

# Jewish American Children’s Nonfiction

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In our world, there are many faiths. We celebrate our faiths in many ways. We pray. We chant and sing. We read our holy books. We listen to and learn from others.

—MAYA Ajmera, Magda Nakassis, and Cynthia Pon, *Faith*

*This chapter addresses the need to explicitly incorporate books about the Jewish experience, religion, and people as part of American history and culture. To help in building a collection that moves beyond food, holidays, and the Holocaust, recommended nonfiction examples include picturebooks, informational text, memoirs, and biographies. In light of the resurgence of anti-Semitism in the United States and around the world, educators should be mindful when building a multicultural collection to include books about Jews and Judaism.*

## Chapter Guiding Questions

- Jewish children have been lucky to see themselves often mirrored in literature. But why might educators be hesitant to use these books as windows for non-Jewish readers?
- How can educators build an informational text collection that includes accurate and authentic content about religious diversity in America?
- What are the characteristics of accurate and authentic representations of the Jewish experience in youth literature?
- What are stereotypes, prejudices, and misconceptions about Jews, Judaism, and Jewish culture and history?

Anti-Semitism continues to be one of the oldest forms of hatred, and recent events in the United States indicate that misinformation, persecution, and vio-

lence targeting Jews expressly because of their religion continues. The Poway, California, synagogue shooting in 2019, the mass shooting at the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in 2018, and the white supremacist rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, in 2017 show that educators need to directly address this idea:

Prejudice grows from ignorance, and ignorance is conquered by reading. Introducing Jewish literature to a wide audience is a crucial part of the fight against anti-Semitism in a dangerous world where hate is on the rise. (Rabinowitz, 2019, para. 3)

As Bari Weiss (2019) explains in *How to Fight Anti-Semitism*, most Americans “understand Judaism as a religion or as an ethnicity because these are the modern categories by which we understand much of the world.” But, “Judaism is not merely a religion, and it is not merely an ethnicity. Judaism is a people . . . with a language, a culture, a literature, and a particular set of ideas, beliefs, texts, and legal practices” (p. 28). Depending on the parameters used for identification, Jews are a minority ranging from 2 to 3 percent of the total United States population (Liu, 2013). In *Insider/Outsider: American Jews and Multiculturalism*, David Biale, Michael Galchinsky, and Susannah Heschel (1998) illustrate that, “although the absorption process for marginalized European immigrants like Italians, Irish, and Jews was not always painless in America, these immigrants were not usually the Other around which the majority defined its identity and consolidated its power” (p. 2). Jews were seen as “white” in relation to Blacks or African Americans, Native Americans, and people of color, but they still faced persecution, prejudice, and stereotyping.

The Jewish experience has not been explicitly addressed in resolutions by organizations such as the Cooperative Children’s Book Center and We Need Diverse Books, which focus on issues of diversity in children’s literature. Anita Silvey’s (1996) *Children’s Books and Their Creators* reflects on the state of multicultural publishing and features contributions by and about Native American, African American, Latinx, and Asian American writers, but Jewish children’s literature is absent as an ethnic or cultural category. Jewish literature is also not included in *Using Multiethnic Literature in the K–8 Classroom* (Harris, 1997), *Critical Multicultural Analysis of Children’s Literature: Mirrors, Windows, and Doors* (Botelho & Rudman, 2009), or *Multicultural Children’s Literature: A Critical Issues Approach* (Gopalakrishnan, 2011). But Jews in America occupy an “anomalous status: insiders who are outsiders and outsiders who are insiders” (Biale et al., 1998, p. 5). This unique position has perhaps been the reason why the Jewish experience has historically been absent from the discussions on multiculturalism

and representation. As a synagogue librarian specializing in children’s literature and a veteran middle school educator, and both of us identifying as Jewish, this position feels inherently familiar.

