**Where are all the Poor Jews?: Classism in Jewish children’s literature**

Over forty years ago, the “Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty” was founded in response to growing concerns that Jewish poverty was a largely overlooked issue within the community, something that was deemed too taboo to discuss, let alone address head-on. In 2002, the Jewish community was further shocked when reports by *The Forward* showed that there were over two-hundred thousand Jews living in poverty in New York City alone. Since then, the problem has only grown; some sources reporting numbers twice that in recent years.

Despite this, the myth of the rich Jew persists to the exclusion of even acknowledging the existence of those who are not. But this stereotype might be just that: a stereotype. Jews are not exclusively—or even mostly—rich and successful. There are indigent Jews, low income Jews, middle class Jews, and yes, rich Jews. Nevertheless, we tend to pay attention to the stories of rich Jews to an inordinate degree. The exceptions being the glorification of the shtetl and stories of early immigrants.

So where are the poor Jews in contemporary Jewish children’s literature? And why is poverty acknowledged only as a glorification of an idyllic bygone era? I argue the present lack of contemporary depictions of lower socioeconomic status in Jewish children’s literature is twofold. The lack of contemporary examples stem both from a deep sense of internalized shame and from the desire to create a story of underdog success; a Cinderella story of Jews rising out of poverty into power and wealth.