

# **CONTEMPORARY JEWISH FICTION FOR TEENS**

Rachel Kamin, Director, Temple Israel Libraries & Media Center  
248/661-5700 ● rkamin@temple-israel.org

**Ehrenhaft, Daniel. *Tell It to Naomi*. New York: Delacorte Press, 2004.**

In an attempt to win the affection of a gorgeous senior girl, and to help his older sister launch her career in journalism, fifteen-year-old David Rosen, a socially awkward loner, pretends to be a female advice columnist for his school newspaper. While Dave's Jewish identity does not play an important role in the story, there are numerous references to Judaism and the passing of time is marked by the Jewish holidays.

**Kass, Pnina Moed. *Real Time*. New York: Clarion Books, 2004.**

Hour by hour, we follow a diverse cast of characters up to and beyond the moment of a bus bombing in Israel. The inner lives of kibbutzniks, tourists, soldiers, and even the Palestinian teen who carries the bomb are absorbingly related, revealing how political situations are really composed of many overlapping personal situations. Compellingly written, this stunning portrait of life in modern Israel offers no easy answers, but raises fascinating questions and helps readers connect to the human side of what they see on the news. (Sydney Taylor Book Award Winner)

**Levitan, David. *Wide Awake*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006.**

Levithan paints a picture of the not so distant future when America has experienced the Jesus Revolution, the All Equal Movement, the Greater Depression, the Reign of Fear, the War to End All Wars, and the Prada Riots, and a gay, Jewish man is about to become President of the United States with a Latino woman as his Vice-President. Duncan, a Jewish high school student, and his diverse group of friends become involved and immersed in the election results which have been called into question. At the same time, they are also dealing with their own relationships – both gay and straight – and finding their own place in the new world.

**Levitin, Sonia. *The Singing Mountain*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1998.**

While traveling in Israel for the summer, seventeen-year-old Mitch decides to stay and pursue a life of Jewish orthodoxy, forcing him to make some important decisions about the family and life he is leaving in southern California. See also *Strange Relations* (2007).

**Mack, Tracy. *Birdland*. New York: Scholastic Press, 2003.**

Jazz, poetry, and film making in Greenwich Village are vivid counterpoints to the moving story of thirteen year old Jed, his parents, and their grief over the death of Jed's older brother. (A Sydney Taylor Honor Award Winner)

**Meyer, Carolyn. *Drummers of Jericho*. Orlando, Florida : Harcourt Brace & Company, 1995.**

A fourteen-year-old Jewish girl goes to live with her father and stepmother in a small town and soon finds herself the center of a civil rights battle when she objects to the high school band marching in the formation of a cross.

**Ostow, Micol. *Emily Goldberg Learns to Salsa*. New York: Razorbill, 2006.**

Emily Goldberg's summer plans are interrupted when her maternal grandmother dies. Even though her mother has been estranged from her family since running away to the States and marrying Emily's father (who is Jewish), the whole family travels to Puerto Rico to attend the funeral. And, what was suppose to be a short trip, turns into a summer-long visit as Emily stays with her mother to help her repair her relationship with her sisters.

**Rabb, M. E. *Missing Persons: The Chocolate Lover*. New York: Speak/Penguin Putnam, 2004.**

Teenaged Jewish sisters Sam and Sophie Shattenberg, change their identities as they flee from New York to a small town in Indiana and open a detective agency. *The Chocolate Lover* is full of Jewish flavor, but the focus is on the solving of mysteries. Don't miss the rest of the *Missing Persons* series: *The Rose Queen*, *The Venetian Policeman*, and *The Unsuspecting Gourmet*. See also *Cures for Heartbreaks* (2007).

**Rahlens, Holly-Jane. *Prince William, Maximilian Minsky, and Me*. Cambridge, MA: Candlewick Press, 2005.**

Nelly Sue Edelmeister learns to play basketball, copes with a major crush on Prince William, makes a true friend, and finds meaning in becoming a bat mitzvah in this funny and touching novel that takes place in modern Berlin. (A Sydney Taylor Honor Award Winner).

**Reinhardt, Dana. *A Brief Chapter in My Impossible Life*. New York: Wendy Lamb Books, 2006.**

In this poignant story, Simone Turner meets Rivka, her biological mother, and learns about the circumstances of her adoption – how Rivka, a Hasidic Jew, became pregnant at sixteen and was shunned by her family, became a photographer and moved to Cape Cod, and now suffers from terminal cancer. (A Sydney Taylor Honor Award Winner).

**Sandell, Lisa Ann. *The Weight of the Sky*. New York: Viking Childrens Books, 2006.**

Sixteen-year-old Sarah Green is one of a few Jewish students at her small Pennsylvania high school. When her parents offer to send her to Israel for the summer, she jumps at the chance to assert her independence, re-invent herself in a new place, and live and work within the Jewish community of a kibbutz. While her journey to find herself is not without hardship and challenges, and her idealistic view of Israel and kibbutz life is shattered, Sarah survives the summer transformed with a new sense of Jewish identity, a deeper connection to the land of Israel, increased self-confidence, and a more mature awareness of her own sexuality.

**Schorr, Melissa. *Goy Crazy*. New York: Hyperion, 2006.**

Sophomore Rachel Lowenstein, a self-described twice-a-year New York Jew, falls in love with Luke Christiansen, the busboy at her brother's Bar Mitzvah. Haunted by her grandmother's instructions to "find a nice Jewish boy to marry" and warning not to go with the goyim, Rachel hides the relationship from her parents, leading them to believe that she is dating her neighbor, Howard Goldstein.

**Sonnenblick, Jordan. *Notes from the Midnight Driver*. New York: Scholastic Press, 2006.**

Alex Gregory gets drunk, takes his mother's car, and crashes into a lawn gnome. He must pay his debt to society by doing 100 hours of community service in a nursing home attending to Sol Lewis, a cantankerous resident who suffers from emphysema.

**Stein, Tammar. *Light Years*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf/Random House, 2005.**

20-year-old Maya Laor is on her way to meet her boyfriend Dov to tell him that she has decided to leave Israel to study at the University of Virginia when he is killed by a suicide bomber. In alternating chapters between Virginia and Israel, Tammar Stein pieces together Maya and Dov's relationship, Maya's life in Israel, her army service, and her family.

**Werlin, Nancy. *Black Mirror*. New York: Dial Books, 2001.**

Convinced her brother's death was murder rather than suicide, sixteen-year-old Frances begins her own investigation into suspicious student activities at her boarding school.

**Woodson, Jacqueline. *If You Come Softly*. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1998.**

Fifteen-year-old Jeremiah, who is Black and whose parents are separated, and Ellie, who is Jewish and whose mother has twice abandoned her, fall in love and then try to cope with people's reactions. Sequel: *Behind You* (2004).