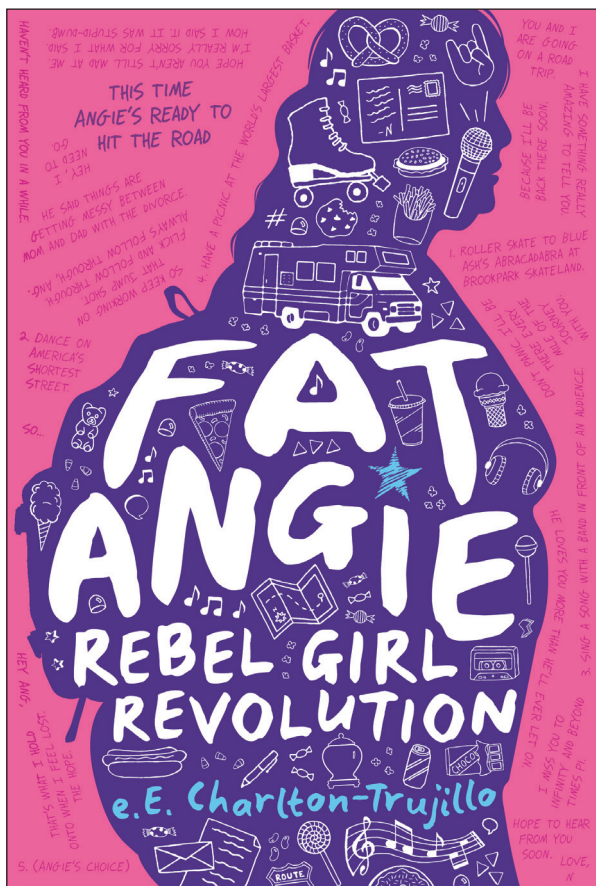


FAT ANGIE REBEL GIRL REVOLUTION

by e.E. Charlton-Trujillo



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Also available as an e-book and in audio

About the Book

Sophomore year has just begun, and Angie is miserable. Her girlfriend, KC, has moved away, her good friend Jake is keeping his distance, and the resident bully has ramped up an increasingly vicious and targeted campaign to humiliate her. An over-the-top statue dedication planned for her sister, who died in Iraq, is almost too much to bear, and it doesn't help that her mother has placed a symbolic empty urn on their mantel. At the ceremony, a soldier hands Angie a final letter from her sister, including a list of places she wanted the two of them to visit when she got home from the war. With her mother threatening to send Angie to a "treatment center" and the situation at school becoming violent, Angie enlists the help of her estranged childhood friend, Jamboree. Along with a few other outsiders, they pack into an RV and head across the state on the road trip Angie's sister did not live to take. It might be just what Angie needs to find a way to let her sister go, and to find herself in the process.

About the Author

e.E. Charlton-Trujillo is the author of *Fat Angie*, which received a Stonewall Book Award. A filmmaker and YA novelist, she grew up in Texas and now lives in California. You can learn more about Rock the Word and about e.E. Charlton-Trujillo on her website, <http://bigdreamswrite.com>.

Common Core Connections

This discussion guide, which can be used with large or small groups, will help students meet several of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for English Language Arts. These include the reading literature standards for key ideas and details, craft and structure, and integration of knowledge and ideas (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL), as well as the speaking and listening standards for comprehension and collaboration and for presentation of knowledge and ideas (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL). Questions can also be used in writing prompts for independent work to meet Common Core State Standards for writing.



