



## Meet Rebecca

*Jacqueline Dembar Greene*

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Rebecca Rubin longs to be the center of attention, but it's not easy in a family of five children! When mysterious cousin Max, the actor, tells her the secret to pleasing an audience, Rebecca can hardly wait to try it out. Then she learns that her young cousin Ana and her family are in danger--they must escape Russia and come to America. Rebecca decides to raise money for their passage by putting on a show right in her New York City neighborhood--until her disapproving grandmother steps in. Unexpectedly, Rebecca finds another way to earn money. But she knows that for her plan to work, she'll have to keep it a secret.

## Meet Rebecca Details

Date : Published July 1st 2009 by American Girl Publishing Inc (first published 2009)

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Author : Jacqueline Dembar Greene

Format : Paperback 78 pages

Genre : Historical, Historical Fiction, Childrens, Fiction, Literature, Jewish

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## From Reader Review Meet Rebecca for online ebook

### Carolynne says

Like most of the American Girls series, *Meet Rebecca* features a spunky heroine who tries to honor her culture and still make her own way in life, this one a young Jewish immigrant in 1914. Spoiler Alert: In this book, Rebecca's interest in acting and motion pictures causes conflict with her more traditional grandparents. But whether she should spend the money she earns on her own pair of candlesticks or on helping her cousin's family never seems like a real question.

As usual, the book (Lexile measure 720L) is appropriate for middle grades and is enhanced with period photographs and a historical note. Readers interested in *Meet Rebecca* may also enjoy *Dreams in the Golden Country: The Diary of Zipporah Feldman, a Jewish Immigrant Girl, New York City, 1903* by Kathryn Lasky, part of the *Dear America* series. Zipporah is also a Jewish immigrant and an aspiring actress. I think a more satisfying series of American Girl books, set a little later in the twentieth century during the Great Depression, are the *Kit* books, by Valerie Tripp.

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### Goat Girl says

I like it. it is a lot like all the other meet whatever doll. it is not boring but sort of the same story board each time.

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### Stephanie says

Read for Paige's book group.

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### Rebekah Morris says

I read this first a number of years ago. I reread it to see if my niece would enjoy it. Answer: Yes. This was a simple, but fun story about a family of Russian Jews who had immigrated to America. It takes place in 1914 when things were growing more difficult for the Jews in Russia. It is not a long story, and only the first in the series, but I enjoyed it.

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### Sam T says

I enjoyed reading *Meet Rebecca* by Jacqueline Dembar Greene. This book is about a 9 year old Jewish girl that lives in New York. It was fun thinking about back than how they did not get paid as much and things costed less money.

Rebecca and her family have to save money to buy ship tickets to get their cousins out of Germany before the war gets to bad. Rebecca wants candles for herself except decides to give the money she made to her parents

to help get ship tickets. Soon after her whole family helps sell things such as tablecloths, bed covers, doilies, and trousseau.

I think anybody would enjoy this book. Even the little kids. Even though this book is not actually about a real person it's about real historic events that have happened in the past.

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### **Sesana says**

This'll be a review for Rebecca's whole series, which I'm giving a 3.5, rounded up because I ended up really liking her as a character.

Rebecca's series is set in 1914 and stars a young Jewish girl, daughter of Russian immigrants. So there are overarching themes of cultural and generational differences throughout, and probably the most coherent storyline to cover all six books in an American Girl's series that I've read. (Rebecca wants to be an actress, her family wouldn't approve, etc.) There are weightier issues, like unions in the sixth book and the still sadly relevant issue of how to deal with a culture that assumes Christianity is the norm. And there's Coney Island and making silent movies, so Rebecca has a very exciting time of it. She's a great character.

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### **Tracy Connolly says**

Rebecca is the daughter of Jewish immigrants living in New York. Rebecca wanted to light the Sabbath candlesticks, like her big sisters. Rebecca looks for ways to raise money to buy her own candlesticks. After meeting her cousin Max, the actor, she decides to put on a show. When that doesn't work, she finds another way. Rebecca is also upset that her cousin Ana and Ana's family are in danger in Russia. They need money to come to New York. How will Rebecca help Ana? Meet Rebecca is the start of an American Girl series set in New York in 1914. This is another excellent series helping girls learn what life was like in other times in history. Jacqueline Dembar Greene does a fantastic job bringing a young Jewish girl's life in 1914 to life.

