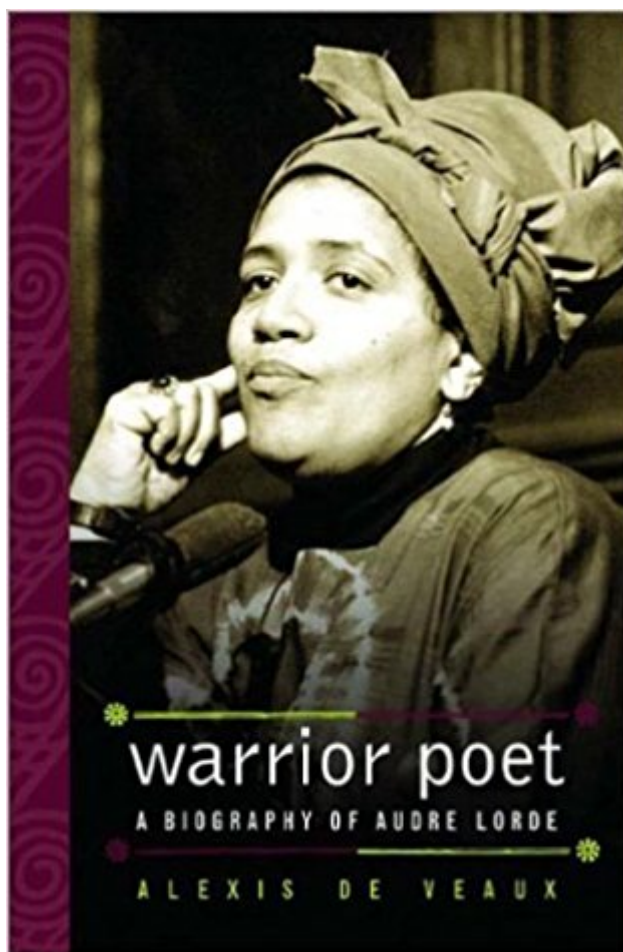


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Warrior Poet: A Biography Of Audre Lorde



Synopsis

Audre Lorde (1934-1992) was the author of *The Cancer Journals*, and an icon of American womanhood, poetry, African American arts and survival. She created a mythic identity for herself that retains its vitality to this day. Alexis De Veaux demystifies Lorde's iconic status, charting her childhood; her marriage to a white, gay man with whom she had two children; her emergence as an outspoken black feminist lesbian poet; and her canonisation as a seminal poet of American literature. Lorde's restless search for a spiritual home finally brought her to the island of St Croix in 1986. This long-awaited first biography draws on the private archives of the poet's estate, personal journals, and interviews with members of Lorde's family, friends and lovers. Assessing the cultural legacy of a woman who personified the civil rights struggles of the twentieth century, De Veaux pays homage to one of the most courageous, singular voices of American letters.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This biography of Audre Lorde, the self-described "black, lesbian, feminist, mother, poet warrior" who died of metastasized breast cancer in 1992, at age 58, captures the complexities of a charismatic figure whose every personal move was indeed political. De Veaux, chair of the women's studies department at SUNY-Buffalo, draws from over 60 of Lorde's unpublished journals as well as testimony from friends and family, though she points out with academic caution in her introduction that this is only a "subjective" story. De Veaux divides her book between Lorde's "two lives," her emergence from a difficult Harlem childhood to a celebrated literary career and, later, her struggle with cancer. Born in 1934 to Caribbean immigrants, Lorde had a persistent, haunting feeling of

being an outsider. An early interracial marriage to Ed Rollins brought two children, but Lorde came to find deeper satisfaction in lesbian love, embarking on a decades-long relationship with Frances Clayton and maintaining erotic friendships with activists and poets who informed and shaped her work. By the 1980s, Lorde's writings were internationally recognized, and she continued to articulate her ideas on race, sexuality and gender in groundbreaking ways, eventually bravely documenting her personal experience with breast cancer. This account does not include Lorde's final days, focusing instead on her working years. While De Veaux occasionally slips into academic-speak, she is a skilled biographer, pulling together the contradictory facts of Lorde's public and private personae with ease. Subjective it may be, but *Warrior Poet* is also a satisfying portrait of a brave life. 16 pages of photos not seen by PW. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

