



**STORYLAB**

PRESENTS



**MEG MEDINA'S**

# **YAQUI DELGADO WANTS TO KICK YOUR ASS**

## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

# Meg Medina's *Yaqui Delgado Wants to Kick Your Ass*

**S**ixteen-year-old Piedad Sanchez, whose nickname is Piddy, just wants to survive. She and her mom recently moved to a so-called “better” neighborhood. But a new neighborhood means a new school, and Piddy doesn’t know anyone at Daniel Jones High School.

On her first day, a girl named Vanesa delivers terrifying news to Piddy: “Yaqui Delgado wants to kick your ass.” Piddy has no idea who Yaqui Delgado is or what she did wrong. Soon she learns that Yaqui thinks Piddy is “stuck up” and does not act or talk “Latina-enough.”

Yaqui and her crew start stalking Piddy. They throw chocolate milk at her in the cafeteria. They steal her favorite elephant necklace. Eventually, they jump her outside her apartment. They film the beating for everyone to watch online. Piddy is humiliated, scared, and has no idea how to make it stop.

Piddy starts skipping school to avoid Yaqui. She finds comfort working with her mom’s best friend Lila at Salón Corazón. The beauty shop feels like a second home, where the women support each other through everything. Piddy also reconnects with Joey, a childhood friend who is dealing with a violent father.



In *Yaqui Delgado Wants to Kick Your Ass*, a Latina teen is targeted by a bully at her new high school

Finally, Rob, a classmate, secretly reports the bullying through an anonymous tip system. When administrators get involved, they offer Piddy options. She can press criminal charges against Yaqui, which could lead to expulsion but also revenge. Or Piddy can accept a “safety transfer” back to her old school.

Piddy chooses the transfer, though it doesn’t seem right. After all, she wasn’t the one doing the bullying. But Piddy knows that returning to her old school will give her a chance to bring up her grades. She can also apply to the special science program. It is a fresh start and the chance to pursue her dream of working with animals.

**AN EXCERPT FROM**  
***YAQUI DELGADO WANTS TO KICK YOUR ASS***

Ma doesn't know it, but I'm going to be a scientist. I want to work with animals, big ones like elephants, maybe even live halfway across the world. It's weird, I know. The only elephants I've ever seen were in the zoo. But we have the National Geographic channel, so I know they're smart and they can feel and hear things people can't. They can keep a herd's whole history—all the good and the bad they've ever seen—in their memory. If I told this to Ma, her screams would touch the sky. "¿Elefantes?" She'd nag about malaria and the smell of dung I'd never get out from under my nails. She'd ask me what kind of decent girl is interested in elephants. And so on.

It's times like these I wish I were Lila's daughter instead. Not that Ma doesn't love me—or that Lila likes elephants. It's just that Lila doesn't bother me. She's never had kids of her own, thank God, so she doesn't have the slightest idea of what's good for me. She doesn't ask me if I've done my homework or where I've been. When Ma works late, we fill up on butter cookies for dinner and watch the good shows Ma calls trash. If I were Lila's kid, life might actually be fun.



Piddy likes to work her Saturday job at the hair salon where her mom's best friend, Lila, also works.



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

# Meg Medina



Meg Medina

**E**ver feel like nobody gets you? Like your family's struggles, your neighborhood, or your dreams don't matter to the rest of the world? Meg Medina felt that way too. She turned those feelings into award-winning books that speak directly to people who've been overlooked.

Growing up Cuban-American, Medina knew what it was like to feel caught between two worlds. She spent years thinking her Latina identity was something to hide, something that held her back from success. But she was wrong. Now she's making sure no one else feels that way.

Medina writes about real problems—bullying, family drama, and fitting in at school. Her characters aren't heroes in fairy tales. They're like people who sit right next to you in class. They have families who speak Spanish at home or who worry about money. They are characters who've heard whispers that someone wants to fight them after school.

What makes Medina special isn't just that she tells those stories—it's that she tells them with respect. She doesn't talk down to young people or pretend their problems are simple. When she wrote *Yaqui Delgado Wants to Kick Your Ass* about a teen facing a bully, she drew from her own experience of being threatened. When adults tried to ban the book because of its title, Medina fought back. She said young adults deserve honest conversations about the cruel language they face every day.

Meg Medina is the first Latina to serve as U.S. National Ambassador for Young People's Literature. To her readers, she says: "I don't want anybody to feel like they have to be embarrassed by their cultural heritage . . . your family has value and that the story of you, the story of your family, matters enough and is deserving of being captured in a story."

## TEXT CONNECTION

# Community Gathering Places

Every community has places where people gather to share stories and support each other. These aren't just businesses; they are the heart of community life.

