP Carnegie
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Children's Book
Awards



English
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CILIP Carnegie Medal 2019 TALKING POINTS

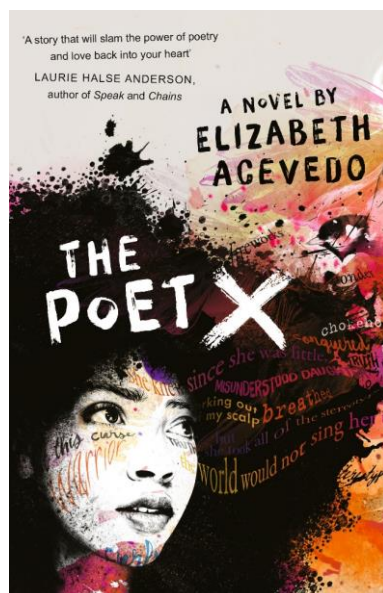
Title: **The Poet X**

Author: **Elizabeth Acevedo**

Publisher: **Electric Monkey**

A NOVEL IN POEMS

Novels in poems are still quite unusual – how did you find this?
How long did it take you to get used to this aspect of it?



Acevedo has said she read the poems aloud while writing to test them out (and she's an experienced performer); have you tried reading any aloud yourself, to see how it affects your reading experience?

The poems in this book combine to form a novel, a single narrative – but how often do you feel they might stand alone as individual poems, too?

Acevedo has described the importance of Jason Reynolds's work when getting started on this book – can you see interesting parallels between this book and *Long Way Down*?

MAMI

Acevedo makes Mami a relatively older mother, and one of the few monolingual Spanish-speakers – why do you think she might have chosen to create the character like this?

Mami often seems to be the villain of this book – but did you ever find yourself having some sympathy for her?

TWIN

What do we learn about Xiomara from her relationship with Twin?

Why is it important that it was Twin who gave Xiomara her first journal?

How are Twin's struggles with expectation different from Xiomara's, and how are they similar?

OTHER CHARACTERS

How is Xiomara's life complicated by:

- Caridad?
- Ms Galiano?
- Aman?
- Papi?

RELIGION AND TRADITION

What did you make of Acevedo's depiction of Catholicism in this book? Is it Critical? Balanced? Nuanced? Extreme?

How much of this is because what we're seeing is just Xiomara's personal perspective? (And how much is also to do with what this Catholicism expects from women in particular?)

When does Xiomara's rebellion against these Catholic expectations begin?

How have her feelings about religion changed by the end of the book?

POEMS IN THE NOVEL

Why do you think Acevedo doesn't share with us the poem Xiomara performs at the final slam?

Would you have preferred to have known it?

Why does Xiomara choose "X" as her slam name?

How does poetry help Xiomara to change? (Many have commented on the way she manages to "find her voice" over the course of the story, but what does this mean?)

GROWING UP, GAINING CONFIDENCE?

What are the ways in which Xiomara learns to challenge the expectations placed on her?

Many books for teen readers are about young people at a moment of significant development and transition in their lives. Is *The Poet X* such a book?

Acevedo has often worked with teenagers, and still has her own teenage diaries – how do you think this might have helped her create Xiomara's voice? Does Xiomara sound like a believable teenager to you?

Do other characters judge her? Are you expected to?

FINALLY

The Poet X is Acevedo's first novel, but there's a second coming soon. Does this one make you eager to read the next?

Do you think this book should win the 2019 Carnegie Medal? Why, or why not?

