

UNIT 2. READING

Big is Beautiful

What makes model Kate Dillon different from other fashion models?

Overweight Kate – that’s what fellow students called her at school. So, after watching a television film about eating disorders, Kate Dillon, an unhappy teenager, decided to starve herself. **9** By the age of sixteen, after losing 30 pounds, she did indeed have more friends and was spotted by a scout for a modelling agency, where she subsequently embarked on a highly successful career in modelling. Dillon was soon featured on the covers of top fashion magazines. Her dream had come true, but it was to be short-lived.

Kate had turned into one of those glamorous, slender models seen in magazines, on TV and in films. Girls all over the world long for such an image and some will do almost anything to achieve it. **10** Constantly worrying about her weight, Kate was also feeling ill and run down. After seven years, she began to wonder if being slim was the only measure of beauty.

During a photography session for the exclusive fashion magazine *Harper’s Bazaar*, Kate’s glamorous life suddenly lost its charm. **11** Was it all worthwhile? Somewhere along the way, hadn’t she lost sight of all the other things that were important in life?

This realisation changed Kate’s life. She gave up modelling and started going out, dancing, and having a good time. She soon began putting on a little weight, although she was careful to eat sensibly, with the guidance of a nutritionist. **12** She slowly gained confidence, became comfortable with her new lifestyle and at ease with her appearance.

Kate was determined to do it her way, and again her life took an unexpected turn. When a friend suggested that she go back to modelling, Kate realised that this was a real possibility. With a more natural look and her newly found self-confidence, she was engaged on the spot by a top agency – this time as a size-14 model. **13** She has established a new norm for beauty, where being as skinny as a rake is no longer the only criterion for an attractive woman.

Describing herself as “a model with a voice,” Kate has been a key speaker on eating disorders and the female self-image at places such as Harvard University. She speaks out against the media’s narrow concept of beauty. According to Dillon, the media feed women images of an impossible ideal which cause anxiety so as to sell them the so-called “solution” in the form of diets. Even messages telling women to be themselves are often mixed. **14**

Kate is optimistic that attitudes are changing and that society is moving towards a more open ideal of beauty, but feels there is still a long way to go. Modifying people’s attitudes takes time, and Kate does not promise young women instant acceptance. **15** The first step is for women to make a decision to live by their own standards rather than trying to fulfill the ideals of others. As Kate says, “What’s really cool is to be who you are.”

- A** At the same time, she started exercising, and took up running and martial arts.
- B** She constantly comes across women's magazines that run articles about her as a role model on one page, and give tips for 'how to get slim quick' on the next.
- C** Encouraged by her manager and clients to be as bony as possible, Kate was eating less and less.
- D** Ironically, she now enjoys even greater success, making twice the income she once did.
- E** It might feel great to look slim, but women should ask themselves: How much effort should be put into it?
- F** The greatest problem is accepting that women can be attractive without conforming to cover-girl norms.
- G** She happened to glance around and became aware of the enormous effort everyone was making to create her perfect public image.
- H** She became obsessed with the idea that being slim would win her acceptance and popularity.