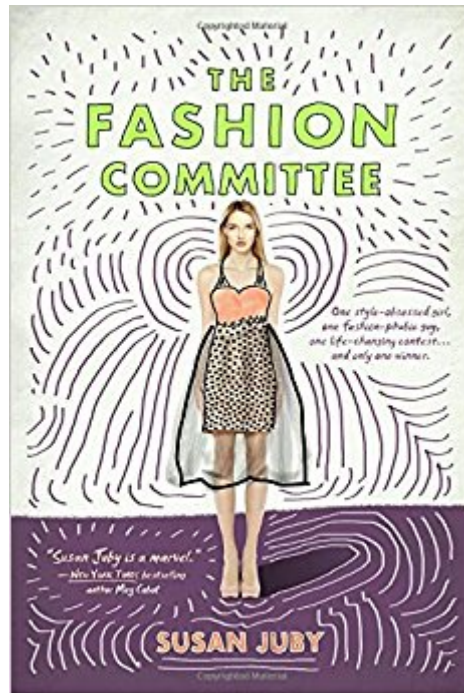




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# The Fashion Committee



## Synopsis

"The Fashion Committee is another winner by one of my all time favorite authors."--Meg Cabot, New York Times bestselling author of the The Princess Diaries and Mediator series Charlie Dean is a style-obsessed girl who eats, sleeps, and breathes fashion. John Thomas-Smith is a boy who forges metal sculptures in his garage and couldn't care less about clothes. Both are gunning for a scholarship to the private art high school that could make all their dreams come true. Whoever wins the fashion competition will win the scholarship and only one can win. Told in the alternating voices of Charlie's and John's journals, this hilarious and poignant YA novel perfectly captures what it's like to have an artistic drive so fierce that nothing's not your dad's girlfriend's drug-addicted ex-boyfriend, a soul-crushing job at Salad Stop, or being charged with a teensy bit of kidnapping can stand in your way. With black and white art custom-created by fashion and beauty illustrator Soleil Ignacio, the book is a collector's item, perfect for anyone with a passion for fashion.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

PRAISE FOR The Fashion Committee: "Filled with hilarious and tragic moments alike, Judy's vibrant novel thoroughly explores the hearts, souls, and minds of two very different teens."

--Publishers Weekly, starred review "The cleverly deceptive title, cover art, and opening pages belie the strength of the protagonists' personalities as well as the tragic elements that have shaped their lives and define the story."--School Library Journal, starred review "Entertaining, smart, and inspiring."--Kirkus Reviews "Tailored to perfection for readers who love to laugh and

look good doing it."--The Globe and Mail"Charlie is perhaps Juby's finest character to date, not just seriously inventive, buoyant and insightful in fashion sense and philosophy, but also a poignant testament to the resilience of a girl determined to live well despite her parents' struggle with addiction."--The Star"Expect hilarity." --Quill & QuirePRAISE FOR The Truth Commission:"With a deft hand and an open mind, Juby presents many layers of truth. This is a sharp-edged portrait of a dysfunctional family with some thought-provoking ideas about what is real." --Starred Review, Publishers Weekly"A surprising, witty, and compulsive read." --Starred Review, School Library Journal"Hilarious, deliciously provocative and slyly thought-provoking." --Starred Review, Kirkus "Juby's bright dialogue and vivid, appealing characters draw readers along as the three young artists navigate truths both light and dark, discovering themselves in the process." --Starred Review, The Horn Book

Susan Juby (www.susanjuby.com) has written seven novels for teenagers. The most well-known is Alice, I Think, the first of the Alice MacLeod trilogy, which was made into a successful television series. She is also the author of a memoir, A Nice Recovery, and the adult comic novel The Woefield Poetry Collective; the sequel, A Republic of Dirt, has just been published in Canada. She is currently working on a second novel about the Green Pastures Academy of Art and Applied Design. Susan Juby lives in Nanaimo, BC, Canada, the setting for most of her books.

I'm biased because I'm a huge Susan Juby fan. I love how she presents a clear message in her YA stories with crazy humor. I love her books for adults as well.

"Find something that makes your heart sing and your brain expand, and let it carry you past all the ugliness and low spots." -- "Measuring someone is borderline invasive. You have to touch them and record their physical presence in the world. It's a pretty specific way to understand someone."Charlie Dean lives and breathes fashion and she strives for style in all things. John Thomas-Smith is a metal sculptor and he could not care less about clothes. They have one thing in common: they desperately want the chance to attend the Green Pastures Academy of Art and Applied Design on full scholarship. When Green Pastures announces that this year's scholarship will be awarded to a fashion design student, Charlie thinks the stars have finally aligned to make her dreams come true. John, meanwhile, is disappointed that the scholarship isn't for metalwork but he also knows that fashion is a joke. How hard can faking his way into the competition really be? Charlie and John have nothing in common except for art and ambition. They are both

