



Ellie's Deli: In a Pickle

Lisa Greenwald

Galia Bernstein, Illustrator

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Lisa Greenwald's *Ellie's Deli: In a Pickle* is the second illustrated book in a series about Ellie, a spunky eleven-year-old whose family owns a Jewish deli. In this installment, Ellie strives to stay on top of schoolwork and squash drama in her social circle while organizing a bat mitzvah party.

As a resourceful event planner and a loyal friend, Ellie can't say no when a schoolmate begs for help with her bat mitzvah. But the task is more daunting than expected—especially because Ellie is adjusting to middle school struggles at the same time, as with a new friend's cliquishness and mind-boggling math quizzes.

Ellie is an energetic lead. She loves her Jewish heritage, embraces comfort food, and lives by the motto "Make a splash." Her sassy sense of humor and fierce determination make otherwise mundane activities thrilling, and her sensitivity to her friends' feelings, tender bond with her grandmother, and thoughtful journal entries reveal her vulnerable side, allowing her to learn and grow. Others are not as fleshed out as she is, but her narration is nonetheless engaging—simple but lively and quippy. Her voice, anxieties, and schemes are authentic representations of sixth-grade girlhood.

The book's inclusion of straightforward recipes, often for plot-relevant dishes, helps to distinguish it and to deepen its worldbuilding. The text is also sprinkled with affectionate explanations of Jewish culture, including definitions of Yiddish terms and descriptions of religious customs. This information is woven into the story in a deft way that's accessible even for those who have never encountered babka or the Torah.

Ellie's Deli: In a Pickle is a funny, warmhearted tale about honoring family, friendships, and food—and learning to take care of yourself throughout it all.

JENNA LEFKOWITZ (September / October 2024)

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