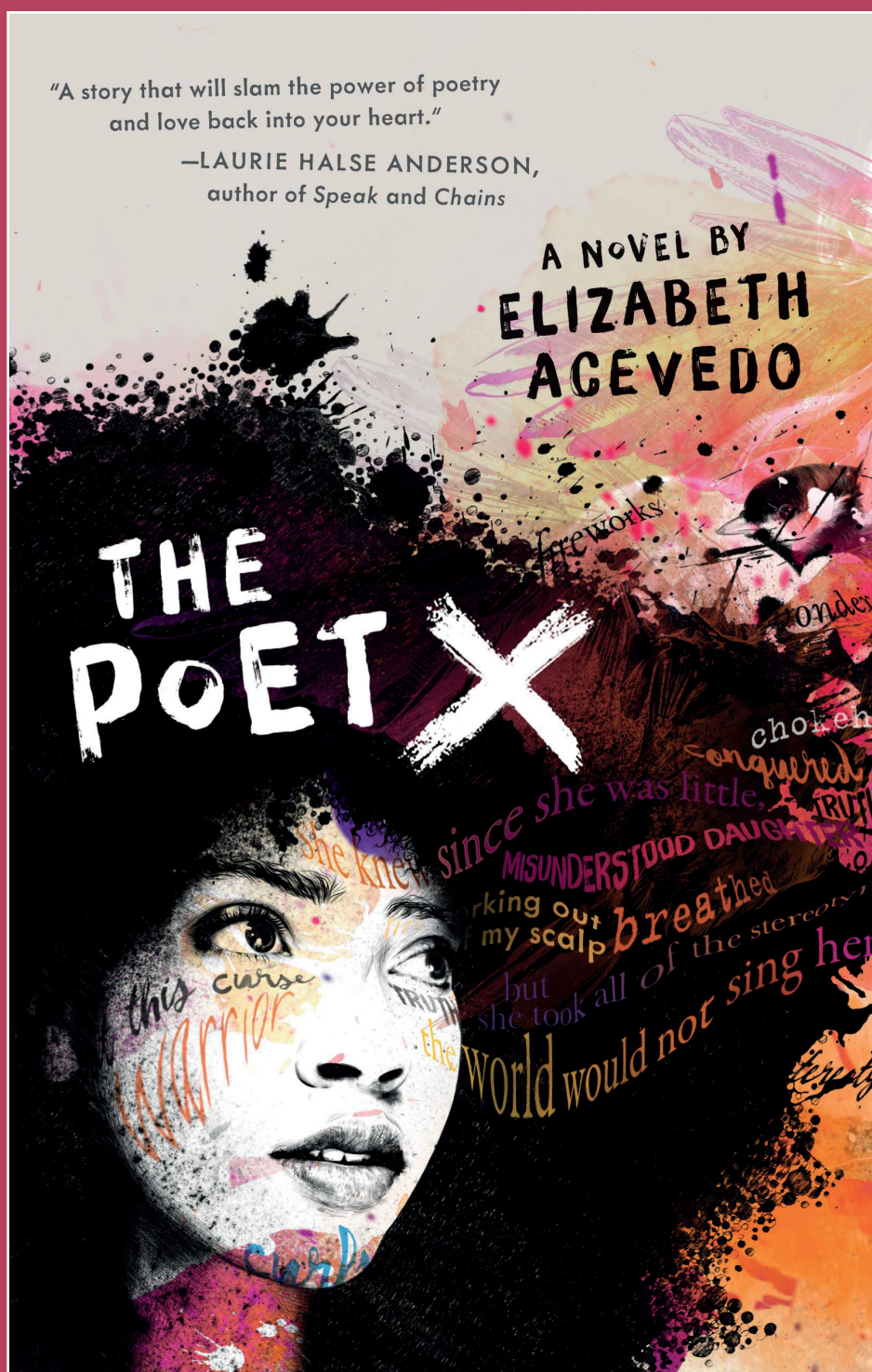
Discussing human rights in this story:

Right to express ourselves; to participate in and contribute to culture; the right to make up our own minds; to have a religion and change it if we want; to equality including women's rights and LGBTI rights

- What could Aman have done when Xiomara was harassed in the corridor? Who else could have done something?
- Is there a conflict between Xiomara's right to self-expression and her mother's right to have a religion?
- How does the writer show Xiomara's growing confidence in expressing herself?



The Carnegie Shortlist 2019



EMC Resources: The Poet X



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Awards



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Publications

Teachers' Note

This book contains some material that is not suitable for some younger students. Teachers should, therefore, make sure to read the book carefully before teaching it or recommending it to students.

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BEFORE READING

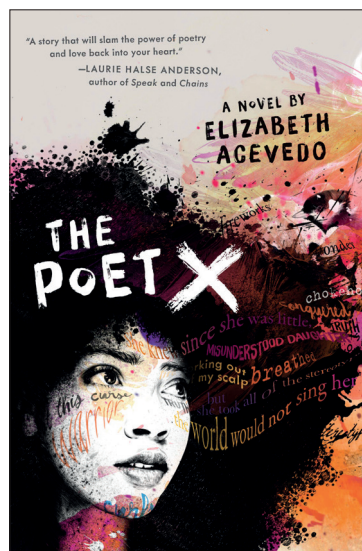
Making predictions

- Complete the three prediction tasks, below, in a pair or three.
- When you have completed the tasks, pool all your ideas about the novel as a whole group.
- Keep a note of your ideas so that you can refer back to them as you read.