## Religion in the Classroom

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The idea of teaching about religion, or groups viewed as religious, without teaching adherence to religion can bump into First Amendment concerns, which may deter public school educators. The American Academy of Religion has a resource document for K–12 educators that provides an overview of how and why religion can and should be taught in schools. It is provided based on the following premises: “Illiteracy regarding religion (1) is widespread, (2) fuels prejudice and antagonism, and (3) can be diminished by teaching about religion in public schools using a non-devotional, academic perspective, called religious studies” (Moore, 2010, p. i). As Codell (2019) states, “Holes in collection diversity are holes in preparing students for encounters with the human diversity . . . so, if you have no Jewish kids in your school, you need Jewish children’s books even more” (para. 4). In addition, books about sacred places, beliefs, and customs can introduce students to unfamiliar vocabulary and communities. This may make students more respectful and aware when navigating the real world. While this chapter focuses on Judaism, this same philosophy should apply when building a collection that represents a multitude of religions.

Comparative religious studies for younger students can be addressed through picturebooks; the following three picturebooks portray accurate and authentic representations of Judaism, as much as is possible within a brief survey text. The book *Faith* by Ajmera et al. (2009) explores in a photo essay format the many ways that faith is expressed around the world. Native American, Rastafarian, Christian, Buddhist, Jewish, Daoist, Muslim, Hindu, and Mennonite faiths are included with examples from over thirty countries. Judaism is represented with photographs of a bar mitzvah celebrant, yeshiva boys studying, a father and son lighting the menorah, an *upsheerinish* hair-cutting ceremony, a girl braiding challah, a funeral in Israel, and the shaking of the *lulav* on the holiday of Sukkot. The book’s photos depict children across the spectrum of individual religions and celebrate the diversity of the world’s religions.

Similar in scope is *Sacred Places* by Philemon Sturges (2000), with exquisite paper cut illustrations by Giles Laroche, which shows various places sacred to different religions, including churches, mosques, synagogues, temples, and shrines. Judaism is represented by King Solomon’s Temple and the Western Wall in Jerusalem and the Ha’ari Synagogue of the Sephardim in Tsefat, Israel, as well

as by Temple Mickve Israel in Savannah, Georgia (one of the oldest synagogues in America), and Temple Solomon in Montreal, Canada. The approach is respectful and impartial, and the selection of sites is diverse, making this an accessible introduction to world faiths, as well as a spiritual introduction to architecture.

The title *What Is God?* (Boritzer, 2009) might make some public school educators nervous, but it is deceiving; the book really answers the question, “What is religion?” The focus is on a discussion of various religions—Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, Islam, and Buddhism—and their commonalities. For example, “Most religions say that you should not lie, most religions say that you should not steal, most religions say that you should not hurt people. There are many ways all religions are the same” (Boritzer, 2009, p. 22). Other aspects of religion, such as holy books and prayer, are also included, and the text and pictures are appropriate and accessible for elementary students.

## Beyond Food and Holidays

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In discussing Jewish characters in children’s literature, Cummins and Toder (2000) note that “if one were to take Jewish-themed picturebooks as representative of American Jewish experience, one would assume that Jews celebrate many holidays but do not do much else with their time” (p. 38). Frequently, educators approach multiculturalism through information about food and holidays. Because of its proximity on the calendar to Christmas, Hanukkah is sometimes the one and only Jewish holiday represented and integrated into classroom discussions. Hanukkah is in actuality a relatively minor, post-Biblical holiday, and much less important than Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, or Passover. Limiting students’ exposure to Judaism to one winter holiday and presenting it as the “Jewish Christmas” can unintentionally perpetuate stereotypes and ideas of “otherness.”

The focus on food and holidays may also be a result of well-meaning educators unprepared to consider the complexities or potential implicit messages in holiday text selection, particularly in nonfiction. *Stories Matter: The Complexity of Cultural Authenticity in Children’s Literature* (Fox & Short, 2003) includes a chapter by Fang et al. (2003) that focuses neither on nonfiction nor on Jews or Judaism, but the message and the reminder that educators need to be critical evaluators of how, when, and why they use particular texts are relevant to many populations. Fang and colleagues (2003) advise that “it is not possible for teachers to know everything about every culture” but that “teachers should cultivate a questioning and wondering stance” (p. 299).

