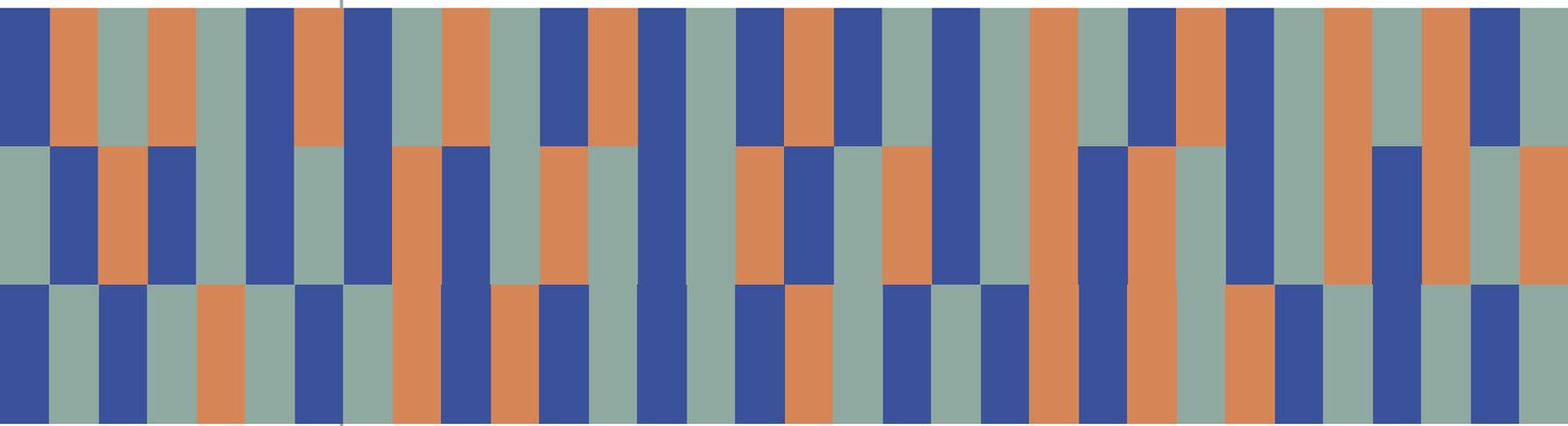


LET'S TALK ABOUT IT!

JEWISH LITERATURE

Identity and Imagination



PROGRAM GUIDELINES AND GRANT APPLICATION

SIX GREAT THEMES

NEW! NEIGHBORS

The World Next Door

YOUR HEART'S DESIRE

Sex and Love in Jewish Literature

BETWEEN TWO WORLDS

Stories of Estrangement
and Homecoming

NEW! MODERN MARVELS

Jewish Adventures in the Graphic Novel

DEMONS, GOLEMS, AND DYBBUKS

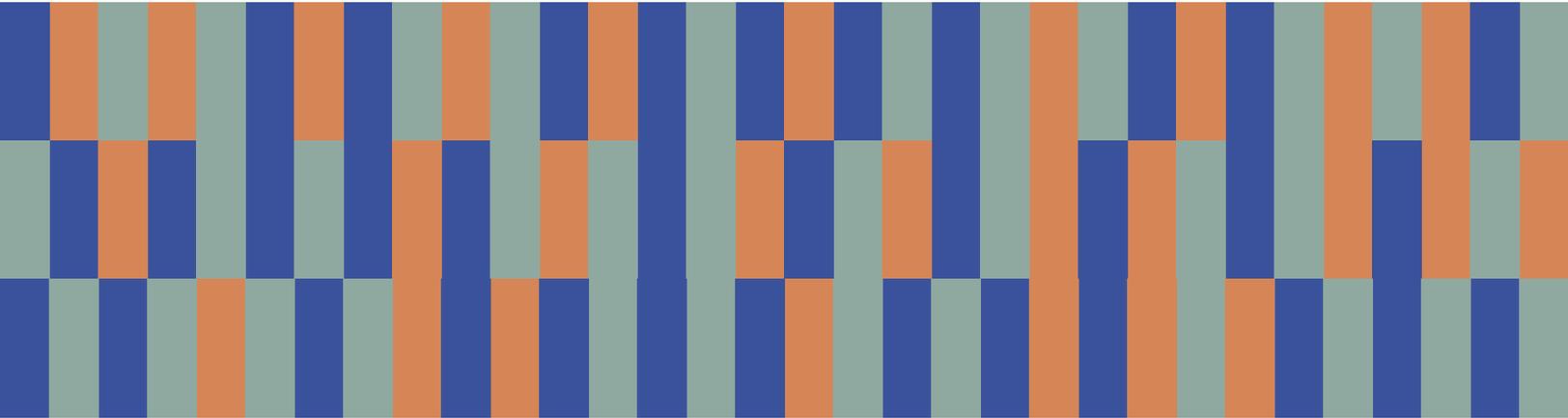
Monsters of the Jewish Imagination

A MIND OF HER OWN

Fathers and Daughters
in a Changing World

Presented by Nextbook and the American Library Association





“The *Let’s Talk About It: Jewish Literature* series has been a huge success here at the Poughkeepsie Public Library District. Due to popular demand, we are starting our third series. Our community has really enjoyed the variety of themes and diversity of authors that are featured. This scholar-based reading initiative has injected communities across America with a dose of great Jewish literature and thought-provoking discussion.”

DEBORA SUSAN SHON, LIBRARY ASSISTANT
POUGHKEEPSIE PUBLIC LIBRARY DISTRICT, NEW YORK

“Miami University Libraries hosted a very successful *Let’s Talk About It: Jewish Literature* program, thanks to the avid participation of campus and community members. This program brought together diverse participants with varying degrees of knowledge about the literature—we all learned from each other!”

FRANCES YATES, LIBRARIAN
KING LIBRARY, MIAMI UNIVERSITY, OXFORD, OHIO

Let's Talk About It: Jewish Literature

Nextbook and the Public Programs Office of the American Library Association (ALA) present *Let's Talk About It: Jewish Literature*, a scholar-led reading and discussion program for libraries interested in exploring Jewish literature and culture. Public and academic libraries are invited to apply for grants to support the program in their community.

