

# INSPIRATION

## Movies, Music and Books to Start the Year Right

### Music

Follow this [link](#) to a Spotify playlist of songs to help get you in the mood for Rosh Hashanah!



### Movies

#### Rosh Hashanah on the Big Screen

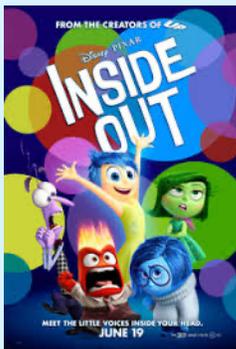
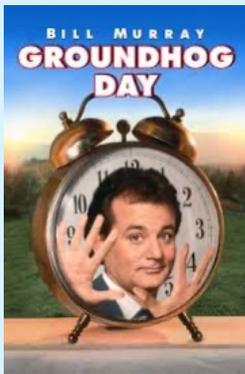
Here are some movies that will inspire you to start the year with a fresh mindset, celebrate the power of reinvention, and embrace all the New Year will have to offer.

#### *Wild* (2014)

When we go on a journey away from our everyday routine, it allows us to rethink our past and see life in a new perspective, which is exactly what the main character of this film did. After an emotional roller coaster involving a relative's death, a broken marriage, a failed career, and drug addiction, Cheryl Strayed (Reese Witherspoon) sets out on a life-changing journey along three thousand miles of the Pacific Crest Trail, a hike her mother would have wanted her to do. During her ambitious voyage, she analyzes her past mistakes, comes to a resolution with herself, and takes on a challenge that expert hikers have failed to accomplish.

#### *My Fair Lady* (1964)

Set in Edwardian London, *My Fair Lady* tells the story of Covent Garden flower girl Eliza Doolittle (Audrey Hepburn), whose thick Cockney accent attracts the attention of phonetics expert Professor Henry Higgins (Rex Harrison). On a bet, Higgins vows to transform Eliza from a "deliciously low" street urchin into a proper lady. Using bullying and insults, he forces her to practice speaking until



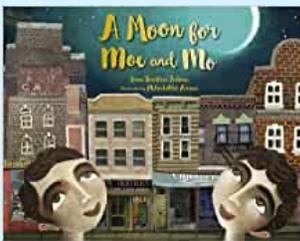
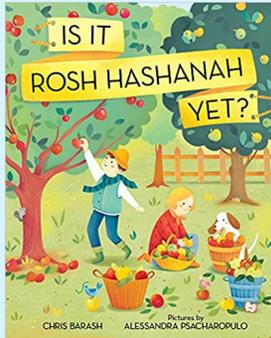
“proper English” flows effortlessly from her lips and she’s presented in high society without revealing her lowly origins. Eliza’s transformation is a success, but she’s not the only one who ends up turning a new leaf. When she becomes fed up with Higgins’ ill treatment, the professor realizes he can’t live without her, thus proving even classist curmudgeons are capable of discovering what really matters in life.

### **Groundhog Day (1993)**

Here, the notion of a fresh start is paradoxical in nature: Phil (Bill Murray) is granted seemingly infinite pushes of the reset button, yet remains shackled by the predictable mechanics of his looping 24 hours. Even death offers no exit, merely a fast-track rewind to the taunting wake-up call of “I Got You Babe” on morning radio. Suspended in the purgatory of snowy Punxsutawney, PA, this eye-rolling Sisyphus experiences denial, despair, delusions of grandeur (“I’m a god,” he tells eventual romantic interest) (Andie McDowell) and finally, inspiration. Phil’s temporal snafu magnifies the difficulty of starting over: do we succumb to a rote existence or challenge it and truly change ourselves?

### **Inside Out (2015)**

This beautiful movie for the whole family explores the changes that must occur in order for us to move forward in our lives, even if they aren’t always the ones that we would choose.