For an overview of the Jewish holidays for very young children, consider

*Here Is the World: A Year of Jewish Holidays* (Newman, 2014). Each two-page spread pairs a rhyming couplet that briefly introduces a holiday with a beautiful full-bleed illustration depicting a contemporary family. For elementary students, *Dance, Sing, Remember: A Celebration of Jewish Holidays* (Kimmelman, 2000) includes a brief explanation of twelve Jewish holidays accompanied by a short story, game, or other activity. For older students, *Jewish Holidays All Year Round: A Family Treasury* (Cooper, 2002), published in association with the Jewish Museum in New York, pairs reproductions of objects from the museum's collection and colorful pen-and-ink drawings by Elivia Savadier with facts about each of the holidays, lore, crafts, and recipes. While most Jewish holiday offerings for children tend to focus on, and feature, families of eastern European descent, *Passover around the World* (Lehman-Wilzig, 2007) and *Hanukkah around the World* (Lehman-Wilzig, 2009) celebrate these holidays through the eyes of Jews in places such as Turkey, Uzbekistan, Italy, Australia, India, Iran, Morocco, and Tunisia, briefly showing their distinct cultures and holiday traditions. Deborah Heiligman's books in the *Holidays around the World* series (published by National Geographic) include *Celebrate Hanukkah* (2006), *Celebrate Passover* (2007a), and *Celebrate Rosh Hashanah & Yom Kippur* (2007b), and show striking photographs of diverse Jewish communities participating in holiday rituals from places such as China, Uganda, Yemen, and Zimbabwe.

## The Holocaust: Not the Totality of the Jewish Experience

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Other than books about Hanukkah, books about the Holocaust are often the only texts used in classrooms that explicitly depict Jewish identities. As Toten (2001) stresses in *Teaching Holocaust Literature*, books must be accurate, age appropriate, authentic, readable, thought provoking, discussable, nonsentimental, and capable of arousing empathy. Silver (2010) provides an astute analysis of the difficulties and challenges with books for children about the Holocaust:

Children's books are expected to affirm life, to offer hope, and to end on, if not a happy note, then at least a positive one. The realities of war and the Holocaust defy these goals, so it is hard to achieve them without distortion. (p. 167)

Meltzer's (1976) *Never to Forget* was one of the first American children's books to explain the history of hatred that led to the Holocaust, the resultant process of destruction, and the courageous spirit of resistance. Following that publication, many excellent children's books about the Holocaust have been about rescuers, typically non-Jews who defied the Nazis by hiding their friends and neighbors,

including more recent examples such as *My Survival: A Girl on Schindler's List* (Finder, 2019), *Courage and Defiance: Stories of Spies, Saboteurs, and Survivors in World War II Denmark* (Hopkinson, 2015), *A Light in the Darkness: Janusz Korczak, His Orphans, and the Holocaust* (Marrin, 2019), *Passage to Freedom: The Sugihara Story* (Mochizuki, 1997), *The Grand Mosque of Paris: A Story of How Muslims Rescued Jews during the Holocaust* (Ruelle & DeSaix, 2008), and the many books published recently about Irena Sendler. But, as Silver (2010) points out, "If there had been as many rescuers as it seems there were from children's books, then six million Jews would not have died, including a million and a half children" (p. 167). She continues, "The urge to show humans at their best distorts the fact that the Holocaust showed humans at their worst" (p.167). When building a library and accessing resources representing Jews throughout history, educators should be mindful not to limit their collections to books that only portray Jews as victims.

While the stories of resistance, rescue, courage, ingenuity, and survival are a beacon of light amid the dark horrors of the Holocaust, reality can be twisted when books about the Holocaust try to extract only a message of hope (Silver, 2010). This is evident simply by the number of books connected to Anne Frank. Grasping onto Anne's comment in her diary that "in spite of everything, I still believe that people are really good at heart," authors tend to gloss over the fact that Anne Frank and the occupants of the Secret Annex were arrested and murdered. Many of these texts focus on symbols, such as the tree outside Anne's window, and often simply state that Anne did not survive the war. While maintaining a gentle detachment makes the dramatic episode more palatable for younger readers (or, at least, for the adults in their lives), the terrible truth of the Holocaust and Hitler's "final solution" is diminished. In building a collection of resources, educators need to be mindful that this is a complex and mature subject, one that requires a varied approach and a carefully curated booklist.

With all accounts or stories based on history, accuracy is of primary importance. In the case of Holocaust literature, accuracy is very frightening. For this reason, many educators do not feel that children under the age of ten should be exposed to books about the Holocaust. The Step into Reading series, written at a K-2 reading level, offers a book about Anne Frank. While publishers may market books about the Holocaust to younger readers, educators will want to consider both their teaching contexts and their students when selecting and introducing books on this topic.