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Discussion Questions

1. Body image is a central theme of *Fat Angie: Rebel Girl Revolution*. The protagonist calls herself “Fat Angie” and sees herself as “Fat Angie.” At one point, as she is about to go on stage and sing, she feels it is “not an attractive moment for her. Even her truly awesome thrift-store shirt and maroon Doc Martens, trimmed with costume jewelry and an ode-to-Wonder-Woman leather cuff could not hide what was always underneath: Fat Angie” (page 272). How does Angie see her physical self at different times in the book? How does Angie’s self-image compare to the way her friends and her family see her? How do other characters like Jamboree and Zeke see their physical selves? On the first day of school, Angie watches “girls flirting—working angles with a slight shift of a hip, a slip of a grin, their confidence vested in their thin waistlines. Nothing to encumber them. Nothing to keep them from being . . . normal” (page 3). Discuss body image in our culture and its impact on females especially. Come up with a list of factors, such as the media, that influence our body image.
2. Music is an important element in the novel. For example, every chapter title is also a song title, and Joan Jett’s “Bad Reputation” inspires Angie to go on the road trip and begin her personal revolution. Find other references to specific songs and lyrics throughout the novel and identify how they suit the situation. Pick one or two that you are unfamiliar with and listen to them to get a sense of their mood. Can you think of specific music that is part of the soundtrack of your own life? Give examples. Then analyze the song that Zeke and Angie write for her to sing with the punk rock band in Cincinnati (pages 280–283). Examine its poetic structure. What do you notice in terms of language, rhythm, imagery, repetition, etc.? Look at the song in terms of its meaning, both for Angie and anyone who might listen to it. What are the messages? How do the lyrics resonate with you?
3. Bullying and cyberbullying are significant issues in our culture, among children and teens in particular. Bullying involves a perpetrator (the bully), a victim, and often a bystander. Define each of these terms. Who are the perpetrators/bullies, the victims, and the bystanders found in this novel? Give examples of their behaviors. What are the consequences of the actions (or the lack of action) of each of these individuals? Consider Stacy Ann Sloan, “Angie’s former tormentor. The queen of sting, the heartless hater, the original mean girl” (page 15). Angie later finds out that her best friend, Jake, is dating Stacy. Stacy then tries to apologize to Angie for her past behavior. Should she be forgiven? Can people change? How does this impact Angie’s relationship with Jake? Should Darius and other bystanders who at first do nothing when Angie is attacked by Gary Klein be forgiven?
4. Discuss the arc of Angie’s relationship with Gary Klein, from the moment he kissed her years ago to the end of *Fat Angie: Rebel Girl Revolution*. This particular school year his behavior has gone beyond bullying: “Gary’s grin—something was different. His meanness had mutated into something distinctly darker since the end of the previous school year. There was a raw hunger in his eyes. His sneer was more informed by hate rather than just ignorance. Gary was no longer the obnoxious jockhead simply posturing for the masses. His dislike for Angie had, in essence, evolved” (page 6). Gary Klein engages in increasingly violent behavior: homophobic slurs, fat shaming, and going as far as physical assault. Have you seen examples of bullying that reached this extreme level? Do you consider homophobia, body shaming, and violence against those who are labeled different or undesirable to be significant issues in our culture? Explain. What do you think are the causes and consequences of these behaviors? Generate a list of solutions for dealing with homophobia, body shaming, and violence directed toward those labeled different. In what ways can you take action on these issues?

