

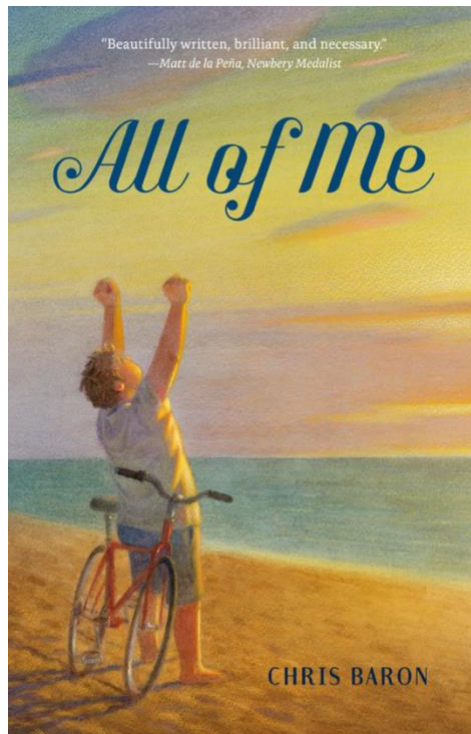
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JOURNAL OF LANGUAGE & LITERACY EDUCATION

Review of *All of Me* Written by Chris Baron

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Student Reviewer: Aura Vaysha Sasadara, 10th grade



Baron, C. (2019). *All of me*. New York, NY: Feiwel and Friends.

ISBN: 978-1-250-30598-5

Adult Review: Ahmad Zubaidi Amrullah

Chris Baron's *All of Me* successfully captivated me with the emotional vulnerability of the protagonist, Ari. Ari was grappling with the social constructs of the body and his concept of self and community. Every day, Ari's peers relentlessly harassed him for being overweight. One day Ari's mother found him unconscious in the bathroom after an attempt to self-harm. After this incident, his mother took him to see a doctor and gave him a diet book to help him lose weight. During his weight-loss journey, Ari cultivated friendships with three people who helped him through this process: the gamer Pick, the traveler Jorge, and the rebel Lisa. The three were always there with their heartfelt supports accompanying Ari undergoing his arduous journey.

Ari's mother was an artist, and his father was frequently away selling sculptures and paintings. One day, his parents announced their divorce. Ari was broken and desperately in need of company. Unfortunately, his close friends, Pick, Jorge, and Lisa were not around. The experiences, which were filled with frustration and hardships, taught him determination, self-love, and friendship. They also taught Ari to better accept himself with all his imperfection, no matter what people thought or said. He was growing up to be the real Ari.

The title *All of Me* illustrates a moral stance of the book. It encourages readers to embrace and accept their identities. The book tells a story of self-acceptance, friendship, determination, and love. The novel may appeal to teenagers who are experiencing issues with body image. *All of Me* is also a great choice for students who enjoy prose or poetry. The story is written in free and dynamic verse, which allows the readers to immerse in a novel that is written in the prose form. I recommend this book for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students in high school. The frequent use of imagery can be useful for students to practice their skills in unraveling feelings and

thoughts of characters in a literary work.

I would advise teachers to check their students' personal and cultural backgrounds before assigning this text. Conceptions of body image could vary between cultures and between individuals. Discussions of fat-shaming could potentially trigger someone experiencing body dysmorphia. It is also important to consider that, because body image is constructed differently on both cultural and individual levels, this text could create a disconnect for students who have never experienced "fat shaming." In an English as a Second Language (ESL) or English as a Foreign Language (EFL) course this could, for sure, lead to an interesting cross-cultural discussion about conceptions of body as well as constructs of politeness from a variety of cultural perspectives.

Student Review: Aura Vaysha Sasadara

This novel is about Ari who was born into a family of artists. He was an overweight teenager who was the object of ridicule among his peers at school. His classmates were violent toward him. His father and mother decided to divorce for reasons that Ari did not understand. Ari felt his life was dark and miserable. He could not accept himself and, as a result, he squeezed his stomach until he fainted from the pain. His mother eventually took Ari to a doctor who advised him to go on a diet.

At first, Ari felt the diet was difficult to maintain but the time he spent creating a role-playing game with Pick, his first friend; exploring with Jorge, his camping partner; and making art with Lisa, a beautiful girl with whom he fell in love, made things easier. Lisa rejected Ari's love, but she wanted to nurture and maintain a friendship. This experience taught him to find his true self and to be himself. Ari does not have an ideal body that many people would expect, but Ari was Ari.

This book was an important read because it emphasizes the importance of loving oneself. It also encourages us to be ourselves without falling victim to other people's scorns. I would recommend the book because it bears a story of strong friendship between Ari and Pick as well as with Lisa and Jorge. The story itself elicits an emotional response in the reader. The language and structure of the writing is also easy to understand.

This novel is suitable for teenagers (12 to 22 years old), especially those who feel uncomfortable with their bodies. The book speaks to adolescents who do not understand who they are. It addresses problems that many teenagers face, such as when Ari went on a diet and was bullied by his peers. The discussion of self-harm is also relatable: many teenagers commonly do the same thing when they feel depressed and frustrated. Ari's friendship with Pick and Jorge and his

love for Lisa also greatly reflects the lives of youngsters. Families, especially those with teenagers in their households, would enjoy this book as it provides insights into what their children might experience.

I absolutely love this book. While reading, it was as if I could feel Ari's feelings. I could feel when Ari was reviled and when Ari became a victim of violence at his school. I could also feel horror when Ari hurt himself. Ari's friendship and romance is also the part that I like from this novel. Strong friendship, fun, and mutual support made my reading experience very memorable. Finally, here is a poem that I made for Ari to close this review.

Note: See next page to read Aura's poem based on the book she read.

Indonesian

Memutilasi Sukma

By Aura Vaysha Sasadara

Tercipta dengan secercah seni.
Raga tambun mental tertimbun.
Berbadan kokoh jiwanya rapuh.
Entah hakikatnya ia siapa?

Rekahkan cinta untuk Lisa.
Berlakon dan menapak.
Separuh masanya untuk berkawan.
Tetapi raganya menuntut bisu.

Lisan terdiam ia dibungkam.
Tutur tajam relung tertusuk.
Tak berotak hilang nurani.
Pula buta beretika.

Mental terkapar memasung diri.
Jiwanya termutilasi kata.

English

Mutilated Soul

By Aura Vaysha Sasadara

Born with a spark of art.
Fat body buried him alive.
Physically strong, yet soul goes wrong.
Who is he actually?

Unrequited love for Lisa.
Role playing and hiking.
His lifetime for friends.
His body forces to remain.

Unspoken words, he is silenced.
The sharp-tongued kill him inside.
Senseless and Heartless.
Unethical as well.

Mentally stunted, small-minded.
Words mutilated his soul.