## Books

### For the Young: Preschool & Picture Books

#### *Is It Rosh Hashanah Yet?*

by Chris Barash & Alessandra Psacharopulo

This is a simple rhyming story with cute illustrations. This book showcases a few different traditions: apple picking, eating pomegranates (it's said that each seed represents a commandment in the Torah), and listening to the shofar. This will be a good way for toddlers to learn about the terms and traditions, and it culminates with the family eating brisket, so the ending is definitely a happy one!

#### *New Year at the Pier*

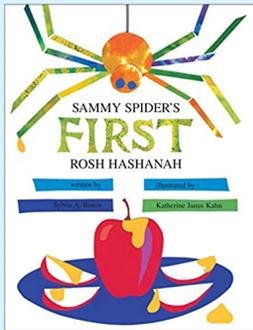
by April Halprin Wayland & Stephane Jorish

Tashlich is very important at this time of year, a Jewish atonement tradition that occurs after synagogue service. Miriam and Izzy are two siblings who use the day to apologize to each other and their friends and family. At its core, this one really is a sweet story about kindness.

#### *A Moon for Moe and Mo*

by Jam Breskin Zalben & Mehrdokht Amini

This story is about two boys, Moses Feldman and Mohammed Hassan, who live at opposite ends of Flatbush Avenue. One day in a shop, the boys meet and discover that they have a lot in common with each other, and a friendship gently blossoms. The focus on empathy and kindness enables both boys to celebrate their respective holidays (Rosh Hashanah and Ramadan) together.



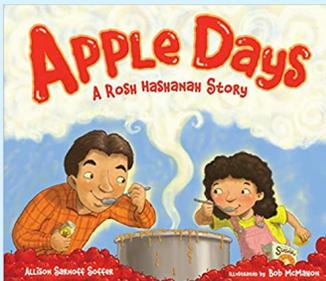
## *Sammy Spider's First Rosh Hashanah*

by Sylvia A. Rouss & Katherine Janus Kahn

Many of us do not like spiders, and would not choose to read books about spiders, even if they are constructed out of otherwise cool cut-out illustrations. If you don't have arachnophobia then this is a cute story about the spiders watching as the Shapiros get ready for the holiday. The book does a good job of emphasizing big, medium, and little, and you get a cheesy parent pun to close the whole thing down. Is it worth spider trauma? Who can say.

## *Apple Days*

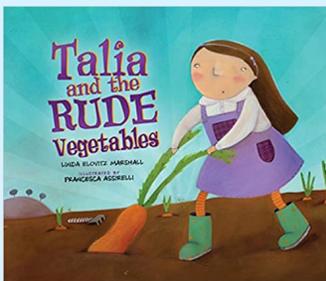
by Allison Sarnoff Soffer and Bob McMahon



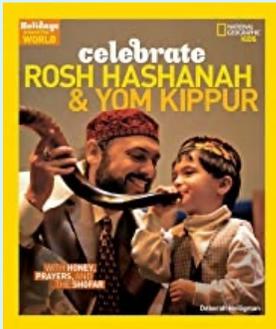
This is a sweet story about community. Katy loves Rosh Hashanah, mostly because it means she has a special ritual with her mother: they go apple picking and then make applesauce together. Disappointingly, this year that tradition gets interrupted by the early arrival of her new cousin. When Katy expresses her dismay to her friendly neighborhood crossing guard, everyone contributes an apple to the cause. Some may not like the aesthetic, but the story has a good message.

## *Talia and the Rude Vegetables*

by Linda Elovitz Marshall and Francesca Asserilli



This one comes replete with some great word play. Talia misunderstands her grandmother's request for 'root' vegetables as 'rude' vegetables and, confused, still manages to find a way to make the holiday sweet. The book also includes slightly elevated vocabulary words; which are always fun to explain to kids. The story may be familiar since some of us may have had grandparents, whose Eastern European accents could be easy to misunderstand at times.



## *Celebrate Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur*

by Deborah Heiligman

This is a great primer on the High Holy Days, with easy to read information interspersed with colorful photographs. Particularly cool is the photo showing an Israeli chef decorating a ridiculously large quantity of gefilte fish (a dish made from different types of fish ground together). There is a lot of great information for the curious reader.

