

PANEL: Size Does Matter: Plus-Sized Heroines in Young Adult Fiction

Fatshion!: Dressing Plus-Sized Characters in Young Adult Fiction

Rainbow Rowell's *Eleanor and Park* features fat heroine Eleanor who falls in love with, and is loved back by, Park. While Park, early on, wishes Eleanor would not let herself stand out so much, Eleanor's quirky fashion sense is a composite of vintage and thrift, all her family can afford. It calls attention to herself and, by proxy, her fat body.

Julie Murphy's *Dumplin'* features fat heroine Willowdean, also known as the titular "Dumplin'," who enters a beauty pageant and decides that her dress will be a red clingy number certain to call attention to her beauty as well as her fat rolls. Not vetted by the pageant staff, aka her mother, Dumplin' is disqualified for wearing such a revealing number. Of course, it calls attention in other ways, as love interest Bo is quite taken with her look.

Want a bikini body? Put a bikini on your body. Such Fatshion advice permeates the internet as a way to promote the fat acceptance movement, but young adult literature has lagged behind in such acceptance. Rowell's fans wanted to know if Eleanor really was fat, and Willowdean is still an anomaly in a culture of skinniness. But change is coming, and novels such as these offer glimpses into the fat acceptance movement for the contemporary teen. This paper argues that fashion is often the first step in advocating for body positivity for a teen audience, and will explore fashion for fat heroines through several fat-positive novels as activism.