Visual Rhetoric Example
How might I “unpack” this visual?

Consider these questions:

- What knowledge about women and weight would readers in other cultures—especially those that don’t value thinness—need to access to understand this visual?
- What cultural “script” or lesson is being implicated in this visual?
- What can viewers make of the size and positioning of the scale?
- What is the relationship between the girls?
- Where do you think the speaker “gained” her knowledge about the scale, especially in light of her age? Was the knowledge she shares explicitly taught to her, or did she infer it in some way?
- Does this visual offer support for socially constructed identity? In other words, does it imply that gender norms are learned rather than biologically encoded? If so, how? If not, why?
- Can you infer the gender of the creator? Does the creator’s status matter?
- Would the message be as salient if two boys were peering down at the scale? If yes, why? If not, explain the role of sex and gender in this visual.
- Upon what model(s) is this visual potentially based?
- How does the caption reinforce the creator’s decision to position and size the scale?
- What other questions does this visual provoke? What evidence is available to propose additional questions?
- One scholar has entitled it a “Weighty Model.” Why do you believe she has done so?
- Might “Unbearable Weight” be a good title for this cartoon? If so, why? If not, what might be a suitable alternative?