

TEEN BOOK CLUB

July 2017 Selection

***Dumplin'* by Julie Murphy**

Dubbed “Dumplin’” by her former beauty queen mom, Willowdean has always been at home in her own skin. Her thoughts on having the ultimate bikini body? Put a bikini on your body. With her all-American beauty best friend, Ellen, but her side, things have always worked... until Will takes a job at Harpy’s, the local fast-food joint. There she meets Private School Bo, a hot former jock. Will isn’t surprised to find herself attracted to Bo. But she is surprised when he seems to like her back.

Instead of finding new heights of self-assurance in her relationship with Bo, Will starts to doubt herself. So she sets out to take back her confidence by doing the most horrifying thing she can imagine: entering the Miss Clover City beauty pageant—along with several other unlikely candidates—to show the world that she deserves to be up there as much as any girl does. Along the way, she’ll shock the hell out of Clover City—and maybe herself most of all.

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Discussion Questions:

1. “All the best things in my life have started with a Dolly Parton song.” This is the first line of the book—what does it reveal about Willowdean? How does Will’s love of Dolly Parton affect her life?
2. Will and her best friend Ellen have a lot of ups and downs over the course of the novel—what does Will learn about her friend, and herself, over the course of the book? Why does Ellen taking the next step in her relationship start to upset Willowdean?

3. How does Will's relationship with her aunt affect her? What about her thoughts about body image? How does Will's fondness for her aunt affect her mother?
4. Will's mother is a former pageant queen—why is she so reluctant to let Will compete in the pageant? How does this affect Will and her mother?
5. How does Will's relationship with Mitch differ from her relationship with Bo?
6. Why does Will question her relationship with Bo? Why is it so difficult to imagine going public with their relationship?
7. Will has this to say about swimsuits: "There's something about swimsuits that make you think you've got to earn the right to wear them. Really, the criteria is simple. Do you have a body? Put a swimsuit on it." Why is this important to her? What would other characters in *Dumplin'* say about this philosophy?
8. Will always has to have a job to help her mom, and to support herself—why do you think this is important? How does working change Will's life?
9. Will makes a few new friends in the story: Hannah, Millie, and Amanda. How does getting to know them change Will? How do Hannah, Millie, and Amanda change over the course of the book?
10. Will becomes very passionate about the Miss Clover City beauty pageant—why does she initially want to enter the pageant? Does her motivation change over the course of the book? Why do the other girls want to enter the pageant?
11. Will is a strong girl, who is confident and unafraid. But she struggles with body image issues—how does she think about her body in a positive way? When does she think more negatively? Why?

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