NEIGHBORS:

THE WORLD NEXT DOOR

A Journey to the End of the Millennium, A. B. Yehoshua
Red Cavalry, Isaac Babel
Neighbors, Jan T. Gross
The Assistant, Bernard Malamud
Mona in the Promised Land, Gish Jen

YOUR HEART'S DESIRE:

SEX AND LOVE IN JEWISH LITERATURE

Portnoy's Complaint, Philip Roth
The Little Disturbances of Man, Grace Paley
A Simple Story, S. Y. Agnon
The Lover, A. B. Yehoshua
The Mind-Body Problem, Rebecca Goldstein

BETWEEN TWO WORLDS:

STORIES OF ESTRANGEMENT AND HOMECOMING

Exodus, The Second Book of Moses
Lost in Translation, Eva Hoffman
The Centaur in the Garden, Moacyr Scliar
Kaaterskill Falls, Allegra Goodman
Out of Egypt, André Aciman

MODERN MARVELS:

JEWISH ADVENTURES IN THE GRAPHIC NOVEL

A Contract with God, Will Eisner
The Complete Maus: A Survivor's Tale, Art Spiegelman
Julius Knipl, Real Estate Photographer: Stories, Ben Katchor
The Quitter, Harvey Pekar
The Rabbi's Cat, Joann Sfar

DEMONS, GOLEMS, AND DYBBUKS:

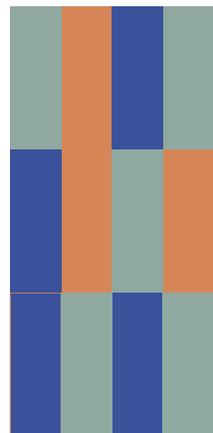
MONSTERS OF THE JEWISH IMAGINATION

Satan in Goray, Isaac Bashevis Singer
The Dybbuk and Other Writings, S. Ansky
The Metamorphosis, Franz Kafka
The Puttermesser Papers, Cynthia Ozick
Angels in America, Tony Kushner

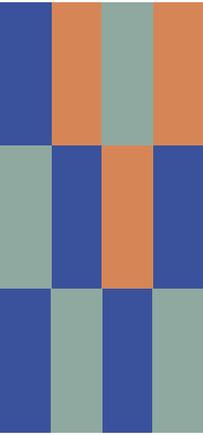
A MIND OF HER OWN:

FATHERS AND DAUGHTERS IN A CHANGING WORLD

Tevye the Dairyman, Sholem Aleichem
Bread Givers, Anzia Yezierska
O My America!, Johanna Kaplan
American Pastoral, Philip Roth
Bee Season, Myla Goldberg



Program Description



Let's Talk About It is a reading and discussion series led by local scholars and organized around themes that engage and stimulate audiences. The American Library Association (ALA) launched *Let's Talk About It* as a national program in 1982. *Let's Talk About It* has reached hundreds of libraries and more than four million people around the United States in the past 25 years.

Let's Talk About It: Jewish Literature — Identity and Imagination is expanding audiences for Jewish literature nationwide and recruiting new libraries to the *Let's Talk About It* reading and discussion model.

Over the past three years, *Let's Talk About It: Jewish Literature* grants have been awarded to 159 libraries in 39 states. These libraries have hosted nearly 800 discussions, attracting an estimated 15,000 participants. Many libraries have also presented additional programs tied to the theme of their discussion series, including lectures, film series, concerts, and art exhibits.

Inspired by the success and popularity of the program, the ALA Public Programs Office and Nextbook have developed a new, expanded version of *Let's Talk About It: Jewish Literature*. We are pleased to announce these new guidelines, featuring six themes and increased funding for libraries, and encourage libraries across the country to apply.

Each participating library will receive a grant to support training, program materials, and honoraria for participating scholars. Libraries that have not hosted a *Let's Talk About It: Jewish Literature* series before are eligible to apply for a \$2,500 grant. Libraries that have already received a grant and completed a *Let's Talk About It: Jewish Literature* series are eligible to apply for a single-series \$2,500 grant or a two-series \$5,000 grant.

Project Sponsors

The ALA Public Programs Office's mission is to foster cultural programming as an integral part of library service in all types of libraries. Established in 1990, the office helps thousands of libraries nationwide to develop and host programs that encourage dialogue among community members and works to establish libraries as cultural centers in their communities.

Nextbook was established by Keren Keshet—The Rainbow Foundation as a gateway to Jewish literature, culture, and ideas for Jews and non-Jews alike. Its programs include: partnerships with public libraries and other organizations to create innovative public programs; the Jewish Encounters book series in which prominent authors consider notable individuals, issues, or events in Jewish history; and Nextbook.org, an online magazine featuring articles and podcasts on Jewish culture, a daily news digest, and an annotated list of recommended books.

How will *Let's Talk About It: Jewish Literature* programs work at my library?

Participating libraries choose one of the six themes listed on page 3 and plan a series of reading and discussion programs taking place every two to four weeks (depending on local library preference). The library is responsible for recruiting a scholar to lead the discussion and for promoting the programs to the widest possible public audience. Each of the themes includes a series of five books to be read and discussed, accompanied by a scholarly essay.

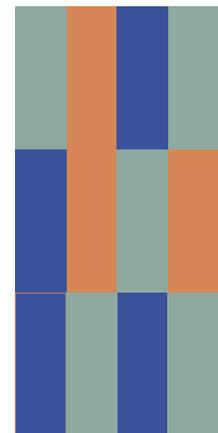
The essays, written by national project scholar Jeremy Dauber, Atran Assistant Professor of Yiddish Language, Literature, and Culture at Columbia University, will introduce each theme and illuminate discussion.

In order to submit a competitive application, please note the following:

- Libraries must provide detailed plans for acquiring books for their collections and for participant use.
- *Let's Talk About It: Jewish Literature* is designed as a reading and discussion series facilitated by a single scholar. The intent of the single-scholar model is to nurture sustained, comfortable dialogue between the program participants and the scholar over the five-session series.
- Consistency in scheduling is a proven method of audience retention and program recognition; therefore, we highly recommend scheduling the program on the same day and time at the same library.
- Each theme features five books to be discussed in the order listed.

What will participating libraries receive?

- A grant of \$2,500. This grant may be used to send the library project director and local scholar (if the library chooses to bring the scholar) to the training session (see below), and for local scholar honorarium, program promotion, series books, and related titles. *The same allowable expenses apply to repeat applicant libraries that receive the two-series \$5,000 grant.*
- Program materials, which include introductory literature and essays on each of the themes, selections for additional reading, and template promotional materials. Program materials will be downloadable via the program web sites (visit either www.ala.org/publicprograms or www.nextbook.org/ala) for local use and maximum distribution. Libraries will also receive bookmarks and 25 posters to promote the series, as well as 50 program folders for participants.
- An intensive training workshop is required for library project directors (see FAQs on pages 14–15 for training requirements for repeat applicants). Local scholars are welcome. Program planning guides will be distributed at this session.
- An opportunity for all participants and project staff to share their thoughts and experiences via the program electronic discussion list.



