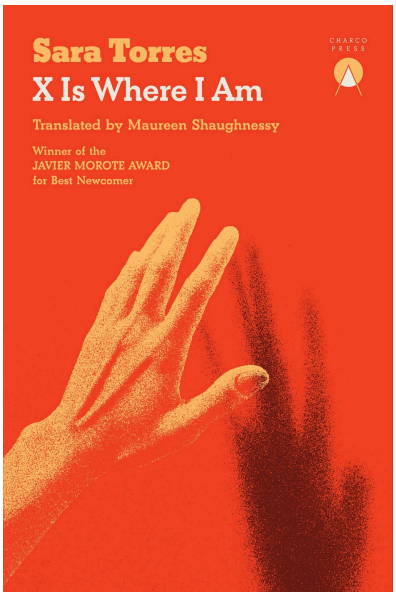
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Reading Guide

X Is Where I Am

Author: Sara Torres

Translator: Maureen Shaughnessy



Please be aware that this discussion guide contains spoilers.

Short Context Note for Readers

X Is Where I Am is a contemporary Spanish novel that sits at the intersection of feminist thought, queer writing, and experimental literary form. Emerging from Spain's vibrant feminist and LGBTQ+ literary scenes of the 2010s, the novel engages deeply with questions of desire, embodiment, love, language, and the politics of intimacy.

Unlike more plot-driven narratives, *X Is Where I Am* is shaped by affect, repetition, and philosophical reflection. For UK readers, the novel may resonate with ongoing conversations around queer temporality, non-normative relationships, consent, trauma, and the limits of language to fully capture lived experience. It is a text that asks to be read slowly, attentively, and with openness to ambiguity.

Short Summary of the Novel

X Is Where I Am is a lyrical, fragmented exploration of queer relationships marked by intensity, imbalance, desire, and pain. The narrator reflects on a love that is all-consuming and asymmetrical, tracing how intimacy can blur into dependency and how devotion can coexist with self-erasure. Meanwhile, she is facing the death of her mother after a long illness, and both dealing with guilt at her absence, while celebrating the relationship they shared.

Rather than following a conventional narrative arc, the novel moves through moments, sensations, and recurring thoughts, capturing the narrator's attempt to understand what remains (and this alludes to the novel's original title, *Lo que hay*, meaning approximately "what's left") of both romantic love and a departed loved one. The text is as much about language and perception as it is about relationships, asking what it means to name experience without mastering or resolving it.

Why Read This Novel Now?

At a time when conversations around consent, emotional labour, queer visibility, and the ethics of care are increasingly present in the UK cultural sphere, *X Is Where I Am* offers a radically intimate perspective on these debates. The novel resists neat categories of victimhood or empowerment, instead dwelling in the uncomfortable grey zones of desire, attachment, and vulnerability.

For UK reading groups, the novel provides an opportunity to engage with queer feminist writing that challenges linear storytelling and asks readers to reconsider how love, harm, and agency are narrated. Its refusal of resolution mirrors contemporary anxieties around how to live ethically with others without turning experience into ideology.

Discussion Questions

1. **Form, fragmentation, and rhythm**
   How does the novel's fragmented, recursive structure shape your reading experience? Did it feel immersive, disorienting, or both? How does form mirror emotional states?

2. **Voice and interiority**
   The novel is intensely interior, anchored in the narrator's consciousness. How does this closeness affect your trust in the narrative voice? What does the novel gain – and risk – by staying so close to one perspective?

3. **Desire and asymmetry**
   How does Torres portray unequal desire within the relationship with Girl? Where do you see devotion tipping into erasure of the self? Does the description of the generation gap between the lovers feel authentic?

4. **Language as limit and possibility**
   The narrator repeatedly returns to the difficulty of naming experience. What does the novel suggest language can do – and what does it fail to do – when it comes to love and pain?

5. **Care, harm, and responsibility**
   Does the novel allow us to clearly locate care, harm or responsibility in terms of the relationship with the narrator's mother? Or does it deliberately resist moral clarity?

6. **Time and emotional duration**
   How does time function in the novel? Do the different relationships described feel suspended, cyclical, or stalled? How does this relate to queer or non-linear experiences of time?

7. **The body and sensation**
   How are bodies represented in the novel – through erotic description, pleasure, and youthful beauty? Or by contrast in terms of intimacy with a diseased and fading body? How does embodiment anchor the text?

8. **Queer love beyond idealisation**
   How does the novel resist idealised representations of queer relationships? Why might this resistance be politically and ethically important?

9. **Reading discomfort and intimacy**
   Were there moments that felt invasive, shocking, or emotionally demanding as a reader? How do these reactions mirror the novel's themes?

10. **Endings and residue**
    The novel does not offer conventional closure. What does remain at the end, for the narrator and for the reader? How does this align with the original title, Lo que hay ("what's left")? What do you think of the choice made for the title in English?

11. **Comparatives**
    What other novels and/or films did the novel make you think of? How does it compare?