Educators will also want to be aware of the fact that many books about the Holocaust are "deceptively packaged to look like picturebooks: heavily illustrated and often short of text" (Silver, 2010, p. 167). Based on the serious, frightening, and complex subject matter, these picturebooks about the Holocaust can be used very effectively with older students. Excellent nonfiction examples include

*The Brave Cyclist* (Hoffman, 2019), *The Flag with Fifty-Six Stars* (Rubin, 2005), and *Memories of Survival* (Krinitz & Steinhardt, 2005). Primary source-based biographies such as the award-winning *Hana's Suitcase* (Levine, 2002), *To Hope and Back: The Journey of the St. Louis* (Kacer, 2011), and *The Journey That Saved Curious George: The True Wartime Escape of Margret and H. A. Rey* (Borden, 2005) are appropriate for middle grade and older readers and offer complex narrative structures and content that belie their initial picturebook appearance.

Only twelve states require Holocaust education as part of their secondary school curricula, while a recent Claims Conference “Holocaust Knowledge and Awareness Study” found significant gaps in knowledge of the Holocaust among Americans. Eleven percent of adults and 22 percent of millennials haven’t heard of the Holocaust, while only 58 percent of American adults believe something like the Holocaust could happen again (Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany & Schoen Consulting, 2018, p. 2). Therefore, it is imperative that high-quality, age-appropriate, accurate, and authentic books about the Holocaust be integrated into the curriculum and have a prominent place in classroom and library collections. However, as Marjorie Ingall (2019), a columnist for the online magazine *Tablet* and member of the Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee, stresses, “We need superlative Holocaust books. . . . No more books that offer ahistorical feel-good fantasy or that destroy hope, no more books that get history wrong . . . no more books that universalize entirely too much from our particular lived experience” (para. 5).

## **Jewish Contributions to American Culture**

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Books about the Holocaust should not be the only nonfiction books with Jewish content that children engage with in school, and books about Jewish history should not exclusively concentrate on the tragedies experienced by Jews. In “A Content Analysis of Orbis Pictus Award-Winning Nonfiction, 1990–2014,” Crisp (2015) notes that a large majority of African Americans represented in the Orbis Pictus winners are framed within the context of slavery or the Civil Rights Movement. He writes, “Depicting African American focal subjects almost exclusively within these contexts is limiting and does not represent the totality of African American experiences” (p. 252). The same theory should be applied to Jewish focal subjects, who are typically framed within the context of the Holocaust or anti-Semitism. This is very limiting and does not represent the totality of Jewish experience or identity. As Ingall (2019) asserts, “Why, when we have a 6,000-year-long story, is there so much focus on one of the worst things that ever happened to us? The Holocaust isn’t the sum total of who we are” (para. 1).

She maintains that, while it is vital to teach the Holocaust in an age-appropriate, responsible way, “books reflecting the diversity of the Jewish American experience” are also essential (para. 1).

Over more than four hundred years, Jewish immigrants and their descendants have made major contributions to America’s growth and development. In *Forged in Freedom*, Finkelstein (2002) brings to life the key turning points in history that affected both the United States and American Jewry. From labor and justice, political coming of age, and the fight against bigotry to the growth of a rich and varied culture and the creation of uniquely American expressions of Judaism, Finkelstein highlights the ways that American Jews have both shaped, and been shaped by, the culture and ideals of the United States.

From the country’s earliest days, Jews have helped contribute to the ideals of the nascent United States. An excellent primary source is a letter from George Washington in 1790 to the Hebrew Congregation of Newport in which he writes, “the Government of the United States, which gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance, requires only that they who live under its protection should demean themselves as good citizens” (Founders Online, n.d., para. 3). This dialogue eventually helped form the First Amendment itself, and the definition of America as a secular country without an official state-sponsored religion. In *To Bigotry, No Sanction: The Story of the Oldest Synagogue in America*, Fisher (1998) uses the exchange between Washington and the Jewish community as a jumping-off point to discuss the history of Jews in America, beginning with the Jewish presence in Spain, the persecution and expulsion of the Jews in 1492, and the migration of Jews to the Americas. He then focuses on how, through erecting buildings like the Touro Synagogue in Newport (the oldest synagogue in the United States), Jews made a place for themselves in the New World. *Heeding the Call: Jewish Voices in America’s Civil Rights Struggle*, also by Finkelstein (1997), focuses on Jewish figures who helped fight for equal rights in America, from the first settlers in 1654 and the abolitionists during the Civil War period to the founding of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the Civil Rights Movement.