Guidelines: How to Apply

Review these guidelines and complete the application on pages 16–19 or online at:
www.nextbook.org/ala/application.html

Application Deadlines	Grant Award Notification	Project Director Training Workshop	Reading/Discussion Programs in Libraries	Final Reports Due
December 1, 2006	January 2007	April or May 2007* Philadelphia, PA	Tier 1: \$2,500 Summer/Fall 2007 Tier 2: \$5,000 Summer/Fall 2007 Winter/Spring 2008	60 days following the completion of the last program or May 30, 2008 (whichever is first)
December 1, 2007	January 2008	April or May 2008* San Francisco, CA	Tier 1: \$2,500 Summer/Fall 2008 Tier 2: \$5,000 Summer/Fall 2008 Winter/Spring 2009	60 days following the completion of the last program or May 30, 2009 (whichever is first)

* For exact training session dates, contact the ALA Public Programs Office at publicprograms@ala.org.

Contact Information

If you require further information about
Let's Talk About It: Jewish Literature grants, please contact:

Let's Talk About It: Jewish Literature Grants
Public Programs Office
American Library Association
50 East Huron Street
Chicago, IL 60611

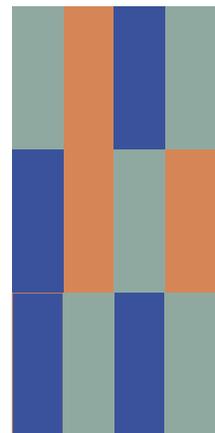
800-545-2433 x5045
publicprograms@ala.org

Eligibility and Requirements

- Public and academic (community college, college, and university) libraries may apply.
- Libraries that have already received a grant and completed a *Let's Talk About It: Jewish Literature* series are eligible to apply for either a single-series \$2,500 grant or a two-series \$5,000 grant.
- Programs must be open to the public. Academic libraries must describe in detail how they plan to attract public audiences to their programs and distribute the books. All libraries are encouraged to partner with local community organizations to promote and plan their programs.
- Eligible uses of grant funds are local scholar honorarium, travel by library project director and scholar to training workshop, books, program promotion, and program materials.
- Each library must designate a library project director responsible for all administrative project details.
- Project directors are required to attend the training workshop.
- Reading and discussion sessions must be led by a qualified scholar whose participation must be confirmed in application materials (see Review Criteria at right and FAQs on pages 14–15).
- Required credit must be given to funders in program and publicity materials.
- Submission of *three* copies of completed application form, signed by library director, with all required attachments.
- Submission of *two* copies of a final report, including required statistics, submitted to ALA Public Programs Office no later than 60 days following the completion of the last program, or by the final report deadline.
- Libraries receiving two-series grant funds under the Round I, December 2006 deadline must complete the first series and submit an interim report in order to apply under the Round II, December 2007 deadline.

Review Criteria

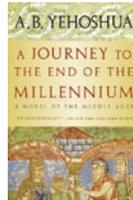
- Clarity and completeness of program plan. All required information, including planned dates, times, and place where program will be held, anticipated attendance, and role of program partners, must be submitted and clearly described.
- Qualification of the project scholar. Each scholar should have a Ph.D. in English Literature, Jewish Studies, or other related humanities subject, and a strong knowledge of Jewish literature and culture. Current or past experience should include teaching literature at a university or college. He or she should be engaging and comfortable speaking before and facilitating discussion with adult audiences. Scholar information should include name, title, and a one-page vita or bio.
- The library's vision of the program. The program plan should describe how the *Let's Talk About It: Jewish Literature* series relates to the library's existing public programs and how the library envisions the program benefiting the community it serves (e.g., how the program will contribute to the community's cultural life).
- Quality of publicity and audience recruitment plan, including the role of program partners. The program plan should describe the role of the program partners (see FAQs on pages 14–15 for examples of how partners participate). When possible, please include partners' letters of support with your library's application.



Themes and Books

Neighbors: The World Next Door

The delicate, often tortuous relationship between neighboring cultures animates these works of history and fiction, which trace the Jewish experience from Muslim Spain to Bolshevik Russia to contemporary America.



A. B. Yehoshua
A Journey to the End of the Millennium

In the waning months of the year 999, Ben Attar, a wealthy Jew from Tangiers, sets sail for Paris. Armed with his two wives, his Muslim trading partner, and an Andalusian rabbi, Ben Attar undertakes the expedition to salvage his relationship with his beloved nephew Abulafia. The estranged young man has settled in Paris with his bride, a cunning woman from a family of renowned Jewish scholars in Ashkenaz. Her moral repulsion for Ben Attar's bigamy—common in his world, unheard of in hers—has alienated Abulafia from Ben Attar.

In a compelling narrative rich with the sights and smells of the Mediterranean and medieval Europe, Yehoshua powerfully dramatizes this intellectual and religious showdown between northern and southern Jews, one full of moral decrees, human desire, and heartbreak.



Isaac Babel
Red Cavalry

In 1920, Isaac Babel rode with the Red Cavalry into eastern Poland as part of Russia's first attempt to spread the glory of Communism throughout Europe. These brief, trenchant short stories, drawn from Babel's observations of that disastrous campaign, are marked by a cool detachment and a gift for the arresting phrase: "The orange sun is rolling across the sky like a severed head."

In Babel's wartime world, life continues, uneasily but inexorably: whether it's Lyutov, the young Jewish journalist who cloaks his identity to blend in with the Cossacks, or the pregnant Jewish woman who keeps her father's mangled corpse in her sleeping quarters, hidden under a blanket. Babel's unsentimental stories remain haunting and strikingly relevant, nearly ninety years after their creation.

Modern Marvels: Jewish Adventures in the Graphic Novel

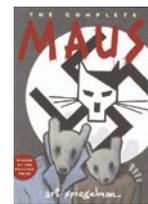
The graphic novel is an exciting new form of storytelling. Here, five Jewish artists experiment with words and pictures to tell stories of childhood, war, and desire; to conjure up lost worlds, both real and imaginary; and to contemplate history, myth, and the individual psyche.



Will Eisner
A Contract with God

Each week during the 1940s, Will Eisner drew "The Spirit," a comic about a masked detective that earned him fans around the globe. He revolutionized comics a second time when, in 1978, he reached back to his own beginnings to produce the first "graphic novel."

