

"Books are the plane, and the train, and the road. They are the destination, and the journey. They are home."

— Anna Quindlen, *How Reading Changed My Life*

Today we have journeyed from across the world to celebrate as a community of readers, librarians, writers and bibliophiles the extraordinary recipients of the 2013 Sydney Taylor Book Award.

Like many of you, I look forward to attending the AJL conference each year with the same yearning that my children feel for summer camp. Whether we are in Montreal, Los Angeles, my home town of Cleveland, or Houston, our love of reading and devotion to recognizing and promoting outstanding Jewish children's literature to readers of all ages makes every ballroom feel like home.

For many of us, Sydney Taylor made this journey possible. Her stories of five sisters --Ella, Henny, Sarah, Charlotte, and Gertie -- adventures growing up in New York's Lower East Side have been captivating readers (both Jewish and not) since 1951. Taylor's All-of-A-Kind series gave Jewish readers a chance to see our own culture and heritage lovingly portrayed in mainstream children's literature. Non-Jewish readers connect to the universal themes of love and are drawn to this memorable characters based on Taylor's own family.

Like All-of-A-Kind family, the recipients of this year's STBA transcend all racial and religious boundaries. They exemplify the highest literary standards while promote positive Jewish values.

Our selection in the Younger Readers Category is ***Hannah's Way***, by Linda Glaser with illustrations by Adam Gustavson published by **Kar-Ben, an imprint of Lerner Publishing**. When Hannah's family relocates to rural Minnesota after her father loses his job, she is the only Jewish student in her class. Hannah worries she will not be able to attend a Saturday class picnic when her teacher arranges a carpool. Her observant family does not ride in cars on the Sabbath. In a delightful display of acceptance and friendship, the entire class chooses to walk with Hannah so she can attend the picnic.

Linda Glaser is the author of several Jewish children's books and received a Sydney Taylor Honor in 2011 for Emma's Poem, her biography of Emma Lazarus.

Thank you, Linda.

Adam Gustavson, is a prolific illustrator. His book, Yankee at the Sedar was a Sydney Taylor honor winner.

For middle readers, I am delighted to present the award to Louise Borden for ***His Name Was Raoul Wallenberg***, published by **Houghton Mifflin Books for Children**. Written in verse, this biography of the Swedish humanitarian highlights his commitment to rescuing Jewish people in Budapest during World War II for readers aged eight to twelve. Teeming with photographs, Wallenberg's passion for helping others is dramatically portrayed.

Louise In 2006, Borden's ***The Journey that Saved Curious George: The True Wartime Escape of Margaret and H.A. Rey*** was a Sydney Taylor Honor Book for Younger Readers.

Thank you Louise.

Deborah Heiligman will receive the 2013 gold medal in the Sydney Taylor Book Award's Teen Readers category for ***Intentions***, published by **Knopf Books for Young Readers** an imprint of Random House, Inc. The loss of innocence Rachel Greenberg, 16, experiences when the adults in her life betray her trust and the relationship with her best friend crumbles is explored in this contemporary novel. Rachel's home life, once calm, has now become strained; her parents are constantly bickering and her beloved grandmother's health has deteriorated. Her uncertain home life, pales in comparison to her shattering discovery that her respected rabbi is an adulterer. Although she makes mistakes, Rachel eventually learns to cope with the revelation that no one -- including her parents, friends, and rabbi -- is perfect by relying on lessons learned from her Jewish education.

Deborah Heiligman has published over 28 books and lives in New York City.

In addition to our gold medal winners, four Sydney Taylor Honor Books were recognized by the committee for 2013. ***The Elijah Door: A Passover Tale*** by Linda Leopold Strauss with illustrations by Alexi Natchev (Holiday House) and ***Zayde Comes To Live*** written by Sheri Sinykin and illustrated by Kristina Swarner (Peachtree Publishers) are recognized in the Younger Readers category. ***The Wooden Sword*** by Ann Redisch Stampler with illustrations by Carol Liddiment (Albert Whitman & Company) garnered recognition as an Honor Book for Older Readers. For Teen Readers, the honor goes to ***Beyond Courage: The Untold Story of Jewish Resistance During the Holocaust*** by Doreen Rappaport (Candlewick).

We are incredibly fortunate to have Sheri Sinykin and Doreen Rappaport here to accept their awards.

I'd like to thank the members of the Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee in attendance for their tireless dedication. Please stand, Charna Gross, Diane Rachwerger, Debbie Feder, our past chair, Barbar Bietz.

I would also like to recognize the AJL board and council for their support of the committee.

Finally, this evening would not be complete if I did not thank Jo Taylor Marshall, Sydney Taylor's daughter for her support. Unfortunately, Jo was unable to make the trip to Houston this year but I hope she will join us next year in Los Vegas.

Enjoy the rest of your evening.