Beauty salons and barbershops are often unofficial community centers. In *Yaqui Delgado Wants to Kick Your Ass*, Salón Corazón is a beauty salon in Queens, New York. The word corazón is Spanish for heart; and the salon serves as the heart of the Latina community. With Latin music, and endless warmth, it is more than just haircuts and manicures. It is a safe haven where everyone belongs, and it is where Piddy finds healing after being beaten by bullies.

Churches, mosques and temples are not just for worship. They're where communities meet to organize and educate. They offer help for families, such as food pantries, job networking, or after-school programs.

Local coffee shops become regular meeting spots. People work on laptops. Students study. Neighbors catch up. They're friendly spaces where different groups can mix more easily than in formal settings.

At a school, there can be classrooms or other spaces that foster community. In the book, Piddy finds support even at Daniel Jones High School. School staff—like Mr. Flatwell, the school counselor, and Ms. Shepherd, the encouraging teacher—listen to Piddy. Unexpected allies like Rob and Darlene, offer support. It only takes one individual to create a welcoming space.

## 👉 Types of Allies in Tough Places



**Mr. Flatwell**

**The Listening Adult**

Takes bullying seriously, doesn't dismiss problems.

Creates safe spaces, offers real solutions, helps with applications



**Ms. Shepherd**

**The Encouraging Teacher**

Sees potential, doesn't give up on struggling students.

Offers extra credit, showcases student work, provides references



**Rob Allen**

**The Fellow Outsider**

Gets bullied too, but still protects others.

Removes dangerous evidence, files anonymous reports, shares opportunities



**Darlene Jackson**

**The Unlikely Helper**

Annoying but helpful, uses connections to help.

Shares inside information, covers absences, shows genuine concern

## 📖 What These Characters Teach Us

### 👤 Allies Look Different

Help comes from unexpected people - the "weird kid" or strict teacher.

### 🔍 Watch for Actions

Real allies do things to help, not just talk.

### 👉 Small Helps Big

You don't need power to help. Small acts make a difference.

### 💡 Anyone Can Help

Adults or students - everyone can support others.

## TEXT REFLECTION

# How Animals Can Be Allies

**A**nimals can provide support in a way that humans often can't match. In *Yaqui Delgado Wants to Kick Your Ass*, Piddy has deep love for elephants. Since a childhood trip to the zoo, they have captivated her. She respects their strength, memory, and devotion to the herd.

Piddy's jade elephant necklace becomes her comfort object; something she touches when nervous or scared. When Yaqui rips it from her neck and crushes it under her heel, Piddy is devastated. It is not just jewelry being destroyed, but Piddy's sense of safety and dreams.

Piddy feels a strong connection to other animals too. She discovers two sick, abandoned kittens in the basement. Piddy spends her tip money from the salon on vet bills. She feeds and worries about the kittens' survival. These tiny, helpless creatures need her—and she desperately needs to feel needed and useful.

Unlike friends who might judge or spread rumors, animals offer love without conditions. They don't care about social status. They won't judge how you look or your mistakes. When Piddy feels like an outcast at school, the kittens simply want her care and attention.

Taking care of animals also can create a sense of purpose. The daily routine of feeding and protecting them can give



Elephants are meaningful to Piddy in *Yaqui Delgado Wants to Kick Your Ass*.

structure when life feels out of control. For Piddy, worrying about the kittens helps her focus on something other than her fears about Yaqui.

Animals can provide physical comfort through touch. Scientists have proven that petting, holding, or just being near animals actually reduces stress. When teenagers feel alone or worried, this physical connection can offer healing without further expectations.

Finally, animals can inspire future goals. Piddy's love of elephants grows into career dreams that give her strength when her present feels hopeless. Working toward something meaningful can help teenagers get through current struggles.

**What Is Realistic Fiction?** Meg Medina's *Yaqui Delgado Wants to Kick Your Ass*

is considered realistic fiction.

Realistic fiction consists of:

- a made-up story but set in the real world;
- a conflict that could happen today; and
- convincing and believable characters.

Keep Reading: Did you know *Yaqui Delgado Wants to Kick Your Ass* is also a graphic novel?

- It was adapted and illustrated by Mel Valentine Vargas.

If you like *Yaqui Delgado Wants to Kick Your Ass*, then you might also like to read these realistic fiction texts:

- *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas
- *Gabi, a Girl in Pieces* by Isabel Quintero
- *American Born Chinese* by Gene Luen Yang

**Start Writing:** Inspired to write your own realistic fiction?

Consider this prompt to get started:

- “Most people think they know me. But the truth is, they only see the version of me I let them see.”

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