



The Auerbach Central Agency for Jewish Education
Seidman Educational Resource Center

Summer Jewish Reading Club

A Selected Bibliography
Celebrating 350 Years of American Jewish History

By Nancy M. Messinger,
Director of Educational Resources

Ages 5 – 8

Rael, Elsa Okon, illustrated by Maryann Kovalski. *Rivka's First Thanksgiving*. New York, NY: Margaret K. McElderry Books, 2001.

Fictionalized account of the author's first Thanksgiving in American as an eight-year-old Jewish emigrant from Poland.

-----, illustrated by Marjorie Priceman. *What Zeesie Saw on Delancey Street*. New York, NY: Simon and Shuster, 2000.

A young Jewish girl living on Manhattan's Lower East Side attend her first "package party" where she learns about the traditions of generosity, courage and community among Jewish immigrants in the early 1900's.

-----, illustrated by Marjorie Priceman. *When Zaydeh Danced on Eldridge Street*. New York, NY: Simon and Shuster, 1997.

While staying with her grandparents in New York City in the mid-1930's, eight-year-old Zeesie joins in the celebration of Simḥat Torah and sees a different side of her stern grandfather.

Rosenberg, Liz, illustrated by Beth Peck. *Grandmother and the Runaway Shadow*. San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace & Co., 1996.

Relates how Grandmother, accompanied by a mischievous shadow, fled her native Russia and immigrated to the United States. Describes her life on the Lower East Side of Manhattan. Good preface, and beautiful illustrations by Beth Peck.

Rosenblum, Richard. ***Journey to the Golden Land***. Philadelphia, PA: The Jewish Publication Society, 1992.

Benjamin and his family endure a difficult journey on their way from Czarist Russia to Ellis Island. Would Benjamin and his family pass all the tests necessary to enter the United States or would they be forced to return to Europe? Read this book and find out the answer!

----- ***The Old Synagogue***. Philadelphia, PA: The Jewish Publication Society, 1989.

An abandoned synagogue is restored by young Jewish families who resettle in the old neighborhood. Interesting contrast between old and modern lifestyles in the lively drawings. Based on the true story of the Eldridge Street Synagogue in Manhattan.

Ross, Lillian Hammer, illustrated by Mary Morgan. ***Buba Leah and Her Paper Children***. Philadelphia, PA: The Jewish Publication Society, 1991.

Buba Leah, who lives in a shtetl in Eastern Europe, has a fervent wish to see her children who have immigrated to faraway America. Her wish is fulfilled when she receives a special letter in the mail.

Ages 8 – 12

Bierman, Carol, illustrated by Laurie McGaw. ***Journey to Ellis Island: How My Father Came to America***. Toronto, Canada: Madison Press Books, 1998.

The dramatic, suspenseful journey of eleven-year-old Russian-born Julius Weinstein, who, along with his mother and younger sister, passed through Ellis Island in 1922 to begin a new life in America. Illustrations include documentary photos as well as watercolor drawings.

Costabel, Eva Deutsch. ***The Jews of New Amsterdam***. New York, NY: Atheneum, 1988.

This book traces the events leading up to the arrival in New Amsterdam of a group of 23 Jews forced to leave Portugal and then Brazil, and describes how they adapted and prospered.

Hest, Amy, illustrated by P.J. Lynch. ***When Jessie Came Across the Sea***. Cambridge, MA: Candlewick Press, 1997.

A thirteen-year-old Jewish orphan girl reluctantly leaves her grandmother and immigrates to New York City where she works for three years sewing lace and earning money to bring Grandmother to the United States, too. Beautifully and dramatically illustrated.

Perl, Lila, illustrated by Donna Ruff. ***Molly Picon: A Gift of Laughter***. Philadelphia, PA: The Jewish Publication Society, 1990.

Follows the life and career of the Jewish entertainer, who, for more than 80 years, performed in Yiddish and English theater, movies, radio and television.

Taylor, Sydney. ***All-of-a-Kind Family (Series)***. New York, NY: Dell, 1989.

A five-volume adventure series about five Jewish girls growing up in New York at the turn of the century. The books not only provide insight into the immigrant world of the 1900's but are very enjoyable reading as well.

Wells, Rosemary, Illustrated by Dan Andreasen. ***Streets of Gold***. New York, NY: Dial Books for Young Readers, 1999.

This story is based on "The Promised Land," a memoir by Mary Antin, who emigrated from Russia to Boston in 1894 at the age of twelve. It illustrates her courage, passion for learning, and love of her adopted country.

Ages 12 and up

Abrahams, Robert D., illustrated by Albert Gold. ***The Commodore: The Adventurous Life of Uriah P. Levy***. Philadelphia, PA: The Jewish Publication Society, 1954.

The daring exploits, thrilling adventures, and world travels of Commodore Uriah Levy are brought to life in this exciting biography.

Finkelstein, Norman H. ***Forged in Freedom: Shaping the American-Jewish Experience***. Philadelphia, PA: The Jewish Publication Society, 2002.

This book traces the cultural, religious, and political factors that shaped the Jewish experience in America. It deals with the period from the mass emigration from Eastern Europe through the 20th century. Written in a popular style, with short chapters and illustrated with many photographs.

----- ***Heeding the Call: Jewish Voices in America's Civil Rights Struggle***. Philadelphia, PA: The Jewish Publication Society, 1995.

Traces the Jewish participation in the civil rights movement from Colonial times to the 1960's.

Gantz, David. ***Jews in America***. Philadelphia, PA: The Jewish Publication Society, 2001.

Using comic strips and humor, this large colorful book brings American Jewish history to life.

Greene, Jacqueline Dembar. ***Out of Many Waters***. New York, NY: Walker Press, 1988.

Follow the adventures of twelve-year-old Isobel, who, after being separated from her sisters, becomes part of the first group of Jews to settle in New Amsterdam.

Hesse, Karen. ***Letters from Rifka***. New York, NY: Henry Holt and Co., 1992.

In letters to her cousin, a young Jewish girl chronicles her family's flight from Russia in 1919 and her own experiences when she must be left in Belgium for a while when the others immigrate to America. Based on the true story of the author's aunt.

Lasky, Kathryn. ***Dreams in the Golden Country: The Diary of Zipporah Friedman, a Jewish Immigrant Girl***. New York, NY: Scholastic, Inc., 1998.

Historical fiction, in the form of a diary of a twelve-year-old Jewish immigrant girl in 1903. Includes photos of the era, plus other background material.

Milgrim, Shirley Gorson, illustrated by Richard Fish. ***Haym Solomon, Liberty's Son***. Philadelphia, PA: The Jewish Publication Society, 1979.

An exciting biography of the Polish-born Jew, who cast his lot with the American rebels, helped to finance the American Revolution, and later helped to save the new nation from economic collapse.

Nixon, Joan Lowery. ***Land of Hope – Ellis Island***. New York, NY: Dell Publishing, 1993.

Follow fourteen-year-old Rebekah Levinsky as she makes the difficult ocean journey from Russia to America, and then must learn to survive on the Lower East Side of New York.

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