

How do you speak up when it feels like no one is listening?

Iveliz Explains It All



BY ANDREA BEATRIZ ARANGO
ILLUSTRATED BY ALYSSA BERMUDEZ

EDUCATORS' GUIDE

ABOUT THE BOOK

Seventh grade is going to be Iveliz's year. She's going to make a new friend, help her abuela Mimi get settled after moving from Puerto Rico, and she is *not* going to get into any more trouble at school.

Except is that what happens? Of course not. Because no matter how hard Iveliz tries, sometimes people say things that just make her so *mad*. And worse, Mimi keeps saying Iveliz's medicine is unnecessary—even though it helps Iveliz feel less sad. But how do you explain your feelings to others when you're not even sure what's going on yourself?

Powerful and compassionate, Andrea Beatriz Arango's debut navigates mental health, finding your voice, and discovering that those who really love you will stay by your side.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Andrea Beatriz Arango is the Newbery Honor–winning author of *Iveliz Explains It All*. She was born and raised in Puerto Rico and is a former public school teacher with almost a decade of teaching experience. Andrea now writes the types of children's books she wishes students had more access to. She balances her life in Virginia with trips home to see her family and eat lots of tostones de pana. When she's not busy writing, you can find her enjoying nature in the nearest forest or body of water.



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PRE-READING QUESTIONS

1. Iveliz dreams of being a poet and writes this book as a series of poems. Her Dad teases her, asking if this is how “Gen Z wrote poetry, / all random thoughts and no rhyme.” (p. 23) Iveliz responds that poems *don’t* have to rhyme—they’re just for her, and there are no rules on the page or on the stage! Try writing your own “no-rules” poem that is all about your thoughts right now.
2. Iveliz identifies as a biracial Puerto Rican, and she shares that her mother, who is also Puerto Rican, is white. Her best friend, Amir, is an Afghan boy. Iveliz also has identities that are neither cultural nor racial: for example, she is a girl and a poet. What are your identities? What do your identities teach you about yourself? How do your identities inform your perspective and your relationships? Write a no-rules poem exploring your identities.
3. Iveliz experiences losses and changes in her relationships with the people she is closest to, including her parents, her grandmother, and her best friend. Both loss and change can be very difficult to face. When things get difficult, it can be hard to accept help, even when we need it. When you or someone you care about has gone through a difficult time, what kind of help was useful? Has it ever been difficult for you to accept help? Can you imagine reasons it might be hard for a person to accept help?
4. Puerto Rican history and current events, folklore, food, plants, and Spanish language are all important parts of Iveliz’s story. Puerto Rico is an island in the Caribbean. It is an unincorporated territory of the United States with Commonwealth status, and Puerto Ricans are full American citizens; its official languages are Spanish and English. Iveliz speaks both languages with her family. Several hurricanes (Hurricane Maria is most recent in the book) have devastated the island and caused trauma for many of its residents, including Iveliz’s abuela Mimi. As you read, log Spanish words, places, events, and phrases that are important to Iveliz’s story. Look up those that are new to you, and, if any are not new to you, consider what they mean to you personally. Keep your log beside you as you read.
5. Iveliz experiences a significant trauma, and it affects her mental health. She is helped by medicine and therapy. A member of her family strongly believes Iveliz should not take medicine or go to therapy. What are your beliefs about taking medicine to support mental health, and what are your beliefs about therapy? How have your beliefs been shaped by people in your life, or how are they different from the beliefs of those around you?



DISCUSSION AND WRITING QUESTIONS

1. The opening three poems give us insight into our main character: who she is, what she's faced, and what she wants.

- What do we learn about Iveliz? What do we learn about her age and where she's from? What does she think her teachers, principal, and mother say about her? What is Iveliz's attitude toward the people she mentions, including her abuela?
- Using the clues you have from the first three poems, what do you imagine what may have happened to Iveliz in the last year? How do you imagine the coming year might challenge Iveliz?



2. Jessica and Justin G. tease and bully Iveliz throughout the book. What assumptions is Jessica making when she says, "Cause, you know, / we're all about immigration, but, / do it right." (p. 7) Why does this make Iveliz mad? What do we learn about Iveliz's relationship with Jessica and Justin G.? How does Iveliz feel about her reaction? Write (poem or prose) or draw how you might have reacted to Jessica or how you might have spoken with Iveliz afterward as her friend.

3. Iveliz's poems communicate events, plans, hopes, thoughts, and feelings. Different forms help her communicate herself in different ways. For example, in "Mimi is here!" (p. 25), the words *un monte*—Spanish for "a mountain"—

are spaced out in a mountain shape, and in her poem "Statuesque" (p. 47), she centers part of the poem to make it look like a statue. These are called concrete poems—poems that are in the shape of what they describe. Iveliz also uses the acrostic form, which is a type of poem where the first letter of each line spells another word (see examples on pp. 50, 85, and 197). Often she invents her own forms. And again and again, she uses lists (pp. 18, 26, 38, 68, 89, 115, 132, etc.) to map out her joys, her goals, and her worries.

