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The Earth, My Butt, and Other Big Round Things

Margaret Manchak

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Reviewer: Margaret Manchak
Reading Level: Young adult;
Rating: Excellent;
Genre: Contemporary realistic fiction;
Subject: Friends--Juvenile fiction; Weight--Juvenile fiction; Family--Juvenile fiction;

Virginia Shreves is the plump protagonist in this coming-of-age story. She struggles with her feelings about her weight, about her restrictive, picture-perfect family, and about her boyfriend Froggy, who is really only her boyfriend on Monday afternoons in her bedroom. All aspects of her life fall apart when her big brother runs afoul of the law, but it seems to be only the beginning of putting things back together in a very satisfying way. While she doesn't figure everything out, Virginia does make real progress in realistic and constructive ways. She makes new friends after months of moping because her best friend has moved, she takes the initiative to try out her own personal style and not her moms, and she communicates her feelings and frustrations to those around her instead of hurting herself.

The Earth, My Butt, and Other Big Round Things is really a constructive self-help book for teens with body and self-image issues, disguised as a light weight, chick novel. Carolyn Mackler deals with hefty topics in a way that that many girls could relate to and benefit from.