

New & Notable Books for Children
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Avrech, Robert - ***The Hebrew Kid and the Apache Maiden***. Seraphic Press, 2004. A coming of age story and historical adventure set in the untamed Southwest in the late 1800's. In their journeys, an immigrant Jewish family encounters settlers, outlaws, and Apache warriors, one of whom is a young woman named Lozen, based on a real person. Strong Jewish values pervade the story, published by a new modern Orthodox publisher. Elementary & middle-school.

Baer, Julie - ***Love Me Later***. Bollix Books, 2005. Quite different from most picture books in both narrative style and illustrations, this portrays, through vignettes rather than a sustained plot, a child's perceptions of the natural world and humorous incidents within his own family. The close-up illustrations of children and animals are distinctive and original. Preschool-grade 1.

Bitton-Jackson, Livia - ***Hello, America***. Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2005. Eighteen-year old Elli and her mother arrive in New York after being liberated from Auschwitz. Elli experiences Jewish life in the 50's, becomes a camp counselor in the Poconos and a Hebrew day school teacher, experiencing love and disappointment along the way. American teenage mores are foreign to her, but supportive friends and relatives help her feel more comfortable in her new home. Grades 7-11.

Chotjewitz, David - ***Daniel, Half Human, and the Good Nazi***. Atheneum, 2005. Flashing back to Germany during the 1930's, this powerful Holocaust novel shows the deterioration of life for an intermarried family through the experiences of their adolescent son, who discovers to his horror that he is half-Jewish, a *mischling* or mongrel. The moral dilemma that climaxes the novel makes it a perfect candidate for discussion. Recipient of several honors and awards. Grades 7-11.

Ehrenhaft, Daniel - ***Tell it to Naomi***. Delacorte, 2004. A rarity – here is a funny book for teenagers about a high school boy who assumes a false identity in order to impress a girl he likes. Events hurtle out of hand before too long, causing Daniel to think about truth and personal integrity. The Jewish content is limited to identifying the main character and his family as Jewish; Judaism does not impact the plot, which appears to be a growing trend in books for teens. Grades 7-10.

Feiler, Bruce - ***Walking the Bible: An Illustrated Journey for Kids Through the Greatest Stories Ever Told***. Illustrated by Sasah Meret.

HarperCollins, 2004. Using kid-friendly language, with helpful maps, illustrations and photographs, the author describes his 10,000-mile journey through places mentioned in the Old Testament. Grades 4-8.

Frank, Mitch - ***Understanding the Holy Land***. Viking, 2004. Succinct yet thorough answers to various questions about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, written as objectively as it is possible to be about this highly polarized issue. The organization is chronological and lends itself to understanding. The format is not very attractive, so this book will need some promoting with students and teachers. Middle school & high school.

Garfinkle, Debra - ***Storky: How I Lost My Nickname and Won the Girl***. G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2005. Serious fun, presented as a journal of Storky's first year of high school. Sex and girls, junk food and TV, his divorced mother's new boyfriend, a cold, indifferent father, and an old man who beats him at Scrabble and gives him advice about babes and life are all part of a fast moving plot about an unusually appealing character. Another title where the Jewish identity of the main character is incidental to the story. Grades 7-10.

Glaser, Linda - ***Mrs. Greenberg's Messy Hanukkah***. Illustrated by Nancy Cote. Albert Whitman, 2004. A slight but cute Hanukkah story about a little girl named Rachel and her elderly neighbor, Mrs. Greenberg. It is a sequel to *The Borrowed Hanukkah Latkes*, in which the spirited Rachel got the lonely Mrs. Greenberg involved in her family's holiday festivities. Revisiting the Hanukkah setting, here Rachel messes up her fastidious friend's kitchen but also makes it feel lived-in. Preschool-grade 2.

Greenfeld, Howard - ***A Promise Fulfilled: Theodor Herzl, Chaim Weizmann, David Ben-Gurion and the Creation of the State of Israel***. Greenwillow/HarperCollins, 2005. An engrossing account of three very different men who were central to the founding of modern Israel. Their personalities, strengths, and contributions to the Zionist enterprise are revealed in one of the most positive books about Israel to be published in quite a while. Middle school.