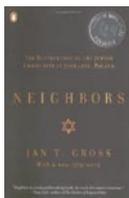
Set among 1930s Bronx tenements, these four stories capture the brutal, tender world of working-class Jews. In the title story, Frimme Hersh's daughter suddenly dies, sorely testing the "contract" this self-made man once entered into with God. In "Cookalein," Eisner casts a humorous eye on the amorous, social-climbing tendencies of young urbanites spending a summer in the Adirondacks. Wry, honest, and sad, these four stories showcase Eisner's unique ability to capture character with the quick strike of his pen.



Art Spiegelman
The Complete Maus: A Survivor's Tale

The comic book transfigured, this graphic novel tells the story of Spiegelman's parents, Vladek and Anna, Jews reaching maturity in a Europe on the verge of Nazism, and their terrifying history and eventual survival in the concentration camps. Spiegelman uses the broadest tools of the genre—Jews are drawn as mice, Nazis as cats, Poles as pigs, Frenchmen as frogs, and so on—to make vivid the unimaginable, both to the reader and to himself, appearing as a character in the book listening to his father's story.

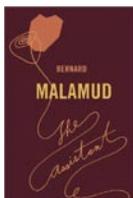
A triumph of storytelling in panels, *Maus* changed forever the way that readers, critics, and artists themselves thought about the graphic novel. In 1992 the Pulitzer Prize committee recognized Spiegelman's groundbreaking achievement by awarding him a special prize for *Maus*.



Jan T. Gross
Neighbors

"Until the outbreak of the war," writes Jan T. Gross, "Jedwabne was a quiet town, and Jewish lives there differed little from those of their fellows elsewhere in Poland." Then, on a summer evening in 1941, just weeks after Germany invaded the Soviet Union, Polish residents took up axes, clubs, and torches and massacred all but seven of the town's 1,600 Jews. The perpetrators, who were brought to trial in 1949, never received official blame for the massacre, which instead went to the Nazis.

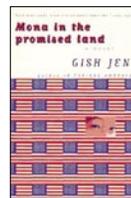
Piecing together eyewitness testimony and trial records with a deft historical imagination, Gross details the "potent, devilish mixture" that led Poles to turn on their Jewish neighbors. Originally published in Poland in 2000, the book sparked a national controversy and led to a public reconsideration of the Polish role in the Holocaust.



Bernard Malamud
The Assistant

Set in a failing Brooklyn grocery, Malamud's 1957 novel follows shop owner Morris Bober as his lightless existence is touched and confused by Frank Alpine, an "Italyener" he doesn't so much hire as inherit. Enterprising and deceitful, tender and violent, Frank seems to embody all the contradictions of America for Morris and his family; but for Frank, it is the Bobbers who represent the last chance for a new beginning, one he can't quite believe in: "usually I end up like I started out, with nothing."

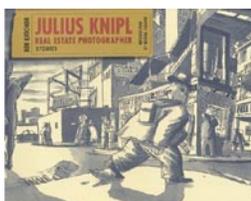
A relentless exploration of suffering and redemption, Malamud's novel never stoops to sentimentality. Like many of his stories, *The Assistant* poignantly (and perfectly) captures the specific struggles of immigrants in language both plain and poetic.



Gish Jen
Mona in the Promised Land

In this rollicking coming-of-age tale, Mona Chang's Chinese immigrant parents move their family to Westchester County in New York for its superior schools and majestic landscaping, only to find that their daughter develops a worrisome interest in the religion of her new friends. "Pretty soon Mona's tagged along to so many temple car washes and food drives...that she's been named official mascot of the Temple Youth Group."

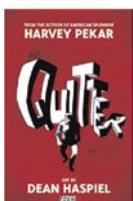
Jen's novel tracks Mona as she discovers herself and her place in the world: She decides to convert, crosses racial lines to befriend the workers in her parents' pancake house, and falls in love with a boy from the local synagogue who lives in a tepee in his parent's backyard. Jen mines the battlefields of adolescence and assimilation to produce a novel that is as charming as it is relevant.



Ben Katchor
Julius Knipl, Real Estate Photographer

Steeped in a melancholy, gray-tinted world of elevated trains, luncheonettes, and gently decaying tenements, Katchor's perambulating photographer, Julius Knipl, documents a rapidly vanishing urban netherworld. Peopled by men who map the migration of hairstyles and those who belong to the Amalgamated Panty-Waist Fitters Union, his cityscape is a familiar one, albeit with the touch of a demented fairy tale.

This is a world where films like *The Wild Aspirin* play at the Doloroso and wholesale calendar salesmen "enter a state of self-induced hibernation" by mid-February. Brilliantly conveying a deep and abiding affection for lower middle-class city life, Katchor, with his blocky ink drawings and wry Yiddish-flavored text, implores his readers to open their eyes to the beauty of the urban landscape.



Harvey Pekar
The Quitter

Pekar, the author of the celebrated comic book *American Splendor*, spent his life quitting before he could fail. Here, he enumerates the ways: an adolescence spent bullying other children in Cleveland, where his immigrant parents owned a small grocery; a lackluster academic career; an unending array of file clerk jobs.

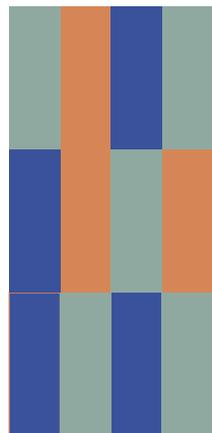
Ostensibly covering Pekar's early years, this dark graphic novel tackles everything from his brief stint in the Navy to jazz criticism and mid-century race relations. The gritty and atmospheric artwork by *American Splendor* collaborator Dean Haspiel perfectly captures Pekar's cantankerous tone. But a surprisingly hopeful message ultimately surfaces. It's possible to find your way in the world, Pekar suggests, even if it takes a lifetime to do it.



Joann Sfar
The Rabbi's Cat

After eating a parrot, an aged Algerian rabbi's cat develops the ability to speak and quickly declares his desire not only to be Jewish, but to have a bar mitzvah. The rabbi engages his pet in a spiraling debate, touching on topics such as spelling, parental love, and the very nature of Jewish identity.

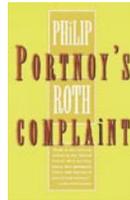
French graphic novelist Sfar's delightful, vibrantly illustrated story is set in Algeria and Paris in the 1930s, where the encroaching modern world is rapidly shattering many long-held customs and assumptions. And like his human counterparts, the rabbi's cat has some tough choices to make: "Should I stay in this house of Jews who are so elegant you'd swear they were French, with the beautiful rugs and the smell of fine cooking, or follow my master in the rain?"



