

Aria 0:00

COLD OPEN: Heidi Rabinowitz: Why do you like to read so much? Aria: Because in the real world, it is good. But sometimes you need to go to another world. And you can read a book and then you're transformed into another world into inside the book. That's why I like reading.

Heidi Rabinowitz 0:19

THEME MUSIC, INTRO: This is The Book of Life. I'm Heidi Rabinowitz. I am here to tell you there is hope for the future. This interview with incoming third grader Aria will warm your heart. She's a voracious reader, she loves high quality books of all kinds, and she really gets the deeper meaning of what she reads. I am sure you will enjoy these book recommendations as much as I do. And please excuse the background noise that begins when a preschool class arrives in the room next door to the library; such is life at Congregation B'nai Israel. I will link to all of Aria's recommended titles at BookofLifepodcast.com. Enjoy!

Okay, Aria, explain to the audience: who are you?

Aria 1:24

My name is Aria and I am seven and three quarters. I'm the daughter of Cantor Sarah at Congregation B'nai Israel.

Heidi Rabinowitz 1:43

Right. So Cantor Sarah and I are co-workers because I'm the librarian at Congregation B'nai Israel. And you've been my student too, because I was your library teacher when you were in preschool. So I'm happy to have you here back in the library. It's nice that you've grown up to be such a good reader. And you're going to tell us about some of your favorite books, right? What's your first choice?

Aria 2:08

All Kinds of Strong by Sharon Reiss Baker. I like it because it has a strong message in it. It's that even though you don't look like you're strong, you can be strong inside.

Heidi Rabinowitz 2:27

Heidi Rabinowitz: That's a good message. Tell me about the pictures in that book.

Aria 2:33

Well, artist was very artistic because he made the fire very real.

Heidi Rabinowitz 2:42

Oh, the fire. That's right, there's a building that burns down, right? Aria: Yeah. Heidi: Okay. And then what happens after the building burns down?

Aria 2:51

Well, the lady that was in it, went to live with the main girl. She had an idea and they made like a little synagogue with the torah in it.

Heidi Rabinowitz 3:04

Okay, tell us another book that you like.

Aria 3:08

I like Zishe the Strong Man. It's by Robert Rubinstein. And I like it because it was about a man who was working on a place that made metal and he used to take a hammer and bang it. And he really liked the sound.

Heidi Rabinowitz 3:19

Was he a blacksmith? Was that his job?

Aria 3:36

Yeah. When he grew up, he became very strong. And he played a cello. And then one day like a guy from America came and he was like, can you please come with me? And we'll travel around the world so you can show off your strength? And he said yes. Because he couldn't just make metal all the time.

Heidi Rabinowitz 4:02

So when he was a strong man showing off his strength, do you mean like he was in the circus or putting on shows to show how strong he was? Aria: Yeah. Heidi: OK, cool. So you like two different books about being strong, but kind of in two different ways. Right? One is like big muscles. And the other one was... what kind of strong was the other one?

Aria 4:21

It was the one that you're strong inside, your heart is strong.

Heidi Rabinowitz 4:25

Do you think you're strong?

Aria 4:27

Maybe?

Heidi Rabinowitz 4:30

Would you like to be strong?

Aria 4:31

Yeah. Then I could play kickball.

Heidi Rabinowitz 4:36

Okay, tell us about another book.

Aria 4:42

Brave Girl. So it is about a young woman from Russia. And she moved to New York. No one would hire her father or mother, but they would hire her to make clothes. She thought it was unfair that she was paid a little and they got only a little lunch break. She wanted to learn, but there was no schools that she could go to back then. And so she went to the library at night and worked the day and then she got like, four hours of sleep, and then she had to wake up to go to work. She started making friends with the workers at the place where they make clothes. And they said that they should have a strike. So she talked to the men workers and they were like, we think we should make a strike but you're a woman and you couldn't do it. After those words she was like, well, I can do it. So she started making speeches and organizing strikes. She was in jail sometimes and her ribcages were broken. But she still wanted freedom. And so they finally said, Fine, fine. Then they let her get more pay get more breaks. I liked it because it was a book about a girl who helped change the world.

Heidi Rabinowitz 6:26

Very good. And that's a real person. Right?

Aria 6:28

Yes.

Heidi Rabinowitz 6:29

Okay. And then you had another choice, right?

Aria 6:34

Yeah. It's called Gittel's Journey by Leslea Newman. The girl named Gittel, she was in Russia, like the one in Brave Girl. She had to go to New York with her mother, and leave behind a lot of things. When they got to this place where they check people if they were sick, and so they can go, Gittel was not sick. The man who was checking them asked her mom, what happened to your eye, and she was like, I was crying. And she go wash your face and then she came out and her eye was still pink. And the man said you have an infection, you can't go to New York. And Gittel had to go by herself. And her mother gave her a piece of paper with her cousin's address and name on it. And then she found her cousin after being on a bunch of boats. She went to New York and found her cousin.

Heidi Rabinowitz 7:09

What did you like about that book?

Aria 7:42

I liked that it was like about a journey to freedom. Because people were fighting in Russia. And she had to go to New York. Heidi: So she could be safe? Aria: Yeah.

Heidi Rabinowitz 7:55

So I noticed that all of the books that you've talked about are historical books, none of them take place now. So why do you like that?

Aria 8:08

I like them because I can learn how the past made the future.

Heidi Rabinowitz 8:15

What is it about today that you can see came from that history?

Aria 8:20

Well, when in the Brave Girl book, that woman she made more people have freedom.