Had Gadya: A Passover Song - Illustrated by Seymour Chwast. Roaring Brook Press, 2005. Chwast's superb illustrations of the traditional Passover Seder song tell several stories at once. First is the one told by the cumulative chain folksong itself, with the characters accumulating across the top of the pages. Second is a story of preparations for the Seder. And third is a visual portrayal of *shtetl* life, capturing its looks and life in a way similar to what Phoebe Gilman did in *Something for Nothing*. Preschool-elementary.

Hoffman, Rabbi Lawrence and Dr. Ron Wolfson - ***What You Will See: Inside a Synagogue***. Photographs by Bill Aron. Skylight Paths/Jewish Lights, 2004. Attractive color photographs and informative text invite the reader to learn about the synagogue as a house of prayer, learning and community, where observance of Shabbat, holidays and life-cycle events take place. Grades 3-6.

Kropf, Latifa Berry - ***It's Purim Time!*** Kar-Ben Publishing, 2005. Like the others in this series set in a Jewish preschool, the brief text and color photographs provide both a simple explanation of the holiday and a look at how young children celebrate it. Charming! Preschool-kindergarten.

Lasky, Kathryn - ***Broken Song***. Viking, 2005. A serious historical novel set in the Russian Pale of Settlement in the late 1800's. Fifteen year-old Reuven Bloom is a musician but his aspirations are violently interrupted by a pogrom that kills his parents and older sister and leaves him fully in charge of his baby sister. The conditions that led to massive Jewish emigration from Russia and to the political unrest that culminated in the Russian Revolution are explored through the interplay of plot and character. A companion to Lasky's 1981 award winning book, *The Night Journey*. Grades 6-9.

Littman, Sarah Darer - ***Confessions of a Closet Catholic***. Dutton, 2005. A pre-teen and middle child, Justine thinks she would prefer to be Catholic instead of Jewish because her Catholic best friend's family seems to have so much more fun than hers. Justine's experiments with another faith are predicated on her search for answers about her own family's commitment to Judaism, their different practices and outlooks, their social insecurities, and her own search for religious identity. Despite a serious subject, this has the humor and child-appeal of Judy Blume's *Are You There, God? It's Me, Margaret* and can be used as a replacement for that slightly outdated classic. Grades 5-8.

Markel, Michelle - ***Dreamer From the Village: The Story of Marc Chagall***. Illustrated by Emily Lisker. Henry Holt, 2005. An outstanding illustrated biography of the great painter that chronicles his long life in a simple lucid text and gives the flavor of his art through paintings that are evocative but not imitative. From childhood, Marc saw things that others didn't and although it took many years, his unique artistic vision, made accessible here to children, was recognized and rewarded. Grades 2-6.

Marzollo, Jean - ***Ruth and Naomi***. Little, Brown, 2005. In her series of Bible stories, Jean Marzollo condenses details while preserving the story's spirit and meaning. This biblical account exemplifies *chesed*, lovingkindness, and it is the predominant theme of the story, shown by Ruth and Naomi's

caring for one another and by the kindness shown to them by Boaz. The lilted illustrations extend the story by showing several generations of redheads, starting with Ruth and culminating with the birth of David, future King of Israel. A chorus of rabbits comments on the story, adding a childlike point of view. Preschool-primary.

Millman, Isaac - ***Hidden Child***. Frances Foster Books/Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2005. The story of the author's boyhood as a child hidden from the Nazis, this is simply but elegantly told and has an unusual illustrative style - a combination of "graphic non-fiction" interspersed by pages of text and photographs. Grades 6-10.

Napoli, Donna Jo - ***The King of Mulberry Street***. Wendy Lamb Books, 2005. This evocative historical novel about an Italian-Jewish immigrant child is shocking because it makes us realize that just 100 years ago, children as young as eight came to this country alone, with nothing but their wits and good luck to help them survive. This is Dom's story and in the two years that elapse, he gives up his hope of returning to his mother in Naples, finds a few friends and a permanent, safe place to sleep, establishes a successful business (he is a child, remember!) and realizes that America is where he wants to be. Grades 5-8.

Newman, Leslea - ***The Eight Nights of Chanukah***. Illustrated by Elivia Savadier. Harry A. Abrams, 2005. With artful simplicity, the author and illustrator combine their talents to show the joyful eight days of a family's Hanukkah celebration. Written simply in a cumulative style, the story's action is significantly enhanced by rollicking illustrations that become busier and more detailed as each night unfolds. They also make a multicultural statement, as people of several races and generations come together to enjoy the fun. Preschool-kindergarten.