In 1883, Emma Lazarus, a Jewish woman from New York, wrote the sonnet “The New Colossus,” which was eventually inscribed at the bottom of the Statue of Liberty. This poem helped define the identity of the United States as a country welcoming of immigrants. Two picturebooks help tell this story: *Emma’s Poem: The Voice of the Statue of Liberty* by Linda Glaser (2010) and *Liberty’s Voice: The Story of Emma Lazarus* by Erica Silverman (2011).

Jews also played a central role in the American labor movement. Michelle Markel’s (2013) picturebook biography *Brave Girl: Clara and the Shirtwaist Makers’ Strike of 1909* describes how Clara Lemlich, a young Jewish immigrant, helped

lead the largest walkout of women workers in United States history. In *Flesh and Blood So Cheap: The Triangle Fire and Its Legacy*, Albert Marrin (2011) provides a detailed account of the notorious 1911 Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire, in which 146 workers—mostly young Jewish and Italian immigrant women—perished. Their catastrophic deaths led to changes in working conditions and fueled a campaign for union rights.

*Schools of Hope: How Julius Rosenwald Helped Change African American Education* (Finkelstein, 2014) tells the story of how the president of the Sears Roebuck Company, the son of German Jewish immigrants, financially supported the building of 5,300 schools in rural African American communities between 1913 and 1932. Several other books depict the role that Jews played in the fight for equal rights for all Americans. *As Good as Anybody: Martin Luther King Jr. and Abraham Joshua Heschel's Amazing March toward Freedom* (Michelson, 2008) is a dual biography of two great Civil Rights leaders. A Jewish immigrant from Poland, Rabbi Heschel, escaped the Nazis and immigrated to America but lost much of his family in the Holocaust. Driven to fight bigotry in all its forms, he became a supporter of King and joined him on the historic march from Selma to Montgomery in 1965. In *Freedom Summer: The 1964 Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi*, Susan Goldman Rubin (2014) chronicles the efforts of Civil Rights workers, who flooded some of the most socially oppressive areas of Mississippi, set against the backdrop of the puzzling disappearance of three of these volunteers: Andrew Goodman and Mickey Schwerner, two young Jewish men, and James Chaney, an African American. Their story is also depicted in *Hot Pursuit: Murder in Mississippi* by Stacia Deutsch and Rhody Cohon (2010).

Readers should be exposed to books that “articulate what makes Jews distinct while showing the ways in which Jewish history and thought contribute to the humanities at large,” and biographies are the perfect way to illustrate this (Biale et al., 1998, p. 7). An analysis of biographies, autobiographies, and memoirs about American Jews show the remarkable range of contributions in virtually every field and endeavor. While there are countless biographies spanning various formats and age ranges on well-known American Jews like Albert Einstein, Harry Houdini, and Steven Spielberg, lesser-known figures are also being highlighted. For example, several biographies have focused on the Jewish role in the comic industry. Lily Renée Wilhelm escaped World War II on the *Kindertransport* to England in 1939, emigrated to the US, and became one of the first female comic book artists, as graphically told in *Lily Renée, Escape Artist* (Robbins, 2011). And while everyone has heard of Superman and Batman, most do not know that the creators behind these superheroes, and many others, were Jewish. Marc Tyler Nobleman chronicles how writer Jerry Siegel and illustrator Joe Shuster created the character of Superman in *Boys of Steel* (Nobleman, 2008)

and how Bill Finger was the secret cocreator of Batman and never received credit for or recognition in *Bill the Boy Wonder* (Nobleman, 2012). *Who Was Stan Lee?* (Edgers, 2014) is a brief, accessible biography of the son of Romanian-born Jewish immigrants who made Marvel Comics a household name. The popular *Who Was . . . ?* series also includes other famous American Jews such as Levi Strauss, Harvey Milk, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Judy Blume, the Three Stooges, and more.