determined to win and they won't let anything stand in their way. Not a soul-killing job at Salad Stop or an unsympathetic girlfriend. Not a dad's girlfriend's drug-addicted ex-boyfriend. And definitely not a very minor case of kidnapping. Two very different artists. One life changing competition. And only one winner in *The Fashion Committee* (2017) by Susan Juby. Although set in the same world as *The Truth Commission*, Juby's latest novel is a standalone contemporary with an entirely new cast of characters (and illustrations by Soleil Ignacio). This epistolary novel features alternating chapters from Charlie and John's fashion journals written over the course of the competition. Charlie's sections each start with one of her signature bright ideas ("Dress for the life you want!") while John's sections finish with quotes from the fashion industry and his own scathing indictments. Although Charlie and John often share physical space, their narratives have little overlap as the plot focuses on their own paths through the competition from developing their concepts and designing their garments to the final fashion show. Juby introduces two very different characters in *The Fashion Committee*. Charlie Dean has been curating and shaping her own persona from a very young age. She values fashion above most else and she believes in deliberate sartorial choices to create a facade to present to the world. Charlie uses that facade to offset some of the things she'd prefer to forget like her father's struggle with drug addiction. John, meanwhile, considers himself a straight shooter with a hard knock upbringing. He is very aware of the privileges of those around him (especially those attending Green Pastures) but turns a blind eye to his own good fortune being raised by two loving and conscientious grandparents. Despite their differing opinions of fashion (and almost everything else), Charlie and John's journeys mirror each other well with a variety of ups, downs, and even a littler romance for both protagonists. Charlie and John both have to deal with some stereotypes and preconceptions about themselves and, through meeting the unique group of students competing in the fashion show, they also learn to acknowledge their own biases. Does everything go perfectly in *The Fashion Committee*? No. Not even with Charlie's efforts to impose beauty and positivity on the world through sheer force of will or John's deliberate choice to always expect the worst. *The Fashion Committee* is a thoughtful novel about fashion, privilege, and perspective where Charlie and John learn to appreciate what they have and also strive to get what they deserve. A must-read for fashionistas of all levels of expertise and anyone who seeking a book that will leave them laughing. Highly recommended.

Possible Pairings: *The Vigilante Poets of Selwyn Academy* by Kate Hattemer, *Don't You Trust Me?* by Patrice Kindl, *Black Friday: The Collapse of the American Shopping Mall* by Seph Lawless, *The Disreputable History of Frankie Landau-Banks* by E. Lockhart, *Moonshot: The Indigenous Comics Collection, Volume 1* by Hope Nicholson (editor), *Lola and the Boy Next Door* by Stephanie Perkins, *Windfall* by Jennifer E. Smith,

Please note: I received an advance reader's copy of this book from the publisher in exchange for an honest review. This did not influence the opinions of my review in any way. When I first received this book from the Penguin Random House First In Line program, I thought it looked like a kind of cute, light romance. With a name like *The Fashion Committee*, I wasn't expecting anything deep. So I was surprised when I read this. The light tone is in stark contrast to the harsh reality of one of the characters. I really enjoyed this book, as I think it said a lot about art, following your passions, and not letting your circumstances determine your future.

**What I Liked:**

**Characters:** The novel is written as a he said/she said book. Each chapter's POV alternates between Charlie Dean, the fashion obsessed teen, and John Thomas-Smith, who enters the competition as a backdoor way of getting into the elite Green Pastures high school of fine arts. I loved Charlie. Behind her seemingly superficial love of clothes lies a teen with a horrific home life. Fashion is her escape, so she doesn't have to face the fact that her dad is a drug addict. Charlie uses a lot of French words (thanks to Google translate!), that she hopes will make her sound more sophisticated. I loved her determination to create an oasis in her bedroom where she could let her imagination soar. She is also dead set on becoming a clothing designer. She has a focus that leaves no time for friends or a love life. But maybe that cute girl who is a fellow competitor (and a major flirt) will nudge Charlie into making room for a romance? I was rooting for Charlie to have some happiness.

**Mischa** is the new, very young girlfriend of Charlie's dad (they met in rehab). She is really trying to stay clean and sober, but she is a very damaged person due to an abusive ex-boyfriend. Mischa becomes Charlie's model, and inspiration, for the competition. It was beautiful to have Mischa see that other people saw her as a valuable person.

**Story:** I love novels with competitions in them. Even though I know nothing about fashion, the author does a wonderful job educating the reader about fashion theory and all the thinking that goes into creating clothes. I think the competition, itself, was amazing, and showed lots of teens who are exploring their passions. I also liked that Charlie had some pretty serious competition in the contest. I hate it when it is a forgone conclusion that the main character will win. You really don't know who the winner will be until the very end. This book has a lot to say about creating art, whether it be as a fashion designer, a painter, or someone who welds metal into cool sculptures. There are so many ways to express yourself. But it seems the truly important thing is not the end product, but the creative process, itself. I also appreciate that there isn't a manufactured romance between Charlie and John. They rarely interact with each other and have their own story lines.

**What I Didn't Like:**

**Characters:** I really don't care for John. Since his story

makes up half of the book, this is a huge problem for me. I just think he is a terrible person on so many levels. First of all, he enters the competition as a backdoor way into Green Pasture's metals program. He figures he can bluff his way through the competition, and after he wins he will just transfer over to the other program. This is so insulting to the other contestants, for whom fashion is their lives. John is also awful to his girlfriend. He is easily flattered by the attention of a rich girl who already attends Green Pastures, and he lets her help him in the contest. Cheater!!! The only reason for John's character is to contrast his life with Charlie's. I guess his purpose in the book is to show how Charlie shows true guts by overcoming real hardships. He is a whiny pretty boy by comparison. Overall, I think this book is worth reading for Charlie's character, alone. She has an amazing resilience that will make you cheer, and break your heart.

I loved this book! Devoured it. The writing was so crisp and descriptive that I could picture the fashions, smell the scents, it really transported me.

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