

The Sydney Taylor Book Award Association of Jewish Libraries

Mission

The purpose of the Sydney Taylor Book Award is to encourage the publication of outstanding books of Jewish content for children, books that exemplify the highest literary standards while authentically portraying the Jewish experience. We hope that official recognition of such books will inspire authors, encourage publishers, inform parents and teachers, and intrigue young readers. We also hope that by educating readers about the Jewish experience, we can engender pride in Jewish readers while building bridges to readers of other backgrounds.

History

The Association of Jewish Libraries has been recognizing quality Jewish literature for many years. In 1968, AJL established a children's book award called the Shirley Kravitz Children's Book Award. The first winner of this award was author Esther Hautzig for her book *The Endless Steppe*. This award was renamed "the Sydney Taylor Book Award" in 1978 after the death of Sydney Taylor, author of the *All-of-a-Kind Family* series.

Nettie Frishman, a librarian Los Angeles Public Library and a member of the AJL book award committee, was a friend of Ralph and Sydney Taylor, and created a "shidduch" between Ralph and AJL. Ralph established the Sydney Taylor Book Award in his wife's memory. The first winner under the award's new name was Doris Orgel for *The Devil in Vienna* (Penguin, 1978). Ralph Taylor attended the June 1979 AJL convention for the awards ceremony. He was presented with the Sydney Taylor Body-of-Work Award as a posthumous prize for his wife's writing career, in which he had been very instrumental.

Since the re-naming of the award, all winners of AJL's children's book awards have generally been referred to as winners of the Sydney Taylor Book Award.

From 1968 to 1980, AJL selected a single award winner from among the novels and chapter books published each year for older children. In 1981, the Sydney Taylor Book Award began recognizing winners in two categories: a picture book or short informational book in the Younger Readers Category and a novel or longer nonfiction title in the Older Readers Category.

In 1985, AJL established the Sydney Taylor Manuscript Award to encourage aspiring writers of Jewish children's books. It is awarded each year to an unpublished author for the best Judaic fiction manuscript appropriate for readers ages 8-11. The Sydney Taylor Manuscript Award is administered by its own separate AJL committee and is not a part of the Sydney Taylor Book Award.

Also in 1985, the Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee began designating Notable Books (originally called "The Best of the Bunch"). These are books which have not been selected as prize winners, but are deemed worthy of attention. A new list of Notable Books is publicized each year at the same time that the winners are announced. Notable Books are selected in both the Younger and Older Readers Categories.

In 1988, the Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee began selecting Honor Books as well as winning titles. The Honor Books bear a silver seal, while the winning titles bear a gold seal. Honor Books are selected in both the Younger and Older Readers Categories.

From 1968 to 2004, the awards were named for the year in which the winners were published, not the year in which the award was presented. For example, the 2004 Sydney Taylor Book Award winner, *Real Time* by Pnina Moed Kass, was published in 2004, yet the prize was awarded in 2005. In 2005, the dating system was changed to coordinate with that used by other major children's book awards such as ALA's Newbery and Caldecott Awards. From that time forth, the award was named for the year in which the prize was presented, for a book published during the previous year.

Over the award's long history, several authors have received multiple Sydney Taylor Book Awards and Honors:

- **Barbara Diamond Goldin** for *Cakes and Miracles: A Purim Tale* (Award Winner for Younger Readers, 1991), *The World's Birthday: A Rosh Hashana Story* (Honor Award for Younger Readers, 1990), and *Journeys with Elijah* (Honor Award for Older Readers, 1999)
- **Nina Jaffe** for *The Uninvited Guest* (Award Winner for Younger Readers 1993) and *The Mysterious Visitor: Stories of the Prophet Elijah* (Award Winner for Older Readers, 1997)
- **Eric A. Kimmel** for *Wonders and Miracles: A Passover Companion* (Honor Award for Older Readers, 2004), *Gershon's Monster* (Award Winner for Younger Readers, 2000), *The Spotted Pony: A Collection of Hanukkah Stories* (Honor Award for Younger Readers, 1992) *The Chanukah Guest* (Award Winner for Younger Readers, 1990), and *Hershel and the Hanukkah Goblins* (Honor Award for Younger Readers, 1989), and for *In the Mouth of the Wolf* co-written with Rose Zar (Award Winner for Older Readers, 1983)
- **Carol Matas** for *Sworn Enemies* (Award Winner for Older Readers, 1993) and *Lisa's War* (Honor Award for Older Readers, 1989)
- **Elsa Okon Rael** for *Rivka's First Thanksgiving* (Award Winner for Younger Readers, 2001) and *When Zaydeh Danced on Eldridge Street* (Award Winner for Younger Readers, 1997)
- **Maxine Rose Schur** for *The Peddler's Gift* (Award Winner for Younger Readers, 1999), *When I Left My Village* (Award Winner for Older Readers, 1996), and *Day of Delight: A Jewish Sabbath in Ethiopia* (Honor Award for Younger Readers, 1994)
- **Ida Vos** for *The Key is Lost* (Award Winner for Older Readers, 2000) and *Dancing on the Bridge of Avignon* (Award Winner for Older Readers, 1995)

Numerous Newbery and Caldecott award winning authors and illustrators have also received awards and honors from the Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee:

