



## *All of Me*

CHRIS BARON

Middle-grade novel-in-verse; 320 pages

Ages 9–12; Grades 4–7

ISBN: 978-1-250-30598-5

### *Does his size define him?*

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AFTER A MOVE ACROSS THE COUNTRY, Ari’s parents work selling and promoting his mother’s paintings and sculptures. Ari’s bohemian mother needs space to create, and his father is gone for long stretches of time on “sales” trips.

Meanwhile, Ari makes new friends: Pick, the gamer; the artsy Jorge; and the troubled Lisa. He is also relentlessly bullied because he’s overweight, but he can’t tell his parents—they’re simply not around enough to listen.

After an upsetting incident, Ari’s mom suggests he go on a diet, and she gives him a book to help. But the book—and the diet—can’t fix everything. As Ari faces the demise of his parents’ marriage, he also feels himself changing, both emotionally and physically. Here is a much-needed story about accepting the imperfect in oneself and in life.

### *Praise for All of Me*

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**Book Riot’s Best Children’s Books about Kindness**

**“If you have ever felt lost in the world, betrayed by your body or buoyed by a glimmer of hope or the glow of friendship, then *All of Me* could be your story, too.” —*Los Angeles Times***

**“*All of Me* is for anyone who has been in search of a tribe, in love with a friend or in need of answers to questions that they can’t bring themselves to ask. In other words, everybody.” —*San Diego Union-Tribune***

**“[A] beautifully written and psychologically acute debut. Readers will be glad to accompany Ari on his journey to self-discovery.” —*Booklist* magazine**

**“Any reader who has felt like an outsider will be drawn to Ari’s story, which means his audience should be legion.” —*Horn Book Magazine***

1. In the opening lines, Ari Rosensweig states:

“The life in my head seems  
so different from the life outside,  
where I am so big  
that everyone stares,  
but no one sees the real me.”

What does this passage tell you about Ari? Once you've finished the book, discuss whether your first impressions of these lines have changed, and if so, how?

2. Body image and size are foremost on Ari's mind most of the time. People around him seem to feel it's all right to ask, "Why are you so fat?" Is it more acceptable to discuss weight than other physical characteristics, such as height, complexion, hair, and/or clothing style? Why or why not?
3. Ari is the right age for a bar mitzvah, which is a Jewish ritual that celebrates a young person's coming of age. He and his parents have moved across the country. If they'd stayed on the East Coast, do you think he would have had his bar mitzvah? Why is it important to his parents that he continue to study with a rabbi? Is it as important to Ari?
- Does your family celebrate or acknowledge any coming-of-age events (bar or bat mitzvah, quinceañera, confirmation, etc.)? Why are these events important in various cultures?
4. One of Ari's favorite books is Arthur C. Clarke's *Mysterious World* (examples on page 207): a book about strange happenings, undiscovered animals like Bigfoot and the Loch Ness Monster, and some of the world's greatest mysteries. He carries it around with him everywhere. Why do you think this book is so important to Ari?
- Are there any books that you relate to in this way?
5. Throughout the story Ari is teased and even bullied (sometimes brutally) about his weight. How does Ari react to these situations and why? How do you feel about the way he reacts? Do you think he makes the right choices?
6. Ari makes two new friends by the start of the summer. Why do Pick, Jorge, and Lisa seem to accept Ari more easily than other kids?
7. Friendship is an important theme in *All of Me*. In what ways are Pick, Lisa, Ari, and Jorge, good friends to each other? In what ways do they face challenges in their friendships?
8. In poems like "She Doesn't See It" (page 146) and many other parts of the book, Ari receives empathy and kindness from Lisa and others about the way he looks and feels. How important is this for him in making a positive change? How important is kindness in our everyday life? Are there acts of kindness you have experienced that have helped you? What can you do to bring more kindness into your daily life?
9. Toward the middle of the book when Ari is at home in San Francisco, he starts to experience changes. In "Post-its," Ari finds the Post-it note that's supposed to remind him to see the rabbi.

“I hold the Post-it,  
alone  
in the quiet apartment,  
no one to tell me whether  
to go or not.  
Something, for once, seems up to me.”

With nobody forcing him, why do you think Ari decides to go anyway? Do you think he made the right choice?

10. Later, Ari says he's going to try to "Be myself. / Myself is okay." Do you believe he will be able to stick to that? Why or why not?
11. Novels in verse express meaning through the placement of words, the open space on the page, vivid imagery, and sensory details to help tell the story. In your opinion, how does the poetry help the reader connect with the characters and the story in *All of Me*? How is the experience of reading a novel in verse different from reading a traditional novel? How might *All of Me* be different if it was written in regular prose?
12. Ari is constantly having his identity defined by others. By the end of the book, how has his identity and how he views himself changed?