



## Looks

*Madeleine George*

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An unforgettable debut novel about the way we look at others, and the way we see ourselves.

Meghan Ball is both the most visible and the most invisible person in school. Her massive size is impossible to ignore, yet people freely spill their secrets in front of her, perhaps because they think she isn't listening. But she is. Now her attention has turned to a new girl: Aimee Zorn, with her stick-figure body and defiant attitude. Meghan is determined to befriend Aimee, and when she ultimately succeeds, the two join forces to take down their shared enemy.

This provocative story explores the ways in which girls use food and their bodies to say what they cannot: I'm lonely.

## Looks Details

Date : Published June 12th 2008 by Viking Books for Young Readers

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Author : Madeleine George

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## From Reader Review Looks for online ebook

### Kristy says

I couldn't finish this book because I just didn't have it in me to go to the dark places teen novels so often take you these days. The story centers on a two girls: one extremely overweight and one terribly anorexic, who use food in similiar ways to express themselves. They navigate the deadly halls of high school and team up together to get revenge on those who have wronged them. This, as far as I could tell from the 50 or so pages I read, is the basic plot.

I just. couldn't. do . it.

On one hand, I feel like I have read this story so many times already since I took the plunge and started reading lots of teen fiction: disaffected teens, painful interactions with peers, betrayal, misery, etc. On the other hand, however, this author is an exceptionally good writer and I think she may have ultimately taken this tale in a more original direction than its predecessors.

I won't find out, though. Because I'm not going to read it!

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### Jamie Felton says

This book was amazing. Not only was the subject matter fascinating, the characters well-developed with personalities that are original and unique, but the message George is getting across was incredibly powerful. Her word choices and imagery are beautiful, and she uses descriptions that make the story that much more compelling.

Meghan Ball ("Butter Ball") and Aimee Zorn are opposites. Meghan is obese while Aimee is struggling with an eating disorder; however, they are both adrift emotionally with no one to really help them. Meghan is a quiet observer who, despite her size, moves without being seen throughout the halls of her high school.

Aimee is a poet who is desperately trying to gain control of her life the only way the she can. The cover of this book is lame, I have to admit I almost didn't read it because of this; hwoever, this turned out to be one of the best books I have read recently. She managed to describe anorexia, overeating, high school dynamics, poetry writing all in a way that felt new to me. There were no cliches or stereotypes here.

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### Silver says

Wow!

I gave a five-star rating to a book that left me dazed and slightly hollow. Incredibly poetic and beautiful.

An anorexic girl/a humongous girl ("made of mud and cellulite" --my now favorite descriptive phrase).

A moment for revenge.

High school.

It could have been a hugely cliched story--but altering voices and the writer's chosen wording kept it from becoming that.

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## **Karen says**

This book didn't seem very captivating, and yet it caused me to keep reading even in the dead of night. This wasn't like a typical YA book that is based on the themes of love, friendship or things like that. This book is about revenge and betrayal and all the bad things that no one really has the courage to write about most of the time.

Looks is about two people who are basically rejected from the social circle in school. These two people have one thing in common though and that is conducting revenge on the girl who ruin their lives by taking away something that was most precious to each of them, trust and friendship, and a poem.

This book taught me a lot about people who face challenges, and that is that they usually don't accept facts about themselves that they don't even know. Like Meghan, one of the main characters in the story. Through the entire book, she believes she is unseen in the eyes of everyone in school, and if her most beloved literature teacher never told her that she wasn't as invisible as she had assumed she was, then she would have continued to think so until the end of her life. And Aimee, the other main character, she doesn't know that she is anorexic she just believes that she is merely just "allergic" to a lot of different foods. But in the poem she wrote about hunger, aspects of her being anorexic flowed out but the word anorexia was never mentioned, she replaced it with hunger.

overall, thi book gave me mixed feelings that I wasn't really sure of because there are so many levels of depth in this book that made me reread sections over and over again and still think "WHAT?!" But even though i got mixed feelings, i really liked it and i find that it touches on the heart of many people even if they don't realize it at first.

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## **Jen says**

I've tried to write a professional and captivating review for this book for the last 10 minutes, but I'm just too excited about it to sit still and get it all out properly. Let me just summarize with bullet points:

- one girl is obese, and one girl is tiny, yet there is no mention of dieting or counseling and no attempt to "fix" the girls in any way, shape, or form
- there is no clear beginning or end, and the plot is a building block, not scaffolding
- the language is poetic without overreaching, and realistic when you least expect it (the author is a playwright, I'm not surprised to learn)
- I would feel good recommending this to an 8 year old and an 80 year old
- best YA book I've read in ages, really

Enough of this review, just go grab it (publishes in mid-June) and read it for yourself!