Jewish baseball stars like Hank Greenberg and Sandy Koufax have long served as role models for Jewish readers but can also help remind all readers of the importance of hard work, determination, and remaining true to yourself. Greenberg's life, baseball career, and legacy are detailed in Shelley Sommer's (2011) *Hammerin' Hank Greenberg: Baseball Pioneer*. For younger readers, we suggest Yona Zeldis McDonough's (2006) picturebook biography, *Hammerin' Hank: The Life of Hank Greenberg*. In an unusual and welcome new slant on a well-covered era in American sports history, Cathy Goldberg Fishman (2012) describes the first time Jackie Robinson met Hank Greenberg (when they collided at first base in a 1947 game) in *When Jackie and Hank Met*. The dual biography parallels the racism the two athletes encountered. While Robinson had to break the color barrier, Greenberg faced anti-Semitism and prejudice as one of the few Jewish ballplayers. Sandy Koufax became a hero to American Jews when he refused to pitch in the 1965 World Series on Yom Kippur, one of the holiest and most important days on the Jewish calendar. Jonah Winter's (2009) picturebook biography *You Never Heard of Sandy Koufax?!*, with spectacular illustrations and cover art by André Carrilho, featuring a lenticular three-dimensional inset that, when tilted, sends Koufax through a pitch, tells the story of arguably the greatest left-handed pitcher in baseball history. A lesser-known Jewish baseball player, who helped intelligence officers during World War II, was Moe Berg. Steve Sheinkin's (2012) *Bomb* includes several riveting stories about him in a book for older readers, while the picturebook *The Spy Who Played Baseball* (Jones, 2018) is appropriate for younger readers. But before Berg, Greenberg, and Koufax, there was Lipman Pike, known as America's first professional ballplayer. *Lipman Pike: America's First Home Run King* (Michelson, 2011) mixes the Jewish immigrant experience with the US national pastime in a picturebook biography.

## Building a Collection in Libraries, Schools, and Classrooms

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While discussions about the lack of diversity in children's books date back more than a century, more recent American Library Association, National Council for the Social Studies, and National Council of Teachers of English statements explicitly focus on the impact of the lack of diverse books for children and the

need to encourage publishers to support more varied texts. For educators looking to build their print resources, one beginning place for reviewing a school or classroom library is the Lee & Low Classroom Library Questionnaire (Lee & Low Books, 2020). This tool helps educators “evaluate how culturally responsive and diverse” a library is and identify gaps (Schneider, 2017). While this questionnaire doesn’t explicitly mention Jewish identity or experience, it does address questions of religious diversity, and many of the types of questions could apply when considering Jewish nonfiction texts.

Identifying and accessing quality nonfiction depicting the Jewish experience can actually be more difficult than finding books about other populations. Depending on the focus and purpose, the aspect of Jewish identity may play a major or very minor role in the text itself. In selecting and using nonfiction about Jews or Judaism, there are some culturally inappropriate “red flags” that could potentially eliminate texts from use in a classroom. These markers are provided here to help educators approach nonfiction texts connected to religion as critical evaluators: the use of biased terms like *Jesus Christ*, *AD*, and *BC* are often inappropriate; *Jesus*, *CE*, and *BCE* should be used instead. Also, watch carefully for bias and inaccuracy in books about Israel, recognizing that it is a very controversial place historically, geographically, and politically, both for Jews and non-Jews.

## Final Recommendations

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Building a classroom or library collection of nonfiction should be a deliberate and mindful process for educators at all grade levels. Creating a diverse collection includes many aspects of identity, and religion should not be excluded. Take the time required to consider representation of diverse religious groups and fill omissions and inaccuracies in an existing collection. Cull out texts that mischaracterize religious communities, populations, and historical events; remember that, just because a book has a more recent publication date, it is not necessarily better. When in doubt, ask questions and seek resources from experts in the field. Consider authorship and time period in use of primary source documents, as perspectives, understandings, and even word usage can change over time. These documents or texts may still be included in a library; however, they may require context, educator support, and expertise to explore.

