

Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee  
*Kathy Bloomfield*

**Description:** The Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee will discuss recent trends in Jewish children's literature and will highlight selected books received in 2014. Bibliographies for all ages will include inclusivity, young adult love stories, graphic novels and Holocaust literature.

**Kathy Bloomfield** has worked for Pacific Telephone, Pacific Bell, the Los Angeles Zoo, BabagaNewz magazine, InterfaithFamily.com, Mayyim Hayyim Community Mikveh, the Union for Reform Judaism and the Wellesley Public School System. She also founded Forwardsbooks, a national Jewish book fair business. Currently, she is the Clergy Assistant at Adat Shalom Reconstructionist Congregation in Bethesda, MD. Her volunteer roles have included Temple President, Mikveh Guide, URJ Outreach Fellow, and member of the Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee. Kathy has a website at <http://forwardsbooks.com>, where she writes about children's literature with Jewish values content.

**Inclusivity**

There is a movement building in the publishing industry called #WeNeedDiverseBooks. This is a laudable crusade, to which I and many others cry, "It's about time!" However, diversity is not the same as inclusivity as validated in a Harvard Business Review article entitled "Diversity is Useless **Without** Inclusivity."

Several of this year's books not only address the concept of diversity they, most importantly, demonstrate the idea of inclusivity.

***Never Say a Mean Word Again*** by Jacqueline Jules, illustrated by Durga Yael Bernhard and published by Wisdom Press – one of our Honor Books- is set in Medieval Spain, where friendship between Samuel, a Jewish boy and Hamza, a Muslim boy solves a difficult problem. "Being the son of an important man didn't help Samuel make friends."

***The Mitten String*** by Jennifer Rosner, illustrated by Kristina Swarner and published by Random House – one of our Notable Books – is set in a shtetl environment, where a deaf woman's need to hear her baby cry at night is creatively assisted by a young knitter who "makes our world better with every stitch."

In ***Chik Chak Shabbat*** by Mara Rockliff, illustrated by Kyrsten Brooker and published by Candlewick Press, neighbors from all over the world, are welcomed each Shabbat to share in a delicious cholent. But when the cholent maker gets sick, the entire apartment complex goes into a tizzy. However, the hasty appearance of pizza, beans and rice, potato curry and barley tea makes it "...taste exactly like Shabbat."

***Elan, Son of Two Peoples*** by Heidi Smith Hyde, Illustrated by Mikela Prevost and published by Kar-Ben beautifully describes a young boy's coming-of-age in the 1800s as he celebrates his Bar Mitzvah in San Francisco with his eastern-European family and his Pueblo manhood ceremony in New Mexico with his Native-American family. "Always remember you are the son of two proud nations."

***In My Family*** by Morah Becky, illustrated by Avi Katz and published by Zmanma publishing, describes inclusivity among the Jewish people – a global Mishpacha. “Ashkenazi or Sephardi,/They are all my family,/From New York or Timbuktu,/Each and every single Jew.”

***Fleabrain Loves Fanny*** by Joanne Rocklin published by Amulet books, a division of Abrams, addresses the challenges of physical disability as illustrated by a young polio victim who is befriended by a rather “extraordinary” flea who enchantingly supports her desire to be part of society. “My name is Franny...I want to go to school with my friends. I am not allowed to come in my wheelchair, so I came on a horse...”

Each of these books uniquely represents the diversity of the world we live in, but most importantly they reflect the concept of inclusivity. We are “a global mishpacha” whose members not only include Jews, but people from all other faiths and cultures.