



# Kevin Coval

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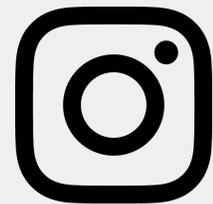
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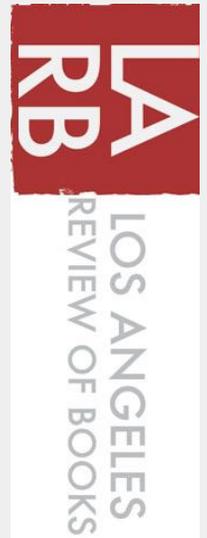
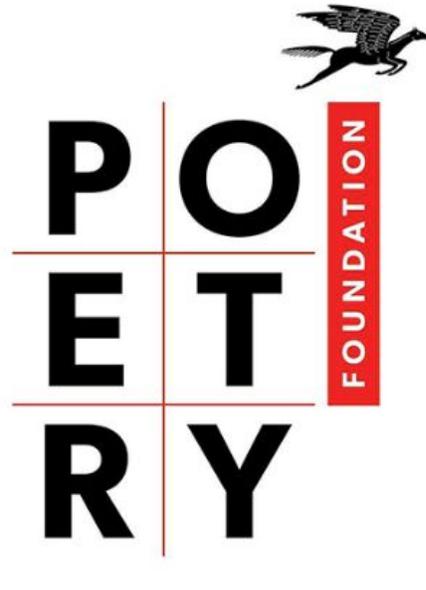
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# READ

## REVIEWS & ARTICLES

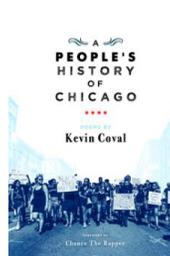
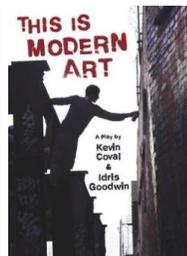
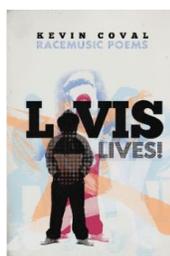
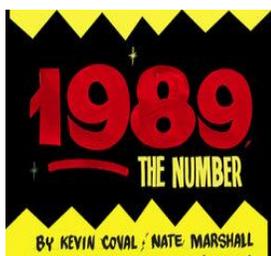
Reviews: Click on the image to read more about Coval & his work



# MORE BOOKS

## written/edited by Coval

Click on the images to learn more!



# BOOK INTRO summary

## What is *Everything Must Go* about?

*Everything Must Go* is an illustrated collection of poems in the spirit of a graphic novel, a collaboration between poet Kevin Coval and illustrator [Langston Allston](#). The book celebrates Chicago's [Wicker Park](#) in the late 1990's, Coval's home as a young artist, the ancestral neighborhood of his forebears, and a vibrant enclave populated by colorful characters. Allston's illustrations honor the neighborhood as it once was, before [gentrification](#) remade it. The book excavates and mourns that which has been lost in transition and serves as a template for understanding the process of displacement and reinvention currently reshaping American cities.

~from *Haymarket Books* [website](#)

# THEMES to look for

## As you read, notice messages regarding:

|   |                               |
|---|-------------------------------|
| PLACE & PEOPLE - celebrating the people of a place      |                               |
| PLACE & IDENTITY - how a place shapes us as individuals |                               |
| Maturation  | Interrogation of whiteness    |
| Friendship  | Masculinity & Vulnerability   |
| Rap & Hip-Hop   | Gentrification & Displacement |

# SEE Kevin Coval's poems

**Poetry Readings: Click on the image to watch Coval reading his work; record your first thoughts and further analysis in the columns**

## **"Ode to the Waitress"**



First reaction to the poem:

Deeper analysis of the poem:

## **"Ode to Footwork"** (not in book)



First reaction to the poem:

Deeper analysis of the poem:

## **"Ode to the DiveBar"**



First reaction to the poem:

Deeper analysis of the poem:

## “Chicago Has My Heart”

(not in book)



First reaction to the poem:

Deeper analysis of the poem:

# QUESTIONS to discuss

**Find specific poems in the collection to support your ideas with textual evidence.  
What lines from the poems can you cite that speak to the question?**

- How does this collection celebrate and honor the people of a neighborhood?
- How does this collection represent a time of change in the world and in a neighborhood?
- In what ways does this collection inform or complicate your understanding of masculinity and vulnerability?
- In what ways does place shape the speaker’s identity?
- How does Coval pay homage to the specific history of his neighborhood, while making his own place in its lineage?
- Is this book about a city or about the speaker? How different would the book be if were placed elsewhere?
- In what ways does the speaker interrogate the world around him? What does he find valuable? What does he criticize?
- What role does friendship play?
- Where do you see Coval’s love for hip-hop and rap shine in his writing?
- Why is the first poem an appropriate opening? In what ways does the last poem serve as a closing?
- How do the illustrations add meaning to the poems they are with?

