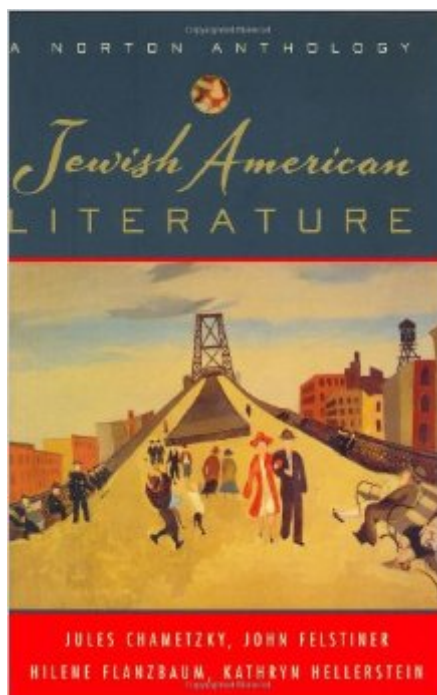


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Jewish American Literature: A Norton Anthology



Synopsis

The Most Comprehensive Anthology of Jewish American Literature Ever Published: With the work of 145 writers, from 1645 to the present, writing in all genres—fiction, poetry, drama, essays, letters, editorials, journals, autobiography, cartoons, song lyrics, and jokes. Classic and Contemporary Writers: Here, generously represented, are the writers who have shaped the tradition, among them Emma Lazarus, Abraham Cahan, Henry Roth, Nathanael West, Clifford Odets, Tillie Olsen, Bernard Malamud, Saul Bellow, Grace Paley, Philip Roth, Allen Ginsberg, Cynthia Ozick, and Harold Bloom. Joining them are younger writers such as Melvin Jules Bukiet, Jacqueline Osherow, Art Spiegelman, Steve Stern and Allegra Goodman, who bring the tradition up to its thriving present. Yiddish and Hebrew Writing in America Jewish American Literature: Traces in breadth and depth America's rich Yiddish-language culture, from the work of Morris Rosenfeld and David Edelshtadt in the 1880s through the Yunge and Introspectivist movements to the post-Holocaust writings of Kadya Molodowsky and Isaac Bashevis Singer. Also represented is Hebrew writing, in translations of the work of Ephraim E. Lisitzky and modernist Gabriel Preil. Special Sections: "Jewish Humor" offers choice selections of Groucho Marx, Woody Allen, and a cluster of perennial Jewish jokes; "The Golden Age of the Broadway Song" samples the unforgettable lyrics of Oscar Hammerstein II, Irving Berlin, Frank Loesser, and Stephen Sondheim, among others; "Jews Translating Jews" reflects on the translator's role in transmitting tradition, gathering poems translated from Yiddish, Hebrew, German, Hungarian, Italian, and Spanish by Jewish American poets from Emma Lazarus to David Unger. Helpful and Lively Reader's Apparatus: The Reader's Apparatus includes a general introduction, period introductions, author headnotes, explanatory annotations, and selected bibliographies.

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Customer Reviews

Anybody's who is at all interested in Jewish culture will learn a lot from this book -- and enjoy it too. It's got a great section on Jews on Broadway, an hysterical piece by Woody Allen, another highly readable set of Jewish jokes -- one can find historical information, interesting stuff on the immigrant's experience, poetry, old and new, short stories as well as the standards like Roth and Bellow... You can pull this book down and start anywhere -- all the pieces are short so you don't get overwhelmed -- and feel instantly the richness and depth of the Jewish-American tradition.

This book is incredible. I enjoy how it incorporates authors who, as per the anthology's title, write about both their Americanness and their Jewishness, hence the elimination of folks like JD Salinger (who is a fine writer but whose texts' themes are not "Jewish" enough for inclusion). The most interesting pieces are possibly the earliest ones from colonial America. Hearing about Jews mouth off Peter Stuyvesant (an anti-semitic governor) and Redcoats is entertaining and educating, and the inclusion of non-fiction like that is a good balance. The only criticism of the book I can see is the exclusion of religious texts, like sermons, by leading American Rabbis or scholars who helped shape American Judaism, e.g. men and women like Solomon Schechter and Ray Frank. Obviously, there are other books to read for that area, and I recommend Jonathan Sarna's American Judaism.

Nice Survey of this broad category of literature, with some amazingly arcane finds; but one should read a lot more of any given author than is presented here to develop a real appreciation for that particular writer's contribution (e.g., only a single 21-page short story is given from Nobel-prize winner Saul Bellow, which is pretty sparse in a book over 1,000 pages long and is less than is given to Bellow's little-known contemporary Tillie Olsen.) So I think the purpose of this anthology is to give the reader an appreciation more for the breadth, than the depth, of the titular subject.

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