- Caldecott Medalist **Eve Bunting** (*Smoky Night*, illustrated by David Diaz, 1995) received the 2002 Sydney Taylor Honor Award for Older Readers for *One Candle*, illustrated by K. Wendy Popp.
- 2004 Caldecott Medal Winner **Mordicai Gerstein** (*The Man Who Walked Between the Towers*) was recognized by the Sydney Taylor Committee for *Noah and the Great Flood* (Honor Award for Younger Readers, 1999), *Jonah and the Two Great Fish* (Notable Books For Younger Readers, 1997), and *The Jar of Fools: Eight Hanukkah Stories from Chelm* by Eric Kimmel (Notable Books For Older Readers, 2000).
- Newbery Medalist **Karen Hesse** (*Out of the Dust*, 1998) received the Sydney Taylor Honor Award for Older Readers in 2004 for *The Cats in Krasinski Square* and the Award for Older Readers in 1992 for *Letters from Rifka*.
- *Hershel and the Hanukkah Goblins* by **Eric Kimmel**, with illustration by **Trina Schart Hyman**, received the 1990 Caldecott Honor Medal and the 1989 Sydney Taylor Honor Award for Younger Readers.
- Newbery Honor Medalist **Kathryn Lasky** (*Sugaring Time*, 1984) received the 1981 Sydney Taylor Award for Older Readers for *The Night Journey*.
- Caldecott Honor (*John Henry*) and Newbery Honor (*To Be a Slave*, 1969) Medalist **Julius Lester** received the Sydney Taylor Honor Award for Older Readers in 1999 for *When The Beginning Began*.
- Caldecott Medalist **Anita Lobel** (*On Market Street* by Arnold Lobel, 1982) received the 1998 Sydney Taylor Honor Award for Older Readers for *No Pretty Pictures: A Child of War*.
- *Number the Stars* by **Lois Lowry** received the 1990 Newbery Medal and the 1989 Sydney Taylor Award for Older Readers.
- **Brian Pinkney**, two-time Caldecott Honor Medalist (*Duke Ellington*, 1999 and *The Faithful Friend*, 1996), received the 1996 Sydney Taylor Award for Older Readers for *When I Left My Village* by Maxine Rose Schur.
- *Noah's Ark* by **Jerry Pinkney** received the 2003 Caldecott Honor Medal and the Sydney Taylor Honor Award for Younger Readers in 2002; with his illustrations, *Journeys with Elijah* by Barbara Diamond Goldin also received a Sydney Taylor Honor Award for Older Readers in 1999.
- **Marjorie Priceman**, 1996 Caldecott Medal Winner (*Zin! Zin! Zin! a Violin* by Lloyd Moss), received the 1997 Sydney Taylor Award for Younger Readers for *When Zaydeh Danced on Eldridge Street* by Elsa Okon Rael.
- Newbery Honor Medalist **Gary D. Schmidt** (*Lizzie Bright and the Buckminster Boy*, 2005) was recognized by the Sydney Taylor Committee in 2001 for *Mara's Stories*, a Notable Book for Older Readers.

- Two-time Caldecott Honor Medalist **Uri Shulevitz** (*The Treasure*, 1980 and *Snow*, 1999) received the 1991 Sydney Taylor Award for Older Readers for *The Diamond Tree: Jewish Tales from Around the World* by Howard Schwartz and Barbara Rush.
- Three-time Newbery Honor Medal Winner (*Zlateh the Goat*, 1967, *The Fearsome Inn*, 1968, and *When Shlemiel Went to Warsaw*, 1969) **Isaac Bashevis Singer** received the Sydney Taylor Body of Work Award in 1971.
- *Joseph Had a Little Overcoat* by **Simms Taback** received the 2000 Caldecott Medal and the Sydney Taylor Honor Award for Younger Readers.

Several winners of the Mildred L. Batchelder Award for books in translation have also been recognized by the Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee:

- **Daniella Carmi** received the 2001 Batchelder Award for *Samir & Yonatan*, a 2000 Sydney Taylor Notable Book for Older Readers.
- *Star of Fear, Star of Hope* by **Jo Hoestlandt** received the 1996 Batchelder Honor Award and the 1995 Sydney Taylor Award for Younger Readers.
- **Uri Orlev** received the 2004 Batchelder Award for *Run, Boy, Run*. He also received it in 1996 for *The Lady with the Hat*, a Sydney Taylor Notable Book for Older Readers; in 1992 for *The Man from the Other Side*, a Sydney Taylor Notable Book for Older Readers; and in 1985 for *The Island on Bird Street*, the 1984 Sydney Taylor Award Winner for Older Readers.
- *Thanks to My Mother* by **Schoschana Rabinovici** received the 1999 Batchelder Award and was selected by the Sydney Taylor Committee as a Notable Book for Older Readers.
- *Anne Frank Beyond the Diary: A Photographic Remembrance* by **Ruud van der Rol & Rian Verhoeven** received the 1994 Batchelder Honor Award and was selected by the Sydney Taylor Committee as a Notable Book for Older Readers.

Miriam Bat-Ami received the Scott O'Dell Award for Historical Fiction for *Two Suns in the Sky*, a Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee Notable Book for Older Readers in 1999.

