

The Day I Became A Potato Pancake

By Arie Kaplan | Illustrated by Beilin Xu

READING GUIDE

About the Book

Naomi and her best friend Ben love playing with the cool inventions Naomi's scientist mother always works on, like the holographic simulation room where they can fight dinosaurs. One day, Naomi and Ben break into her mom's top-secret lab (otherwise known as the garage) to see what other cool stuff they might find. They find an experimental machine that transforms you into whatever you're thinking about at the moment. While eating potato pancakes, Ben reaches for the button to see what it does-- and he's suddenly transformed into a life-size walking, talking potato pancake!

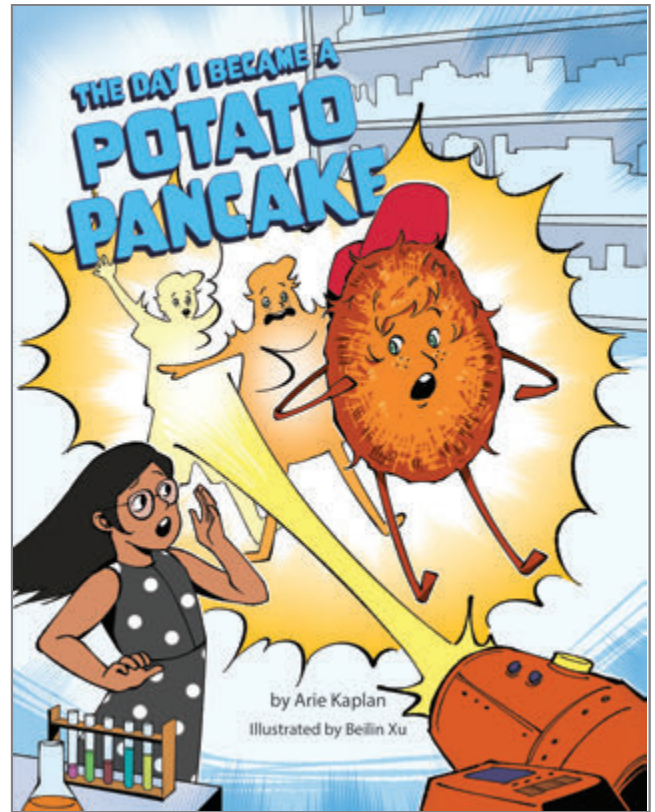
While Naomi's mom works to concoct an antidote, Ben discovers that he enjoys being the center of attention at school, and delays changing back to a human. But the clock is running out. If he doesn't take the antidote soon, he'll remain a potato pancake forever.

To make matters worse, there's a mysterious figure watching Ben's every move. It's an alien, called a Dreideltopian, who collects Hanukkah-themed objects from around the galaxy for his museum, and now he wants to collect Ben!

An endnote explains significant Hanukkah rituals and items and includes an activity to encourage readers to think about what Hanukkah might look like in space.

Arie Kaplan has written numerous books and graphic novels for young readers, including *Frankie and the Dragon*, *Batman: Harley at Bat*, *The Jurassic Park Little Golden Book*, *The New Kid from Planet Gorf*, and *Speed Racer: Chronicles of the Racer*. Arie is also the author of the award-winning nonfiction title *From Krakow to Krypton: Jews and Comic Books*. He currently lives in Queens, New York.

Beilin Xu is an illustrator hailing from the tropical city of Singapore. Armed with a degree in Fine Arts from Pratt Institute, she draws inspiration from diverse sources. Whether wielding a tablet pen or a crochet hook, Beilin infuses passion and playfulness into every creation.



Key Themes:

Friendship; Making amends; Community; Hanukkah rituals and traditions.

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Ages 7–9 years

Use these questions to preface and conclude a reading of this book with children. Encourage them to share their observations as you read the book together, and take time to linger on pages or spreads that generate more discussion.

Before Reading

- Look carefully at the cover illustration. What do you think is happening? What do you think the red machine on the bottom does?
- Based on the title and the cover illustration, what do think this story is about?
- This story is a graphic novel. Have you read any other graphic novels? Were they fiction like this one, or non-fiction?
- What do you know about Hannukah?

After Reading

- The author uses several concepts from the science fiction genre of storytelling. For example, in the movie Star Wars, the Death Star uses a tractor beam to capture Han Solo's ship, and in this story the dreidel spaceship uses a tractor beam to capture Ben and Naomi. What other famous science fiction concepts can you find in this story?
- In graphic novels, the words and pictures work together to communicate what's going on to the reader. For example, on page 33, we see that Ben has become very popular. How does the author convey this with words? What does the illustrator show in the pictures to let the reader know this too? Find another page and think about how the pictures and words are working together to communicate an idea.
- There is a lot of humor in this book. Dad makes dad jokes, the alien makes alien jokes, and Ben's weapons are applesauce and sour cream. What part of the book make you smile or laugh the most?

Optional: Extension Activity

Write the sequel to this story. Imagine that Naomi and Ben go back to the lab but that it is Naomi who gets transmogrified. What does she turn into? What happens next? Write a script dialogue for the first page and draw the pictures for it in the panels below. Use words and pictures to create its first page.