Discussion Questions

5. As Angie enters William Anders High School on her first day of tenth grade, “her chin was up. Though it still doubled. Her heart was beating. Though it was broken. Her dreams were big. Though she could not really remember them. She was, in Fat Angie terms, alone. Truly. Deeply. Painfully alone” (page 4). This profound sense of loneliness and feeling like an outsider is something Angie contends with at every moment. She feels “the undeniable pain and heartache . . . [of] an outsider who was gay-girl gay in small-town Ohio. A young woman who had been shunned by her community of peers” (pages 13–14). What and who are the sources of Angie’s loneliness and sense of otherness? What are the consequences of her isolation? How and why do these feelings change as the story progresses?
6. “After several deep breaths, Angie repositioned her lopsided backpack, a pang pushing along the center of her diaphragm. What she privately referred to as the Hole was aching. It was also on her List of Dislikes” (page 7). What is Angie referring to as “the Hole”? When did this feeling begin? How do her anxiety, depression, and panic disorder play into her self-image and her relationships with others — Jake, Gary Klein, Jamboree, Connie, Zeke, etc.? Why do you think there are times when Angie is silent and reluctant to speak up while at other times she needs and wants to be seen and heard?
7. Think about the coping strategies that Angie and other characters in the book use to deal with their issues: breathing deeply, listening to and performing music, journaling, undergoing therapy, walking, dancing, etc. Which of these approaches are successful? Have you tried any of these approaches when faced with a difficult situation? Talk about the results. Do you have other ideas for effective ways of coping with challenges? Does anyone in the novel try to cope in ways that are not helpful, even harmful? Explain.
8. Numbers and math are important symbols used throughout the novel. They are a coping strategy for Angie. Look for and discuss specific examples, like the one on pages 221–222: “You can’t let them hear you dying every second of every minute of every hour of every day. There are 86,400 seconds of screaming-not-screaming in every single day. Crying-not-crying. Feeling-not-feeling. But it’s still so loud, you know?” Numbers are also one of the ways in which Angie begins to see her true self. Her mother has always told her that she is not proficient with numbers. But at Fountain Square, she thinks, “Am I really deficient at the art of numbers? I think about them all the time. . . . I like coefficients. A coefficient never changes. My mom is not a coefficient. Jamboree is not a coefficient. They are constantly changing. Maybe I don’t like the art of numbers because they are incongruent with the reality of people. People are not math. Are they?” (page 290) Talk about this statement and what it symbolizes about the changes occurring in Angie.
9. Another powerful symbol found in *Fat Angie: Rebel Girl Revolution* is the urn that Angie’s mother keeps on the mantel. We first learn about the urn on pages 43–44. Describe the urn and trace its journey throughout the novel. What do the urn and its journey symbolize for Angie’s mother? For Angie? What items have a similar kind of symbolism for you?
10. Author e.E. Charlton-Trujillo allows readers to view Angie’s world through a lens of empathy and understanding, as it becomes clear that each character in the book has had their challenges. Discuss those challenges as they apply to Jake, Darius, Zeke, Jamboree, Connie, Wang, and Angie’s sister. Does the awareness of their challenges help Angie see these characters in a different way? Did it change your view of these characters? Do challenges explain and/or excuse some of their behavior? Using specific examples, explain why or why not.