1. The front cover

- In a pair or small group, examine the book's front cover and discuss the questions below.

- ▶ What do you think the book will be about?
- ▶ What is the likely audience for the book?
- ▶ Does it remind you of any other books? Does it make you want to pick the book up and start to read?



2. The title

The title of the novel you are going to read is *The Poet X*.

- Working with your partner or three, discuss what you think about the title. What meanings and connotations can you think of?
- Discuss your ideas, questions and predictions about the novel, including what genre of story you might expect.

3. A taster

- Read the three extracts from the novel. Add to your ideas, questions and predictions about the novel, including what genre of story you might expect.

Extract 1

Altar Boy

Twin is much easier for Mami to understand. He
likes church.

As much of a science geek as he is,
He doesn't question the Bible the way that I do.

Extract 2

Questions I have

It's so complicated.

For a while now I've been having all these feelings,
Noticing boys more than I used to.

Extract 3

Mami's Dating Rules

Rule 1. I can't date

Rule 2. At least until I'm married

Rule 3. See rules 1 and 2.

DURING READING

We recommend working through the novel without pausing too often, then doing some more substantial work afterwards. The novel does offer lots of opportunities to pause for reflection, particularly about the different relationships described and the issues raised.

- Keep a journal while reading, pausing to write down your reflections about each of the points below. Where possible, have a discussion with other readers before putting your thoughts down on paper.

Say it out loud

- ▶ Try reading some of the poems aloud, or listening to someone else read them. Think about whether the poems work better aloud or on the page and why. Elizabeth Acevedo is an award-winning slam poet, so you might enjoy listening to her read *The Poet X* as an audiobook if you get the chance.

Unhideable

At the beginning of the book, Xiomara says she is 'unhideable'.

- ▶ As you read, think about what she means by this, how it affects her, the times when she wants to hide and what happens when she tries.

Home and school

- ▶ What are the different pressures faced by Xiomara and Twin/Xavier at home and at school? When does the culture of home and school clash and how do they handle this?

Changing it up

- ▶ When you have finished Part One, look back at some of the different types of writing, for example when a poem is dated, or when it is dialogue with a single letter showing who is talking. What is the difference between the different types of entry? Why do you think Acevedo varied the entries in this way?

Xiomara and religion

- ▶ Track Xiomara's changing relationship with religion and the Church and the conclusions she comes to at the end of the novel.

First loves

- ▶ Think about the similarities and differences in the ways Xiomara and Twin/Xavier handle their relationships and the difficulties they face.

A novel in verse

- ▶ As you read, think about why Elizabeth Acevedo decided to write her novel as a series of poems. If the novel were told in prose, with Xiomara as a first person narrator, how would it be different?

A home of prayers and silence

Right at the end of the novel, Xiomara says she was 'raised in a home of prayers and silence'.

- ▶ Think about all the things in the family which are not spoken about. Flick through the book and look at some of the places where a poem says 'what I didn't say' or where Xiomara writes a rough draft of an assignment but hands in something completely different. By the end of the book, do you feel Xiomara and Twin/Xavier have found a voice and a way to be heard?

