

SYDNEY TAYLOR BOOK AWARD WINNERS: PART I

Description: Meet the Sydney Taylor Honor Award winners, including **Lesléa Newman & Amy June Bates** (*Gittel's Journey*), **Debbie Levy** (*The Key from Spain*), **Andrew Maraniss** (*Games of Deception*), **Sofiya Pasternack** (*Anya and the Dragon*), and **Victoria Ortiz** (*Dissenter on the Bench*), and hear from the committee members (**Rebecca Levitan, Rena Citrin, Shoshana Flax, Marjorie Ingall, Sylvie Shaffer & Rivka Yerushalmi**) about their favorite books of the year.

Lesléa Newman is the author of 70 books for readers of all ages, including *A Letter to Harvey Milk*; *October Mourning: A Song for Matthew Shepard*; *I Carry My Mother*; *The Boy Who Cried Fabulous*; *Ketzel, the Cat Who Composed*; and *Gittel's Journey*. Ms. Newman wrote *Heather Has Two Mommies*, the first children's book to portray lesbian families in a positive way, and has followed up this pioneering work with several more children's books on lesbian and gay families: *Felicia's Favorite Story*, *Too Far Away to Touch*, *Saturday Is Pattyday*, *Mommy, Mama, and Me*, and *Daddy, Papa, and Me*. She is also the author of many books for adults that deal with lesbian identity, Jewish identity and the intersection and collision between the two. Other topics Ms. Newman explores include AIDS, eating disorders, butch/femme relationships, and sexual abuse. Her award-winning short story, *A Letter To Harvey Milk*, has been made into a film and adapted for the stage.

Amy June Bates is the illustrator of over 50 books. She picked up a pencil when she was three and hasn't stopped drawing since. She grew up with six younger brother and sisters, none of whom have turned into crows or swans. She has lived in California, Maryland, Michigan, Utah, Pennsylvania, and Japan. She loves to wander. She prefers the mountains.

Debbie Levy writes books—fiction, nonfiction, and poetry—for people of all different ages, and especially for young people. Before her writing career, she was a newspaper editor with American Lawyer Media and *Legal Times*; before that, she was a lawyer with the Washington, D.C. law firm of Wilmer, Cutler & Pickering. She has a bachelor's degree in government and foreign affairs from the University of Virginia, and a law degree and master's degree in world politics from the University of Michigan. She lives in Maryland with my husband, Rick Hoffman.

Andrew Maraniss is a New York Times-bestselling author of narrative nonfiction. His first book, *Strong Inside*, was the recipient of the 2015 Lillian Smith Book Award and the lone Special Recognition honor at the 2015 RFK Book Awards. The Young Reader edition was named one of the Top 10 Biographies and Top 10 Sports Books of 2017 by the American Library Association and was selected as a Notable Social Studies Book for 2019 by the National Council for the Social Studies. His second book, *Games of Deception*, is the story of the first U.S. Olympic basketball team, which competed at the 1936 Summer Games in Nazi Germany.

Sofiya Pasternack grew up surrounded by goats, and as an adult pets the neighbor's goats through the fence even though she probably shouldn't. When she's not doing psychotherapy with her patients, she can be found enjoying Utah's wild places, teaching her kids to make challah and defending nice dragons. She should definitely be reading right now. Her debut novel *Anya and the Dragon* and its sequel *Anya and the Nightingale* are kind of about Jewish farm girl Anya, and kind of about a dragon, but are mostly about Anya's favorite goat, Zvezda. Find Sofiya at www.sofiypasternack.com or on twitter @sofiypasternack.

Rebecca Levitan holds a BA in history and Judaic studies from Binghamton University, and an MLIS from the University of Pittsburgh. She is a full-time librarian at the Pikesville Branch of the Baltimore County Public Library in Baltimore, MD. She is currently the Sydney Taylor Book Award Chair and a council member of AJL. As a mom of two young girls (and one on the way) she is passionate about quality Jewish literature. Rebecca is also an avid knitter and can often be found working on a shawl that she will likely not wear because it is too warm in Baltimore most of the year.

Rena Citrin has been the library director at Bernard Zell Anshe Emet Day School for the past 23 years. Located in the Lakeview neighborhood of Chicago, a long ball throw from Wrigley Field, the day school has 500 students in nursery through eighth grade and has 18,000 holdings. Rena is a graduate of Northwestern University and received her MLIS from Dominican University. This is her fourth year on the Sydney Taylor Book Award committee.

Shoshana Flax holds an MFA in writing for children from Simmons College, and is an assistant editor at the *Horn Book* and a member of the 2019 and 2020 Sydney Taylor Book Award committee. Previously, she worked as a children's bookseller at Brookline Booksmith. She is represented by Amy Stern of the Sheldon Fogelman Agency, and she also sells Parodies for Charities. Follow her on Twitter @ShoshanaFlax.

Marjorie Ingall is a columnist for *Tablet Magazine* and the author of *Mamaleh Knows Best: What Jewish Mothers Do to Raise Successful, Creative, Empathetic, Independent Children*. She often writes for the *New York Times Book Review*. Marjorie has written for many other magazines and newspapers, including *The Forward* (where for seven years she was "The East Village Mamele"), *Ms.*, *New York*, *Glamour*, *Self*, and the late, lamented *Sassy* (where she was the senior writer and books editor). She is also a ghostwriter and lives in NYC's East Village.

Sylvie Shaffer is the preK-8 librarian at the Capitol Hill Day School in Washington, DC and holds dual master's degrees in library science and children's literature from Simmons University. Sylvie served on AJL's 2019 and 2020 Sydney Taylor Book Awards committee and also on ALSC's 2018 Geisel Committee. You can find her online at www.SylvieJulietShaffer.com.

Rivka Yerushalmi, in addition to serving on the Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee, is the founder of the Gateway Domestic Violence Shelter Children's Library in Aurora, CO and the WEAVE Shelter Library in Sacramento, CA. She currently works as an information specialist providing telephone and mail reference services for the National Institute on Aging/ADEAR Information Centers at NIH, and is a former content editor of the healthfinder.gov consumer health website.