Olswanger, Anna - ***Shlemiel Crooks***. Illustrated by Paula Goodman Koz. NewSouth Books, 2004. Offbeat, funny, and told in a highly inflected "Yinglish," this story about the attempted theft of Passover wine is set in a Jewish neighborhood in St. Louis in the early 1900's. The ghosts of Pharaoh and Elijah are both part of the action. Based on an incident in the life of the author's great-grandfather and illustrated with vigorous linocuts that match the earthiness of the story. Grades 5-8 and for adults.

Poole, Josephine - ***Anne Frank***. Illustrated by Angela Barrett. Knopf, 2005. A 40-page illustrated biography that describes her short life and puts it into the context of the growth of Nazi power and the Holocaust. The writing style is pithy and somewhat informal, a contrast to the large, serious illustrations that show Anne and her family in situations that gradually worsen as the war

goes on. Miep Gies, the woman who helped the Franks in hiding and later found Anne's diary, is an important character, as is Otto Frank, Anne's father, to whom Miep gave the diary. This engrossing book provides both a general introduction to the period and to Anne's life, as it is known through her diary. Because it approaches its subject directly but tactfully, without frightening details, it could be read by children who are just beginning to ask questions about the Holocaust. Grades 3-6.

Rabb, M.E. - ***Missing Persons***. Penguin/Putnam, 2004. This sparkling series of four titles, *The Rose Queen*, *The Chocolate Lover*, *The Venetian Policeman* and *The Unsuspecting Gourmet*, features the adventures of teenage sister sleuths Sophie and Sam Shattenberg solving mysteries while hiding out from their wicked stepmother. Grades 7-10.

Rappaport, Doreen - ***In the Promised Land: Lives of Jewish Americans***. Illustrated by Cornelius Van Wright and Ying-Hwa. HarperCollins, 2005. Thirteen American Jews are the subjects of this handsomely illustrated collective biography. The information provided about each one is quite short, highlighting a critical moment in their lives. More space is given to the illustrations that portray the subjects surrounded by some smaller pictorial vignettes. The time period covered is 1628 to the present. Profiled are Asser Levy, Ernestine Rose, Solomon Nunes Carvalho, Jacob W. Davis, Lillian Wald, Harry Houdini, Pauline Newman, Lillian Copeland, Ira Hirschmann, Jonas Salk, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Judith Resnick, and Steven Spielberg. Grades 4-7.

Rappaport, Doreen - ***The Secret Seder***. Illustrated by Emily McCully. Hyperion, 2005. In this story, a boy and his father, hiding from the Nazis in occupied France, climb to the top of a mountain to share a Passover Seder with other Jewish men in the same circumstances. With very little food and in fear for their very lives, their somber observance is a testament to courage and faith. Poignantly written and very well illustrated, the story confronts the tragedy of the Holocaust while offering hope that the human spirit will prevail. For students in grades 3-6 with some knowledge of the Holocaust.

Ruben, Susan Goldman - ***The Flag with Fifty-Six Stars: A Gift from the Survivors of Mauthausen***. Illustrated by Bill Farnsworth. Holiday House, 2005. When the German concentration camp of Mauthausen was liberated by American troops, the prisoners presented them with an American flag that they had made in secret, a flag with 56, instead of 48, stars. This chronicles the story of Mauthausen and its liberation, showing its horrors but also the hope and incredible courage of prisoners like Simon Weisenthal. Many survivors and liberators were interviewed by the author, and these

primary sources are apparent in the conviction with which the story is written. The realistic illustrations, large and expressive, are also excellent. Grades 5-8.

Russo, Marissabina - ***Always Remember Me: How One Family Survived World War II***. Atheneum, 2005. The author-illustrator tells the story of her own family's experiences during the Holocaust, focusing on the four strong Jewish women - her grandmother, mother, and two aunts - who most influenced her life. Each character is carefully individualized, with illustrations made to look like actual photographs and documents. The story is reassuring and relatively non-threatening, making it appropriate for somewhat younger children than is usual for illustrated Holocaust stories. Grades 3-5.

