Association of Jewish Libraries

NOTABLE CHILDREN'S BOOKS OF JEWISH CONTENT: THE BEST OF THE BUNCH FROM 2000

by Linda R. Silver, Jewish Education Center, Cleveland Heights, Ohio and
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This annual list contains outstanding books chosen from those submitted to and evaluated by the Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee of the Association of Jewish Libraries. The committee recommends them for library, home and classroom use. The 2000 committee members are: Linda R. Silver, Chair, Jewish Education Center, Cleveland, OH; Kathleen Clotfelter, Donna Klein Jewish Academy, Boca Raton, FL; Etta Gold, Temple Beth Am, Miami, FL; Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA; Naomi Morse, Charles E. Smith Jewish Day School, Lower School Campus, Rockville, MD; and Libby K. White, Beth Israel Congregation, Owings Mills, MD. Richard Fechter, Cleveland, OH is administrative assistant.

2000 SYDNEY TAYLOR AWARD WINNER FOR YOUNGER READERS

Kimmel, Eric A. **GERSHON'S MONSTER: A STORY FOR THE JEWISH NEW YEAR.** Illus. by Jon J. Muth. NY: Scholastic Press, 2000. $16.95. 32p. ISBN: 043910839X. Folktale for grades 1 – 4.

The teachings of the Baal Shem Tov are woven into this satisfying folktale about *tashlikh* and *teshuvah.* Not until his precious children are threatened by a fearsome sea monster made up of all the sins he has carelessly tossed away, does Gershon truly repent. Muth's moody watercolors are the perfect companions to a story that personifies abstract concepts in a way that is both meaningful and scary-delightful to children.

2000 SYDNEY TAYLOR AWARD WINNER FOR OLDER READERS

Vos, Ida. **THE KEY IS LOST.** Trans. by Terese Edelstein. NY: Morrow/HarperCollins, 2000. $15.95. 272p. ISBN: 0688162835. Fiction for grades 5-8.

Separated from their parents, in hiding from the Nazis, and always in the gravest danger, two Dutch-Jewish sisters become finely attuned to the skills of survival. Showing how the girls are affected, how they adapt, and how they protect themselves psychologically from constant threat, the story is enlivened by a spirit of hope and even humor because it is told so consistently from the young sisters' point of view.

HONOR BOOKS FOR YOUNGER READERS

Fagan, Cary. **THE MARKET WEDDING.** Illus. by Regolo Ricci. Plattsburgh, NY: Tundra Books of Northern New York, 2000. $16.95. 32p. ISBN: 0887764924. Picture story for grades 1-4.

A joyous celebration of love and community, set in an immigrant neighborhood in Toronto during the 1920's. The dynamic illustrations breathe with life. The story, based on one written by Abraham Cahen in 1898, pokes fun at pretension while affirming the importance of friendship.

Oberman, Sheldon. **THE WISDOM BIRD: A TALE OF SOLOMON AND SHEBA.** Illus. by Neil Waldman. Honesdale, PA: Boyds Mills Press, 2000. $15.95. (32p.) ISBN: 1563978164. Folktale for Kindergarten – grade 3.

In this elegantly illustrated folktale blending Jewish and African traditions, King Solomon is challenged by the visiting Queen of Sheba to build a palace of bird beaks. The little hoopoe bird humbly shows them what a cruel folly this would be.

NOTABLE BOOKS FOR YOUNGER READERS

Altman, Linda Jacobs. **THE LEGEND OF FREEDOM HILL.** Illus. by Cornelius Van Wright and Ting-Hwa Hu. NY: Lee and Low, 2000. $15.95. (30p.) ISBN: 1584300035. Historical fiction for grades 2-4.

California in the Gold Rush era is the setting for this heartwarming story of an inter-racial friendship. Two little girls, one Jewish and one African-American, find enough gold to ransom the run-aways the slave-catcher has in his clutches. Colorful, realistic illustrations reflect the setting, characters, and drama.

Fishman, Cathy Goldman. **ON PURIM.** Illus. by Melanie W. Hall. Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2000. $16.00. (28p.) ISBN: 0689823924. Holiday story for Kindergarten – grade 2.

One of the best of the books on holidays created by Fishman and Hall, this combines evocative illustrations with a narrative that is sensitive to the paradoxes of a holiday in which G-d's name is never mentioned.

Kimmelman, Leslie. **DANCE, SING, REMEMBER.** Illus. by Ora Eitan. NY: HarperCollins, 2000. $18.95. (36p.) ISBN: 0060277254. Holiday collection for preschool – grade 1.

A light-hearted writing style and child-like illustrations give panache to this cheerful holiday collection.

Manushkin, Fran. **COME, LET US BE JOYFUL: THE STORY OF HAVA NAGILA.** Illus. by Rosalind Charney Kaye. NY: UAHC Press, 2000. $12.95. (30p.) ISBN: 0807407313. Nonfiction for grades 2-5.

