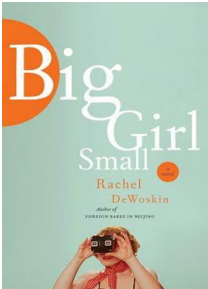




**Fr. Michael Goetz Library Learning Commons
Teacher's Book Review**



***Big Girl Small, Rachel DeWoskin*
Reviewed by Ms. Cosgrove, October 3rd, 2012.**

Many people, despite their fond memories of high school, would not choose to relive it again. It is a time filled with great highs and great lows. For some, the challenges are many, but manageable. For others, especially those teens who are marginalized because they are different, the challenges can seem insurmountable.

This week's novel is set in a high school for the arts. The protagonist, Judy Lohden, is typical of the student body in many ways. She is multi-talented in the areas of singing and writing. She comes from a supportive home, has an older brother and sister and like so many kids in her age bracket, she will do anything to fit in. When she sings, she commands the stage. Her voice is big but her stature is small, for Judy Lohden is only three feet, nine inches tall.

For somebody who spends a great deal of her time straining to see everything in her path, she has a "beyond her years" understanding of people around her. Her self-understanding is equally highly developed for her age. The first person point of view takes us into Judy's mind as she sized up the people around her with lightning speed and dead on accuracy. In one moment she can be hilarious in her self-deprecating remarks and in the next moment achingly vulnerable in her desire to be loved. The book begins at the end, in the sense that Judy reveals that something very terrible has happened to her which has her living in a seedy motel room for the last week. The story is then unraveled, very slowly, in order to trace the events which have led her to this state of despair and loneliness.

The book is the celebration of the human spirit's potential to not only survive, but endure. Few teen readers will have experienced Judy's horrifying circumstances but many will be all too familiar with her basic plight. Can a damaged reputation be restored? The primary question guiding the protagonist's journey seems to be whether we should be judged by our mistakes in life or by our attempts to correct them. I loved this book because it underscores my strong belief that although there are circumstances in our life over which we have no control, our attitude in encountering them and dealing with them is in our total control. The blessing of being human is our consciousness of that inherent freedom and this story reminds us of it.