

**Title:** *Eleanor and Park*  
**Author:** Rainbow Rowell  
**Genre:** Young Adult - Socio-Economic Differences

**Respondent's Name and Grade:** Zahra V., 8<sup>th</sup> Grade

**Date Responded To:** July 31, 2022

**Questions:**

1. *What is the main plot of this book?*

*Eleanor and Park* is set in Omaha, Nebraska in the year 1986. It follows two characters who struggle to fit in with everyone else in their suburban town. Eleanor is a poor girl who dresses in men's clothing and is bullied by others for being "big and awkward." Park is an Asian American boy who is not traditionally masculine and keeps to himself. The two strike up a friendship after sitting next to each other on the school bus and become very close. As the two try to navigate their complicated home lives and the relationship with each other, they learn about the importance of friendship, trust, and love.

2. *Which character did you most identify with and why?*

I identified most with Park because of his experience as a person of color in a majority white school. For example, his Korean features make him stand out from everyone else, which is a common experience for people of color. I also related to his shy nature and how he was not very confrontational.

3. *What do you believe is the main message of this book?*

I believe the main message of this book is that love can be a refuge for people. For example, as the relationship between Eleanor and Park grew, they became more confident in themselves and were able to confide with each other about their personal struggles and home life. Eleanor was able to seek refuge from her horrible stepfather Richie and Park was able to come to terms with his more feminine side against his father's pressure. Overall, this shows how love can affect people in good ways and make them stronger.

4. *Do you think the main message of this book was effectively integrated into the story, or did it come across as too "preachy"?*

No, I don't think this book was "preachy" at all because it had an interesting plot that moved at a good pace. Although the book contained heavy topics such as poverty, abuse, and prejudice, it did not preach anything. Instead, it shed light on such topics and made it relatable for many young teens today, guiding them through a path of self acceptance and clarity.

5. *If two or more perspectives on an important topic were explored/presented in this book, which one did you agree with and why?*

The two perspectives in this book were those who bullied Eleanor for her appearance and those who stood up for her. I agree with Park, who stood up to her bullies because it is wrong to bully others. Eleanor comes from a very poor family and deals with an abusive stepfather. As a result, her family lives on scraps and cannot afford luxuries such as new clothes, good food, or a cell phone. Despite this, Park becomes a refuge for her and helps her deal with these struggles even when others tormented her for it.

6. *In what ways (if any) were your beliefs about a topic changed or reaffirmed through reading this book?*

My beliefs about identity and expression were reaffirmed by reading this book because it showed how Park came to terms with his gender expression. For example, Park is ridiculed by his father for not being traditionally masculine, especially because his father is a well respected war veteran. This causes tension between Park and his dad, but through Eleanor, Park learns to accept himself. He begins wearing eyeliner and stands up for himself against his dad, finally expressing who he really is.

7. *What perspective, if any, do you think was missing from this book?*

I don't think any perspective was missing from this book. One perspective I thought was really powerful to include was that of Eleanor's mother, who suffers the emotional and physical abuse of her husband. The book shows how she is trapped in her marriage and how she tries to cope with the harsh reality by pretending things are okay to keep her family in balance. Showing this difficult situation describes how Eleanor's mom walks on eggshells and cannot provide Eleanor with the best support because she is also a victim of abuse and ridicule.

8. *Did this book encourage you to pursue any topics further through more reading, research, action, etc., and if so, how?*

Yes, this book made me delve deeper into topics such as domestic abuse, child abuse, poverty, and how such topics are linked. For example, Eleanor's stepfather Richie is portrayed as a scary, horrible man who is violent and forces his family to live in poverty. This is a reality for many people in America, so reading this book opened my eyes more to the varying social classes in our nation.

9. *What type of reader (based on age, interests, perspectives, etc.) would you suggest this book to?*

I would recommend this book to readers who enjoy a wholesome romance and those who like books that show strong character development as both Eleanor and Park undergo major changes by the end of the book.

10. *What other book(s) have you read that you think would make a good addition to this category of the Perspectives Bibliography, and why?*

Another book that I think would make a good addition to this category for the Perspectives Project is *Looking for Alaska* by John Green, which follows Miles throughout his year at Culver Creek and his relationship with a mysterious girl named Alaska. This book delves into topics such as class struggles, family relationships, and friendship.