

LET'S TALK ABOUT IT!

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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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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*.

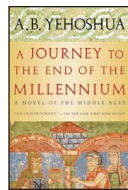
Join us for a reading and discussion series like no other. Led by a local scholar, *Let's Talk About It: Jewish Literature* will feature lively discussion of five books on a common theme in Jewish literature and culture.

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.

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.

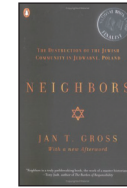
In a compelling narrative rich with the sights and smells of the Mediterranean and medieval Europe, Yehoshua powerfully dramatizes this intellectual and religious showdown between northern and southern Jews, one full of moral decrees, human desire, and heartbreak.



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."

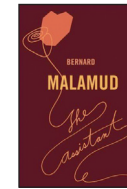
In Babel's wartime world, life continues, uneasily but inexorably: whether it's Lyutov, the young Jewish journalist who cloaks his identity to blend in with the Cossacks, or the pregnant Jewish woman who keeps her father's mangled corpse in her sleeping quarters, hidden under a blanket. Babel's unsentimental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



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 Bobers 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 teepee 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.