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MEDIA RELEASE

**2008 SYDNEY TAYLOR BOOK AWARDS
ANNOUNCED BY THE ASSOCIATION OF JEWISH LIBRARIES**

(Chicago—January 7, 2008) **Sarah Gershman** and **Kristina Swarner**, author and illustrator of ***The Bedtime Sh'ma: A Good Night Book***, **Sid Fleischman**, author of ***The Entertainer and the Dybbuk***, and **Sonia Levitin**, author of ***Strange Relations***, are the 2008 winners of the prestigious Sydney Taylor Book Award.

The Sydney Taylor Book Award of the Association of Jewish Libraries honors new books for children and teens that exemplify the highest literary standards while authentically portraying the Jewish experience. The award memorializes Sydney Taylor, author of the classic *All-of-a-Kind Family* series. The winners will receive their awards at the Association of Jewish Libraries convention in Cleveland, Ohio this June at a special ceremony celebrating the 40th anniversary of the award.

Gershman and Swarner will receive the 2008 gold medal in the Sydney Taylor Book Award's Younger Readers Category for ***The Bedtime Sh'ma: A Good Night Book***, published by **EKS Publishing**. With accessible language, this book helps young children understand the meaning and concepts of the Sh'ma prayers. The stunning artwork matches the mood of the text, and the words of the prayer (in Hebrew, English, and transliteration) are beautifully integrated into double spread illustrations. "The soothing and soulful voice of Rabbi Julia Adelman on the included CD will lull the listener to sleep with sweet dreams," adds Kathy Bloomfield, a member of the Award Committee. The book is recommended for children up to grade 2.

Fleischman will receive the 2008 gold medal in the Sydney Taylor Book Award's Older Readers Category for ***The Entertainer and the Dybbuk***, published by **HarperCollins Children's Books**. When the spirit of a 12-year old Jewish boy, murdered by the Nazis, possesses the body of an American GI traveling through Europe as a second-rate ventriloquist, the pair is able to unmask the Nazi responsible. "Fleischman's knowledge of ventriloquism and senses of humor and humanity craft an imaginative and haunting story, and although all the action takes place after the war, the sense of loss and tragedy echo through the book," comments Kathe Pinchuck, incoming Chair of the Award Committee. "Wry humor adds dimension to the characters and suspense accelerates the pace." The book is recommended for grades 6-8.

Levitin will receive the 2008 gold medal in the Sydney Taylor Book Award's Teen Readers Category for ***Strange Relations***, published by **Knopf**, an imprint of Random House Children's Books. Fifteen-year-old Marne decides to spend the summer with her Aunt Carole in Hawaii. But, Aunt Carole is now Aunt Chaya, married to a Chabad Rabbi with seven children. What Marne anticipates will be a relaxing summer of jogging on the beach, surfing, sun tanning, and shopping turns out to be a summer of exploration, spirituality, and growth. "Levitin skillfully writes from the perspective of a contemporary teenager and realistically deals with issues such as drinking, drugs, sexuality, and peer pressure," notes Rachel Kamin, Chair of the Award Committee. Levitin also won the 1987 Sydney Taylor Book Award for *The Return* and two honor awards for *The Singing Mountain* (1998) and *Silver Days* (1989).

Six Sydney Taylor Honor Books were named for 2008. For Younger Readers, Honor Books are: ***The Castle on Hester Street*** by **Linda Heller** with illustrations by **Boris Kulikov** (Simon & Schuster), ***Letter on the Wind*** by **Sarah Lamstein** with illustrations by **Neil Waldman** (Boyds Mills Press), and ***Light*** written and illustrated by **Jane Breskin Zalben** (Dutton Children's Books, an imprint of Penguin Young Readers Group). For Older Readers, the Honor Books are: ***Holocaust: The Events and Their Impact on Real People*** by **Angela Gluck Wood** with consulting by Dan Stone (DK Publishing in association with USC Shoah Foundation Institute for Visual History and Education) and ***The Secret of Priest's Grotto*** by **Peter Lane Taylor** and **Christos Nicola** (Kar-Ben). For Teen Readers, the Honor Book is ***Let Sleeping Dogs Lie*** by **Mirjam Pressler**, translated from the German by **Erik J. Macki** (Front Street/Boyds Mills Press). It should be noted that *The Castle on Hester Street* won the Sydney Taylor Book Award when it was first published in 1982 by the Jewish Publication Society, and its Honor Award this year is due to Boris Kulikov's new illustrations.

In addition to the medal-winners, the Award Committee designated twenty-three Notable Books of Jewish Content for 2008: eleven in the Younger Readers Category, eight in the Older Readers Category, and four for Teens. Notable titles, and more information about the Sydney Taylor Book Award, may be found online at www.SydneyTaylorBookAward.org. A special video announcement of the awards can also be accessed at www.youtube.com/SydneyTaylorAward, and a blog about the awards can be found at www.sydneytaylorbookaward.blogspot.com.

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