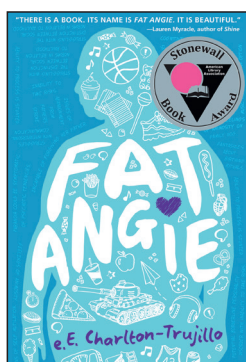
Discussion Questions

11. Angie's sister's name is only mentioned once in the book, on page 302. Do you think this was a deliberate choice on the part of the author? If so, why? Think about Angie's relationship with her sister, both before she dies and after. Who is the idealized sister, created by Angie's mother and members of the community? On pages 38–39 we learn that "the ghost of her sister saturated the neighborhoods and streets of Dryfalls. . . . Homecoming queen, state-honored athlete, school-play lead. . . . Angie's sister had been the shining star and single most important person in the community. . . . She was a war hero. She was a legend. . . . No one wanted to let her go." Discuss this statement. How does the legend of her sister impact the person that Angie is when the story begins as well as the person she becomes by the story's end? Who is the real sister, the sister whom Angie only fully comes to know after Staff Sergeant Hernandez gives her the letter, written right before her sister's capture?
12. On page 317, Angie tells her mother, "Screw your symbols. . . . Some things are just what they are. She died. Period. She died scared. Period. She died because you wouldn't understand, and she had to run from your expectations. Period." Talk about this passage. In what ways does Angie's understanding of the dynamic between her sister and their mother influence Angie's own self-image and the person she is becoming?
13. Angie's relationship with her "couldn't-understand mother" is very complex. Angie feels unloved and unseen and unheard, despite the fact that her mother says, "I am deafened by hearing you, Angie" (page 109). Discuss the many ways in which Connie marginalizes Angie and fails to fulfill her needs, in regard to her sexuality, the loss of her sister, her body image, her fears, and her calls for help (such as her suicide attempt). In what ways does she fail her child? What do you feel the role of a parent is when a child is in crisis? What does Connie do, in her way of thinking, to help Angie (the threat of Whispering Oak, physical violence, verbal assault, etc.)? What could/should she have done to truly help her daughter?
- Does Connie herself deserve empathy or compassion? What does her behavior tell us about her own issues, and do they excuse her behavior? Does she cope effectively with her problems? What could Connie do to help herself? What kinds of things can adults do to support kids who are struggling?
14. Look for and discuss examples throughout *Fat Angie: Rebel Girl Revolution* in which social media is used to harm others (for example, when the video of Angie having a panic attack appears online and others post mean comments about it, found on pages 47–48). What examples can you find where it is actually beneficial (such as when Darius posts the video of Angie's beating by Gary Klein and uses it to indict Gary, found on pages 309–310)? What lessons can be learned from these examples? Can you think of real-life examples in which social media is/was harmful, as well as examples in which it is/was beneficial?
15. Review Angie's sister's *Why Not?* list found on page 84. Why do you think that she chose these particular items for the list? Angie, at first, calls the list a "List of Impossible" (page 84). How does that change by the end? Discuss each item on the list, whether you feel that Angie completes it, how she completes it, and how she changes as a result. What would you put on your own *Why Not?* list? What would you put on a *Why Not?* list for someone who is important in your own life?
16. Rebellion is defined on page 130 as "the defiance of authority," with references to specific revolutions. Why do you think e.E. Charlton-Trujillo titled the book *Fat Angie: Rebel Girl Revolution*? As the novel begins, Angie does not defy authority. However, as the story progresses, she becomes more and more rebellious. Discuss whether Angie's rebellion is necessary to her growth. Can you think of examples in real life where "revolution" has led to change for the better? Was Angie's rebellion necessary? Give examples of her growth as a rebel.

Discussion Questions

17. Describe the character of Patricia Ana Corona-Morales (Zeke). Compare and contrast Zeke and Angie. What does Zeke teach Angie about different aspects of herself (her sexuality, her body, her shame, her power, her story)? What does she teach Angie about self-acceptance? Then shine the same light on Wang, Jamboree, Darius, and Jake and their relationships with Angie. What does Angie learn about, and from, each of them?
18. Angie seems to have lost hope early in the novel. Give some specific examples that demonstrate her lack of hope. In the letter Staff Sergeant Hernandez gives to Angie, her sister tells her, "But sometimes there is real hope. And it's something you can see. Almost multiplying. That's what I hold on to when I feel lost. The hope" (page 82). We see more glimmers of hope in Angie as the story progresses: "Something renewed sprang in Angie's would-be plump soul. She was infused with hope. She was infused with excitement" (page 153). Look for more examples. In the end, despite the difficulty of Angie's life, do you feel that her story is hopeful? Discuss why.
19. Discuss the final lines of the novel: "There was a girl. Her name was Angie. She had fallen in love . . . with herself" (pages 342–343). In terms of many of the topics that you considered in the questions above (body image, sexuality, loneliness, the Hole, having challenges, physical and cyberbullying, othering, rebellion, and hope), what does this final line tell us about where Angie's journey has led her?
20. e.E. Charlton-Trujillo created the Rock the Word program that included five YA and middle-grade authors in its first incarnation. At Rock the Word Iowa, for example, the writers worked with more than 1,200 teens at two different schools to help them find their voices and tell their stories. e.E. Charlton-Trujillo says that Rock the Word is about "the idea of empowerment. And giving kids a place where they can harness their voices. To see themselves as storytellers. As changemakers. As activists." In what ways do Angie, Darius, Jamboree, and others find their voices in *Fat Angie: Rebel Girl Revolution*? Give specific examples from the novel.
21. As an author, e.E. Charlton-Trujillo asks young people, "What is your story to the world? What is it you want to say? How will you make your mark?" In this spirit, why is Angie's story important?
22. What is your own story? What do *you* have to say to the world?

Also by e.E. Charlton-Trujillo



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These questions were prepared by Terri A. Evans, a consultant to Winding Oak, school library media specialist and educator, library advocate and volunteer, and reader who lives in Minnesota.