AFTER READING

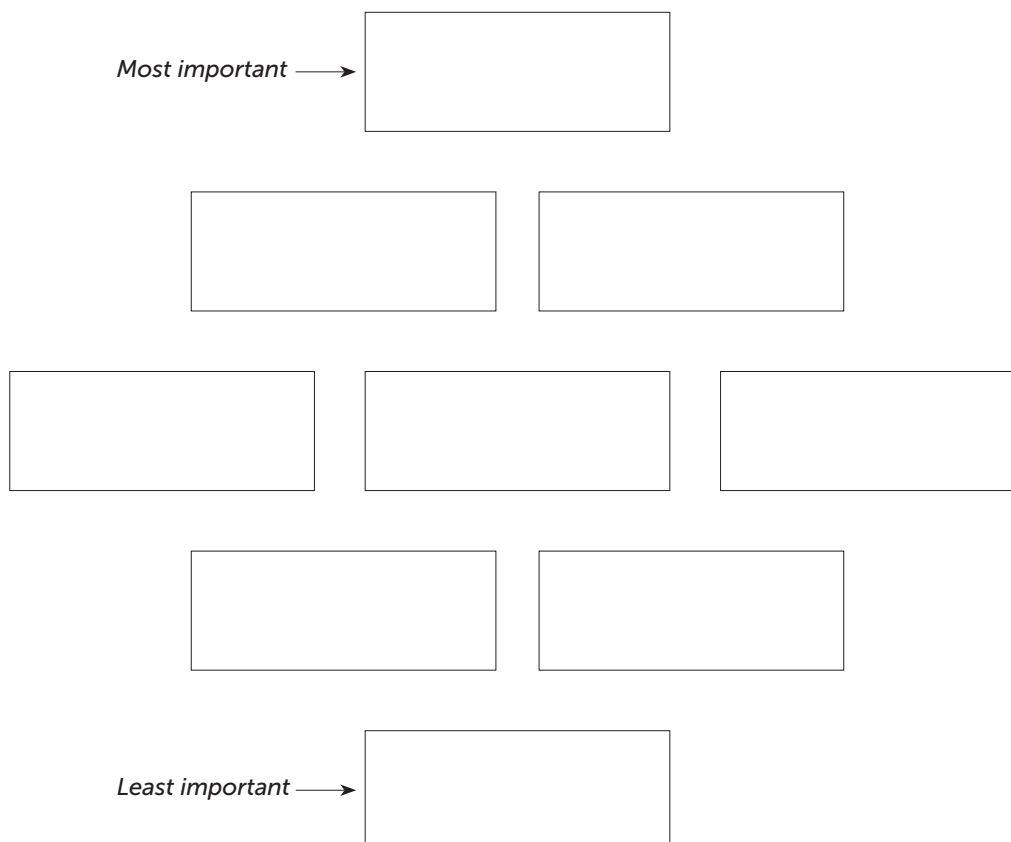
What is the novel about?

- Below are nine suggestions for what *The Poet X* is about.
- Working in a pair, or small group, rearrange them into a 'Diamond 9' formation, as shown below.
- Compare your arrangement with another pair or group and discuss any differences.

The Poet X is about ...

How the older and the younger generation misunderstand each other	The power of words, and poetry in particular	The difficulties in managing different expectations: from home, school, friends, religion and culture
The importance of making the most of your talents	Breaking out of stereotypes	First love
A girl of colour learning to love herself	The damage done by secrets and lies	The importance of having a way to express yourself and feel heard

Diamond 9 pattern



Exploring relationships

- Much of the novel centres around Xiomara. However, there are lots of other characters who feature prominently. Remind yourself of the role played by each of the following characters.

Mami	Father Sean
Mrs Galliano	Isabelle
Papi	Caridad
Twin	Aman

- In a pair or a three, cut out the names of the characters. Group and move them around to show how they are connected in the novel. For example, characters from different aspects of Xiomara's life.
- Re-shuffle the names and come up with a different set of relationships. For example, characters that help Xiomara to grow in confidence.
- Stick down the names on a large sheet of paper in a way that you think best shows different relationships in the novel. Draw arrows and insert comments to make it clear what the relationships are.
- Compare what different groups have come up with and then write a short piece on your own with the title:

What the novel shows about human relationships.

Responding in verse

- Read the poem below which Lola, on Goodreads.com, wrote in response to *The Poet X*.
- Write your own poem in response to the book. You could write in the style of Xiomara, or in a style of your own.

I stand here, and I think,
if there is one thing I want to say,
to Xiomara,
it's that she is proof effervescent passion and love,
transcend hate.

Words have the power,
to open your chest,
and pull your heart out,
and carry it to the sky.

But if those words are not expressed,
if they remain imprisoned,
and you remain restrained,
you will never feel freedom.

I want to let them free,
to let them fly,
to let them breathe,
to let me cry,
my emotions out,
to form a pool,
that becomes a sanctuary.

Reading the reviews

The extracts, below, are all from reviews of the book.

- Working with a partner, discuss which reviewer comes closest to your own view of the book.
- Working individually, write your own paragraph to express your views about the novel. You can draw on the review extracts you have read if you wish.
- Share some of your reviews as a whole group.

A. What a revelation this book was! I devoured it in one sitting and could hear the rhythm of the words in my head. Some of the subject matter is really tough and X is a character that you just want to get through life with as few scars as possible. You feel for her and Acevedo has ensured that you feel with her. When she talks about the shivers up the back of her neck, you feel them. When she talks about the anger caused by 'grown ass' men hitting on her, you feel that anger. I feel quite certain that this is a book, and a character, that will stay with me for a long time.

