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# Gabi, A Girl In Pieces (Junior Library Guild Selection)



## Synopsis

Named to Kirkus Reviews Best Books of 2014  
Named to School Library Journal Best Books of 2014  
Gabi Hernandez chronicles her last year in high school in her diary: college applications, Cindy's pregnancy, Sebastian's coming out, the cute boys, her father's meth habit, and the food she craves. And best of all, the poetry that helps forge her identity.

July 24  
My mother named me Gabriella, after my grandmother who, coincidentally, didn't want to meet me when I was born because my mother was unmarried, and therefore living in sin. My mom has told me the story many, many, MANY, times of how, when she confessed to my grandmother that she was pregnant with me, her mother beat her. BEAT HER! She was twenty-five. That story is the basis of my sexual education and has reiterated why it's important to wait until you're married to give it up. So now, every time I go out with a guy, my mom says, "Ojos abiertos, piernas cerradas." Eyes open, legs closed. That's as far as the birds and the bees talk has gone. And I don't mind it. I don't necessarily agree with that whole wait until you're married crap, though. I mean, this is America and the 21st century; not Mexico one hundred years ago. But, of course, I can't tell my mom that because she will think I'm bad. Or worse: trying to be White.

Isabel Quintero is a library technician in the Inland Empire. She is also the events coordinator for Orange Monkey and helps edit the poetry journal Tin Cannon. Gabi is her debut novel.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Gr 9 Up – Sixteen-year-old Gabi Hernandez has a lot to deal with during her senior year. Her best friend Cindy is pregnant; her other best friend Sebastian just got kicked out of his house for coming out to his strict parents; her meth addict dad is trying to quit, again; and her super religious Tía Bertha is constantly putting a damper on Gabi's love life. In lyrical diary entries peppered with the burgeoning poet's writing, Spanglish, and phone conversations, Quintero gives voice to a complex, not always likable but totally believable teen who struggles to figure out her own place in the world. Believing she's not Mexican enough for her family and not white enough for Berkeley, Gabi still meets every challenge head-on with vulgar humor and raw honesty. In moments, the diary format may come across as clunky, but the choppy delivery feels purposeful. While the narrative is chock-full of issues, they never bog down the story, interwoven with the usual teen trials, from underwhelming first dates to an unabashed treatment of sex, religion, and family strife. The teen isn't all snark; there's still a naiveté about whether her father will ever kick his addiction to meth, especially evident in her heartfelt letters to him. When tragedy strikes, readers will mourn with Gabi and connect with her fears about college acceptance and her first sexual experience. A refreshing take on slut- and fat-shaming, Quintero's work ranks with Meg Medina's *Yaqui Delgado Wants to Kick Your Ass* (Candlewick, 2013) and Junot Diaz's *Drown* (Riverhead, 1996) as a coming-of-age novel with Latino protagonists. – Shelley Diaz, School Library Journal

"Readers won't soon forget Gabi, a young woman coming into her own in the face of intense pressure from her family, culture and society to fit someone else's idea of what it means to be a 'good' girl. A fresh, authentic and honest exploration of contemporary Latina identity." -- Kirkus Review

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"Reading Quintero's debut is like attending a large family fiesta: it's overpopulated with people, noise, and emotion, but the overall effect is joyous."--Booklist, "starred review"

"Quintero's first novel quickly establishes a strong voice and Mexican-American cultural perspective through the journal of intelligent, self-deprecating, and funny Gabi."--Publishers Weekly, "starred review"