Children who have sung and danced to "Hava Nagila" will learn how it may have come to be transformed from a sad Yiddish melody to the musical embodiment of pioneering Zionism. An ebulliently written and illustrated story set in Israel before statehood.

Melmed, Laura Kraus. **MOISHE'S MIRACLE.** Illus. by David Slonim. NY: HarperCollins, 2000. $15.95. (31p.) ISBN: 0688146821. Hanukkah story for Kindergarten – grade 2.

On the eve of Hanukkah, a poor man receives a magic frying pan that produces endless latkes. Moishe wants to feed the whole village but his wife, Baila, has other ideas…. The deep, dusky pictures glow with magic.

Shollar, Leah. **THREAD OF KINDNESS: A TZEDAKA STORY.** Illus. by Shoshana Mekibel. NY: HaChai, 2000. $. (30p.) ISBN: 1929628013. Picture book for Kindergarten – grade 2.

Goodness rewarded is the theme of this traditional story about a poor family who use the six years of plenty given to them by Elijah to help others. The message is conveyed gently and illustrated with soft pastels.

HONOR BOOKS FOR OLDER READERS

Hest, Amy. **LOVE YOU, SOLDIER.** Illus. by Sonja Lamut. Cambridge, MA: Candlewick Press, 2000. $14.99. 80p. ISBN: 0763609439. Fiction for grades 4-6.

Katie is seven when her father leaves to fight in World War II, nine when she and her mother get the devastating news of his death, and ten when the war ends. Katie's story is told with artful simplicity and resonates with emotion. Hest's writing shows how "less is more."

Rubin, Susan Goldman. **FIREFLIES IN THE DARK: THE STORY OF FRIEDL DICKER-BRANDEIS AND THE CHILDREN OF TEREZIN.** NY: Holiday House, 2000. $18.95. 47p. ISBN: 0823414612. Holocaust biography for grades 5-8.

A Bauhaus-trained Jewish artist from Prague is imprisoned in Terezin. There she teaches traumatized children to express themselves and their fears through art. An inspiring biography with memorable illustrations by Dicker-Brandeis and her students.

NOTABLE BOOKS FOR OLDER READERS

Carmi, Gabriella. **SAMIR AND YONATON.** Trans. by Yael Lotan. NY: Arthur A. Levine/Scholastic, 2000. $15.95. 185p. ISBN: 0439135044. Fiction for grades 5-8.

Frightened to be the only Palestinian in the children's ward of a hospital in Israel, Samir withdraws into himself. Gradually, Yonatan, the boy in the next bed, draws him into another world where Jews and Palestinians can be friends.

Deedy, Carmen Agra. **THE YELLOW STAR: THE LEGEND OF KING CHRISTIAN X OF DENMARK.** Illus. by Henry Sorensen. Atlanta: Peachtree, 2000. $16.95. (30p.) ISBN: 1561452084. Historical fiction for grades 3-5.

A beautifully illustrated tribute to the tolerance of the Danish people and their king, who took many risks on behalf of the Jewish population during the German occupation of World War II.

Hirschfelder, Arlene B. **PHOTO ODYSSEY: SOLOMON CARVALHO'S REMARKABLE WESTERN ADVENTURE, 1853-54.** NY: Clarion, 2000. $18.00. 118p. ISBN: 0339589123X. Biography for grades 6-9.

Carvalho, a Baltimore Jew of Sephardic ancestry, was a tenderfoot when he joined an expedition led by the explorer, John Charles Fremont. This well-researched biography gives a stirring account of his adventure.

Isaacs, Ann. **TORN THREAD.** NY: Scholastic Press, 2000. $15.95. 188p. ISBN: 0590603639. Fiction for grades 7 – 9.

Based on the experiences of a Holocaust survivor, this is the story of two teenaged sisters who survive a Nazi slave labor camp where they were imprisoned for several years. Through a large cast of characters, the author touches on some central Holocaust issues.

Jaffe, Nina. **TALES FOR THE SEVENTH DAY.** Illus. by Kelly Stribling Sutherland. NY: Scholastic Press, 2000. $15.95. 73p. ISBN: 0590120549. Folklore for grades 4-8.

Seven tales follow a gracefully written Introduction describing traditional observances that have maintained Jewish identity and continuity. The tales are adapted from Talmud, folk literature and oral tradition.

Kimmel, Eric A. **THE JAR OF FOOLS: EIGHT HANUKKAH STORIES FROM CHELM.** Illus. by Mordicai Gerstein. NY: Holiday House, 2000. $18.95. 56p. ISBN: 0823414639. Hanukkah stories for grades 3-6.

Too delicious to be enjoyed only at Hanukkah, these effervescent tales show how the wisdom of fools might be the wisest kind of all!

