

## LET'S TALK ABOUT IT!

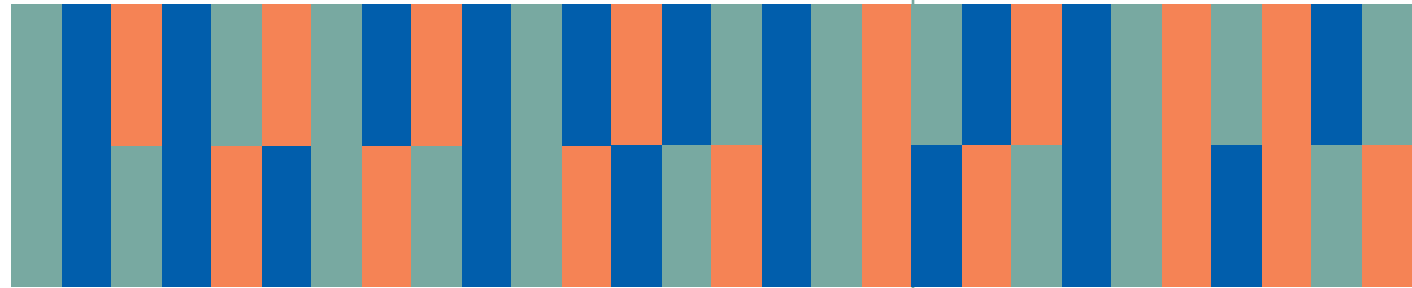
Be a part of our  
upcoming *Let's Talk About It:*  
*Jewish Literature* series.

***"We are always looking for the  
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.

**A READING AND  
DISCUSSION SERIES IN  
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*Presented by Nextbook and the American Library Association*

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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](http://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.

## 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.

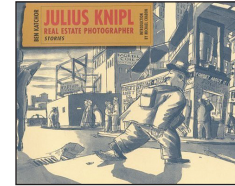


#### Art Spiegelman **The Complete Maus: A Survivor's Tale**

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*.



#### 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?"