



Through the PJ Library Years

For this mother-daughter duo, the Jewish books in their mailbox gave them each the connection they needed.

BY ELLERY PLESUR AND FAYE HOLLANDER

It's time for Ellery Plesur to say goodbye to one of her greatest joys: receiving a free Jewish book in the mail monthly. The seventh grader got her first book from PJ Library when she was 7 years old, and now she has graduated from PJ Our Way, the next chapter for children ages 9–12. Ellery and her mother, Faye Hollander, loved reading books together, but both programs gave them their own unique experiences. Here's a look at those experiences, in their own words.

Ellery: I've always loved books. PJ Library came into my life right when I started craving new books, new subjects, new plot twists — and that was just what it gave me. It wasn't very long before I started getting excited for that little blue-and-white package that meant a whole new cast of characters to have fun with.

Another thing I've always loved is learning about who I am and exploring every aspect of

What does Ellery Plesur love more than chocolate? Her PJ Library book collection.

PHOTO BY
FAYE HOLLANDER

my identity. PJ Library gave me a great chance to learn about some of the different facets of Judaism in a format that I already loved: books!

For years, I looked forward to that monthly PJ Our Way email, when I could see a whole new list of books, choose one, and keep it. What more could a growing bookworm want?

Book after book, and I never grew tired of it. Even now, about a quarter of my bookshelf is made up of favorite PJ Our Way books and characters: *Sweep*, *Wishtree*, *Charlie Thorne*, and my good friend Rabbi Harvey. PJ Our Way became about so much more than just free Jewish books. It was about being clever! It was about prevailing over adversity! It was about looking danger in the face and telling it you were strong! I felt like I was standing in the middle of a glorious hurricane of excitement, and in the eye of the hurricane was Judaism. When the world said Jews didn't matter, I had all my fictional friends to tell me we did matter.

But there was one problem: I could only get these books until I was 12, and my time was coming to an end. What could I do?

Which brings me to the third thing I've always loved: making stuff. So when I got the invitation to work behind the scenes for the PJ Our Way design team, you bet I said yes!

Now I wasn't just standing amid a hurricane, I was directing it. I made videos, quizzes, and friends. Together, we interviewed authors, wrote blog posts, and reviewed books before they were published! My tiny bookworm heart was overcome with joy.

Sadly, all good things must come to an end. But I didn't say goodbye to PJ Our Way — oh, no. It will always remain because of the amazing memories and the conversations that the books still spark between my parents and me.

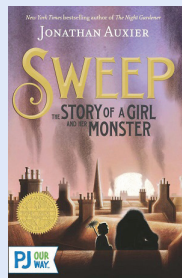
I'll never forget PJ Our Way. I don't think my parents will either. Because the fourth thing I don't think I'll ever stop loving? OK, fine, it's chocolate. But I love community, too, and PJ Our Way was never lacking for that. It built community within community, and that's what I'll always remember.

Faye: I'm a Jersey girl. My husband is a New Yorker. When we decided to put down roots in Massachusetts, we knew we'd be living far from family, but I did not expect that creating a Jewish household would be so difficult without them nearby.

Without the regular influence of things like sitting together at synagogue, telling stories, sharing recipes, and observing traditions, much of the responsibility for creating those traditions fell to my husband and me alone. When experiencing the richness of our families and our Jewish roots became a thing that required packing and driving six hours, our tiny Jewish household in Massachusetts felt very, very quiet. And when finding the right fit for both synagogue and Hebrew school did not come easily, we did not feel adequately anchored to our culture.

PJ Library created an anchor for us. Stories, information, and traditions all appeared in our mailbox. The books became a reliable resource and reminder for learning about and observing so many Jewish moments. They started conversations and answered questions I hadn't thought to ask. PJ Library has been a great fit, a welcome addition to our home, and something I've recommended to so many Jewish families in my life. 📖

ELLERY'S MUST-READS



Sweep

Written by Jonathan Auxier

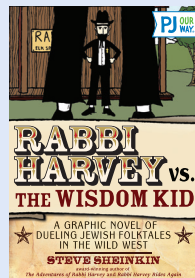
Nan is one of the best chimney sweeps in London. When she gets caught in a fire, she's sure the end has come. Enter Charlie: knight in sooty armor, guardian angel, golem.



Wishtree

Written by Katherine Applegate

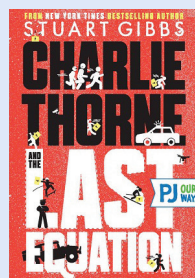
Red is a wise, philosophical, and funny old oak tree that has watched over his neighborhood for hundreds of years. He's seen it all, but that's about to change.



Rabbi Harvey vs. the Wisdom Kid ♦

Written and illustrated by Steve Sheinkin

Rabbi "Wisdom Kid" Ruben is new in town, and he wants to get rid of Rabbi Harvey! See them duke it out in this Wild West battle of wits.



Charlie Thorne and the Last Equation

Written by Stuart Gibbs

Charlie Thorne is a supergenius and the world's best chance at finding Albert Einstein's lost equation, which can save the world — or destroy it.



LOOKING FOR A GOOD BOOK TO LISTEN TO?

For a limited time, all PJ Our Way subscribers can access our audiobook library at pjourway.overdrive.com.

♦ **RABBI HARVEY VS. THE WISDOM KID** IS ONE IN A SERIES OF THREE BOOKS.