Themes and Books

Your Heart's Desire: Sex and Love in Jewish Literature

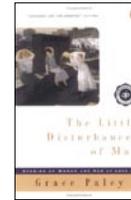
In these works of modern fiction, love and desire cross paths in the math department, on the analyst's couch, in an Israeli garage—and often with surprising results: an arranged marriage heats up, a ménage à trois turns cozy.



Philip Roth
Portnoy's Complaint

Alexander Portnoy is hostile, oversexed, and seething with guilt. His libido simply will not behave. On the analyst's couch, he performs a stand-up routine that doubles as an anti-bildungsroman. An equal-opportunity offender, Portnoy rails against his father, Jews, blacks, women, WASPs. He also relishes his own self-hatred by deploying vaudevillian humor ("a man's cartilage is his fate"). At stake for the sympathetic reader are larger questions about religion and morality. Opposed to decency and dignity, Portnoy exhibits the kind of attitude only an assimilated immigrant can afford.

The 1969 novel is best known for Portnoy's onanistic exploits and his explosive anger toward his mother—but therein Roth offers the notion of love as anger, or why else would his antihero spend so much time on the couch?



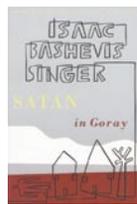
Grace Paley
The Little Disturbances of Man

Paley's first collection is populated with gutsy, sensuous women and the breezy, selfish men they fall for against their better judgment. The power of these brief, anecdotal stories stems from the generosity and complexity of the author's worldview. Rather than vilifying her feckless antiheroes, who struggle "till time's end...to get away in one piece" from the women who adore them, she offers them up without judgment, exposing both warts and charms.

In subtle, Yiddish-inflected prose, Paley perfectly captures the humor of couplings in a bygone New York. But her earthy stories often turn on moments of intense lyricism, as when one character cradles her son in bright sunlight, his fingers "interred forever, like a black and white barred king in Alcatraz, my heart lit up in stripes."

Demons, Golems, and Dybbuks: Monsters of the Jewish Imagination

These five tales, which are as much about bodies—the enchanting, the ailing, the monstrous—as about spirits, leave the reader wondering: Which is stranger, the supernatural world or our own?



Isaac Bashevis Singer
Satan in Goray

The residents of Goray, having survived Bogdan Khmelnitsky's notorious 1648 massacre, are convinced that the Messiah will arrive at any moment. So when followers of purple-robed mystic Sabbatai Zevi come to the Polish shtetl offering a return to the Promised Land, the villagers are quick to join their ranks—with disastrous results. Dietary laws and society's basic civilities are quickly forgotten. Life in the isolated village deteriorates in a blaze of famine and chaos.

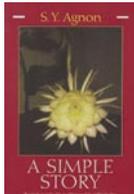
Originally published in Singer's native Poland in 1935—the same year he immigrated to America—the dark, chilling tale clearly reflects the anxieties of its era. The Nobel laureate's first novel is an epic story of desperation and religious fervor.



S. Ansky
The Dybbuk and Other Writings

Rejecting his Orthodox upbringing, Ansky (né Solomon Rappoport) became at turns a Russian revolutionary, a miner, and a bookbinder in Paris. He was in his mid-30s when, already a successful writer, he gravitated back to his roots. In 1911, he embarked on an ambitious trek throughout Polish and Galician shtetls, gathering materials for folkloric research.

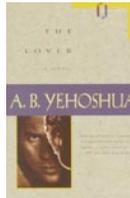
His best-known work, *The Dybbuk*, was directly inspired by this ethnographic quest. The four-act play, a metaphysical take on *Romeo and Juliet*, tells the story of Leah, who, on the eve of her wedding, is possessed by the spirit of the dead Khonon, a poor rabbinical student who had been in love with her. First performed in Vilna in 1920, weeks after Ansky died, *The Dybbuk* quickly became a cornerstone of Jewish literature.



S. Y. Agnon
A Simple Story

Set at the turn of the 20th century and first published in 1935, *A Simple Story* floats the anti-romantic, anti-modern idea that it is better to love the person you marry than to marry the person you love. Hirshl, the only child of prosperous shopkeepers in northern Poland, is entranced by his intelligent and penniless cousin, Blume. An arranged marriage to Mina, who comes with a dowry, clothes, and no interest in books, brings on a bout with madness, but Hirshl emerges from the sanatorium resigned to keep shop in his parents' world. Eventually he embraces its traditions.

Agnon's narrator delivers this not-so-simple story with a folklorist's comic touch, and draws from the Nobel laureate's experiences growing up in a Galician shtetl before he immigrated to Palestine.



A. B. Yehoshua
The Lover

Asya, a high school teacher, begins an adulterous affair with Gabriel, an Israeli émigré, back in the country for a brief visit. But when the 1973 Yom Kippur War breaks out and Gabriel disappears, it is Asya's husband, Adam, who becomes obsessed with his whereabouts: Has he fled the country? Has he been pressed into service by the military? Has he been captured by Egyptian forces? Is he lying wounded in a hospital? Is he lost forever?

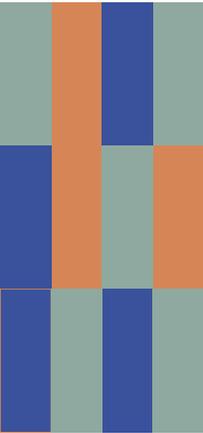
The story of Adam's unlikely search, told from multiple viewpoints in the manner of Faulkner, reveals a family in which everyone is a missing person—misunderstood, ignored, silent—and a society riven by differences in class, background, and political outlook.



Rebecca Goldstein
The Mind-Body Problem

After shaking off the vestiges of her Orthodox upbringing, Renee Feuer—the self-deprecating philosophy graduate student who narrates Goldstein's witty debut—embarks on a series of raucous affairs. A crisis of confidence in her intellectual prowess leads her to settle down with an aging mathematician whose genius, she believes, affirms her own: "I was floundering and thus quite prepared to follow the venerably old feminine tradition of being saved by marriage." Soon, though, she's back on the prowl.

Goldstein deftly veers between hilarious anecdotes about Renee's charmingly familiar family and philosophical ruminations on the nature of human romantic interaction—the rift between the "outer public place of bodies and the inner private one of minds."



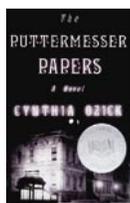
11



Franz Kafka
The Metamorphosis

In November 1919, Kafka drafted a long, angry letter to his father, calling him a "vermin" who drained other's blood to sustain himself. The Czech writer had spent the previous ten years trying to wrest free from his parents, who demanded financial support and denigrated his literary efforts.

