

NEIGHBORS: **The World Next Door**

Leader: St. Ambrose University Professor Owen Rogal

Location and Time: Bettendorf Public Library, 7 p.m.

Dates and Book Selections :

Thursday May 31—**A Journey to the End of the Millennium:** *A Novel of the Middle Ages* by A.B. Yehoshua—In the year 999, Ben Attar, a wealthy Jew from Tangiers, sets sail for Paris. Armed with his two wives, his Muslim trading partner, and an Andalusian rabbi, Ben Attar undertakes the expedition to salvage his relationship with his beloved nephew whose new bride is repulsed by Ben Attar's bigamy.

Thursday June 14—**Red Cavalry: And Other Stories** by Isaac Babel—In 1920, Babel rode with the Red Cavalry into eastern Poland as part of Russia's first attempt to spread the glory of Communism throughout Europe. These trenchant, unsentimental short stories, based upon his observations of that campaign, remain haunting and strikingly relevant.

Thursday June 28—**Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland** by Jan T. Gross—Piecing together eyewitness testimony and trial records with a deft historical imagination, Gross details the “potent, devilish mixture” that led Poles to turn on their Jewish neighbors. Originally published in Poland in 2000, the book sparked a national controversy.

Thursday July 12—**The Assistant** by Bernard Malamud—Set in a failing Brooklyn grocery, Malamud's 1957 novel follows shop owner Morris Bober as his lightless existence is touched and confused by Frank Alpine, an “Italyener” he doesn't so much hire as inherit. The specific poignant struggles of immigrants are captured in language both plain and poetic.

Thursday July 26—**Mona in the Promised Land** by Gish Jen—In this rollicking coming-of-age tale, Mona Chang's Chinese immigrant parents move their family to Westchester County in New York for its superior schools and majestic landscaping, only to find that their daughter develops a worrisome interest in the religion of her new Jewish friends.

All books are available for loan on a first-come basis at the Information Desk.

MODERN MARVELS: **Jewish Adventures** **in the Graphic Novel**

Leader: Augustana College Professor Rachel Magdalene

Location and Time: Bettendorf Public Library, 7 p.m.

Dates and Book Selections (which are available at the Information Desk):

Tuesday August 28—**A Contract with God** by Will Eisner—Eisner revolutionized comics in 1978 when he reached back to his own beginnings to produce the first “graphic novel”. Wry, honest, and sad, these stories showcase his unique ability to capture character with the quick strike of his pen.

Tuesday September 11—**The Complete Maus: A Survivor's Tale** by Art Spiegelman—Jews are drawn as mice, Nazis as cats, Poles as pigs, Frenchmen as frogs, and so on to make vivid the unimaginable, both to the reader and to himself as he appears as a character in the book listening to his father's story of survival. Maus changed forever the way that readers, critics, and artists themselves thought about the graphic novel.

Tuesday October 9—**Julius Knipl, Real Estate Photographer** by Ben Katchor—Brilliantly conveying a deep and abiding affection for lower middle-class city life, Katchor, with his blocky ink drawings and wry Yiddish-flavored text, implores his readers to open their eyes to the beauty of the urban landscape.

Tuesday October 23—**The Quitter** by Harvey Pekar—The author of the celebrated comic book *American Splendor* spent his life quitting before he could fail. Here, he enumerates the ways: an adolescence spent bullying other children in Cleveland; a lackluster academic career; an unending array of file clerk jobs. But a surprisingly hopeful message ultimately surfaces.

Tuesday November 6—**The Rabbi's Cat** by Joann Sfar—After eating a parrot, an aged Algerian Rabbi's cat develops the ability to speak and quickly declares his desire not only to be Jewish, but to have a bar mitzvah. The rabbi engages his pet in a spiraling debate, touching on topics such as spelling, parental love, and the very nature of Jewish identity.

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Additional Programming:

August 30, 7 p.m.—**Introduction to the Graphic Novel** by writer/illustrator Sean Leary

October 25, 6:30 p.m.—Viewing of the film **American Splendor** based on comic book series "American Splendor" by Harvey Pekar and "Our Cancer Year" by Harvey Pekar and Joyce Brabner, originally released as a motion picture in 2003, 101 minutes long, adult content. Sean Leary will introduce the film.

Let's Talk About It: Jewish Literature, a reading and discussion series, has been made possible through a grant from NextBook (www.nextbook.org) and the American Library Association (www.ala.org)

Graphic novels are the coexistence of word and image on the page. The Bettendorf Public Library Information Center is happy to provide the *Modern Marvels* discussions as community support of the "Coexistence: The Art of Living Together" exhibition at the Figge Art Museum, August 31-September 27, 2007.

View the exhibition on the web at www.coexistence.art.museum

Check a listing of all local activities and exhibition sponsors at www.jfqc.org/coexistence

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Let's Talk About It Jewish Literature

Two Themes: NEIGHBORS:

The World Next Door

The delicate, often tortuous relationship between neighboring cultures animates these works of history and fiction, which trace the Jewish experience from Muslim Spain to Bolshevik Russia to contemporary America.

**5 discussions, Thursdays,
starting May 31
and**

MODERN MARVELS:

Jewish Adventures in the Graphic Novel

The graphic novel is an exciting new form of storytelling. Here, five Jewish artists experiment with words and pictures to tell stories of childhood, war, and desire; to conjure up lost worlds, both real and imaginary; and to contemplate history, myth, and the individual psyche.

**5 discussions, Tuesdays,
starting August 28**