Sachs, Marilyn - ***Lost in America***. Roaring Brook Press, 2005. A French teenager, the only one of her family to survive the Holocaust, joins relatives in America, determined to make the kind of life for herself that her parents would have wanted. In an economical and concrete style that is suffused with emotion, Sachs tells her story of loneliness, alienation, and gradual adaptation to America. Written with humor and many details of the post-war period, this sequel to *A Pocket Full of Seeds* will appeal mostly to girls in middle school.

Schroeder, Peter W. and Dagmar Schroeder-Hildebrand - ***Six Million Paper Clips: the Making of a Children's Holocaust Memorial***. Kar-Ben Publishing, 2004. Now a moving documentary film called "Paper Clips," this is the remarkable true story of the residents of rural Whitwell, Tennessee, where everyone is "white, Anglo-Saxon, and Protestant." The community got involved helping their middle school students collect six million paper clips to symbolize the Jews lost in the Holocaust. Grades 5-8.

Schwartz, Howard - ***Before You Were Born***. Illustrated by Kristina Swarner. Roaring Brook Press, 2005. This beautifully written and illustrated little story is adapted from *Midrash Tanhuma*, telling of the angel who gives an unborn baby a soul, teaches it all of the world's wisdom, including the entire Torah, and then removes all that knowledge at birth by touching the baby above the lip, causing it to forget everything and leaving the mark above the lip that all humans bear. Told with the intimacy and simplicity of a bedtime story and warmly illustrated, it is outstanding! Preschool-grade 2.

Shulevitz, Yuri - ***The Travels of Benjamin of Tudela***. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005. Benjamin of Tudela, known only from the book he wrote about his travels, left his home in Spain in 1159 and spent 14 years traveling dangerous roads, seas, and deserts and reaching Genoa, Rome,

Constantinople, Cairo, Baghdad, Jerusalem, and China. In this fictionalized account, Benjamin relates what he saw and learned, telling stories of the Arch of Titus, the Assassins, the Crusaders, a false messiah, Jerusalem, and more. Each episode occupies a large, double page spread, with the illustrations predominating. In one of Shulevitz's most ambitious works, he imagines and paints a 12th century world as it might have been experienced by a traveler: muddy roads, searing deserts, walled cities, and mighty seas. The results are stunning! Grades 5-8.

Silverman, Erica - ***Sholom's Treasure: How Sholom Aleichem Became a Writer***. Illustrated by Mordechai Gerstein. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005. Did Sholom Aleichem really have a mean stepmother? Did he compile a dictionary of her colorful Yiddish insults? Was he the boy making those grotesque faces behind the *melamed's* back in *cheder*? These are the kind of details, fascinating to children, that *Sholom's Treasure* deals with. Erica Silverman and Mordecai Gerstein have combined their gifts and knowledge to tell and show children some events - tragic and comic - from Sholom Aleichem's early life. This charming story, part biography and part fiction, will introduce children to one of the great comic writers of our age and a prime chronicler of the Jewish people at the turn of the 20th century. Grades 3-6.

Stein, Tammar - ***Light Years***. Knopf, 2005. Traumatized by her boyfriend's death in a suicide bombing, a young Israeli searches for distance and forgetfulness at an American college where she thinks she can leave the past behind. Maya tells the story that alternates between Israel and Virginia, revealing her pain, her life in Israel, her experiences in the Israeli Army, and her resilience as she gradually heals and forges new bonds. Lyrically and insightfully written, this excellent first novel casts a light on the life of Israeli teenagers, which includes army service. For older teens & young adults.

Taback, Simms - ***Kibitzers and Fools: Tales My Zayde Told Me***. Atheneum, 2005. Brimming with humor and bursting with life, this dynamically illustrated collection of anecdotes and short stories about *kibitzers*, *shlemiels*, *noodniks*, *meshugeners*, and other Yiddish types is reminiscent of Taback's award winning *Joseph Had a Little Overcoat* but with more bite and intended for slightly older readers. Grades 3-6 and older.

Weiss, Arnine Cunsky - ***Becoming a Bat Mitzvah: A Treasury of Stories***. University of Scranton Press, 2004 and ***Becoming a Bar Mitzvah: A Treasury of Stories***, 2003. These are compilations of personal bar/bat mitzvah reflections written by remarkable people of all ages who have unique stories to share. While the quality of the small photo included with each entry is rather poor, Weiss's intention is clearly to inspire students

studying to become bar or bat mitzvah. Both forwards include very helpful background information; nice companions to Goldin's and Kimmel's books from the 90's. Grade 6-adult.

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