

Teens Read & Review

Caroline Cates reviews *Every Body Shines* edited by Cassandra Newbold

Every Body Shines, edited by Cassandra Newbold, is a YA anthology containing the stories of sixteen different people whose lives are affected by being overweight. The obstacles faced by these characters expose the common, perpetuated issues that target people whose bodies are not accepted due to their size. The use of body image as a normal challenge in a person's coming of age story provides the space for the emotions that come along with this topic to be validated. While the stories contain a variety of experiences and perspectives, each of these authors is ultimately contributing to the narrative that no matter what your story looks like, or what you look like, you should be heard and acknowledged for what you go through.

One particularly enjoyable aspect of this book was that each story had a different way of showing empowerment and resilience. Every author in this collection has a slightly different way of expressing how the characters develop, so the readers experience challenges spanning from outfit anxiety to space travel to gender identity struggles. Despite the individuality of each of these characters, each of their families, values and lives, they all portray the bravery it takes to figure out who you are in this world, and to be comfortable with that person. This looks beautifully different for each separate narrative, and the reader is persuaded to imagine that any person in any situation can do just that. This is such an encouraging message and it is particularly exciting to see this being presented to audiences both old and young.

This book was consistently able to make me feel supported in being simply what I already am, in a world where so often it can feel like I need to be something more. Starting this dialogue in young adult readers can be helpful as they navigate all of the difficulties and barriers that come between individuals and the world they live in. It is important to see that you are not alone and you are not rejected. In fact, this book encourages everyone to be a part of a community that wants acceptance and a celebration of all which is a motivation we can all stand to gain from. Please go read this book!

Caroline Cates grew up in New York City and moved to Cold Spring in the spring of 2020. She is currently a senior at Haldane High School and an intern with the Sozosei Foundation, in addition to her part time job at The Main Course.