In that difficult decade, Kafka composed the now-classic tale of Gregor Samsa, a put-upon salesman who finds himself transformed into a "monstrous vermin," often rendered as a cockroach. Read as both an allegory of Jewish alienation in Europe and a perverse rewriting of Yiddish folk tales, *The Metamorphosis* resonates because of Kafka's furious and at times hilarious portrayal of a family at war with itself, struggling first to care for, and then to destroy the child it no longer understands or loves.



Cynthia Ozick
The Puttermessa Papers

One expects a formidable critic like Ozick to be erudite and incisive, but the surprise of her haunting, fantastical 11th book is how funny it is. The novel's interlinked stories, most of which appeared over the past 20 years in *The Atlantic* and *The New Yorker*, chronicle the life of Ruth Puttermessa (Yiddish for "butter knife"): a friendless, uncommonly learned, unmarried civil servant with a law degree, whose "only irony" is "to postulate an afterlife."

But one morning Puttermessa finds a golem in her bed, and everything changes: she becomes Mayor of New York; forms an "ideal friendship" with a younger man; grows old; is brutally murdered; and ascends to Paradise. Ozick's distinctive, poetic style, meanwhile, elevates a novel of ideas to a work of art.



Tony Kushner
Angels in America

This two-part play opens with a rabbi's eulogy for Louis Ironson's immigrant grandmother, but the nebbishy paralegal soon becomes embroiled in a personal drama emblematic of the Reagan years. Louis abandons his AIDS-stricken lover for a married Mormon lawyer, a protégé of Roy Cohn, the censorious powerbroker who lives in denial of his own identity and terminal illness.

At a time when many playwrights were thinking small, Kushner crafted a sprawling tapestry unafraid to embrace large political, social, and spiritual themes or to weave the phantasmagoric into everyday life. By invoking the ghost of Ethel Rosenberg as well as Aramaic texts, this Pulitzer Prize winning epic, full of mordant humor and literary zest, uses its ethnic and sexual specificity to illuminate the American experience.

Themes and Books

Between Two Worlds: Stories of Estrangement and Homecoming

Writers from Egypt, Brazil, Poland, and the United States take up the central theme of Exodus, exploring questions of home and away and what it means to belong.



Exodus The Second Book of Moses

This well-known narrative crackles with tension and drama: a harsh, hasty uprooting from Egypt, a “stiff-necked” people so beaten down by slavery that the notion of freedom leaves them bewildered; a vengeful, capricious god who is unafraid to slay thousands of his chosen people when they disobey. The Israelites wander in a vast, unfamiliar desert for decades, uncertain if all this talk of a promised land will ever turn into reality.

Woven into “the tempestuous, epic myth,” as Israeli novelist David Grossman calls it in the book’s introduction, is the legal and religious code that transforms the Israelites from a beleaguered clan into a nation. Those forty years spent stranded in the desert remain pivotal, Grossman explains, “a lengthy cocoon stage, the final one before the Jewish people was hatched into history.”



Eva Hoffman Lost in Translation

If exile is the hallmark of Jewish experience in the 20th century, then Eva Hoffman is a representative of the age. Born in Krakow, Poland, to a Jewish family that had survived the Holocaust, she immigrated as a child to Canada, where she was thrust into a new language and a new culture. In this intimate memoir, she recalls her struggle to belong in this alien world, and the later challenges to her identity as a student in Texas and as a writer in New York.

As she tries to reconcile her femininity, her religion, and her intelligence, Hoffman shows how many different “languages” we all have to master, and provides an unforgettable portrait of a Jewish woman’s coming-of-age.

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A Mind of Her Own: Fathers and Daughters in a Changing World

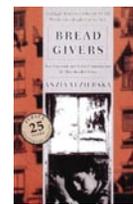
“I carried her in my arms,” Tevye sighs as another daughter goes her own way—and so begins a modern literary tradition of Jewish fathers and daughters who get carried away with politics, money, sex, religion, and, above all, one another.



Sholem Aleichem Tevye the Dairyman

Sholem Aleichem’s most famous character is an educated workingman in tsarist Russia, struggling to make a living, marry off his many daughters, and—despite a wife who raises cursing to an art form—live an old-fashioned life. Instead, his children present him with all the troubles of a world in transition. Tsaytl’s insistence on marrying for love is hard enough on Tevye, but his younger daughters’ romantic entanglements bring more serious ills—class struggle, superstitious ignorance, and finally the anti-Semitism that drives the Jews from their shtetl homes.

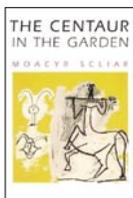
Tevye believes unshakably in his special connection to God, and remains optimistic even when irony is the only kind of joke he can sustain. Why, he asks himself, if God loves the Jews so much, does he make their lives so bitter?



Anzia Yezierska Bread Givers

Yezierska, who emigrated from Poland to America in 1890, tells the story of Sara Smolinsky, the youngest of five daughters living on the Lower East Side’s Hester Street in the 1920s. Sara’s father is a rabbi, a learned man who studies undisturbed while his wife and daughters struggle to cobble together a meager existence. After her father marries off each of her sisters in loveless (and often dubious) arrangements, Sara flees home, desperate to escape the same fate and determined to breathe in “the new air of America.”

Yezierska’s autobiographical novel remains a classic, a compelling depiction of the struggles of Jewish immigrant life, particularly for women, in the early 20th century.



Moacyr Scliar
The Centaur in the Garden

"I am a centaur, a mythological creature, but I am also Guedali Tartakovsky," proclaims the narrator of this affecting novel. Born half-human and half-horse to immigrants from Russia who staked out a new life in Brazil, the boy struggles with his identity. Much of the book's deadpan comedy arises from the intersection of the mythical with this real Jewish community. When the lonely Guedali finally meets a centauress, there's one problem: She is beautiful, but she is also a gentile.

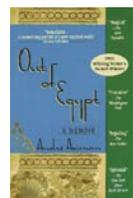
Tartakovsky is a vivid symbol of the dual consciousness of Jews inspired to leave Europe for South America by philanthropist Baron de Hirsch's utopian vision—forever an outsider, yet uniquely suited to Brazil's farmlands.



Allegra Goodman
Kaaterskill Falls

Set in the mid-1970s, this sweeping novel follows three Orthodox families over two eventful summers spent in the bucolic town where they retreat each June from the grittier confines of Washington Heights in New York City. Elizabeth Shulman, perfect wife and mother, begins to long for the secular world's "loose days and weeks." Her neighbor, Hungarian refugee Andras Melish, undergoes a crisis of faith, unable to understand his young wife's piety. Meanwhile, Rav Kirshner, the group's spiritual leader, discovers he is dying and must choose a son—Isaiah, dull but devout, or clever but worldly Jeremy—to take his place.