# HEAR

# Kevin Coval

Click to listen to the audio book, podcast, & learn more about his work

## Audio book coming soon!

### The CornerStore



**WGN Radio Podcast  
Co-host**

### Artist Profile



**Ear2Ground TV  
(video)**

### An Inspiration



**What popular Grammy  
Award-winning rapper  
calls Kevin Coval his  
mentor?  
(video)**

# PROMPTS for writing

After reading each of the following poems, write your own poem using prompts

|   |  |
|---|--|
| 1750 W. Haddon  | Where is your “spot”? Your “ancestral land”? Write a poem inspired by a place that “tether[s]” you “to the earth again.”   |
| No One Here Has Ever Been to the Lake   | This poem incorporates words from the plaque on the Statue of Liberty so that they create a new message. Write a poem that mashes up an existing well-known text, song, prayer, etc., and plays with its meaning to make it something new. |
| Laborer poems<br><i>Saviors of El Barrio, Ode to the Waitress, The Tamale Guy, Ode to the Old Barbers, Ode to the Women Who Clean My Unmentionables</i> | Write an ode that praises the un or under-celebrated workers in your world. Who will you write about? Ode to the lunch lady, the sneaker connect, the barista? Who will you recognize and honor as an integral laborer to your world?      |
| People of a place<br><i>Mr. Rooster, Denizen, Oba, Thigahmahjiggee, David, The Oil &amp; Incense Man</i>  | Write a group piece about a place that makes a city unique. It might be a place that is under-heralded, taken for granted, or ignored. How does the place define the city, for better or worse, from your perspective?                     |
| Lit-X   | Write a poem telling your origin story? Where is your “X marking the spot” beginning? Where were you “born again”?   |
| Ode to the Waitress   | Coval uses creative wordplay in this poem. Try your hand at writing a poem that plays with word sound and meaning. Try to use some alliteration, consonance, assonance, homophones, and/or rhyme to help you achieve this effect.          |

|                            |  |
|----------------------------|--|
| How I Met Idris            | Think of the time and place where you met one of your good friends. Imagine the setting--what details can you remember in regard to sounds, smells, what you were feeling? Using imagery, write a poem about meeting your friend for the first time. |
| Song for the Bowling Alley | Write your own poem using the concrete form.   |

## ODES discuss & write

*In conversation with poetic tradition*

**What does Coval choose to write odes about?**

**How do his odes work together to create meaning in the collection?**

**WRITE** your own ode inspired by Coval or by another poet below, click image to read

**Ode to My Socks**  
by Pablo Neruda



**Ode to Gossips**  
by Safia Elhillo



**Ode to Cheese Fries**  
by Jose Olivarez



**Ode to the Only Black Kid in Class**  
by Clint Smith





### “Urbis Orbis”

- Learn more about the former coffee house [here](#). How does knowing more about the cultural landmark change your reading of the poem?
- The first stanza is lengthy with longer lines while the last stanza is only three short lines. What effect does this have on meaning? What do you think might be signified by the use of white space in between the stanzas?

### “Lit-X”

- How do details convey one or more aspects of the setting?
- What is the speaker’s relationship to the setting?
- How does punctuation contribute to the structure and rhythm of the poem?

### “The Time I Was Homeless & the Car Was Also a Bank”

- This poem is paired with an illustration of tangible items mentioned in the poem. What *intangible* things appear in the poem and how would you illustrate them?

### “Oba”

- What specific diction and details help to characterize Oba?
- Check out Zimmerman’s mural of Oba [here](#). Is this what you expected it to look like after reading the poem? Why do you think Coval focuses on his eyes?

### “1037 N. Damen”

- Is the speaker in the poem static or dynamic? Explain.
- What is the relationship between the particular sequence of events in the poem and its structure as a whole?
- Describe the relationship between the setting and the speaker.

### “Ode to the Dive Bar”

- What are some striking contradictions, and how do they contribute to the overall tone?
- Underline the uses of imagery. Where do you see each of the five senses: sight, touch, hearing, taste, smell? Would you characterize these as positive qualities, negative, or both?
- What new information does the paired artwork give us that the poem does not?

### “New Construction”

- How do the two stanzas create major contrast in the poem?
- Find examples of connotative language that highlight the juxtaposition between the people and building materials in each stanza. In what ways do the people and the materials mirror each other?

### “The Real World”

- What are the points of comparison between *The Real World* and the real world?
- How might contrasts indicate a conflict of values?

### “Pioneers”

- In what ways does the speaker identify with his people?
- How are the speaker’s people characterized? What specific examples support this?
- As in other poems, Coval doesn’t capitalize “america.” Consider this choice.

### “Everything Must Go”

- What is the effect of the first person collective (“we”) point of view, especially when compared to the third person (“they”) of the first poem in the collection?



