



## Gratz Insider, Summer 2016 - Story Continuation

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### Summer Reading Suggestions

Here's what people at Gratz have been reading:

#### Joy Goldstein, President

[The Nightingale](#) (Kristin Hannah, 2015): This popular novel, set during World War II, focuses on the lives of two sisters in Nazi-occupied France. Describing the book as “a great read,” Goldstein says:

Author Kristin Hannah weaves a complex story of sisters in German-occupied France, each struggling to balance the need to survive and resist the war. The story is about the principles that drive everyday people to risk their lives and the circumstances that influence the expression of resistance.

[The Rag Race: How Jews Sewed Their Way to Success in America and the British Empire](#) (Adam D. Mendelsohn, 2014): Although this book is on Goldstein's list of summer reads, she hasn't gotten to it yet. It is a work of historical nonfiction that has received several Jewish book awards. As the clever title and cover illustration suggest, this book attributes the economic rise of Jews in America in large part to their early and continued involvement in the clothing industry. It also compares the path of Jews in this industry in America to the path of their British counterparts.

#### Dr. Joseph Davis, Associate Professor of Jewish Thought and Academic Coordinator of the Distance Learning Program

[An Officer and a Spy](#) (Robert Harris, 2014): This historical novel is based on the Dreyfus Affair. Planning to read the book this summer, Dr. Davis describes the author as someone who does “meticulous research” for his novels.

[Kaaterskill Falls](#) (Allegra Goodman, 1998): Set in the Catskill Mountains in the 1970's, this book, using different intersecting plot lines, invites readers into the lives of the members of a tightknit Orthodox Jewish community. Professor Davis enjoyed this book last summer, adding that the author, Allegra Goodman, is sometimes referred to as “the Jane Austen of contemporary Jewish fiction.”

**Dr. Joshua Guttoff, Director of the Master of Arts in Jewish Education Program and Assistant Professor of Jewish Education**

[Jewish Noir: Contemporary Tales of Crime and Other Dark Deeds](#) (edited by Kenneth Wishnia, 2015): This book is an anthology of short stories by accomplished authors on dark themes in modern Jewish history. Dr. Guttoff describes it as a book for “lazy evenings and rainy afternoons.”

[Attuned Learning: Rabbinic Texts on Habits of the Heart in Learning Interactions](#) (Elie Holzer, 2016): In contrast, Dr. Guttoff characterizes this book as one “for more serious times.” It focuses on a mindfulness approach to learning.

**Dr. Ruth Sandberg, Leonard and Ethel Landau Professor of Rabbinics and Director of the Graduate Certificate Program in Jewish-Christian Studies**

[The Misunderstood Jew: The Church and the Scandal of the Jewish Jesus](#) (Amy-Jill Levine, 2006): This book enables people to consider Jesus through his Jewishness in order to enhance their understanding of his teachings and to help strengthen interfaith relations. Although Dr. Sandberg does not classify this book as “light reading,” she says that it “is not overly academic and can be read rather quickly.” She describes the author, Amy-Jill Levine, as “one of the best Jewish scholars in Jewish-Christian studies” and as an author who “writes in an engaging way on a subject that is of great importance to both Jews and Christians.”

**Mindy Cohen, Event Coordinator**

Mindy Cohen recommends two light reads from Amy Sue Nathan, a new author who grew up in Northeast Philadelphia and graduated from Temple University. Nathan’s first novel, [The Glass Wives](#), published in 2013, raises questions about the meaning of family when two women who had been married to the same man now share the same home. Nathan’s second novel, [The Good Neighbor](#), published in 2015, explores the value of truth in a story about a divorced mother who, after returning to her childhood home, gets caught up in a web of deception. Both books are set in Philadelphia.

**Dodi Klimoff, Executive Assistant, Office of the President; Assistant Director of Admissions**

[Lab Girl](#) (Hope Jahren, 2016): In this bestselling memoir, scientist Hope Jahren chronicles her life in and outside the lab, and along the way, awakens the reader to the secret majesty of the plant world. Dodi Klimoff described this book as “light reading, but informative and fun.”

### Nancy Nitzberg, Director of Library Sciences

[People of the Book](#) (Geraldine Brooks, 2008): A New York Times bestseller and a work of historical fiction, this book uses the character of a book conservator to trace the real and imagined history of the famous Sarajevo Haggadah. While delving into the history of the haggadah, the main character also faces some plot twists of her own.

Nancy Nitzberg offers the following assessment of the novel:

Knowing that a real book inspired this historical fiction - with vignettes of time travel to Jewish communities of a few distinct eras - I found it a very good effort to explain some of the historic settings and situations that this book and other historic artifacts may have endured. There were a few story lines to follow, which made for a compelling adventure story about the book, the book's conservator, and the book's owners in past times.

### The Latest and Greatest in Jewish Fiction for Adults

In addition to the book recommendations we received from Gratz faculty and staff, [here](#) is an extensive list called "Recommended Reads: The Latest & Greatest in Jewish Fiction for Adults." Distributed at the recent conference of the Association of Jewish Libraries, this list was compiled by Rachel Kamin, director of The Joseph and Mae Gray Cultural and Learning Center at North Suburban Synagogue Beth El in Highland Park, Illinois; Ellen Tilman, director of library services for the Meyers Library at Reform Congregation Keneseth Israel in Elkins Park, Pennsylvania; and Judy Weidman, librarian at the Schachtel Library of Congregation Beth Israel in Houston, Texas. The list was made available to us with the permission of its creators.