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### **Bree says**

This review is from the point of view of a mother. I'm reading the Rebecca series to decide when they will be appropriate for my daughter.

I was excited to read the Rebecca books because the time period and immigrant story are favorites of mine. Although I am intrigued by Rebecca the character, I struggled through the book. The space taken to explain Jewish traditions was helpful, but broke up the flow of the story.

The conflict, that Rebecca was sneaking around doing something her parents would disapprove of, wasn't handled as well as it could have been. Although there were hints that her grandparents are more old-country, and that there were certain expectations for a daughter vs. a son, I don't think a modern audience got a full understanding of the strict culture Rebecca was being raised in. The emphasis on traditions was pleasant, but skirted past a strict Orthodox Jewish upbringing in the early 20th century.

As if there weren't enough plot points going on, there were a few too many side issues rolled in (sibling

rivalry, Rebecca's desire to be treated more as an adult). I suspect these were thrown in to give the series more flow, but it made the first book cumbersome.

On a good note, I think the parts where Rebecca struggled to decide how to spend her money - for herself or family, rang very true to her age, and is something a modern audience would understand.

While I haven't rated any one particular book of Rebecca's very high, I think the stories as a whole are timeless and relevant to the target audience - they deal with teasing, accepting someone who is different, judging others, celebrating your heritage/faith/traditions, and I think Rebecca grows throughout the series. I like the emphasis on Rebecca's emotions as she grapples with issues - this is a well-rounded series, and even exceeds some of the earlier AG historical series.

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### **Tess says**

A short but sweet reread. This is a cute story about helping others and how important small businesses were and are today

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### **Kristen Lauderdale says**

Ok, I love this family.

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### **Melanie Abramof says**

A fun, interesting, and accessible look into Jewish life for a second-generation immigrant child in the early 20th century. It was a good read, but Rebecca was not as interesting and likeable a character as I'd hoped. I hope my impression will change as I continue the series.

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### **Emma says**

I absolutely adored the American Girl books growing up, so with some time to kill in Barnes & Noble yesterday, I decided to pick up one of the ones that had come out in the time since I was the target audience.

Rebecca Rubin is a Russian-Jewish girl in New York City in 1914. And while I'm pleased they've tackled this era of immigrant families in turn of the century New York and also Jewish families, there was just too much exposition on the culture and traditions. I felt like instead of telling the story, everything needed to stop and be explained. Furthermore, there isn't a whole lot of story besides. Rebecca wants to be an actor like her cousin, but mostly she just wants people to stop thinking of her as little. Most of the book was focused on Rebecca's whining about one thing or another. Even when she sold her linens to pay for her (starving) cousin's way to America, she whinged about how angry her family would be with her. She's just not as likable a character as I come to expect from these books, and the storytelling lagged.

I did want to check to make sure this wasn't just my adult self rejecting something I would have enjoyed when I was nine. So I picked up *Meet Kirsten: An American Girl*, which was my favorite growing up for lots of reasons, least of all the fact that she had my last name and so that was the doll I ended up with. But *Meet Kirsten* held up to my standards. Without being explicit or as dark as things probably really were, it still gave a solid feeling of immigrating to the United States, with both real tragedy and joy. It's a story, and teaches you about another culture without being a Social Studies lesson.

For the Jewish aspect, some books I would recommend instead would include *All-of-a-Kind Family*, about a large Jewish family in turn-of-the-century New York City, that includes a lot about Jewish culture and holidays without beating you over the head with it. Or a great book about Russian-Jewish immigrants at the time would be *Letters from Rifka*, although it would be for a slightly older child.