L.J. Newsholme on www.Amazon.co.uk

B. Some of the poems just were okay... The difficulty with using poetry to further a plot is that sometimes you struggle to create linking passages between events and at times the poems just didn't feel all that poetic. The plot... What plot??? Was there a plot?? Well if there was one it was signposted so much along the way that it just plodded along in incredibly predictable fashion.

Emer on www.goodreads.com

C. Xiomara's powerful and affecting story expresses what it's like to be a teen girl suddenly in possession of a woman's body, noticed and commented on by men. It also considers how her religious parents' expectations for Xiomara as a young woman constrain her (and them) in ways that have to be newly negotiated.

It's refreshing to read a teen book where the protagonist deals openly with religion alongside first love and the blossoming of her own artistic talents.

Booktrust.org.uk

D. I really enjoyed the characters in this book; in very few words the author managed to portray the characters' personalities and traits vividly and emotionally.

The discussion of religion was fascinating. As someone who is in no way religious, I felt that the author did a great job at showing the protagonist's doubts and fears.

On the whole, I enjoyed *The Poet X* though there were aspects that I felt were a little lacking. Xavier, Xiomara's twin, had an interesting story that I wish had been explored more. I don't think that the book's conclusion was as impactful as it could have been as everything was tied up too neatly.

Charlotte on www.amazon.co.uk

Cards for Literary Analysis

These cards have been designed for use with any short story or novel. You can select a particular card to work with or rely on your teacher to give you a particular area of focus. You could then work through the bullet points on your card or select a few that seem most interesting or relevant for a particular text.

Setting

- ▶ In which different settings does this story/novel take place? What part does each setting play? Which setting is most significant and why?
- ▶ How important is setting to the story/novel as a whole? Does the setting have a particular impact on the story/novel, or could it be set almost anywhere?
- ▶ What difference would it make if this story/novel was set somewhere else? E.g. another country, a rural rather than urban setting, in space!
- ▶ How effective do you think the writer has been in creating a sense of place? Are there any particular examples of setting you think are particularly well written? If so, why?
- ▶ Is there anything particularly interesting or special about the way setting is used and presented? In what ways is it similar or different to stories/ novels that explore similar themes and ideas, or that are written in the same genre?
- ▶ Find one or two bullet points from other cards that add to what you have discussed about setting. Explain the connections.
- ▶ Is there anything important that you've noticed that isn't raised on this card? What is it? Why do you think it's important?

Characters

- ▶ Who is your favourite character, and why?
- ▶ Who do you think is the most important character, and why?
- ▶ Who are the other significant characters? What different roles do they have?
- ▶ What is special or unusual about the way one or more of the characters is presented?
- ▶ Which character would you most like to be friends with, and why? Which character might significant adults want you to be friends with, and why?
- ▶ Are characters paired or grouped in any particular ways? E.g. friends, rivals, etc. What ideas are raised by these pairs or groupings?
- ▶ Are the characters typical of ones found in this kind of story/novel? Are they distinctive and individual, or stereotypes? Explain your answer.
- ▶ Find one or two bullet points from other cards that add to what you have discussed about characters. Explain the connections.
- ▶ Is there anything important that you've noticed that isn't raised on this card? What is it? Why do you think it's important?

Form and structure

- ▶ What do you think is interesting about the way this story/novel begins?
- ▶ What were the key moments in this story/novel? How did they shape the story/novel as a whole?
- ▶ If you had to describe the path of this story/novel, what would it be? E.g. journey from childhood to adulthood, from grief to happiness etc.
- ▶ What did you notice about the end of this story/novel? Was it what you were expecting? Did it tie up loose ends, or leave some things unresolved?
- ▶ Does this story/novel belong to a particular genre? If so, how does it fit in with other stories that you know in the same genre?
- ▶ Does the story/novel use just one form or does it include more than one E.g. letters, diary entries, poems, newspaper reports
- ▶ Find one or two bullet points from other cards that add to what you have discussed about form and structure. Explain the connections.
- ▶ Is there anything important that you've noticed that isn't raised on this card? What is it? Why do you think it's important?

Themes and ideas

- ▶ What, to you, are the five most important themes and ideas in this story/novel? If you had to narrow your list down to one theme or idea, what would it be and why? In what ways is this theme presented? E.g. if the theme is love, what exactly does the story/novel have to say about love?
- ▶ Does this story/novel deal with big issues that affect the whole world, or small ones that affect individual lives? Give reasons for your answer.
- ▶ Does this story/novel contain any themes or ideas that have made you look at the world in new ways? If so, what are they, and how have they changed your views?
- ▶ Does this story/novel contain any themes and ideas that explore how people should act and behave? If so, what are they and do you agree with how they are presented?
- ▶ Are the themes and ideas presented in ways similar or different to other stories you have read, including stories of the same type, or in the same genre?
- ▶ Find one or two bullet points from other cards that add to what you have discussed about themes and ideas. Explain the connections.
- ▶ Is there anything important that you've noticed that isn't raised on this card? What is it? Why do you think it's important?

