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Jewish Literature series.

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book it is necessary to read next."***

SAUL BELLOW

JEWISH LITERATURE

Identity and Imagination



Let's Talk About It:

Jewish Literature—Identity and Imagination

is presented by Nextbook, a gateway
to Jewish literature, culture and ideas,
and the American Library Association.

Jeremy Dauber, Atran Assistant Professor
of Yiddish Language, Literature and Culture
at Columbia University, serves as the
project scholar.

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Millions of people at thousands of libraries across the country have gathered for *Let's Talk About It* programs since its inception in 1982. Now, the American Library Association and Nextbook partner to bring *Let's Talk About It* reading and discussion series to new audiences through *Let's Talk About It: Jewish Literature—Identity and Imagination*.

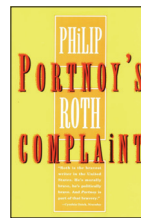
Join us for a reading and discussion series like no other. Led by a local scholar, *Let's Talk About It: Jewish Literature* will feature lively discussion of five books on a common theme in Jewish literature and culture.

Visit www.nextbook.org to learn more about Jewish literature. The site features author interviews, essays on Jewish culture and history, and a daily cultural news digest with links to stories and reviews from around the world. The site also allows visitors to search annotated reading lists and to keep up with other Nextbook programs.

YOUR HEART'S DESIRE

Sex and Love in Jewish Literature

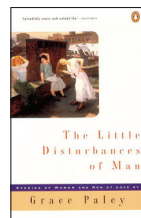
In these works of modern fiction, love and desire cross paths—in the math department, on the analyst's couch, in an Israeli garage—often with surprising results: an arranged marriage heats up, a ménage à trois turns cozy.



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.

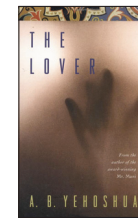
In subtle, Yiddish-inflected prose, Paley perfectly captures the humor of couplings in a bygone New York. But her earthy stories often turn on moments of intense lyricism, as when one character cradles her son in bright sunlight, his fingers "interred forever, like a black and white barred king in Alcatraz,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



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 marry the person you love. Hirshl, the only child of prosperous shopkeepers in northern Poland, is entranced by his intelligent and penniless cousin, Blume. A proposed 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 emigrated 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."