There is a rich body of children’s literature portraying the Jewish experience in America, and educators should not hesitate to use these books with all readers, both Jewish and non-Jewish. If Judaism, Jewish culture, and history are absent or excluded from the body of multicultural literature available to stu-

dents, stereotypes, prejudices, and misconceptions will persist. This sentiment is strongly echoed by Cummins and Toder (2000), who write:

If intellectuals and educators decide that Jews are no longer worthy of consideration because they have gained the status and privilege of white, Christian people in our society, then they will glibly overlook the very real exclusion and discrimination many Jews have experienced. (p. 40)

The books we read as children shape our understandings of ourselves and the world in which we live, and we must acknowledge that the multicultural discourse should expand to include the Jewish experience. Meeting people of different religions in books will better prepare children to approach real-life encounters with greater understanding.

## Practical Strategies

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- Cultivate respect for and awareness of religions by introducing students to differences in beliefs, practices, architecture, and traditions through picturebooks and other nonfiction, secular sources.
- Intentionally include information about Jewish holidays and celebrations throughout the school year, not just as a special unit or in conjunction with Christmas.
- Curate Holocaust selections to make certain they do not all concentrate on the tragedies experienced by the Jews or have Jews presented exclusively as victims.
- Seamlessly integrate Jewish biographies into genre studies of music or literature, or a unit on biographies at large.
- When studying American history, ensure that time periods include the presence and contributions of Jewish Americans and Jewish immigrants.

## Ten Additional Nonfiction Books about Jewish Americans

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1. Ades, A., & Mildemberger, V. (2020). *Judah Touro didn't want to be famous* (V. Mildemberger, Illus.). Kar-Ben.
2. Blumenthal, D., & D'yans, M. (2019). *Parrots, pugs and pixie dust: A book about fashion designer Judith Leiber* (M. D'yans, Illus.). Little Bee Books.

3. Krasner, B., & Garrity-Riley, K. (2014). *Goldie takes a stand! Golda Meir's first crusade* (K. Garrity-Riley, Illus.). Kar-Ben.
4. Macy, S. (2019). *The book rescuer: How a mensch from Massachusetts saved Yiddish literature for generations to come* (S. Innerst, Illus.). Paula Wiseman Books.
5. Marshall, L. E. (2020). *The polio pioneer: Dr. Jonas Salk and the polio vaccine* (L. Anchin, Illus.). Alfred A. Knopf.
6. Newman, T. (2020). *Itzhak: A boy who loved the violin* (A. Halpin, Illus.). Harry N. Abrams.
7. Nuchi, A. (2018). *God bless America: The story of an immigrant named Irving Berlin* (R. Polivka, Illus.). Hyperion.
8. Ortiz, V. (2019). *Dissenter on the bench: Ruth Bader Ginsburg's life and work*. Clarion Books.
9. Pinkney, A. D. (2016). *A poem for Peter: The story of Ezra Jack Keats and the creation of The snowy day* (L. Fancher & S. Johnson, Illus.). Viking/Penguin.
10. Raisman, A. (2017). *Fierce: How competing for myself changed everything*. Little, Brown and Company.

## Five Online Resources

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1. Anti-Defamation League. (n.d.). *Children's literature*. Books Matter. <http://www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resources-for-educators-parents-families/childrens-literature>
2. Association of Jewish Libraries. (2018, October). *Love your neighbor: AJL recommends Jewish books for all readers*. [https://jewishlibraries.org/Love\\_Your\\_Neighbor](https://jewishlibraries.org/Love_Your_Neighbor)
3. Jewish Women's Archive. (n.d.). *Living the Legacy*. <https://jwa.org/teach/livingthelegacy>
4. SJL Reviews Editors. (2017). *Books on democracy & citizenship*. [https://www.facinghistory.org/sites/default/files/SLJ\\_DemocracyBooklist\\_2017.pdf](https://www.facinghistory.org/sites/default/files/SLJ_DemocracyBooklist_2017.pdf)
5. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (2017, December 11). *Teach*. <https://www.ushmm.org/teach>

## Book Awards

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- National Jewish Book Awards—see <http://www.jewishbookcouncil.org/awards/national-jewish-book-award.html>
- Sydney Taylor Book Award—see [https://jewishlibraries.org/Sydney\\_Taylor\\_Book\\_Award](https://jewishlibraries.org/Sydney_Taylor_Book_Award)

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