



Jewish Girls Coming of Age in America, 1860-1920

Melissa R. Klapper

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Jewish Girls Coming of Age in America, 1860—1920 draws on a wealth of archival material, much of which has never been published—or even read—to illuminate the ways in which Jewish girls' adolescent experiences reflected larger issues relating to gender, ethnicity, religion, and education.

Klapper explores the dual roles girls played as agents of acculturation and guardians of tradition. Their search for an identity as American girls that would not require the abandonment of Jewish tradition and culture mirrored the struggle of their families and communities for integration into American society.

While focusing on their lives as girls, not the adults they would later become, Klapper draws on the papers of such figures as Henrietta Szold, founder of Hadassah; Edna Ferber, Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *Showboat*; and Marie Syrkin, literary critic and Zionist. Klapper also analyzes the diaries, memoirs, and letters of hundreds of other girls whose later lives and experiences have been lost to history.

Told in an engaging style and filled with colorful quotes, the book brings to life a neglected group of fascinating historical figures during a pivotal moment in the development of gender roles, adolescence, and the modern American Jewish community.

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