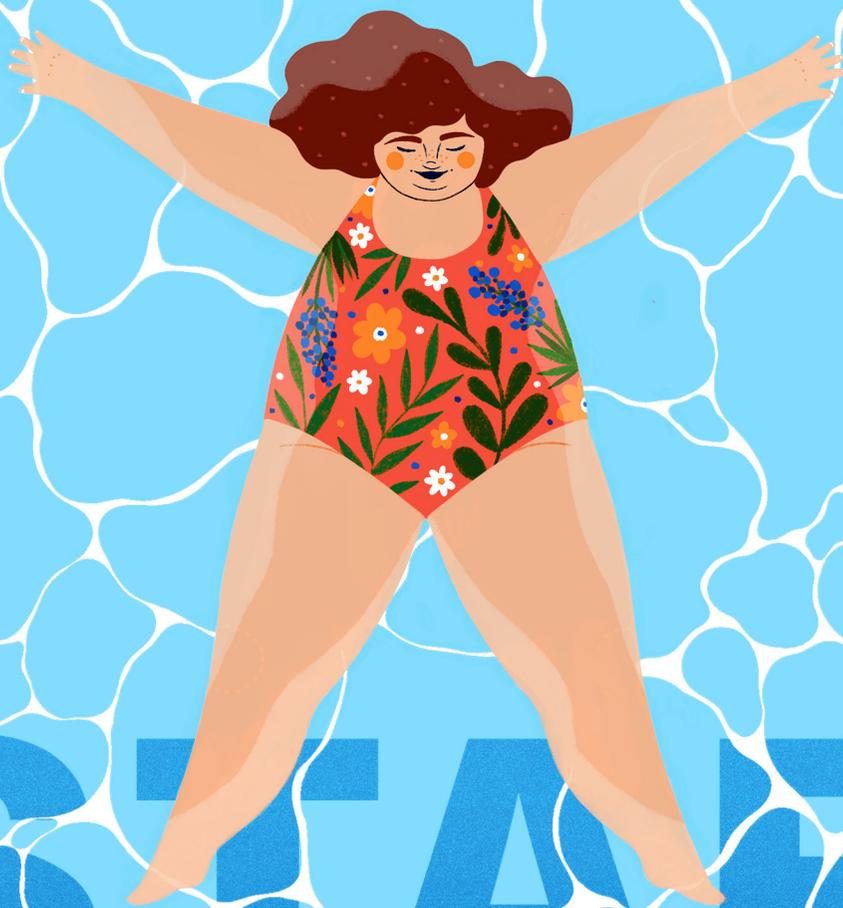
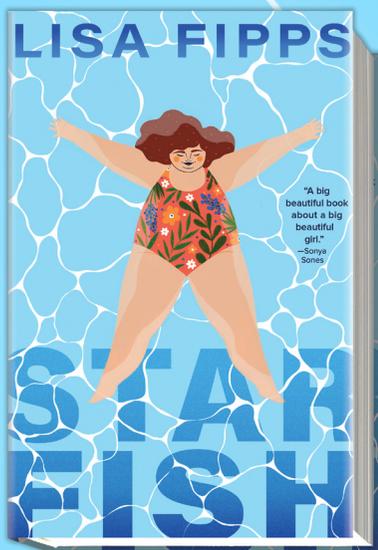


A DISCUSSION GUIDE TO



SUMMER
FESTIVAL





ABOUT THE BOOK!

Ellie is tired of being fat-shamed and does something about it in this poignant debut.

Ever since Ellie wore a whale swimsuit and made a big splash at her fifth birthday party, she's been bullied about her weight. To cope, she tries to live by the Fat Girl Rules—like “no making waves,” “avoid eating in public,” and “don't move so fast that your body jiggles.” And she's found her safe space—her swimming pool—where she feels weightless in a fat-obsessed world. In the water, she can stretch herself out like a starfish and take up all the room she wants. It's also where she can get away from her pushy mom, who thinks criticizing Ellie's weight will motivate her to diet. Fortunately, Ellie has allies in her dad, her therapist, and her new neighbor, Catalina, who loves Ellie for who she is. With this support buoying her, Ellie might finally be able to cast aside the Fat Girl Rules and starfish in real life—by unapologetically being her own fabulous self.



