

For More Information Contact:

Rebecca Levitan, Chair
Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee
Association of Jewish Libraries

www.sydneytaylorbookawards.org
sydneytaylorbookaward@jewishlibraries.org

January 25, 2021

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

2021 Sydney Taylor Book Award Winners Announced

Winners of the annual [Sydney Taylor Book Award](http://www.sydneytaylorbookawards.org) were announced by the Association of Jewish Libraries today in a virtual livecast at the Youth Media Awards announcement at the American Library Association. Named in memory of Sydney Taylor, author of the classic *All-of-a-Kind Family* series, the award recognizes books for children and teens that exemplify high literary standards while authentically portraying the Jewish experience.

GOLD MEDALISTS

Welcoming Elijah: a Passover Tale with a Tail by Lesléa Newman, illustrated by Susan Gal, published by Charlesbridge, is the winner in the picture book category. This warmly illustrated, poetic book parallels the experiences of a young boy at a Passover seder and a small white kitten outdoors. When the boy opens the door to welcome the prophet Elijah, he finds a furry friend instead. Simple text, diverse characters, and a timeless feel make this a story to be treasured.

Turtle Boy by M. Evan Wolkenstein, published by Delacorte Books for Young Readers, an imprint of Random House Children's Books, a division of Penguin Random House, is the winner in the Middle Grade category. Will's bar mitzvah service project helps him face challenges in his own life in this engaging story by a debut author. Bullied at school and a loner, turtle-loving Will completes a bucket list of milestone activities for a terminally ill boy and gains the strength to face his own upcoming surgery.

Dancing at the Pity Party by Tyler Feder, published by Dial Books for Young Readers, an imprint of Penguin Young Readers Group, a division of Penguin Random House, is the winner in the Young Adult category. This debut memoir in graphic form is a funny, sad, confidently illustrated meditation on grief. It's both a tribute to Tyler's wonderful mom, who died of breast cancer at the age of 47, and a guide to Jewish mourning practices. A singular achievement..

SILVER MEDALISTS

Six Sydney Taylor Honor Books were recognized.

For Picture Books, the Honor Books are ***I Am the Tree of Life: My Jewish Yoga Book*** by Mychal Copeland, illustrated by André Ceolin, published by Apples and Honey Press, an imprint of Behrman House, and ***Miriam at the River*** by Jane Yolen, illustrated by Khoa Le, published by Kar-Ben Publishing, a division of Lerner Publishing Group.

For Middle Grade, the Honor Books are ***Anya and the Nightingale*** by Sofiya Pasternack, published by Versify, an imprint of Houghton Mifflin Harcourt; ***No Vacancy*** by Tziporah Cohen, published by Groundwood Books; and ***The Blackbird Girls*** by Anne Blankman, published by Puffin Books, an imprint of Penguin Young Readers Group, a division of Penguin Random House.

For Young Adult, the Honor Book is *They Went Left* by Monica Hesse, published by Little, Brown Books for Young Readers, an imprint of Hachette Book Group.

In addition to the medal winners, the Award Committee designated eleven Notable Books of Jewish Content for 2021.

The Notable Picture Books are *The Eight Knights of Hanukkah* by Leslie Kimmelman, illustrated by Galia Bernstein, published by Holiday House; *The Polio Pioneer: Dr. Jonas Salk and the Polio Vaccine* by Linda Elovitz Marshall, illustrated by Lisa Anchin, published by Knopf Books for Young Readers, an imprint of Random House Children's Books, a division of Penguin Random House; and *The Ninth Night of Hanukkah* by Erica S. Perl, illustrated by Shahar Kober, published by Sterling Children's Books, an imprint of Sterling Publishing.

The Notable Middle Grade Books are *Beni's War* by Tammar Stein, published by Kar-Ben Publishers, a division of Lerner Publishing Group; *We Had to Be Brave: Escaping the Nazis on the Kindertransport* by Deborah Hopkinson, published by Scholastic Focus, an imprint of Scholastic; *A Place at the Table* by Saadia Faruqi and Laura Shovan, published by Clarion Books, an imprint of Houghton Mifflin Harcourt; and *Letters from Cuba* by Ruth Behar, published by Nancy Paulsen Books, an imprint of Penguin Young Readers Group, a division of Penguin Random House.

The Notable Young Adult Books are *Today Tonight Tomorrow* by Rachel Lynn Solomon, published by Simon Pulse, an imprint of Simon and Schuster Publishing; *The New Queer Conscience* by Adam Eli, published by Penguin Workshop, an imprint of Penguin Young Readers Group, a division of Penguin Random House; *The Way Back* by Gavriel Savit, published by Knopf Books for Young Readers, an imprint of Random House Children's Books, a division of Penguin Random House; and *The Assignment* by Liza Wiemer, published by Delacorte Press, an imprint of Random House Children's Books, a division of Penguin Random House.

More information about the Sydney Taylor Book Award, a complete listing of the award winners and notables, and seals for purchase can be found at www.sydneytaylorbookawards.org.

The 2021 Winner for the [Sydney Taylor Manuscript Award](#) is *Cats and Honey Cake* by Sonja Spear.

Winning authors and illustrators will receive their awards at the Annual Conference of the Association of Jewish Libraries, to be held virtually from June 27 to July 1, 2021. Gold and silver medalists will participate in a blog tour from February 8 to 12, 2021. For more information about the blog tour, please visit www.jewishlibraries.org. For an exclusive interview with Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee Chair, please visit The Book of Life Podcast at www.bookoflifepodcast.com.

Members of the 2021 Sydney Taylor Book Award committee are Chair Rebecca Levitan, Baltimore County Public Library, Baltimore, Maryland; Rena Citrin, Bernard Zell Anshe Emet Day School Chicago, Illinois; Judy Ehrenstein, Montgomery County Public Libraries, Bethesda, Maryland; Toby Harris, Temple Beth Am, Seattle, Washington; Marjorie Ingall, freelance writer, New York, New York; Aviva Rosenberg, Ridgefield Free Public Library, Ridgefield, New Jersey; and Martha Simpson, Stratford Library Stratford, Connecticut.

The Association of Jewish Libraries, the leading authority on Judaic librarianship, promotes Jewish literacy through enhancement of libraries and library resources and through leadership for the profession and practitioners of Judaica librarianship. The Association fosters access to information, learning, teaching and research relating to Jews, Judaism, the Jewish experience, and Israel.

###