Language

- ▶ Identify one or two of your favourite passages in the story/novel where language is used particularly well? Explain how it is used.
- ▶ How would you describe the language used in this story/novel overall? E.g. poetic, plain, chatty etc.
- ▶ Would you say the language in this story/novel is original or creative in any particular way? If so, how?
- ▶ Are there any patterns in the language used? If so, what are they, and what is their effect? Are there any other patterns, such as of imagery and symbolism?
- ▶ How is dialogue used in the story/novel? Do characters, for example, speak in particularly distinctive ways?
- ▶ Is the language similar to how it is used in similar kinds of stories/novels? If so, in what ways? If not, why not?
- ▶ Find one or two bullet points from other cards that add to what you have discussed about language. Explain the connections.
- ▶ Is there anything important that you've noticed that isn't raised on this card? What is it? Why do you think it's important?

Narrative

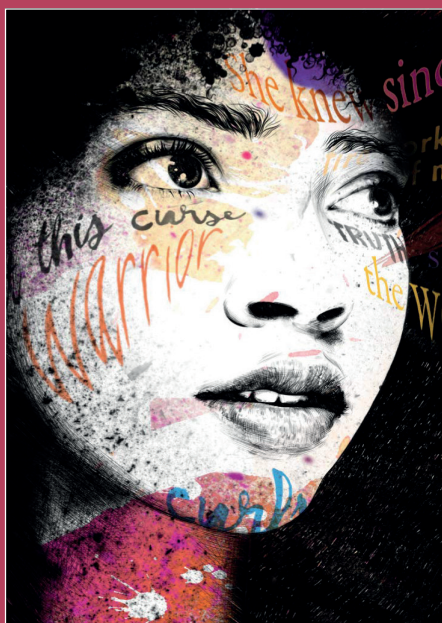
- ▶ How does the writer try to capture and keep the reader's attention? How successful are they in doing this?
- ▶ Is the narrative told in order from beginning to end (a linear narrative), or does it move backwards and forwards in time? What is the effect of the order in which events are told?
- ▶ Can you think of any other ways the story/novel could be told? For example, by a different character, or in a different order? How would this affect your experience of reading?
- ▶ Would you say that this story/novel is told in a particular original or creative way? If so, how?
- ▶ Is this story/novel told in a way that is typical for its genre?
- ▶ Find one or two bullet points from other cards that add to what you have discussed about narrative. Explain the connections.
- ▶ Is there anything important that you've noticed that isn't raised on this card? What is it? Why do you think it's important?

Point of view and voice

- ▶ Through whose eyes do we see the events of the story/novel? Do readers get just one point of view or several?
- ▶ What do you find interesting about the point or points of view presented?
- ▶ If the story/novel is told from different points of view, how does the writer do this?
- ▶ What would the story/novel be like if told from someone else's point of view? Whose point of view would you choose, and why?
- ▶ How would you describe the tone of voice used to tell the narrative? Does the narrative draw attention to itself by using a particular tone, or is the tone pushed to the background? What is the effect of the choice made by the writer?
- ▶ Find one or two bullet points from other cards that add to what you have discussed about point of view and voice. Explain the connections.
- ▶ Is there anything important that you've noticed that isn't raised on this card? What is it? Why do you think it's important?

Audience and overall personal response

- ▶ Who do you think this story/novel was written for, and why? Are there any other groups of people who you think should read it?
- ▶ What was your experience of reading this story/novel?
- ▶ What would you recommend about this story/novel to other people?
- ▶ Which parts of this story/novel did you most enjoy? Were there any parts that you didn't enjoy?
- ▶ Do you think this story/novel could be improved in some way? If so, how?
- ▶ What other stories (or films, TV, plays etc.) does this story/novel remind you of? In what ways?
- ▶ Who do you think should read this book and why?
- ▶ Find one or two bullet points from other cards that add to what you have discussed about personal response and audience. Explain the connections.
- ▶ Is there anything important that you've noticed that isn't raised on this card? What is it? Why do you think it's important?



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