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## **France says**

I read this book because I was interested in what the blurb said. After reading the first few pages I couldn't put it book down. I liked this book because it was expressing what is actually happening in the world, social injustice, stereotyping and bullying.

This book covers the 'book with themes related to those we've studied in class in the 1st half of the year' category on the book blog bingo board. I was really interested in completing this category because I quite liked our topic of inequality and social injustice. This book relates to inequality and social injustice because Meghan who is obese and Aimee who is anorexic are treated differently because what they look like. When walking around school they are given dirty looks and some people even walk into them as if they don't exist. At the end when they become friends and join forces they take on everyone and immediately are given respect. Which is something I really like about this book.

Meghan was a character that I was really interested in because she didn't really seem to care about what others thought about her. She receives a lot of irrelevant behaviour from the students at her school and has developed strategies to overcome it. Although Meghan says very little she notices a lot. Meghan's character development throughout the story wasn't really significant though she played a big part in this book.

"It's not an honest face. It's not a kind face. It's a face made of anger and secrets and lies"

This was a quote from Looks that I quite liked. This explains what Meghan saw in Aimee, its almost an exact copy of Meghan's lies that she to uses. Meghan can't believe it and immediately knows that she is witnessing someone who can potentially be her friend.

Something I learnt from this book is to never judge anyone by their looks. Meghan and Aimee were both victims of this, they persevered and in the end they were finally given respect. You shouldn't judge anyone by their looks because you don't know what they have been through or are going through.

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## Gehad says

\*TIP: Judging a book by its cover, always leads to surprises

I know it's wrong to judge a book by it's cover, but I do it anyways. The second I laid eyes on this book, the title caught my attention. I mean, look how "LOoks" is written, so funky and cool.

Here's the tricky part about Judging a book by it's cover (Especially for this book)

1. You pick up the book, distracted by the title.
2. Then you actually read the title.
3. The title makes you think it's about people getting judged by how they look. (Which interests you)
4. You read the book, and you realize the story is actually better and different from your prediction. (Surprising!) And you will know how thoughtful the author is for purposely choosing this cover and the story that goes along with it.

\*\*TIP: Every book is unique in its own way

Compared to other books, this one hits the spot. Because most of the other books I've read are about those average teen girl problems and their drama. But LOoKS, is different, it expresses the lives of young girls in a totally different way. The author expresses the characters in a more mature way, problems that every girl can connect to, and things that aren't being mentioned every day in the normal teen life.

\*\*\*Tip: Books don't just entertain you, they teach you life lessons as well

This book taught me... that, anything is possible. Also, I have to give others a chance in life. I can't just judge a person by their cover and make conclusions. And in order to really know a person, I have to sit down and talk to them myself. This book made me more conscious of who I talk to and the information I give to people. Because giving the wrong information to a wrong person comes with consequences.

\*\*\*Tip: Characters in books are relatable in some way (Especially in LOoKs)

So the characters...Aimee is a skinny girl and Meghan--not so much. Both of them are in high school and attend the same school.They are very self conscious and don't believe in themselves and what they are able to do. They are both very interesting characters. Many girls can relate to them, because their actions are almost seen everyday in everyday life. For example, these are relatable situations...

"She tousles her bangs discreetly, pulls some hanks of hair into her eyes" (Page 11)

"she was suddenly aware of her skirt gripping her legs in the wind, exposing their contours. She tries lamley to pull the fabric away from her skinniness, making fluff out in front of her." (Page 49)

You can't disagree, both of these characters are obviously trying to hide something. One is trying to hide her face with her hair, and the other is trying to hide her skinny legs with her skirt. This shamefulnes is 100% relatable. Everyone knows how it feels like to be ashamed of something. And how when you don't want to show something, you hide it.

\*\*\*\*\*TIP: Conflicts are the best!

So, Aimee and Meghan are super weird. As I was reading the book, I was going through this journey of long lost best friends. As I mentioned earlier, Aimee is as skinny as a pencil and Meghan is as fat as a waterbed. Both characters have issues with their body and are trying to make new friends. Meghan is observant, more like a stocker if you ask me. Meghan stalks Aimee's actions and who she's friends with. As creepy as it sounds, I mentally thanked Meghan for stalking Aimee because she ends up warning her about that new friend of hers, Cara. Cara mentally and emotionally hurt both characters in the book, and both Aimee and Meghan pair up like opposite sides of a magnet and must seek revenge on the "evil doer" (Cara).