Read my full review and comparisons to other books at my blog: [http://shorteasywordsreviews.blogspot...](http://shorteasywordsreviews.blogspot.com)

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### **Amy Rae says**

One of our assignments this week in kidlit was to read an American Girl novel and come to class prepared to discuss it. My original plan was to read *Meet Cécile*, but I couldn't get it from Audible. So I decided to go with *Meet Rebecca*, which came out after I (sort of) outgrew American Girl.

This one is solidly okay. For a child whose reading skills aren't quite up to *All-of-a-Kind Family*, it's a simple introduction to a near-identical time and place. The *All-of-a-Kind Family* sisters live in the Lower East Side of Manhattan in 1912 and feature a large family with immigrant parents. Rebecca Rubin lives in the Lower East Side of Manhattan in 1914 with her large family and immigrant parents and grandparents. Rebecca's story features less Yiddish, fewer adventures, and focuses strongly on her. She's the Ella of the family, longing to be a performer like her cousin Max (né Moishe). For now, however, Rebecca's stuck being told she's too young to do much of anything--including lighting the candles for Shabbos.

I suspect that, from that description, you can tell that we're hitting most of the highlights of the stereotypical Ashkenazi Jewish immigrant story from this time period. But I found it listenable, and while I think there are better books out there (and I wish American Girl would have chosen less well-worn territory for this historical doll), it's an okay book. Broad characters, but the small adventures Rebecca has remind me of why I absolutely adored the American Girl books as a child. I'd be willing to spend more time with her family--and since the full *Rebecca* series was packaged as one audio book, I probably will.

One possibly weird complaint: I understand why it would be confusing to have both a Sadie (one of Rebecca's sisters) and a Zadie (the Yiddish word for "grandpa") in a book for children still nailing down the reading thing, especially since this book is positioned to be easily understood by non-Jewish children. However, I would have liked her grandparents to be Bubbie and Zadie, not Bubbie and Grandpa.

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### **Elizabeth says**

Rebecca Rubin wants to be the center of attention for once. But that is hard when your one of five kids. She wants to be able to light the sabbath candles but her older twin sisters always get to do that. Rebecca thinks if she can raise enough money to buy her own candlesticks maybe she can light them. She starts finding

different ways to raise money but when she hears of she Uncle, Aunt and Cousins in Russia needing help to leave and come to America for safety, will she chose the right thing to do with her money?

I really liked this book. It's a little different from the other American Girl books but in a good way. Rebecca is an interesting character. She just wants to fit into her family while standing out. Her twin sisters have each other and her brothers play together, she is kind of left out. She wants to be an Actress but her Parents and Grandparents don't approve.

I don't know what exactly I was expecting from these books but I like them a lot.

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## **Hannah Harris says**

**Title:** *Meet Rebecca*

**Author:** Jacqueline Dembar Greene

**Illustrator:** Robert Hunt

**Genre:** Historical Fiction

**Theme(s):** Immigration, culture, Jewish religion

**Opening line/sentence:**

"Rebecca Rubin tugged at her wooden doll until the top and bottom pulled apart to reveal a smaller doll nesting inside."

**Brief Book Summary:**

In this book of the American Girl series, the main character, Rebecca, explores and explains life in 19th century New York City. As the reader is drawn into her emotional experiences, they can learn the harsh realities of being an immigrants, as well as the difficulties of working as a middle-class American during America's multi-cultural evolution.

