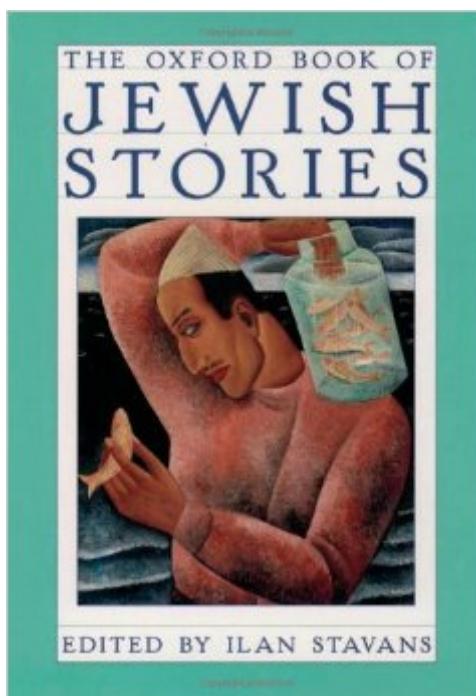


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# The Oxford Book Of Jewish Stories



## Synopsis

In this remarkably wide-ranging anthology, Ilan Stavans has collected the work of more than fifty notable Jewish writers from around the globe, weaving these diverse viewpoints and voices into a rich portrait of Jewish literary tradition. The Oxford Book of Jewish Stories takes us from the mid-1800s right up to the present, encompassing the full spectrum of Jewish writing around the world. The variety of tales captured here is stunning. Readers will find stories such as "A Yom Kippur Scandal" by Sholem Aleichem, the father of Yiddish literature; "Before the Law" by Franz Kafka; "Looking for Mr. Green" by Saul Bellow; "The Spinoza of Market Street" by Isaac Bashevis Singer; and "Midrash on Happiness" by Grace Paley. Stavans has included many pieces by Americans, including such markedly different writers as Cynthia Ozick, Bernard Malamud, Moacyr Seliar, Stanley Elkin, Delmore Schwartz, Dan Jacobson, Francine Prose, Allegra Goodman, and Philip Roth. And here too are pieces from around the globe, by writers no less varied: Isaac Babel, Italo Svevo, Primo Levi, Elias Canetti, Amos Oz, and Danilo Kis. What emerges in the end is proof of an observation by Ba'al Makshoves--that the Jews may have many languages and a dozen echoes in foreign tongues, but only one literature. And it is one of the finest in the world. The many marvelous tales that fill The Oxford Book of Jewish Stories affirm that a shared identity can exist without sterile uniformity--and that writers can engage their religious and cultural heritage without losing touch with those rich, complex ambiguities that inhabit the heart.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This is a book to cherish. I've given many copies to friends. It is one of the best anthologies, if not the best, I've ever come across. Stavans' introduction and chronology guide the reader intelligently through history and literature. A triumph!

You're in some seriously weird territory in *The Oxford Book of Jewish Stories*, edited by Ilan Stavans. First, collecting a series of stories under the rubric "Jewish" is difficult by definition. What is a "Jewish" story? The answer is, there is really no such thing. Many of the stories in this collection have little, if any, Jewish content. So, the reader must seek underlying or unconscious Jewish content, and suddenly one is in an interpretative world with many pitfall and few benefits. With this central question unanswered, the collection stands tottering and uneven. It spans the globe, gives the reader a glimpse into figures long since receded into the literary dustbin (like Israel Zangwill), contemporary powerhouses like Roth, Oz, Bellow, and a lot in between, and old masters like Agnon. So, this collection will please few. Yes, there is a selection to choose from; sure it is necessarily broad and inclusive, yet somehow, for all that effort, the stories lacks emotional or intellectual punch. It is as if the editor picked breadth over content.

I found the tales in the earlier portion of the book brilliant--entertaining, engrossing, funny, tragic, and with absorbing plot lines and memorable characters. The more contemporary stories were sometimes wonderful, but occasionally there was an awkward, strange, or mediocre story. With that in mind, enjoy this wonderful book of stories.

This is a wonderful collection. The great masters of modern Jewish story-telling are represented here. I could quarrel with some of the selections, and would for instance prefer a different Bellow story. But there are also some of the great, great stories here including one of the masterpieces of the writer who I personally consider the greatest of all modern Jewish storytellers Isaac Bashevis Singer. The selection here is of one of his greatest stories, 'The Spinoza of Market Street.' Each of the fifty or so selections is briefly and competently introduced. A truly wonderful anthology.

I was given this anthology as a gift and I read it immediately. It is excellent! Stavans is continuing the work that Irving Howe began. I want my children and grandchildren to read it too.

This wonderful anthology of Jewish stories is an in depth exploration of Jewish culture and creativity around the world from mid 1800's to end of the 20th century; all in one amazing volume. Editor Ilan

Stavans's introduction alone is worth the cost of the book. It comprises a great and comprehensive introduction to Jewish stories and through them to variety of life all over the world. It is a book you can turn to again and again for the joy of reading and superb writing. It is even more a primer of the creativity of modern Jewish writers world wide to express challenges and triumphs of Jewish life and tradition. I write as a teacher of adult learners for over 30 years who greatly appreciates excellence and intriguing writing as a way to bring the rich culture of Judaism to students of a variety of ages. We have used this anthology and others Ilan Stavans had produced with great joy.

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