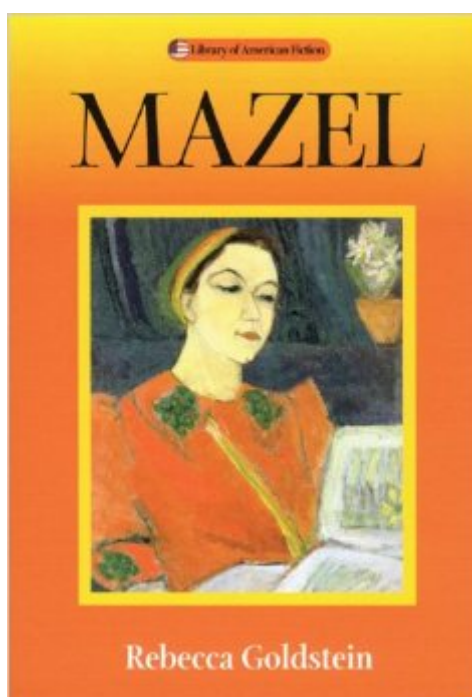


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Mazel (Library Of American Fiction)



Synopsis

Mazel means luck in Yiddish, and luck is the guiding force in this magical and mesmerizing novel that spans three generations. Sasha Saunders is the daughter of a Polish rabbi who abandons the shtetl and wins renown as a Yiddish actress in Warsaw and New York. Her daughter Chloe becomes a professor of classics at Columbia. Chloe's daughter Phoebe grows up to become a mathematician who is drawn to traditional Judaism and the sort of domestic life her mother and grandmother rejected.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

My first impression of Rebecca Goldstein's novel *Mazel* was that this was a Jewish book written for my generation. I'm 29 and growing up Jewish I was saturated with stories and films of the Holocaust throughout my childhood to the point of becoming jaded. Never had I heard anything about Europe from my elders that was positive. Everyone knew of the so-called "Golden Days" of the Jews in Europe, when scholarship and the arts flourished in Jewish communities, and even in the ghettos the culture could not be stemmed. Yet all the images I had in my mind until I read *Mazel* were black-and-white, the colors of Hitler's proud films of his concentration camp successes. *Mazel* describes life in the pre-war shtetel of Poland not through the misty eyes of an elderly person remembering a lost way of life, but through the eyes of a girl, Sasha, living the life and finding it rather oppressive. Sasha's family moves to Warsaw where she finds a thriving culture of young

"enlightened" Jews, part of the Bohemian intelligentsia. She becomes an actress in the Yiddish theater and finds love and herself in a Poland whose fate is as yet unimaginable. The story then moves to present-day New Jersey where Sasha, now an old woman, is at the wedding of her granddaughter, a professor at Princeton, who has adopted the old ways and has become an Orthodox Jew, much to her grandmother's dismay. Most of the book is about Sasha's life in Europe before the war. Mazel is unique because it casts a fresh perspective on the final days of European Jewry. Much of the story is told from the point of view of young optimistic characters who strive to enjoy life. It doesn't dwell on the knowledge that the readers must inevitably share: that most of the characters are fated to die just when they were beginning to live.

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