LET’S TALK ABOUT IT!

JEWISH LITERATURE
Identity and Imagination
A READING AND DISCUSSION SERIES IN AMERICA’S LIBRARIES

Neighbors: The World Next Door

Join us @ your library 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 relating to the theme Neighbors: The World Next Door.

Where
Knights Room
Pius XII Memorial Library
3650 Lindell Blvd.
St. Louis, MO 63108
(parking passes will be provided)

When
Sessions will begin at 10:00 a.m. every other Tuesday:
September 18, October 2, October 16, October 30 and November 13, 2007.

Facilitated by
Julia Lieberman, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Spanish Language and Literature, Sephardic Studies and Israeli Culture
Saint Louis University

Books for Discussion
Sept. 18, 2007—Journey to the End of the Millennium by A.B. Yehoshua
Oct. 2, 2007—Red Cavalry by Isaac Babel
Oct. 30, 2007—The Assistant by Bernard Malamud
Nov. 13, 2007—Mona in the Promised Land by Gish Jen

To Join Us
RSVP to gregorypl@slu.edu
or call (314) 977-3107

Let’s Talk About It: Jewish Literature, a reading and discussion series, has been made possible through a grant from Nextbook and the American Library Association. See www.nextbook.org and www.ala.org/publicprograms for more information.
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.

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 confounded by Frank Alpine, an "Italienne" he doesn't so much hire as inherit. Enterprising and deceitful, tender and violent, Frank seems to embody all the contradictions of America for Moriss 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.

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.

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.