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reflecting the specific experiences of one overweight, Mexican-American teenager, Quintero's debut novel addresses a number of universal themes, from family relationships to sexual exploration. Gabi's voice, as expressed in her diary through poetry, prose, lists, and overheard conversations, is funny, smart, full of wonder, and brutally honest."--VOYA Magazine, "starred review" "Meet Quintero's 'fat girl' Gabi, eating and starving and fighting and writing her way through the crushing pressures of high school boy desire, religious approval and Mexican cultural taboos. I cannot think of any book today for young adults as voracious, bold, truthful and timely."--Juan Felipe Herrera, Poet Laureate of California "One of the year's finest young adult novels."--Largehearted Boy "One of the year's finest young adult novels."--Largehearted Boy "Believing she's not Mexican enough for her family and not white enough for Berkeley, Gabi still meets every challenge head-on with vulgar humor and raw honesty... A refreshing take on slut- and fat-shaming, Quintero's work ranks with Meg Medina's "Yaqui Delgado Wants to Kick Your Ass" and Junot Diaz's "Drown" as a coming-of-age novel with Latino protagonists."--School Library Journal, "starred review" "Meet Quintero's 'fat girl' Gabi, eating and starving and fighting and writing her way through the crushing pressures of high school boy desire, religious approval and Mexican cultural taboos. I cannot think of any book today for young adults as voracious, bold, truthful and timely."--Juan Felipe Herrera, Poet Laureate of California "Readers won't soon forget Gabi, a young woman coming into her own in the face of intense pressure from her family, culture and society to fit someone else's idea of what it means to be a 'good' girl. A fresh, authentic and honest exploration of contemporary Latina identity."--Kirkus Reviews, "starred review" "Quintero's first novel quickly establishes a strong voice and Mexican-American cultural perspective through the journal of intelligent, self-deprecating, and funny Gabi."--Publishers Weekly, "starred review" "Reading Quintero's debut is like attending a large family fiesta: it's overpopulated with people, noise, and emotion, but the overall effect is joyous."--Booklist, "starred review" "While reflecting the specific experiences of one overweight, Mexican-American teenager, Quintero's debut novel addresses a number of universal themes, from family relationships to sexual exploration. Gabi's voice, as expressed in her diary through poetry, prose, lists, and overheard conversations, is funny, smart, full of wonder, and brutally honest."--VOYA Magazine, "starred review" Winner of the 2015 Morris Award for Debut YA Fiction "Meet Quintero's 'fat girl' Gabi, eating and starving and fighting and writing her way through the crushing pressures of high school boy desire, religious approval and Mexican cultural taboos. I cannot think of any book today for young adults as voracious, bold, truthful and timely." Juan Felipe Herrera, U.S. Poet Laureate "One of the year's finest young adult novels." Largehearted Boy "Believing she's not Mexican enough for her family and not white enough for Berkeley, Gabi still

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Quintero's young adult novel 'Gabi: A Girl in Pieces' centers around a young, light-skinned Mexican-American girl. Like Gabi, I feel I need to prove my identity all the time." Melissa Lozada-Oliva, The Guardian Awards 2015 Capitol Choices: Noteworthy Books for Children and Teens 2015 Tomas Rivera Book Award, Works for Older Children 2015 YALSA Best Fiction for Young Adults 2015 YALSA Quick Pick for Reluctant Young Adult Readers, Top 10 Selection Amelia Bloomer List, part of the American Library Association, Social Responsibilities Round Table's Feminist Task Force Booklist Best Books of 2014 School Library Journal Best Books of 2014 "Winner of the 2015 Morris Award for Debut YA Fiction "Meet Quintero's 'fat girl' Gabi, eating and starving and fighting and writing her way through the crushing pressures of high school boy desire, religious approval and Mexican cultural taboos. I cannot think of any book today for young adults as voracious, bold, truthful and timely." --Juan Felipe Herrera, U.S. Poet Laureate "One of the year's finest young adult novels." --Largehearted Boy "Believing she's not Mexican enough for her family and not white enough for Berkeley, Gabi still meets every challenge head-on with vulgar humor and raw honesty... A refreshing take on slut- and fat-shaming, Quintero's work ranks with Meg Medina's Yaqui Delgado Wants to Kick Your Ass and Junot Diaz's Drown as a coming-of-age novel with Latino protagonists." --School Library Journal, starred review "Readers won't soon forget Gabi, a young woman coming into her own in the face of intense pressure from her family, culture and society to fit someone else's idea of what it means to be a 'good' girl. A fresh, authentic and honest exploration of contemporary Latina identity." --Kirkus Reviews, starred review "Quintero's first novel quickly establishes a strong voice and Mexican-American cultural perspective through the journal of intelligent, self-deprecating, and funny Gabi." --Publishers Weekly, starred review "Reading Quintero's debut is like attending a large family fiesta: it's overpopulated with people, noise, and emotion, but the overall effect is joyous." --Booklist, starred review "Told through Gabi's diary, the book is tragic, hilarious, and always whip-smart. It's also, I'm sure, one of the most diverse and all-encompassing YA novels out there." --John Hansen, The Guardian "While reflecting the specific experiences of one overweight, Mexican-American teenager, Quintero's debut novel addresses a number of universal themes, from family relationships to sexual exploration. Gabi's voice, as expressed in her diary through poetry, prose, lists, and overheard conversations, is funny, smart, full of wonder, and brutally honest." --VOYA Magazine, starred review "Gabi's voice is a completely bicultural and bilingual voice, so throughout the novel, you will have Spanish and English the way it's really spoken in our families -- it's this crazy sort of Spanglish mix. And she's bold. She will say the quote-unquote unthinkable things about her body, about sexuality, about the crazy, dual sets of rules for Latino boys and girls." --Meg Medina, author of Yaqui Delgado Wants to Kick Your Ass,