ARTWORK BY LANGSTON ALLSTON

# ADDITIONAL resources

Click on the images to learn more!

## TedTalk



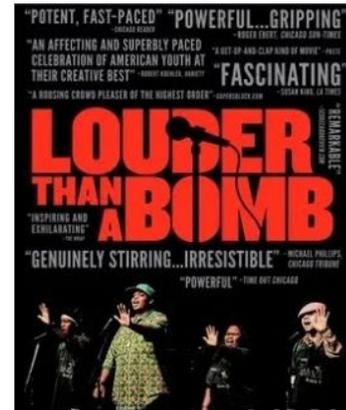
## Tips on Becoming an Artist





**The Daily Show**

## Louder Than a Bomb Documentary



## Glossed and Found

Watch after reading and discuss: How does this collection tell Coval's essential story?



## We the People: Extraordinary Stories of Ordinary People

## The artist: Langston Allston



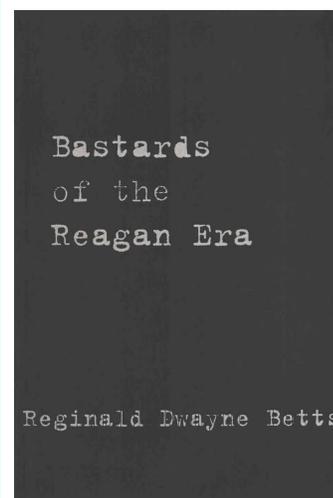
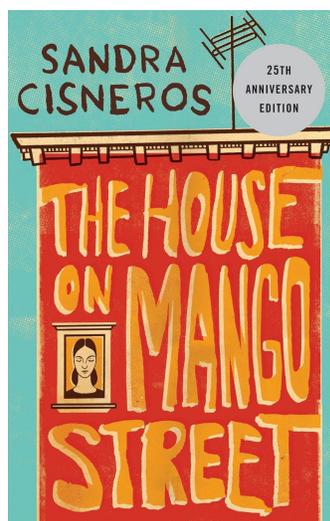
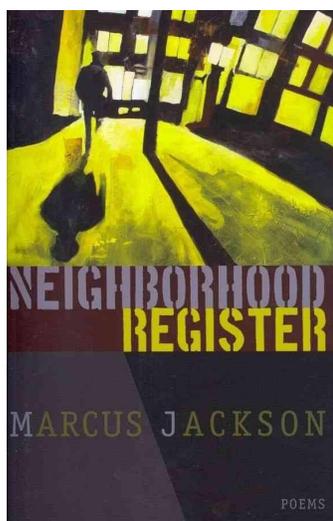
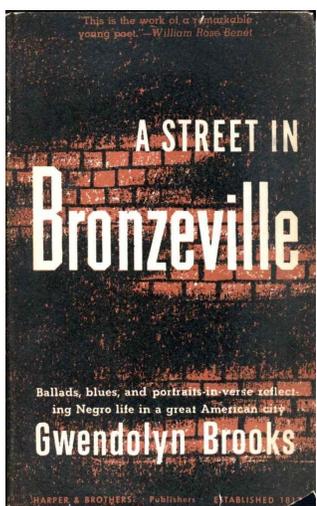
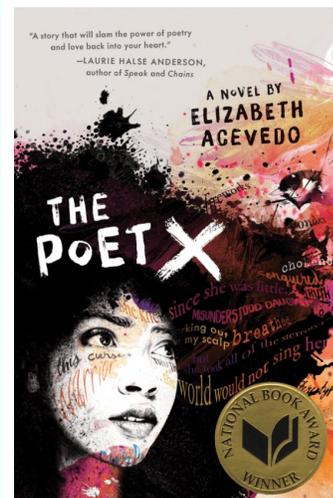
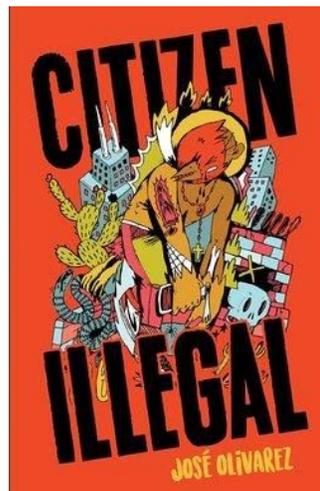
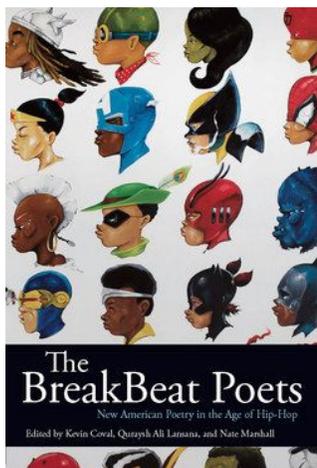
## Young Chicago Authors



# BITTERSWEET

# DID YOU LIKE Everything Must Go?

Check out these other works! Click on image for more info



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