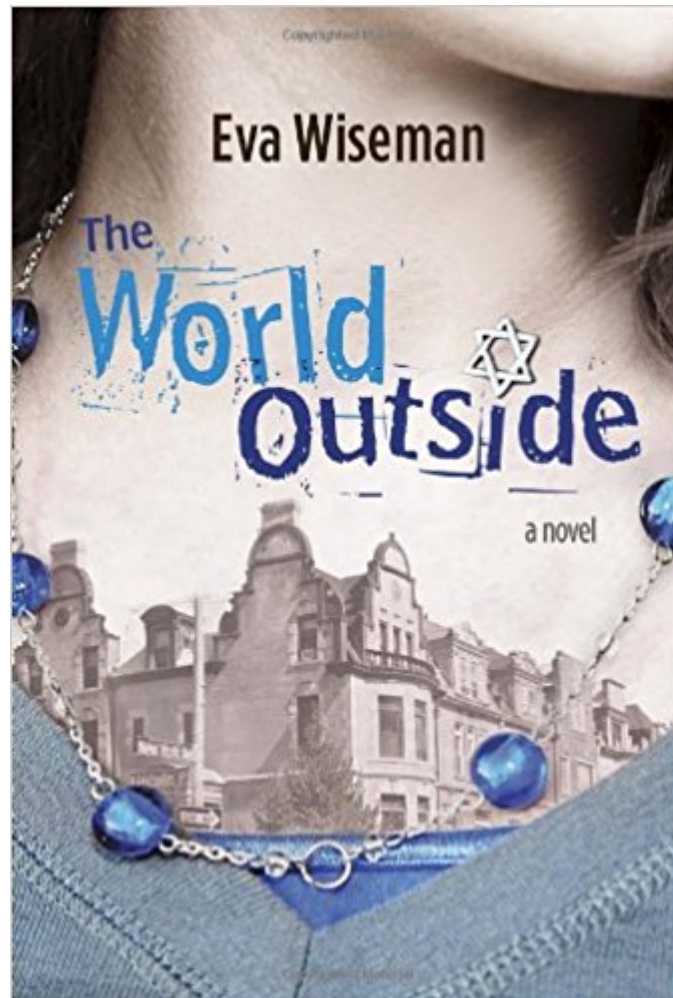




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The World Outside



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Synopsis

An informative and powerful novel, *The World Outside* explores the life of a teenage girl in a fundamentalist Hasidic community who dreams of a different future.

Seventeen-year-old Chanie Altman lives the protected life of a Lubavitcher Hasidic girl in Crown Heights, Brooklyn, New York, in 1991. Religion is the most important aspect of her life, and, like other Lubavitcher girls, she is expected to attend a seminary and to marry as soon as she graduates from high school. But Chanie has a beautiful voice and dreams of becoming an opera singer - a profession forbidden to a Hasidic girl. When she meets David, a non-Hasidic Jewish boy, he opens the portals to the world outside her fundamentalist community. The Crown Heights riots break out, and the Lubavitchers are put under siege by their African-American neighbors. A tragedy occurs. Will Chanie stay in the fundamentalist community she has always known in a life that has been prescribed for her, or will she leave it behind to follow her dreams?

Book Information

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Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

Customer Reviews

Gr 9 Up • What does it mean to become an adult? For Chanie, a Hasidic Jew living in Crown Heights, Brooklyn in the early 1990s, it means marriage and a full commitment to her religion and culture. Chanie has always been curious as to why she can and cannot do certain things, curiosity that is not encouraged by her parents, especially her mother. Her interest in the world outside is

enhanced when she meets David. Knowing of Chanie's immense musical talent, he encourages her to apply to Juilliard where she gets accepted and to focus on herself instead of everyone else. Chanie's choice for her future becomes overshadowed by her terminally ill brother's death and the infamous 1991 Crown Heights riot, in which she witnesses the horrific attacks against Jewish homes, property, and people. Wiseman is known for choosing unique time periods in Jewish history for her books. She authentically portrays a young woman torn between two worlds. Readers of all backgrounds will be able to empathize with Chanie, and while some readers may disagree with her choices, the ending is believable. Some of the dialogue seems contrived at times, and the explanations about Hasidic culture and rituals could have been woven into the story more seamlessly. Recommended for libraries looking to enhance their collections about cultural groups and self-identity. Marissa Lieberman, East Orange Public Library, NJ