“Warrior Poet is a literary event of considerable significance. - Atlanta Journal-Constitution
“A clearly written and extensively researched volume that is every bit as formidable as Lorde herself was, and will likely be regarded as the definitive study of the controversial poet. - Buffalo News
“De Veaux's thorough tale of a complicated artist is compelling. Lorde comes to life, and her powerful prose is presented in a whole new light. - Essence --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

Lorde led an extraordinary life. Her pain, her fearlessness, her speaking when others were quiet. De Veaux sheds light on a literary icon not only for the LGBT community but Lorde was a leading voice in the early feminist movement. The book came in excellent shape, the seller gave as was promised, no highlighting, great condition book. Its worth snatching up this book is out of print and a real jewel.

What I thought I knew about Audre Lorde was delightfully challenged after reading this! You should absolutely buy this book!

I love this book very much.

I found this bio well-written and of a high authorial standard. After reading it, I wondered about this brave poet who contested the hypocrisy of her times. For this she merits praise, great respect and thanks. Yet, I wondered how many women learned harsh lessons from Ms. Lorde? A number of

times, as I read, I was reminded of Ayn Rand, who helped herself to a married man, Nathaniel Brandon, simply because she was being 'honest'. She wanted him. Period. Never mind the deeply hurt wife who turned herself inside out to accept her loss. I wonder how Lorde's partner and co-mother of two children handled Lorde's sense of sexual entitlement? I got the sense that just as Lorde's parents were distant, that Lorde herself might have been distant too. After all, how many deep relationships can one nurture over the long haul? Did Lorde's righteous anger splash a little wildly and hurtfully too? Out of Lorde's voiced anger, insight and clear thinking, the world improved. I know we all have to bear with each other's flaws as much as possible, but as I put down the book, I thought that it might have been dangerous for me to have been Lorde's friend. Eleanor Cowan, author of *A History of a Pedophile's Wife: Memoir of a Canadian Teacher and Writer*

Alexis DeVaux presents a comprehensive account of self-described feminist, lesbian, and poet warrior, Audre Lorde. The author pulls together a myriad of published documents, unpublished journal entries by Audre Lorde herself, and a host of interviews with personal friends and family members to create a well documented look at the poet's life. The book is divided into two major sections called "lives." The first life begins prior to Audre's birth, and highlights some aspects of her parent's early life, their eventual marriage and move from the Caribbean to the United States. This family background helps readers understand Audre's nearly lifelong quest to come to terms with her relationship with her often emotionally detached parents. This portion of the book also details information about Audre's childhood, educational background, and young adult life. We learn about Audre's marriage to a white, gay, man and their eventual divorce and follow her process of "coming out" regarding her own lesbianism. Her long-term relationship with a white woman, Frances Clayton, and the challenges associated with raising a bi-racial son and daughter in a lesbian household during an era of rampant, overt racism and sexism was also discussed. DeVaux also takes time to highlight some of Audre Lorde's flaws, thus providing a somewhat more balanced view of the author. Her professional career as a poet develops slowly, and the evolution of her writing career parallels the evolution of her political views and personal growth. The second section of the book, "The Second Life," continues to explore her career development, chronicles her battles with cancer in more detail, and ends with her death. Audre Lorde supported freedom and equality for all, regardless of race, gender, class, or sexual orientation. However, because of her strong views and personal lifestyle, she often found herself on the fringes. Many white feminists were uncomfortable with her views on race, while those involved in the black power movement tended to be uncomfortable with her feminist ideology and her lesbianism. Yet she used her own struggles,

particularly her battle with cancer, as a means to educate, motivate, and inspire. I enjoyed WARRIOR POET and was impressed by Alexis DeVeaux's attention to detail and the time she spent helping readers understand the social and political climate of the times. There were times when I felt she went a little too far "setting the stage" and wanted to read more about Audre and less about other poets, or politics. Audre seemed to use her identity to take on very public battles for women's rights, gay rights, and so forth. But I found myself wanting to know more about how her children handled their mother's public persona. I also wondered how her very conservative, Catholic mother and her other siblings responded to Audre's lifestyle, and this issue was surprisingly never addressed. In spite of its sometimes academic feel, this is a must read for anyone that wants to learn more about an important literary figure. Reviewed by Stacey Seay of The RAWSISTAZ Reviewers

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