A 2012 survey of the covers of 624 “traditionally published” YA books noted, among other things, the representations of minorities - or rather, the lack of them.

It was found that **90% of covers featured a white character, 10% featured a character of ambiguous ethnicity, 1.4% featured a Latino/Latina character, 1.4% an Asian character, and 1.2% a black character.**

Of the black models featured, two were “behind a white girl”, two had their face obscured, three were without heads and featured alongside two white friends, and only one is featured front and center, being [an illustration of the albino lead character](http://nnedi.com/sunny.html) in the book “Akata Witch”.

And as for **visual representations of characters with disabilities: zero**.

Much of the YA literature that *can* be considered diverse is often contemporary, realistic fiction or historical fiction about the struggle of being a person of color. As Teen librarians or teachers we hear the stories of struggle, of poverty of bullying, so it *is* nice to have this type of young adult fiction available. But, yea life can be tough and there are lots of books that represent that but many teens like to escape into fantasy or science fiction or horror. Readers of these genres also like to see themselves in these books.

**Body Image**

So, we already know that teen book covers are whitewashed, but how is weight depicted on the cover? Well, the very books that discuss stories of overweight teens, very rarely actually show a full bodied teen or really depict the size of the teen the story is about.

What does it say to our teens and about our culture when we can’t put realistic looking teens on the covers of the very books we say represent them?

But with all that said there are some books that got it right with the cover.

Questions? Email me: [melissa.taylor@jeffcolibrary.org](mailto:melissa.taylor@jeffcolibrary.org)