Once they join forces, the joy inside your stomach wakes up and your eyes can't be removed from the book. It's a great feeling, the feeling of joy.

\*\*\*\*\*TIP: The "BIG-words Zone"

If you're worried about this book being too hard for you to understand, then you're worrying too much! I had absolutely no trouble reading the book, and I'm not a big fan of vocabulary. This book is written for teens, the author knows better than to use BIG words the would distract a teen from reading. Words splashed into into brain like waves passing through air.

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## Harley Burger says

What is it like to be invisible? Ask Meghan Ball and Aimee Zorn, the two protagonists of Madeleine George's novel Looks. Looks is a realistic fiction/ teen fiction novel due to its straightforward depiction of serious real-world themes such as bullying and anorexia in a high school setting. It shows the problems many teenagers today face and how their everyday interactions can impact the way they act and how they interact

with others. This is a very interesting novel written from a unique point of view not often seen before. The first of two main characters is Meghan Ball, a “fat girl” in the words of the author, who is practically invisible to everyone around her and uses this as an advantage. Meghan feels like an outsider until she sees Aimee Zorn, the novel’s second main character. Aimee is described as being “as skinny as Meghan is large” and is shown to have unspecified (and very possibly fictional) allergic reactions to almost everything she eats. Meghan feels a connection to Aimee and tries to befriend her when Aimee becomes friends with another girl named Cara, from Meghan’s past. Through Cara the two girls become acquainted with each other through the course of the book and learn about their similarities despite their looks.

I give this book three out of five stars. The topics explored are very well depicted through the use of interesting characters in a very typical setting. The writing style helped add to the unique aura of the book and made Aimee and Meghan stand out against the other characters both literally and metaphorically. However, it feels like many things were left unexplained or unresolved, although the main conflict was eliminated by the end of the book. For example, I was very confused about Aimee’s eating disorder, and whether or not she was actually having allergic reactions in some instances. The cause of her disorder was never blatantly stated, but perhaps that was intentional. I liked how the supporting characters all seemed very predictable on the surface, but were very subtly hinted at having darker sides to them, just like Aimee and Meghan. Looks is a good book for anyone who feels alone and needs to know that they are not, or generally anyone looking for an interesting take on high school drama. I however do not recommend this for people who are easily upset by bullying or eating disorders.

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### **Rebecca says**

I am not sure what made me dislike this book so much.

There were aspects of it that I did like. The descriptions and I felt that the author did a good job making me feel sick to my stomach when something awful happened to one of the characters but in the end I felt more depressed than any other emotion. I don't think I actually got anything from the book but a gloomy headache. Which I guess is good because a book is not supposed to make me feel comfortable with eating disorders I should not be comfortable with people bullying other people and people putting themselves down but I can't really bring myself to recommend the book to anyone (I did recommend it to one person and they had the same reaction I did so...)

Made me think but I didn't like it.

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### **Jennifer Wardrip says**

Reviewed by Karin Librarian for TeensReadToo.com

Meghan is obese. She is the largest person at Valley Regional High and her hulking size, oddly enough, allows her to blend into the background. Most people are too uncomfortable to make eye contact and most teachers are content to allow her to remain silent during class discussions. Meghan doesn't have any friends, but she knows a lot about everyone at school.

Aimee is reed thin. Her list of foods that give her a "bad reaction" grows every day. About the only things she allows herself to eat are Jell-o and carrot sticks. Her big, floppy hats and black, long skirts make her all but invisible in the school's halls. Invisible to everyone except Meghan, that is...

Meghan feels the need to connect with Aimee. She begins to follow Aimee in order to try and find an excuse to talk to her, but it isn't until Aimee is betrayed and she and Meghan share a common enemy that they team up for a little payback.

LOOKS deals with many issues - eating disorders, friendship, bullying, and high school dynamics are the most evident. George's unique writing style in the first and last chapters give the reader a voyeuristic feeling and, at times, the lyrical and figurative language tricks the reader into thinking they are reading an extended poem rather than a work of prose.

While the author doesn't wrap the story up in the traditional way of most young adult novels, it is definitely an accurate picture of the atmosphere in a typical high school.