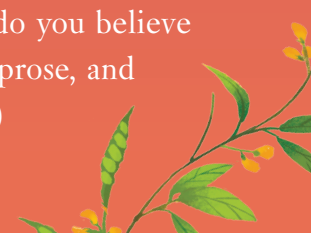

Exercises:

- Write a poem that is a list of goals you have.
 - Write an acrostic poem using your name as the spine word. Write a second one using the name of a friend or family member.
 - Write a concrete poem about an event, place, phrase, or word that is meaningful to you.
4. Iveliz speaks with her family and writes in her journal in English and Spanish. As you read, if there are words or phrases you do not understand, look them up. What do Spanish words and phrases add to Iveliz's story? Name a specific moment where the Spanish taught you something about the poem's event, feeling, or goal. Let's experiment in Spanish: try to write a small poem—even a one-word poem—in Spanish that is either in Iveliz's voice or in your own voice about something important to Iveliz or to you.



DISCUSSION AND WRITING QUESTIONS

(CONTINUED)

5. How does Iveliz expect Amir (pp. 75, 82–84) and Akiko (p. 76) to react to her prank, and how do they actually react? What new information do you learn about Iveliz as you read about her reaction on the bus (pp. 76–77 and 78–83)? Draw a picture or write a poem to express your reaction to this series of events.
 6. How does Iveliz feel about the gardens she works on at school and at home? Cite examples from the text in your answer. What do you imagine the school garden looks like, and what do you imagine Iveliz and Mimi’s garden looks like? Create an image (drawing, collage) to show what each of these gardens looks like using evidence you find in the book. If Mimi’s garden was in Puerto Rico, what do you imagine it would contain? Illustrate or describe it in words. Why and how is it different?
 7. Mimi disapproves of Iveliz taking medication for her mental health (pp. 55–57) and of her going to therapy. (pp. 128–129) When Dr. Turnip suggests that Iveliz’s medicine is like Alzheimer’s medicine for Mimi would be—if it existed—it bothers her enough to ask Mimi if she would take medicine for her Alzheimer’s. (p. 209) Why do you think that Mimi believes imaginary Alzheimer’s pills are different from Iveliz’s pills? Why does it bother Iveliz that Mimi believes they are different? What does Iveliz need from Mimi, and why?
 8. Foreshadowing is when an author drops clues that build, over time, toward a big reveal. For example, early in the book, Iveliz throws a pillow at her dad and misses, “of course.” (p. 24) Midway through the book, her dad visits, and she can “almost feel / the bed creak under him.” (p. 130) On page 145–146, we learn what happened to Iveliz’s dad. How did you feel and what did you think when you learned what happened?
 9. Iveliz writes, “Mira, / I took fourth-grade math. / I know what a common denominator is. / Soy yo.” (p. 144) Here, Iveliz is blaming herself for events outside of her control. Why do you think Iveliz needs to believe that what happened to her dad is her fault? How do those around her help her to understand that it isn’t?
 10. Compare when Iveliz’s father encourages her to “speak up, not out” (p. 20) to when Dr. Turnip encourages her to “SPEAK UP.” (p. 204) How do you think speaking up is different from speaking out? What does it mean for you to speak up? When have you spoken up in the past? What might you like to speak up about now?
 11. “Second Chances” is the first poem, and it refers to adults giving students second chances. “Second Chances” is also the title of the poem in which Iveliz decides to give Akiko a second chance. (p. 252) How does Iveliz think differently about second chances between the beginning and the end of the book? Use evidence from the text to support your answer. What do you believe about second chances? (Poem, prose, and art are all fine ways to respond.)
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POST-READING QUESTIONS

1. Iveliz wants to be a poet—she *is* a poet! Throughout the book, she names real-life poets that inspire and influence her. Each of these writers has published work that is available online. Read, read, read. What do you discover? What do you like? What do you learn about yourself? When you find a piece by an artist that you truly like, write a response poem or create a new poem that is inspired by what you feel and think.

- Elizabeth Acevedo (p. 5)
- Pages Matam (p. 5)
- G Yamazawa (p. 5)
- Safia Elhillo (p. 23)
- Sarah Kay (p. 23)
- Mahogany L. Browne (p. 23)
- Elizabet Velasquez (p. 259)

2. Iveliz grows in each of her strongest relationships, with Mami, her dad, Mimi, and Amir in particular. Pick one relationship and examine how it was tested (What conflicts arose?) and strengthened by the end of the book. What new understanding exists between Iveliz and the person you've chosen? How is this relationship similar to and/or different from a relationship you have with a person in your life who you are close to? Write (poetry or prose), draw, or create art that represents your answers.

3. What does Iveliz accept about herself by the end of the book? How has she changed? How has she grown? How does the Happiness pie chart (p. 136) compare to her mention of “happy” in her poem “He Doesn’t, Of Course”? (pp. 242–243) Your answers can be paragraph responses, poems, or drawings with captions.



ALSO BY
ANDREA BEATRIZ
ARANGO

Christina Olivares is a longtime educator and author of the poetry books *No Map of the Earth Includes Stars* (2015) and *Future Botanic* (2023).

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