Goodman creates an exquisite group portrait that explores how individuals shape their identities within—and against—the seemingly unshakable community laws that define them.



André Aciman
Out of Egypt

For Aciman's family, home is a mercurial concept. In 1905, the Sephardic Acimans moved from Turkey to Alexandria, where they flourished financially for decades. But theirs was a life in exile: Expecting to be sent to Germany during World War II, the women knitted woolens. As a boy, when asked which country he hailed from, Aciman replied, "France, of course."

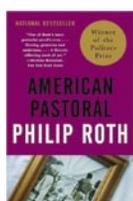
Aciman sketches a cast of eccentric characters—from his Ladino-speaking grandmothers to Uncle Vili, an Italian fascist turned British spy—and creates an elegy to a lost culture. Fittingly, his last night in Alexandria falls on Passover; Aciman flees the seder ("I don't want to be in Jerusalem next year"), heading to the waterfront. There, he writes, "I caught myself longing for a city I never knew I loved."



Johanna Kaplan
O My America!

A provocative and aggressively charming social critic, Ezra Slavin quotes De Tocqueville, Marx, and the rabbinic *Ethics of the Fathers* with equal measure. When he dies, his daughter Merry—product of the first of many marriages and affairs—must make sense of her father's life.

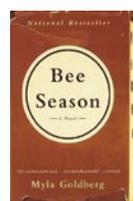
Skipping back and forth in time—from the 1940s, when Merry's mother, Pearl, a Polish immigrant socialist drowned Ezra "in diapers and Palestinians," to the 1960s, when he talked politics with Upper West Side psychoanalysts—Kaplan creates a colorful, cacophonous portrait of a man and his milieu. The novel brims with capacious wit and intelligence: "Ez, with that first-generation disease, had believed himself to be self-generated," Kaplan writes. "He had put all his money on an idea of America he had just gone and made up."



Philip Roth
American Pastoral

"Being wrong about people is how we know we're alive," Nathan Zuckerman, Roth's recurring narrator, muses after discovering exactly how wrong he was about the golden-haired idol of his youth. Fifty years after high school, Zuckerman can see that Seymour "Swede" Levov's charming facade obscures complicated and tragic depths. Swede marries a beauty queen and runs his immigrant grandfather's prosperous company only to see his daughter become a bomb-throwing fugitive.

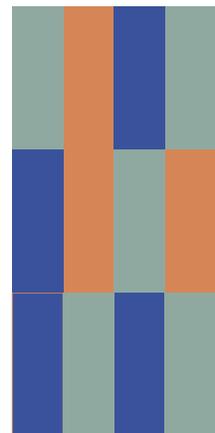
Swede embodies the promise and glory of postwar America—as well as the tragic loss of that paradise. This first installment of Roth's American Trilogy explores themes of loyalty and betrayal against a backdrop of social and political ferment.



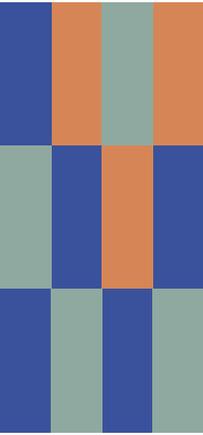
Myla Goldberg
Bee Season

Nine-year-old Eliza, the least impressive member of the brainy Naumann family, amazes everyone by winning the local spelling bee, then the state contest. When she nearly prevails at nationals, her father, a cantor, introduces her to the works of medieval mystic Abraham Abulafia in hopes that understanding the world "in alphabetical terms" will help her win it all next year. As Eliza gallops toward enlightenment, she outshines her geeky older brother, Aaron; no longer the family star, he turns his back on his family and his faith.

With equal measures of deadpan humor and lyricism, Goldberg chronicles an extraordinary year in the life of a seemingly ordinary family. She unflinchingly details the awkwardness of Eliza's pre-spelling days and evokes the pure pleasure afforded by her spiritual quest.



Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)



Q Should I contact and confirm the project scholar before submitting the application?

A Yes. Your application must include the name, title, and vita or bio of a confirmed project scholar in order to be considered.

Q Who is required to attend the training workshop?

A The library project director is required to attend the training workshop corresponding to the grant deadline (see application deadline table on page 6). The library may choose to bring the project scholar to the training session as well, but his or her attendance at the training is not required.

Q Are repeat applicants required to attend a training workshop?

A Project directors must attend the training workshop; however, required attendance by repeat project directors may be waived at the discretion of the ALA Public Programs Office.

Q Are special libraries such as JCC or synagogue libraries eligible to apply for this grant?

A No. *Let's Talk About It: Jewish Literature* has been designed for public and academic libraries. However, interested special libraries are encouraged to partner with their local public and/or academic libraries to assist with the program (e.g., encourage their users to participate, help publicize the program).

Q What qualifications will the local scholar for this project possess?

A The qualified scholar should have a Ph.D. in English Literature, Jewish Studies, or other related humanities subject; a strong knowledge of Jewish literature and culture; experience teaching literature at a university or college; and experience speaking before and facilitating discussion with adult audiences.

Q Is my local rabbi an appropriate scholar for this project?

A Yes, as long as the rabbi has the appropriate academic credentials (see above).

Q May multiple scholars lead the discussions?

A No. *Let's Talk About It: Jewish Literature* is designed as a reading and discussion series facilitated by a single scholar. The intent of the single-scholar model is to nurture discussion, communication, comfortable dialogue, and a relationship between the program participants and the scholar over the five-session series.

Q My library already applied for a *Let's Talk About It: Jewish Literature* grant, but was not awarded the grant. Can my library reapply?

A Yes. Libraries are invited to reapply, but we strongly encourage them to contact the ALA Public Programs Office (publicprograms@ala.org) to find out why they were not awarded the grant and how to revise their application.

Q How long should each session last?

A An hour and a half to two hours is about right. Attendees should come prepared to discuss the book. The scholar will talk for about 15–25 minutes. Group discussion will last about an hour. About 30 minutes are needed for getting started, seating, wrapping up, and, if needed, taking a break.

Q What is the optimum size for discussion groups?

A There is no magic number. You want to make this program available to the largest number of people who will make an active commitment to participate. If your group is large, you can either break into smaller groups for discussion or plan to hold the program at additional times. Asking people to sign up in advance for these programs is the best way to predict group size, as well as ensure a commitment to attendance.