Heidi Rabinowitz 8:26

So do you think that people are more free today because of what she did back then?

Aria 8:31

Yeah.

Heidi Rabinowitz 8:32

Okay. So it sounds like you're reading these books and finding a lot of things to admire. Do these books change the way you think about things?

Aria 8:46

I think the only thing that it changed is that I read more.

Heidi Rabinowitz 8:51

Why do you like to read so much?

Aria 8:54

Because in the real world, it is good. But sometimes you need to go to another world. And you can read a book and then you're transformed into another world inside the book. That's why I like reading.

Heidi Rabinowitz 9:11

It's interesting, though, because when you say that it makes me think of reading things like fantasy where you're literally reading about another world.

Aria 9:17

Yeah. I also read about biographies about people who change the way everybody today.

Heidi Rabinowitz 9:25

So you like to know how we got to where we are. Aria: Uh-huh. Heidi: Do you care about whether the main character is a boy or a girl?

Aria 9:37

Maybe. I got a big fairy tale book out of this library once. And I didn't really like it because every time the prince saves the princesses and then they live happily ever after. That's why I like Harriet Hamsterbone.

Heidi Rabinowitz 9:54

Harriet Hamsterbone? Aria: Yup. Heidi: I don't know those books. What is that?

Aria 9:59

They're chapter books but with pictures in there, and it's kind of my favorite books it's like it has words in it but pictures with word bubbles.

Heidi Rabinowitz 10:11

Graphic novels.

Aria 10:12

Yeah. It's a graphic novel and a chapter book. I like those types of books. It's a series about a hamster princess. All the books are based on a fairy tale. But they're a different version. Like Whiskerella. Her life wasn't really bad. She didn't want to be cast on the spell, put in a nice dress and glass slippers. She wanted to stay home and read books

Heidi Rabinowitz 10:12

[laughing] That's pretty different from Cinderella.

Aria 10:55

Yeah, and instead of marrying a prince, she married a stable boy. And then they lived happily ever after. Jack and the Beanstalk, instead of a boy climbing up, a girl climbed up with a battle quail. And she saved the harpster, a hamster with a harp attached to its back, and broke a giant bunny's back.

Heidi Rabinowitz 11:22

A giant bunny? Aria: Yeah. Heidi: Wow, I'll have to check those out. That sounds like fun. Aria: Um-hmm. Heidi: Okay, so the books that you were talking about before, All Kinds of Strong and those books, are they picture books or chapter books?

Aria 11:37

They're all picture books.

Heidi Rabinowitz 11:41

Okay. What age kids do you think they are best for?

Aria 11:46

Hmm. Well, I think seven and eight.

Heidi Rabinowitz 11:49

I would agree with that. We talked a little bit about the art in All Kinds of Strong. Was there anything special about the art in any of those other books?

Aria 11:58

Well, in Zishe the Strong Man it was like a picture book but it also had word bubbles. I like that.

Heidi Rabinowitz 12:11

So it was a little bit of graphic novel style. Aria: Um-hmm. Heidi: Why do you think kids should read Jewish books?

Aria 12:22

Because some of the people who changed the world were Jewish, or Russian or Arabic, or Yiddish. And those are part of the Jewish people. And I think that they should read their biographies to learn more about them.

Heidi Rabinowitz 12:48

Do you think kids who are not Jewish should read books about Jewish characters or real Jewish people?

Aria 12:56

Maybe, because then they would be learning another religion and culture. And that's what I sometimes try to do.

Heidi Rabinowitz 13:06

You try to read books about non Jewish characters or non Jewish real life people in biographies? Aria: Yeah. Heidi: Who did you read about that you really were impressed by?

Aria 13:17

I really like Leonardo da Vinci cause he had a very nice imagination, and he wrote upside down. No backwards, he wrote backwards. With his right hand, because he was a lefty. But it was very hard to write with the left side this way. So he just wrote, right, this way.

Heidi Rabinowitz 13:44

Okay, cool. So you might remember from when you were with me when I was interviewing Craig Taubman the musician when he was here at B'nai Israel, that I always like to ask the guests of the podcast if there's something that they think people should do to help make the world a better place. So I know last time, you told me that people should not litter and I agree with that completely. Do you have any other suggestions for how people can make the world a better place?

Aria 14:14

That they should read more and stop doing other stuff that's not like active or learning something.

Heidi Rabinowitz 14:25

What stuff should they stop doing?

Aria 14:28

Like, hanging around on the couch watching TV.

Heidi Rabinowitz 14:34

Okay, well, you have given excellent answers and really good suggestions. Aria, thank you for coming on the show.

Aria 14:42

You're welcome.

Sadaf Siddique 14:43

TEASER: Hi, I'm Sadaf Siddique, co author of Muslims in Story and the cofounder of Kitaab World. I will be joining you soon on the next Book of Life podcast, and I would like to dedicate this episode to people building bridges with community.

Heidi Rabinowitz 15:00

THEME MUSIC, OUTRO: Don't be a stranger. Say hi to Heidi 561-206-2473 or BookofLifePodcast@gmail.com. Check out our Facebook page or our Facebook discussion group Jewish Kidlit Mavens. We are occasionally on Twitter too. There are lots of ways to support the show through Patreon and through donations to our home library, The Feldman Children's Library at Congregation B'nai Israel of Boca Raton, Florida. You can find links for all of that and more at BookofLifepodcast.com. Our background music is provided by the Freilachmakers Klezmer String Band. Thanks for listening and happy reading.

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