



ALL-OF-A-KIND FAMILY

Written by Sydney Taylor

Illustrated by Helen John

In Sydney Taylor's classic story, five young sisters experience Jewish life in New York City in the early 1900's. In reading this book, contemporary children experience the simple, family pleasures of talk, inventive play, and holiday celebrations.

The characters we visit in *All-of-a-Kind Family* are representative of tens of thousands of Jews who immigrated to the United States around the turn of the 20th century. Many came from Eastern Europe and settled on the lower East Side of New York City. Some, like the All-of-a-Kinds, followed an observant Jewish lifestyle: fathers attended services at the *shul* (synagogue); mothers were responsible for the holiday preparations; no lights were kindled on *Shabbat* (the Sabbath); an adult man wore a *kittel* (white linen robe) for certain religious observances.

DISCUSSION IDEAS

The lives of the family in this book seem familiar to us and, at the same time, quite different. Here are some ideas for conversation:

- How is the All-of-a-Kind family like yours? In what ways are they different?
- Picture yourself magically transported back to the time of this story. What about this time-period might you love? What would you miss?
- Why was reading so important to the children?
- How do you feel about reading this book? What Jewish traditions in this book are new to you?

ALL-OF-A-KIND ACTIVITIES

Here are a few activities that *All-of-a-Kind Family* can inspire:

- Ask a grown-up to hide buttons or pennies. Then volunteer to clean your room or weed the garden to find them.
- Choose a Jewish holiday observed in this book. Find ways to celebrate that remind you of the All-of-a-Kind family.
- Ask your librarian for a book recommendation. Then, set aside time on Friday evening when your whole family sits together and reads.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sydney Taylor was born in New York city in 1904 to Jewish immigrant parents. Taylor's book series, the *All-of-a-Kind Family*, tell the story of a fictional Jewish family based closely off her own life growing up in a large family on the Lower East Side. Sydney Taylor's legacy is one that survives to this day through the Sydney Taylor Book Award, an award created by her husband, Ralph, after her death in 1978. The award is given annually to "outstanding books for children and teens that authentically portray the Jewish experience" (jewishlibraries.org). Pj