THIS GUIDE WAS WRITTEN BY ANGIE MANFREDI.

Angie Manfredi is a librarian, writer, and editor. She's fat and not sorry about it and is passionately committed to ensuring all kids and teens have equal access to books that represent the truths in their lives. She likes sending snail mail, watching bad TV and good films, and Twitter, where you can find her [@MISSKUBELIK](#).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ◆ Ellie says, “The first Fat Girl Rule/you learn hurts the most” (p. 6), but she doesn’t define what the first rule might be. After hearing some of the Fat Girl Rules, what do you think the first rule could be?
- ◆ Ellie talks about “fatdar” (p. 11) and says that it feels like people are experiencing “discomfort . . . shock . . . fear . . . [and] anger.” Why do you think Ellie lists these emotions? Why would a person being fat make someone feel these feelings?
- ◆ Why do you think Ellie wants to be a storyteller or a poet?
- ◆ Ellie asks, “Why aren’t kids allowed/to tell grown-ups when they’re wrong?” (p. 35). What do you think the answer to that question is? Have you found that to be true?
- ◆ How do things change for Ellie when she goes to Diana’s store (p. 37)? What does she notice that makes her act and feel differently?
- ◆ Ellie says, “A friend hears what you say with silence” (p. 50). What do you think this means?
- ◆ How did you feel when you read about Ellie having to hide food (p. 56) and not being allowed to learn to play piano (p. 51)?
- ◆ Ellie tells us she went on her first diet when she was four years old (p. 65). Do you think four-year-olds should be on diets? Why or why not? How did that change Ellie’s life?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS CONTINUED

- ◆ What is it like for Ellie when Catalina’s siblings let her sit in the front of the minivan (p. 75)? This could seem like a small action; does it feel that way to Ellie?
- ◆ Why doesn’t Ellie feel better when she does things that can be seen as ways of standing up for herself, like insult her classmates back (p. 81) or steal the photo card from the tourists (p. 110)?
- ◆ What does it mean for Ellie to invite Catalina to swim with her (p. 134)? How does it represent the changes in their friendship and in Ellie?
- ◆ Ellie tries to figure out what’s better: being ignored or being humiliated (p. 141). Why do you think that can be hard to know?
- ◆ What makes Ellie feel so good about burning the Fat Girl Rules (p. 192)?
- ◆ How would you have handled the situation with Marissa and Kortnee? What do you think Ellie did right?
- ◆ How did you feel when Ellie finally confronted her mom? What events in the book made Ellie ready to do this?
- ◆ In what ways in *your* life do *you* “starfish”? What does it mean and look like for you?

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

- ◆ Ellie’s therapist, Dr. Wood, has her “write down the hurtful words people say” (p. 71) so Ellie doesn’t have to carry them around. Try this out for yourself in a private space. Write down hurtful things people have said to you; use this space as a way to let go of the things *you* carry.
- ◆ Ellie gets put together with Enemy Number 3 to make a bulletin board project for the library (p. 148). They design something to talk about bullying. If you could create a bulletin board or poster to talk about the impacts of bullying, what would it look like? Maybe even try working together with someone like Ellie does to create something that reflects your message. What colors and medium would you use? Make a sketch or even create it for real!
- ◆ Ellie says she wants “people to accept me, just as I am” (p. 173), but she has a hard time figuring out how to describe herself. Try to find ways to describe yourself that have nothing to do with how you look. Take sticky notes and write down things that describe you that you are proud of and happy about. Think about words that could describe some characters in this book. What are words to describe Ellie? Catalina? Viv? Enemy Number Three? Viv’s dad? Dr. Wood?



PRAISE FOR STARFISH!

★ “A verse novel that shines . . .
Ellie’s story will delight readers who long to
see an impassioned young woman seize an
unapologetic victory.”

—BOOKLIST, starred review

★ “Make room in your heart for this
cathartic novel.”

—KIRKUS REVIEWS, starred review

★ “Charming.”

—SCHOOL LIBRARY JOURNAL, starred review

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



LISA FIPPS is a library marketing manager.
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