**Professional Recommendation/Review #1:**

Susan Benson -- Association of Jewish Libraries Newsletter

American Girl's Rebecca series of six books was published in connection with the introduction of the new Rebecca doll, described as a lively girl with dramatic flair growing up in New York City in 1914. Each of the books in the series follows an identical format: a repeated foreword about Jewish immigrant families of the era; an introduction to Rebecca's Jewish family; the main story; a section entitled Looking Back, which elaborates on a theme from the story and introduces the reader to an aspect of Jewish life in 1914; a glossary; and a sneak peek at the next book in the series. The stories are nicely illustrated with vintage photos and color drawings of the action and specific items as they occur in the story. In *Meet Rebecca*, the title character comes up with a clever way to raise money to bring her Russian cousins to America, and we learn about immigrant life in New York City. In *Rebecca and Ana*, Rebecca helps her cousin adjust to her new life, and we learn about school days in 1914. In *Candlelight for Rebecca*, Rebecca makes choices about Christmas decorations, and we learn about Hanukkah in 1914. In *Rebecca and the Movies*, she celebrates her 10th birthday with a visit to a movie studio, during Passover, and we learn about the Jewish roots of the film business. In *Rebecca to the Rescue*, she demonstrates her bravery when the Ferris wheel breaks down at her brother's bar mitzvah celebration at Coney Island, and we learn about seaside resorts in 1914. In *Changes for Rebecca*, our heroine visits the garment factory where her relatives toil, later accompanying workers in a labor demonstration, and we learn about strikes, unions, picket lines, and other ways workers fought for their rights. Throughout the series, Rebecca is spunky, caring, compassionate, and resourceful. Secondary characters such as Bubbie and Cousin Max are also well developed. In her easy-to-read style, the author gently handles the tensions between the old world (speaking Yiddish, keeping Passover, traditional family

values) and the new (trying new things, doing what you love, working on Shabbat). One perhaps false note is the motto, The best we can do in this life is follow our hearts --not exactly a Jewish message. The stories are full of history lessons (sugar-coated and with occasionally unlikely adventures), very much in the tradition of Sydney Taylor's classic All of a Kind Family books, as we get to know and love a Jewish girl with real emotions and authentic experiences. Even without the doll, these books will be treasured.

#### **Professional Recommendation/Review #2:**

Candice Ransom -- Children's Literature

The year is 1914; the setting is New York's East Side. Rebecca Rubin longs for the spotlight, a position that is hard to attain in a family with five children. Her fourteen-year-old twin sisters always light the candles on Shabbos. Victor is nearly thirteen and studying for his Bar Mitzvah. Benny is the youngest and the pet, and Beckie? She wants to go on the stage like her Uncle Max, but no one will take her dreams seriously. The first of six titles in a new American Girl series, Meet Rebecca is peopled with stiff characters and filler dialogue designed to dump information on the reader. True to the American Girl format, the book opens with a double-spread of the characters and concludes with a lengthy section about Jewish immigrants, their culture, and the difficulties they faced, and a glossary of Yiddish terms. A teaser chapter from the next book entices the reader to continue the series. Fans of American Girl dolls and books will enjoy the latest offering.

Readers who prefer their historical fiction not watered down will turn to better books.

#### **Response to Two Professional Reviews:**

In accordance with Benson's review, I think this title to be a perfect introduction to historical fiction for a young reader. Because the story involves a detailed plot with much character development and reference, the factual evidence and incorporation is not overwhelming. At the same time, though, the historical information is easy to differentiate from fictional plot. Moreover, the concluding pages, which summarize the historical setting of the book, provide a guide to the reader in furthering understanding of the nonfiction aspects of the book. Finally, because the characters develop to be typical roles of the historical environment, readers have opportunity to make text-to-self connections with the characters in the piece.

#### **Evaluation of Literary Elements:**

Typical of all of the American Girl series, this book includes a glossary with unfamiliar terms, an introduction chapter detailing the historical setting, and a concluding section incorporating world events of this time period. Moreover, the pictures interspersed throughout the piece add a supplemental learning experience for the reader -- as they understand the historical evidence on another dimension. Moreover, the simple, conversational and informal text of the pieces proves to be a simple reading experience, and would not be intimidating to new readers. However, the length of the piece represents a higher level of reading, so those that would be targeted for this book may be bored by the easy text.

#### **Consideration of Instructional Application:**

To incorporate historical fiction in a classroom, students could use this piece to as a reference to understand the components of historical fact versus fiction. For example, how characters are fiction pieces while the setting, events, or environment are nonfiction examples. To further demonstrate understanding, students could create their own historical fiction pieces, identifying a well-known historical event and creating a storyline around the happening -- within the piece, students could incorporate real-life events, researching the lifestyle or culture of the time, while also using fiction plots and characters.

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