

# Looking Back to Move Forward

*From the award-winning author of How the Moon Regained Her Shape comes a chapter book about equality and diversity.*

## The Passover Surprise by Janet Ruth Heller

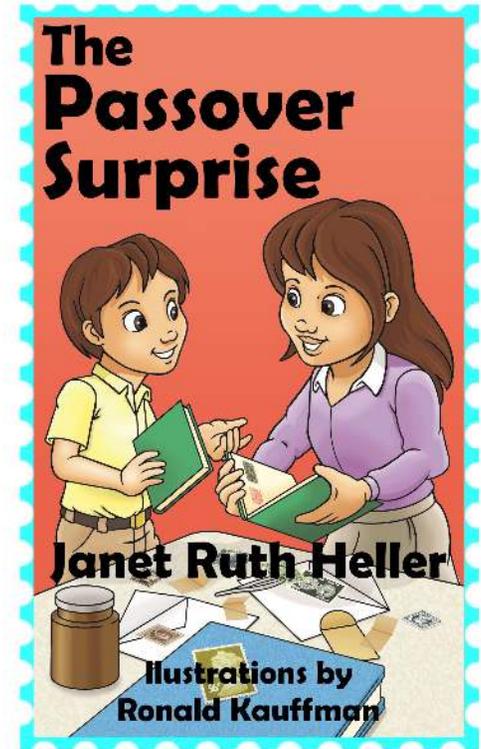
Janet Ruth Heller, the award-winning author of a classic children's picture book about bullying, shares another poignant story to help children grapple with complex issues. This time, the author of *How the Moon Regained Her Shape* (Arbordale, 2006; rpt. 2012), which won four national awards, delves into the topics of fairness, sexism, and diversity for a middle-grade audience.

Her first chapter book for 8- to 12-year olds, *The Passover Surprise* (Fictive Press, 2015) combines a Civil Rights Era backdrop and experiences from Heller's own Jewish upbringing to illustrate issues of the time like racism and sexism.

The story follows Lisa and her little brother Jon as they participate in a stamp collecting competition. But when their father determines which child will get the new large stamp album, he bases his decision on his preconceived idea that stamp collecting is a boy's hobby, not a girl's hobby. Lisa has to learn how to discuss her feelings with her father in a calm and honest way. Her mother, her teacher, and her friends provide guidance to Lisa as her talk with her father and Passover, approach.

*The Passover Surprise* raises important issues, including the treatment of women, sibling rivalry, bullying, and inclusion. By reading her father's letters home from World War II, Lisa learns details about Jewish and Black soldiers' experiences. Her school project on the Civil Rights Movement leads to Lisa's finding similarities between her problems with bias against women and and the prejudice against African Americans. Parents and teachers can use the Discussion Guide to discuss these topics with their children and students.

The book also exposes young readers to the traditional Jewish customs for celebrating the Sabbath. On Passover, family members remove leavened bread from the house and chant the seder prayers. *The Passover Surprise* includes a glossary of Hebrew terms used in the book, making it a great primer for readers not yet familiar with Jewish traditions.



### BOOK DETAILS

Book Details

Written by Janet Ruth Heller

48 Pages

Fictive Press

Paperback

ISBN 978-1927663172

E-book also available

## About the Author

Janet Ruth Heller is the president of the Michigan College English Association. She has a Ph.D. in English from the University of Chicago and has taught literature, creative writing, linguistics, and women's studies courses.

She has published three books of poetry: *Exodus* (WordTech Editions, 2014), *Folk Concert: Changing Times* (Anaphora Literary Press, 2012), and *Traffic Stop* (Finishing Line Press, 2011). The University of Missouri Press published her scholarly book, *Coleridge, Lamb, Hazlitt, and the Reader of Drama* (1990).

Janet's fiction picture book about bullying, *How the Moon Regained Her Shape* (Arbordale, 2006; rpt. 2012), has received many awards, including a Book Sense Pick (2006), a Children's Choices selection (2007), a Benjamin Franklin Award (2007), and a Gold Medal in the Moonbeam Children's Book Awards (2007).

## Talking Points

- Bridging Cultural Divides: Teaching kids about Jewish culture
- How to Teach Emotional Maturity: Talk it out, be honest, try to keep a level head
- Connecting with Gen X: Teaching children the hobbies of kids in the 1960s
- Feminist Parents: How to ensure you're not being sexist to your daughter
- Jewish History: Reconciling the learned favoritism for boys in Judaism
- Between Then and Now: Discussing the Civil Rights, Women's Movement with children



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