

Honor Jewish American Heritage Month With Books
Aurora Ropp and Kris Wiley for The News-Review

May is Jewish American Heritage Month, and the library is a great place to find books that celebrate Jewish youth.

Picture Books

“Nathan’s Song” written by Leda Schubert and illustrated by Maya Ish-Shalom tells the story of a man who moves from Russia to America and sticks to his dream of singing.

As a boy, Nathan loves to sing all the time while doing his chores. A famous opera singer visits, and Nathan longs to sing like that. Nathan’s family saves and saves for him to go to Italy and train; however, when he gets on the boat, it’s not headed for Italy. It goes to New York!

In New York, Nathan sings while he works and saves money for the rest of his family to join him in America. He trains his singing voice with a man named Nicolo, meets and marries a lovely lady who speaks Yiddish, and finally finds his family again, singing for them at Ellis Island.

The end papers tell how this story was inspired by the author’s grandfather. She describes how challenging life was for Jewish people living in Russia before World War I and how many left looking for a better life.

This is a wholesome story about moving to a new place for a new start. It is a great read with a bit of history perfect for ages 4 to 8.

Middle Grades

“Repairing the World” by Linda Epstein explores grief, friendship, family and faith.

Daisy is an 11-year-old living on Long Island who happily spends her days with her parents and her best friend, Ruby.

When Ruby dies unexpectedly, Daisy’s world changes, and she feels unimaginable sorrow. Even the thought of becoming close friends with newcomers Avery and Mo feels like a betrayal of the relationship she had with Ruby.

Daisy attends Hebrew school weekly, and some of the concepts she learns help her work through her sadness. This includes tikkun olam, which refers to actions taken to repair the world. Daisy thinks long and hard about her tikkun olam project, and what she comes up with honors her friendships with Ruby, Avery and Mo.

This book made me cry, and it made me smile. I think anyone who has grieved will relate to Daisy’s raw emotions. There also were more lighthearted moments with her family and friends. Plus, I learned several things about Judaism.

Young Adults

Fans of historical fiction may enjoy Katherine Locke's "This Rebel Heart," which is set during the Hungarian Revolution of 1956.

Csilla's parents survived the Holocaust only to have their country ruled by the Soviet Union. After her parents are murdered by the secret police because her father was labeled a Jew, a Titoist and a Zionist, Csilla and her aunt are the only family left in Budapest, and they are determined to flee their homeland.

Suddenly, her parents are exonerated, which leads to a larger, student-led protest movement. Csilla begins to have second thoughts: Should she leave the country that has destroyed her family, or should she stay and try to remake it?

With elements of magical realism and a fast-paced plot, I got caught up in a part of history of which I knew little.

All of these books are available at the library. Place holds at roseburg.biblionix.com, or contact library staff at library@cityofroseburg.org or 541-492-7050 for assistance.

This Month's Youth Programming

4-4:45 p.m. every Wednesday - Club de Idioma Español | Spanish Club for 4th through 8th graders

10 a.m. Tuesday, May 16 – Grab-and-go craft kits while supplies last

10 a.m. Tuesday, May 30 – Grab-and-go craft kits while supplies last