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I feel like this book is as much about me as it is about Isabel Quintero, the author. I first met Isabel when we started 7th grade in 1994 at Corona Fundamental Intermediate School in Corona California. I was 12 years old and about to embark on my teenage years -- which were not the happiest years for me. As a closeted gay male teenager trying to figure out life, growing up in a very conservative, traditional Mexican, Catholic, somewhat homophobic and close-minded home in conservative Southern California, my teenage years were very challenging for me. Reading Isabel's book took me right back to the front and center of this time in my life that, I later realized, for so long I've almost tried to forget, disassociate and distance from. Prior to reading Isabel's book, I considered that my life really started in August of 2000, when I moved to Berkeley California to attend the University of California, Berkeley. I remember the day that my dad and my cousin dropped me off and I felt like I had arrived home, and I felt such a great sense of

belonging, that I never felt before. I lived in the dorms during my first year at Berkeley, and I truly enjoyed being surrounded by all my classmates, especially my very attractive male classmates. Living on campus at Berkeley with so many other amazing, intelligent and talented people truly fueled me to do my very best and I felt this great sense of accomplishment and meaning just being there. I never really missed my family, and I almost dreaded having to go home during the holidays. I love and appreciate my family very much and I am so thankful and feel so blessed to have the family that I have, who has always loved and nurtured me unconditionally. I think that the most important lesson I am taking away from Isabel Allende's book is just a heightened love and appreciation for my family and a fresh appreciation for my teenage experience. I feel extremely blessed to have such a hardworking family. My family's work ethic has followed me to adulthood in a way that I truly learned as a teenager to be persistent, inquisitive and thoughtful as I approach my work and goals. I had a number of moments, when reading Isabel Allende's book, that I felt this burning need to call my mom and just tell her how much I appreciate her. My mom has truly been this solid rock of love and inspiration for me throughout my life and I feel so blessed for it. In sum, my teenage years have truly shaped who I am today and reading Isabel Allende's book made me have a deeper appreciation and understanding of that. Thank you Isabel! :)

Gabi, *A Girl in Pieces* is a beautiful, lyrical, and truly stunning debut novel by Isabel Quintero. Written in diary form, the novel traces Gabi's senior year in high school as she finds her strength and voice through poetry (reading and writing it), learns to love herself and celebrate her "beautifully crazy and colorful all-American family." Gabi's voice is not cliched teen shtick portrayed in teen magazines and so much of popular culture. Instead, hers is honest, raw, vulgar, heartbreaking, hilarious, moving, painful, aware. Quintero explores intersections of gender, race, ethnicity, and sexuality without being preachy; she writes movingly about rape culture ("boys will be boys") from a teen's point of view. Without knowing it, Gabi is an intersectional feminist and also everything that is a 17-18-year-old trying to figure out her life and her path in all of its awkwardness, humiliation, beauty, revelations, and lessons hard-won. I can't wait to read more of Quintero's work. After reading this novel, I'm not at all surprised by the critical accolades it (and she) has received.

Gabi thinks she might go to hell. Not because she is a murderer or a thief or does drugs. She doesn't. It's because she likes boys, (sometimes more than one at a time) wants to have sex, and defends her friends even when they tell her to leave it alone. But the truth is Gabi probably is one of



God's favorite people if he's up there... Although he hasn't been too nice to her lately. Gabi, a Girl in Pieces, is one of my favorite books. I read it twice.

After thirty years of working with "young adults" as Librarian in a senior high school in San Bernardino, California, I can promote "Gabi" as an outstanding, valuable, not to be missed, piece of literature for young adults. At the outset, I would tell the reader to please not give up and experience the author's growing up. Then, her vocabulary reaches beyond the words generally not found in dictionaries. Follow her from July 24 to June 8 with her diary at age 16 in her senior year in high school.

This is the kind of book that keeps you intrigued the whole time. One thing is that if you haven't experienced the struggles that the character goes through in the book, I don't think you won't understand the real meaning. In the same way I felt identified as a Latina woman because the character has much truth as describing our community. I absolutely love this book.

book for my daughter

Excellent

Gabi, a Girl in Pieces is classified as a young adult book, but I'm here to tell you that very old adults will love it too. A big thank you to Isabel Quintero for taking us inside the mind of Gabi and sharing all her thoughts with us. Fascinating, and I only wish that I could continue to be with Gabi as she heads off to college.

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