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For immediate release

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MEDIA RELEASE

2006 SYDNEY TAYLOR BOOK AWARDS ANNOUNCED BY ASSOCIATION OF JEWISH LIBRARIES

(New York—January 12, 2006) Erica Silverman and Mordicai Gerstein, author and illustrator of *Sholom's Treasure: How Sholom Aleichem Became a Writer*, and Sarah Darer Littman, author *Confessions of a Closet Catholic*, are the 2006 winners of the prestigious Sydney Taylor Book Award.

The winners were announced on January 9 at the Midwinter Meeting of the Association of Jewish Libraries in Manhattan. AJL's Sydney Taylor Book Award 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 Cambridge, MA this June.

Silverman and Gerstein will receive the 2006 gold medal in the Sydney Taylor Book Award's Younger Readers Category for *Sholom's Treasure: How Sholom Aleichem Became a Writer*, published by Farrar, Straus and Giroux. This picture book biography chronicles Sholom's childhood, revealing the influences that turned him into the great Yiddish writer who would give us *Fiddler on the Roof*. The text and illustrations blend perfectly to bring Sholom to life as a lovable rascal. This is a vital, engaging, living-and-breathing portrait of one of modern Jewish culture's most famous and beloved champions. The book stands alone beautifully, and also makes an excellent introduction to Sholom Aleichem's own works. The book is recommended for grades 2-5.

Littman will receive the 2006 gold medal in the Sydney Taylor Book Award's Older Readers Category for *Confessions of a Closet Catholic*, published by Dutton Children's Books. The first-time author's oddly titled book won the hearts of the awards committee with its vivid, honest story of spiritual exploration. Justine Silver struggles to balance her family's expectations that she should be Jewish "but not too Jewish." Frustrated, she follows a Catholic friend's example by giving up Judaism for Lent, and thus begins a search for identity and belonging that will resonate with readers of all religions. By turns funny and heart-wrenching, this tenderly written novel celebrates family, friendship, and faith. The book is recommended for grades 4-8.

Eight Sydney Taylor Honor Books were named for 2006: four in the Older Readers' Category and four in the Younger Readers' Category. For Older Readers, the Honor Books are: *Memories of Survival* by Esther Nisenthal Krinitz published by Hyperion, *The King of Mulberry Street* by Donna Jo Napoli published by Wendy Lamb Books/Random House, *The Travels of Benjamin of Tudela* by Uri Shulevitz published by Farrar, Straus and Giroux, and *Prince William, Maximilian Minsky and Me* by Holly-Jane Rahlens published by Candlewick. For Younger Readers, the Honor Books are: *The Journey That Saved Curious George* by Louise Borden published by Houghton Mifflin, *Ruth and Naomi* by Jean Marzollo published by Little Brown and Company, *Shlemiel Crooks* by Anna Olswanger published by Junebug Books, and *Kibitzers and Fools: Tales My Zayda Told Me* by Simms Taback published by Viking,

In addition to the medal-winners, the Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee designated thirty Notable Children's Books of Jewish Content for 2006: eighteen in the Older Reader' Category and twelve in the Younger Readers' Category. Notable titles, and more information about the Sydney Taylor Book Award, may be found online at www.SydneyTaylorBookAward.org.

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