Lester, Julius. **PHARAOH'S DAUGHTER.** San Diego: SilverWhistle/Harcourt, 2000. $17.00. 182p. ISBN: 0152018265. Historical fiction for grades 7-9.

A dazzling portrait of ancient Egypt and a provocative story of religious and cultural identity are created in this free interpretation of the youth of Moses and his older sister.

Levine, Ellen. **DARKNESS OVER DENMARK: THE DANISH RESISTANCE AND THE RESCUE OF THE JEWS.** NY: Holiday House, 2000. $18.95. 164p. ISBN: 0823414477. Non-fiction for grades 5-8.

Interviews with individuals involved in the Danish resistance, documentary photographs, and a lucid text combine to tell an inspiring true story.

Moss, Marissa. **HANNAH'S JOURNAL: THE STORY OF AN IMMIGRANT GIRL.** Young American Voices Series. San Diego: Harcourt/Silver Whistle, 2000. $15. 50p. ISBN: 0152021558. Fiction for grades 4-6.

The exciting story of Hannah's trip from Russia to America is told through her journal entries. The format, with lined pages, hand lettering, and Hannah's drawings and comments in the margins, is especially appealing.

Musleah, Rahel. **WHY ON THIS NIGHT? A PASSOVER HAGGADAH FOR FAMILY CELEBRATION.** Illus. by Louise August. NY: Simon and Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2000. $24.95. 110p. ISBN: 088776519X. For all ages.

Intended to give children a central part in planning and participating in the Passover Seder, this includes every major part of the haggadah in Hebrew, English and transliteration. And, as if that weren't enough, there are also superb illustrations, songs, games, crafts, recipes, and other ideas for making the Seder truly family-centered.

Polacco, Patricia. **THE BUTTERFLY.** NY: Philomel, 2000. $16.99. (42p.) ISBN: 0399231706. Fiction for grades 4-6.

During the Nazi occupation of France, a child discovers that her mother is hiding Jews. The "little ghost" who appears in her bedroom at night is one of them. Monique and Sevrine become friends, sharing hope for a brighter future symbolized by the butterfly. A poignant story whose illustrations express its mood.

Schanzer, Rosalind. **ESCAPING TO AMERICA: A TRUE STORY.** NY: HarperCollins, 2000. $15.95. (30p.) ISBN: 0688169899. Immigration story for grades 4-6.

In the early twentieth century, a family of Polish Jews, headed by a determined father, leaves the Old Country. This book, vibrantly illustrated, expresses their thankfulness and pride in becoming Americans.

Schwartz, Howard. **THE DAY THE RABBI DISAPPEARED: JEWISH HOLIDAY TALES OF MAGIC.** Illus. by Monique Passicot. NY: Viking, 2000. $15.99. 80p. ISBN: 0670887331. Folklore for grades 5-8.

The magic in these tales - of dreams, heavenly journeys, and secret names – is used to protect and save the Jewish people. Several of the stories feature learned women and all twelve of them are associated with the major festivals, Rosh Hodesh, and Shabbat.

Smith, Frank Dabba. **MY SECRET CAMERA: LIFE IN THE LODZ GHETTO.** Photographs by Mendel Grossman. San Diego: Gulliver/Harcourt, 2000. $16.00. (37p.) ISBN: 0152023062. Non-fiction for grades 5-7.

Mendel Grossman did not survive the Holocaust but his photographs did. They are heartbreaking reminders of everyday life in a community destined for destruction.

Taylor, Marilyn. **FARAWAY HOME.** Dublin, Ireland: O'Brien Press, 1999. $ 7.95 Pbk. 48p. ISBN: 0531145247. Fiction for grades 6-9.

An Austrian brother and sister are sent on the Kindertransport to Northern Ireland, where a farm for Jewish refugees from Hitler was established near Belfast. Actual events are integrated with sympathetic characters, believable relationships, well-paced action, and a portrayal of lives forever changed by war.

Vogiel, Eva. **INVISIBLE CHAINS.** NY: The Judaica Press, 2000. $. 280p. ISBN: 1880582570. Fiction for grades 5-7.

An Orthodox boarding school in England is the setting for this story of two sisters. A wise headmistress and a concerned young teacher intervene to solve the girls' potentially destructive relationship. Traditional Judaism guides and supports all of them.

Watts, Irene. **REMEMBER ME: A SEARCH FOR REFUGE IN WARTIME BRITAIN.** Plattsburgh, NY: Tundra Books, 2000. $6.95pbk. 174p. ISBN: 088776519X. Fiction for grades 5-8.

Twelve year old Marianne, who was introduced in ***Goodbye, Marianne*** (Tundra, 1998), is sent on the Kindertransport to England. Missing her parents and yearning for the familiarity of Jewish family life, she struggles in a series of foster homes. A fascinating picture of war-time England – of courage and narrow social attitudes – is painted.