Q May multiple project directors coordinate the series?

A No. A single project director must be designated at each library site for the series.

Q Can this series be presented at multiple sites?

A No. The program must be held at one library.

Q What role do project partners typically play in the *Let's Talk About It: Jewish Literature* series?

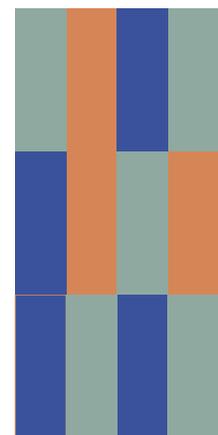
A Project partners can be invaluable resources for marketing the program, identifying and providing access to scholars, creating supplemental projects, assisting with book distribution, and providing supplemental funding.

Q How important are partners to this grant?

A The presence of community partners indicates the library's ability to reach out to targeted audiences in the community, to generate community support and interest, and to capitalize on local resources. Partners help to paint the picture of the library's enthusiasm for the program.

Q Are the project deadlines "postmark" or "receipt" deadlines?

A Receipt. Applications must be received by the ALA Public Programs Office (50 East Huron Street, Chicago, IL 60611) on or before the deadline date. Late, incomplete, faxed, or e-mailed applications will not be accepted.



APPLICATION

Checklist of Required Materials

Complete applications will include three copies of the following:

- Cover sheet with signature of library director
- Narrative statement (two to five pages, double spaced preferred)
- Scholar and project director vita or bio (up to two pages each)
- Samples of previous or current publicity materials
- Letters of support from project partners

MAIL APPLICATION TO:

Let's Talk About It:

Jewish Literature Grants
Public Programs Office
American Library Association
50 East Huron Street
Chicago, IL 60611

QUESTIONS?

publicprograms@ala.org
800-545-2433 x5045

PLEASE NOTE

All materials must be **RECEIVED** before or by application deadline. Late, incomplete, faxed, or e-mailed applications will not be accepted. To receive a copy of this application as a Word (.doc) document, please send a request via e-mail to publicprograms@ala.org.

A printable/downloadable copy of the application is available online at:

www.nextbook.org/ala/application.html

APPLICATION Cover Sheet

Complete (type) the following pages and answer the questions in the narrative section by attaching up to two typed sheets.

Name of Library _____

ALA Organizational Membership # (if applicable) _____

Address _____

City, State, ZIP _____

Phone, Fax, E-mail (required) _____

Name and title of project director _____

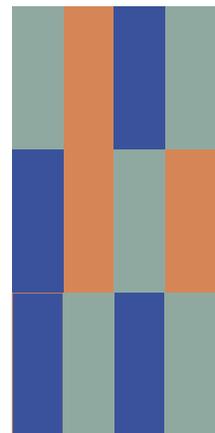
ALA Membership # (if applicable) _____

Name, signature of library director _____

ALA Membership # (if applicable) _____

Population of library's legal service area _____

Partner Organization(s) (if applicable) _____



INDICATE AMOUNT OF GRANT REQUESTED

- \$2,500 (one series)
- \$5,000 (two series)*

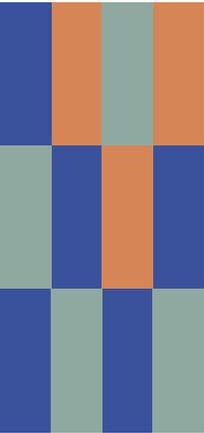
INDICATE SELECTED THEME(S)

- Neighbors: The World Next Door
- Modern Marvels: Jewish Adventures in the Graphic Novel
- Your Heart's Desire: Sex and Love in Jewish Literature
- Demons, Golems, and Dybbuks: Monsters of the Jewish Imagination
- Between Two Worlds: Stories of Estrangement and Homecoming
- A Mind of Her Own: Fathers and Daughters in a Changing World

* Only libraries that have already received a grant and completed a *Let's Talk About It: Jewish Literature* series are eligible to apply for a two-series \$5,000 grant.

APPLICATION

Programs for Which Funding Is Requested



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Complete the following table, indicating proposed dates, times, venues, and projected attendance for the five *Let's Talk About It: Jewish Literature* programs in the theme you have selected. If applying for the two-series grant, complete both tables.

THEME:

DATE AND TIME	LOCATION	BOOK TO BE DISCUSSED*	ANTICIPATED ATTENDANCE

THEME:

DATE AND TIME	LOCATION	BOOK TO BE DISCUSSED*	ANTICIPATED ATTENDANCE

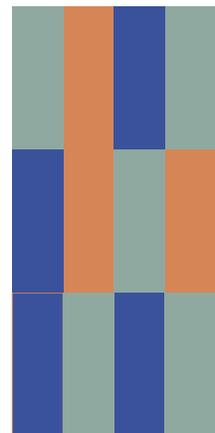
* Refer to page 3 of the guidelines for list of books. Books must be presented in the order listed in the guidelines.

APPLICATION

Narrative Statement

Attach a two- to five-page (double spaced preferred) typed narrative statement addressing the following:

- 1 Describe your project plan, including overall goal(s), reason for choosing theme, description of target audience(s), names and roles of partners, if any. Include letters of support from partners.
- 2 What is the project director's specific experience with *Let's Talk About It* programming or other library reading and discussion groups, and/or adult public programming? Attach a vita (up to two pages) or brief biography for project director.
- 3 What is the name and title of the project scholar, the scholar's highest degree and discipline? If not included in bio or vita, describe in detail the scholar's knowledge of Jewish literature and culture. Provide examples of college/university-level literature classes taught and any previous experience relevant to leading a library-based reading and discussion group. Attach a vita (up to two pages) or bio for the scholar. (Note: Applications without a confirmed project scholar will not be considered.)
- 4 Describe the publicity efforts you will use to attract participants. Attach samples of previous or current program publicity materials, if available.
- 5 If your library is an academic (community college, college, or university) library, describe how you will attract public audiences beyond your own user community and provide your plans to make books available and accessible to the general public. Give examples of past programs that attracted public audiences.
- 6 What methods will you use to evaluate whether your program met its goals and objectives?
- 7 Has your library previously received or applied for a *Let's Talk About It: Jewish Literature* grant? If so, under which deadline? (If the grant was received, provide date final report was submitted.)
- 8 What is your library's commitment to and history of adult public programming, including previous *Let's Talk About It* experience and/or other adult public programming? Please provide specific examples of program successes, including attendance figures.



Let's Talk About It:
Jewish Literature

Public Programs Office
American Library Association
50 East Huron Street
Chicago, IL 60611