Seventeen-year-old Chanie has spent her entire life in New York's Hasidic Crown Heights neighborhood. Her days center around obedience to God, her parents, and her Rebbe (the spiritual leader of her Lubavitcher community). Her dream of becoming an opera singer seems impossible until she meets David, a non-Hasidic Jewish boy who helps her to see that her beautiful voice can lead to a life beyond the restrictive world she knows. Set in 1991 during the Crown Heights riots (between African Americans and Jews), the book depicts the sect sympathetically. Chanie is bright and questioning; she demonstrates her spunk in befriending African American teen Jade and falling in love with the Jewish-but-not-Jewish-enough David, who helps her apply to Juilliard, where she is accepted. All of which makes Chanie's final decision to give up Juilliard and David and submit to an arranged marriage realistic but frustrating for most readers. Even so, this will find a readership with fans of Chaim Potok's *The Chosen* (1967) and Barry Deutsch's *Hereville: How Mirka Got Her Sword* (2010). Grades 7-10. --Kay Weisman

I was excited to win a copy of *The World Outside* by Eva Wiseman through the LibraryThing Early Reviewers Program. The book takes place in 1991 in the Crown Heights section of Brooklyn. Chanie, the book's main character is a Lubavitcher girl, part of a strict Hasidic sect of Judaism. Chanie has always accepted her culture and her sheltered lifestyle but has begun to rebel a bit as she grows older. When she meets a David a Jewish boy who is not Hasidic she begins to look at her families lifestyle through a new lens. David encourages Chanie to stretch her wings a bit but she is conflicted about choosing between the secular life and the spiritual one. In the end Chanie must make a choice on what world she will embrace. *The World Outside* does a great job of showing the

reader what life is like for a Hasidic teen. Although, it may seem restrictive to those on the outside to those within it is conscious decision and provides a sense of community. The writing had a good flow and kept your interest. I will definitely be reading other books by this author. 3.5 stars!

My daughter was given this book, but was told to let me see it first. I AM SO GLAD I DID! As a Lubavitcher, I was hesitant about it, since most books written about the community are inaccurate. I saw a friend's name in the acknowledgements, so I figured it must be ok. First off, I realize Ms. Wiseman is not Lubavitch, nor religious. However, being that she spent the time to research, I would have thought she would have given her manuscript to those who helped her for approval. She didn't. 1. Bais Rivkah school only has a half day on Friday. 2. They don't get homework on Friday, and certainly none that must get done before shabbos. 3. Why was Baba drinking milk after a meat meal Friday night? 4. Why was Chanie eating a bagel for breakfast shabbos morning? The mother in the book is portrayed as a monster, and all the religious people are puppets. They quote stuff constantly like a brainwashed zombie. Maybe there are people in Crown Heights like that, but in thirty years, I have yet to meet one. I feel that Ms. Wiseman wrote this book to push an agenda. I am going to file this book where it belongs, IN THE GARBAGE! I've rarely thrown a book in the garbage. I run a memorial library for my deceased son's memory, so I read a lot of books. Save your money and pick a different book.

Growing up in NJ during the 1980's and 90's I recall hearing the news about the incident in Crown Heights. I have some experience with Lubavitch in a community that I worked security in which was a mix with blacks. There was quite some conflict. It was a class of cultures. [The World Outside] by [Eva Wiseman] was simply written but at times seemed to be like an after school special plot. It seems to be written for a specific community who can not read it. I would have liked to see more about the external conflict mixed with the internal conflict. Given the setting I feel this should have played a bigger role and given those not familiar with the history more background.

Chanie has grown up in a close-knit Lubavitch community in Brooklyn, NY with her many siblings, most of which have left home, except for her twin brother who is profoundly mentally handicapped due to not getting enough oxygen while he was being delivered. Her mother often blames her for being born first and depriving her brother, one of the many ways she demeans her youngest daughter. Chanie meets David, though Jewish, doesn't belong to their sect. He encourages her to apply to Juilliard Music School because of her beautiful singing voice, even

though she can't read music and has no formal training. A riot in the neighborhood by Black instigators traps the family in their apartment for several days and finally gives Chanie and her mother time to talk and come to terms with their differences. Set in 1991, this was a great story but Chanie's decisions disappointed me at the end of the book.

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