

***My Grandmother's Stories:
A Collection of Jewish Folk Tales***

**Adèle Geras, Author
Jael Jordan, Artist
Older Children's Book Award Winners**

**Introduction by
Sue Barancik**

We were charmed by the book we selected as the Older Children's Book Award winner, My Grandmother's Stories, written by Adèle Geras and illustrated by Jael Jordan, published by Alfred A. Knopf.

A grandmother and her young granddaughter enjoy a close relationship as the two explore the treasures in Grandmother's home. Each object the girl picks up reminds her grandma of a story, some from the Bible, some from folklore, and some from more contemporary sources. All the stories Grandma tells teach positive Jewish values, but in a painless, non-didactic way. The illustrations fit this loving book so well, we felt that we would be remiss in not honoring the artist as well.

Adèle Geras is not a newcomer to children's literature. Two previous candidates for this award written by Ms. Geras were The Girls in the Velvet Frame, a novel of pre-World War I Palestine, and Voyage, a story about the trip to America by a family of immigrants. Her prose is strong, her books memorable. In My Grandmother's Stories, she evokes a wonderful picture of life in another era and a moving relationship between a grandmother and granddaughter.

Ms. Geras was born in Jerusalem and spent her childhood in many countries, including North Borneo and Gambia. She now makes her home in Manchester, England. She was unable to attend our banquet, but she sent a letter of acceptance.

The book is enhanced by the paintings of Jael Jordan. She was born in England and spent most of her childhood in Israel. Her home is now in London, and she sent her greetings in a letter.

Letter of Acceptance, by Adèle Geras

The first thing I'd like to do is say an enormous thank you to everyone. Firstly to Ralph Taylor and the individual members of the committee who awarded me this prize, secondly to Jane Fior, my editor at Heinemann in London whose brainchild this book was, and thirdly to Jael Jordan who illustrated my stories so perfectly.

I regret very much not being in Miami Beach with all of you, attending the banquet and meeting you and talking to everyone personally, but you must think of me here in Manchester having my own small celebration, raising a glass of wine in a toast to all of you across the Atlantic, and above all, thinking of my grandmother who would have derived a great deal of *nakhes* [pleasure] from this award.

She was wise, kind, funny: in short, a "mensch." She was just as I describe her—only more so. Part of the pleasure I found in writing the stories came from the knowledge that I was capturing as truthfully as I possibly could a place that has now changed greatly, and a time that has disappeared. My grandmother's flat is the background for all of my earliest memories, and it was good to be back there again.

I believe it is the duty of all of us to remember and record as much as we can of ourselves and our experiences, both for our own delight, and also in order to be able to show the past to our children and their children. That's why I love albums full of old family snapshots and enjoy hearing reminiscences from anyone at all whose memory goes back further than mine.

I shall put my plaque up on the wall, and look at it every day and thank all of you, all over again.

Letter of Acceptance, by Jael Jordan

I am so delighted that *My Grandmother's Stories* has won the 1990 Sydney Taylor Book Award. It was a very important book for me, partly because it was such a treat to be able to respond to Adèle Geras' warm and vivid text, but also because it gave me the opportunity of looking at and remembering my own family background. Many of the characters I drew were based on family and friends; they include a portrait of my mother (posing as Auntie Adèle in an old photograph), and of my paternal great-grandparents (used as the frontispiece in the Knopf edition of the book). It was a real challenge to try and depict a range of Jewish types as people real to me rather than familiar stereotypes.

I would like to thank very warmly both Adèle Geras and Jane Fior, editor of this book, for their continual support and enthusiasm, which made all the difference to the flow of work. Fiona Macmillan, Art Editor, made a splendid job of the production.

My apologies for not being able to come to Miami in person, but I certainly feel very honored to be receiving this award.

Many thanks.