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## **Johanna says**

January 3, 2016

Johanna Estrada

Book review 4

Pages 256

Book: Looks

7-blue

This book was good, it was written by Madeline George. It was about two girls who wanted revenge, because a popular girl had humiliated them. At first Meghan and Aimee weren't friends, Meghan the one who was once in the popular group got really fat so her popular friends turned on her. Aimee has anorexia so Cara was making fun of her disorder. Meghan and Aimee got together to plan something to get revenge on Cara. To me I think instead of revenge they should do it some other way. Also I wonder if, when Meghan was in the popular group did she also make fun of people? I think people should never make fun, because some day it can happen to you and you won't like it. Also revenge is not the right path to go to.

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## **Jay G says**

Want to see more bookish things from me? Check out my YouTube channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCfer...>

Meghan Ball and Aimee Zorn are both invisible in their own way. Meghan is obese and people tend to pretend she doesn't exist where Aimee is extremely thin and seems to disappear into herself. Meghan begins to feel a strong need to connect with Aimee, but Aimee wants nothing to do with her. When a common enemy brings the two girls together, in order to get their revenge.

This book was extremely easy to read. I loved Meghan and Aimee and both of their personalities. I loved how the book touched on so many important topics such as bullying, friendship, eating disorders and high school.

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## **Rekha says**

Meghan and Aimee are both invisible in their own ways. Meghan's obesity renders her a non-person to everyone at school and Aimee's eating disorder make her almost literally disappear into herself. They find each other and partner up to seek revenge against two popular kids who have hurt them both in different ways.

The best thing about the book was the poetic language. I paid close attention to all the imagery and the way the book is written elevates the story and made me forget about things that usually make me a little cranky (like one-dimensional evil popular kids). There were passages where I didn't even feel like I was reading prose. The first half of the book, especially, had an understated creepiness that I loved.

I would recommend this to teens who are fans of *Speak*, perhaps. Or fans of *Poison Ivy* by Amy Koss.

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### **Leann says**

Wow. I don't even know where to begin, but this novel was fantastic. Meghan is an outcast, and I really felt her pain. I thought this novel was so true to the horrors of high school, because let's face it, people can be harsh. Whenever J-Bar bullied her, I could see it happening. This novel dives deeply into a lot of issues like anorexia, obesity, betrayal, bullying, isolation, invisibility, I could go on. It felt so real to me. This novel really changed the way I look at some people, and I'm so glad I read this.

Highlights: When Cara showed her true colors. Okay, that should so not be a good thing, but I was just glad to see it. Sometimes, it's people like Cara who hurt you the most. Also, when Meghan and Aimee joined forces to bring down the one person that hurt them both, and they do not disappoint (I wish I had guts like these girls, but I have a conscience, which is horrible for revenge). I also really loved the character Mr. Handsley, I wish I had a teacher like him. Ms. Champoux was hilarious as well, especially with the morning announcements.

Also, how awesome is this cover? It's brilliant, as is the hardcover (check out the my interview with Madeleine to see the hardcover).

Lowlights: The action came a little later than I thought it would, and Meghan's constant following Aimee seemed a bit odd at times. I could understand where she was coming from, and in the end, they were kindred spirits. I also really, really wanted to punch J-Bar in the face. But I think he got what was coming to him. The ending was a little disturbing, because it just made me wonder about a lot of things...

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### **E says**

If this book were a teen movie it would have received a high rating and been placed alongside *Heathers* for its nihilistic tone, humour, and uncomfortably accurate portrayals of the "ethically complicated" social lives of teenagers. The poems in this book – the one that's supposed to be really good, at least – is actually pretty impressive (especially when one considers that it's supposed to have been written by a 14-year-old!).

Looks is fast-paced and raw and a little mean, with a lovely dreamy quality to the prose. The revenge plot drew me in; the high school villains were so cruel (and lacking in substance) that I really wanted to see them Get Theirs. But then, I sort of had a problem with that, because wouldn't it be more interesting if the villains had dimension and then I felt conflicted about the whole revenge plot? I'm more forgiving of caricatures in

films because of their brevity. I expect the villains of novels to have at least a little depth.

Overall, the pared-down, descriptive language worked well, but while they were evocative, I found the descriptions of eating disordered behaviour (and its accompanying emotional states) fairly predictable. I also found a few things implausible, including Meghan's all-knowingness (we never discover much else about her character; so frustrating) and the totally unbelievable relationship between Bill and Aimee's mother.

I'm waffling between 3 and 4 stars, here. I enjoyed most of the novel but it felt 90%, almost dark and comedic enough to really hit the spot, but not quite there.

A sequel set at the same high school, that gave a little depth to heretofore unexplored characters would definitely peak my interest. So, um, Madeleine George, if you feel like writing that, you've got at least one reader.

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