

Bodies Are Cool

Tyler Feder

Rocky Pond Books, 2021

Reviews

- [Kirkus](#) (June 1, 2021): “A bustling celebration of body positivity that lovingly features bodies, skin, and hair of all kinds. ‘Big bodies, small bodies / dancing, playing, happy bodies! / Look at all these different bodies! / Bodies are cool!’ begins this engaging picture book, extolling the variety and splendor of human bodies in gentle, singsong text. With shared public spaces as the backdrop of her full-bleed spreads—and a refreshing lack of fanfare—author/illustrator Feder depicts people of many races, genders, disabilities, and physical attributes enjoying one another’s company, emphasizing connection rather than explanation. [...] Most notably, Feder chooses clear and unapologetic language to describe body characteristics, challenging the negative connotations that are often attached to those bodies. Though the illustrations are a bit jam-packed, their richness and detail easily make up for the busy feel. Perfect for read-alouds, this offering shows young readers that vitiligo, assistive equipment, scars (including those denoting gender transition), fatness, dark skin, and textured hair (among many other features) all belong. Expanding visually beyond her celebration of the body, Feder also takes care to include queer families and characters wearing headscarves and turbans as well. Depicting societally marginalized human bodies in all their joyful, normal glory, this book is cool.” (Starred review).
- [School Library Journal](#) (July 1, 2021): “With colorful pages of people in all shapes and sizes, this book both serves as a joyous read-aloud for small and large groups and as a book for individual study and discovery. It works as an introduction to diversity without being explicitly about that, which is a gloriously refreshing take on the universality of the human experience. Young readers can look at the full-page color cartoon drawings for true-to-life representation of people in everyday group situations, such as a public swimming pool, the park, dance class, movie theater, and public transit. Displayed is a richly detailed tapestry of people with many skin tones, hair colors, shapes and sizes, clothing choices, and abilities; examples include wheelchairs, a hijab swimsuit, prosthetics on adults and kids, diabetics with insulin pumps, etc. More importantly, in a book about body positivity, the drawings represent people as they are in real life, ‘tall, short, wide, or narrow.’ The approach to both body image and body concepts is to use people-centric language and imagery that doesn’t divide along explicit lines. Each spread with its dense drawing of people joined together in a group activity focuses on traits (body shape, skin tone, hair, eyes, faces, etc.) in a repetitive, rhythmic sequence. Feder includes representations of Africans, Asians, Muslims, and whites from small sizes to plus sizes in all positions. [...] **VERDICT** With lilting dancelike rhythm through word repetition and brightly colored detailed images, this is a timely and worthy addition for every collection.” (Starred review).
- [Booklist](#) (June 1, 2021): “This joyous, uncompromising, vividly illustrated picture book celebrates bodies—everybody’s bodies. [...] This would make a great read-aloud, especially as the ‘Bodies are cool!’ refrain invites audience participation. Intended for young audiences, this unabashed

promotion of body positivity packs a punch and reminds readers to respect and love every body—including their own. This is a timely message with universal applications.” Starred review.

- [Publishers Weekly](#) (Apr. 22, 2021): “In an act of resistance against ubiquitous, homogenous images of human figures, artist Feder (*Dancing at the Pity Party*) offers up an inclusive celebration of endless variation in rousing verses and group settings, including public transit, a seasonal market, and a pool. Feder employs bold black linework and a luscious palette of candy colors. Bouncy text, on each page ending with the refrain ‘bodies are cool,’ attends people of varying abilities, ages, body shapes, religions, skin tones, and hair textures; a range of gender identities and sexual orientations are shown throughout. [...] With such a joyfully inclusive range of humans, all taking part in community and taking pleasure in each other’s company, it’s hard to imagine a stronger statement of body affirmation and pride.” Starred review.

Lists

- [ALA Rise: A Feminist Book Project List](#), 2022

Response to Challenges

- Author Tyler Feder, on her goals in writing *Bodies Are Cool*: “[I hope the book shows that] it’s normal to be trans or visibly queer or very fat or with a really noticeable disability. [...] If [kids] just start out thinking that everyone’s fine how they are, they’ll grow up and not want to discriminate.” ([NPR](#))
- Urbandale (IA) Community School District School Board member Dan Gutmann, on a lengthy list of books, including *Bodies Are Cool*, flagged as in violation of Iowa’s new law forbidding teaching of gender identity in schools: “I was a child sitting in an elementary school at one point. I’m also the father of a student. I take offense to the idea that my family is age-inappropriate. I find that incredibly offensive.” ([Des Moines Register](#))
- Bookseller Sarah Luce Look, on why *Bodies Are Cool* is a good fit for her bookstore in Decatur, GA: “We love this one—it’s important for all kids to see different kinds of bodies, and to see fat bodies and disabled bodies and different types of people interacting with each other in all different kinds of ways.” ([New York Times Wirecutter](#))

References

“2022 Rise: A Feminist Book Project List.” American Library Association. Retrieved September 11, 2023 from <https://www.ala.org/rt/2022-rise-feminist-book-project-list>

“Bodies Are Cool.” (2021, April 22). Booklist. Retrieved September 11, 2023 from <https://www.publishersweekly.com/9780593112625>

“Bodies Are Cool.” (2021, June 1). Kirkus. Retrieved September 11, 2023 from <https://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/tyler-feder/bodies-are-cool/>

Giddings, Caitlin. "15 LGBTQ Books for Kids and Teens Recommended by Queer Librarians, Educators, and Independent Booksellers." (2023, June 1). New York Times Wirecutter. Retrieved September 11, 2023 from

<https://www.nytimes.com/wirecutter/reviews/15-lgbtq-books-for-kids-and-teens/>

Ha, Vi. "Bodies Are Cool." (2021, July 1). School Library Journal. Retrieved September 11, 2023 from

<https://www.slj.com/review/bodies-are-cool>

Higgins, Chris. "Iowa School District Flags 374 Books as Potentially Banned, from 'Ulysses' to 'Heartstopper.'" (2023, July 31). Des Moines Register. Retrieved September 11, 2023 from

<https://www.desmoinesregister.com/story/news/education/2023/07/31/urbandale-school-district-iowa-book-ban-law-flagged-ulysses-color-purple-heartstopper-lgbtq-themes/70459691007/>

McBroom, Kathleen. "Bodies Are Cool." (June 1, 2021). Booklist. Retrieved September 11, 2023 from

<https://www.booklistonline.com/Bodies-Are-Cool-Tyler-Feder/pid=9747976>

Torchinsky, Rina. "These Kids' Authors Are Telling the Stories of Trans Youth. Book Bans Won't Stop Them." (2022, March 31). NPR. Retrieved September 11, 2023 from

<https://www.npr.org/2022/03/31/1089726765/these-kids-authors-are-telling-the-stories-of-trans-youth-book-bans-wont-stop-th>