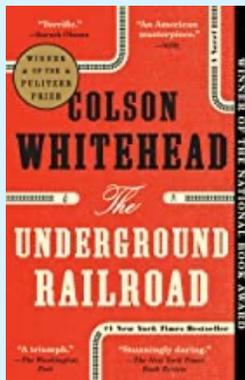
## Books

### For the Young at Heart

## *The Underground Railroad*

by Colson Whitehead

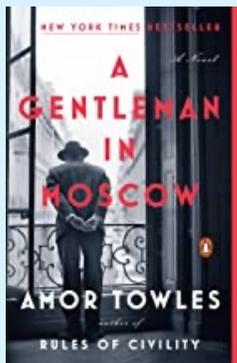
Starting a new life is never simple, and it's especially difficult for Cora — a slave on a cotton plantation in Georgia. An outcast amongst her fellow slaves, when Caesar arrives from Virginia, he tells her of a way to escape: The Underground Railroad. In Colson Whitehead's work of fiction, the Underground Railroad consists of actual tunnels and railways. But soon after their escape, it becomes clear Cora and Caesar are being hunted. With attention to historical detail, the author creates a work that exemplifies the horrors of slavery as Cora tries desperately to start over.

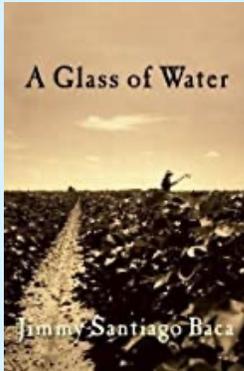


## *A Gentleman in Moscow*

by Amor Towles

In 1922 Moscow, Count Alexander Ilyich Rostov is sentenced to house arrest at the Moscow Hotel Metropol. Though the aristocrat has never worked a day in his life, he'll have to learn how to adjust to life in one room. But as he watches the horrors unfolding around him, he'll realize that maybe his confinement isn't such a curse after all.





## *A Glass of Water*

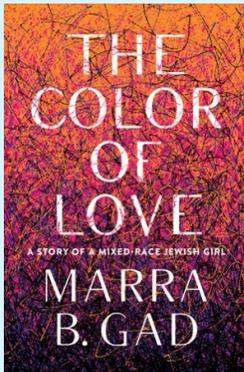
by Jimmy Santiago Baca

Giving a voice to the Chicano experience, Baca's novel follows a family who risks everything crossing the Mexico border to make a better life for themselves in America. Casimiro and Nopal spend their days in the chili fields, until Nopal is unexpected — and brutally — murdered. Without a mother, Casimiro and Nopal's sons, Lorenzo and Vito, are left to navigate this strange new world by themselves. Though Lorenzo follows in his father's footsteps, Vito becomes a notorious boxer. Coming back together to face a common enemy, Baca's novel takes a heart-wrenching look at the "American Dream" as well as the power of brotherhood.

## *The Color of Love*

by Marra Gad

*Winner of the 2020 Midwest Book Award in Autobiography/Memoir, The Color of Love is an unforgettable memoir about a mixed-race Jewish woman who, after fifteen years of estrangement from her racist great-aunt, helps bring her home when Alzheimer's strikes.*



Marra's biological mother was unwed, white, and Jewish, and her biological father was black. While still a child, Marra came to realize that she was a "mixed-race," Jewish unicorn. In Black spaces, she was not "Black enough" or told that it was OK to be Christian or Muslim, but not Jewish. In Jewish spaces, she was mistaken for the help, asked to leave, or worse. Even in her own extended family, racism bubbled to the surface. *The Color of Love* explores the idea of *yerusha*, which means "inheritance" in Yiddish. At turns heart-wrenching and heartwarming, this is a story about what you inherit from your family's identity, disease, melanin, hate, and most powerful of all, love. With honesty, insight, and warmth, Marra B. Gad has written an inspirational, moving chronicle proving that when all else is stripped away, love is where we return, and love is always our greatest inheritance.