

# Tina Fey captivates Union Square with her 'Bossypants' attitude

Hidden in the depths of my parents' video cabinet is a dusty VHS recording of an awkward 13-year-old girl and her two friends performing "Saturday Afternoon Live." The girl dreamed of mailing the tape to her hero, Tina Fey, who would so impressed with her precocious gift for comedy writing and performing that she would offer the aspiring comedienne a job the moment she saw it. It was Tina Fey who inspired me to be a writer and who taught me that awkward and unpopular girls can achieve success, too.

To get a front-row seat at Fey's book signing at the Union Square Barnes & Noble on Friday, I arrived at the store's 10 a.m. opening and basically squatted for eight hours straight. I thought my early arrival was a bit overzealous, but I paled in comparison to some of the fans that showed up: Two girls sitting next to me took a 1 a.m. bus from Boston to see Fey, and two other fans arrived with personalized onesies for Fey's just-announced second child. I had never felt more normal.

Representatives from the store expected the signing would draw in about 1,000 fans, making it their largest event of the year. But they underestimated the immense popularity of their guest, as nearly 2,000 fans gathered for the first stop on Fey's five-city promotional book tour.

Tina Fey has climbed the ladder of stardom over the past decade. Performing with the Second City in Chicago lead to a position as head writer and performing on Saturday Night Live. From there, she penned the hit film *Mean Girls*, then filled Thursday nights with Liz Lemon's "30 Rock" antics. But up until 2008, Fey enjoyed what was essentially a cult following. It took a spot-on impersonation of cultural zeitgeist Sarah Palin to skyrocket Fey into mainstream icon territory.

"I tried to do my friend Paula Pell's grandma... [Palin] did a lot of smiling when she talked. She was real pleased with herself," Fey said while discussing the difficulties of perfecting her Sarah Palin accent. "During the six or eight weeks [that the sketches aired] it got a little better, then it got bad again."

And Fey is likely to gain scores of new fans with her book "Bossypants," which takes the reader on a laugh-out-loud journey through Fey's life, from her awkward high school years to her tenure as reigning queen of "Saturday Night." Fey's signature comedic voice is ever-present in the book – self-deprecating, witty, and full of sarcasm.

"I think it's hilarious," said Tisch sophomore Juan Cocuy, who arrived at Barnes & Noble around 11:20 Friday morning to get a good seat. "She writes it the way she talks, and it's really funny imagining it in your head."

What makes "Bossypants" work is Fey's remarkable ability to blend side-splitting humor with carefully disguised words of wisdom. Readers will certainly get plenty of laughs out of the book, but hidden behind the jokes are some life lessons, as well. Normally, words of inspiration in celebrity memoirs can come off as disingenuous and pushy, but Fey sneaks wisdom into anecdotes in such a subtle way that the reader doesn't even recognize it.

In one chapter, Fey recounts an exchange between SNL cast members Jimmy Fallon and Amy Poehler during a pitch meeting. When Poehler made a vulgar joke, Fallon reacted by saying "Stop that! It's not cute! I don't like it!" Poehler replied boldly, "I don't fucking care if you don't like it."

The moral of that anecdote, which recurs throughout the book, is one that accurately describes both Fey's career and her mass appeal: "Do your thing and don't care if they like it."

*A version of this story appeared in the Monday, April 11 edition. Carrie Courogen is a staff writer. Email her at [features@nyunews.com](mailto:features@nyunews.com).*