

Assimilating America: The Life and Stories of Isaac Bashevis Singer

NEH/LOA/ALA Library Project

Grant Guidelines

This project is made possible by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities and is coordinated by The Library of America in cooperation with the American Library Association.

The centennial celebration **Assimilating America: The Life and Stories of Isaac Bashevis Singer**, funded by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), will organize, present, and support public programs on the life and work of the Nobel Prize-winning writer Isaac Bashevis Singer (1904-1991). Coordinated by The Library of America, **Assimilating America** will be a multifaceted exploration of the most famous Yiddish writer of the twentieth century— an immigrant writer who made himself an American writer, in the process transforming American culture and being transformed himself, in his life and in his work. The celebration will be produced by cultural institutions nationwide, in association with the Mercantile Library of New York and the American Library Association and with the support of the Estate of Isaac Bashevis Singer.

Assimilating America will provide \$450 grants to 50 public, academic, school, or special libraries interested in organizing Singer programs for the public. All libraries are invited to apply to receive these grants to support their programs. Participating libraries will receive the three-volume hardcover authoritative collection *Isaac Bashevis Singer: Collected Stories*, to be published by The Library of America in July 2004.

What the Grant Provides

Libraries selected for the **Assimilating America** project will receive:

- A \$450 grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities to be used for program expenses
- The three-volume hardcover collection *Isaac Bashevis Singer: Collected Stories*, Ilan Stavans, editor.
- Supporting materials, including a reading group guide and the booklet "How to Organize a Singer Program"
- An orientation workshop for project directors at the American Library Association (ALA) Annual Conference in Orlando, Florida, on June 27, 2004
- Access to an extensive Singer Centennial website with continually updated resources including a list of events, biographical and critical writings on Singer, and relevant links to other sites (launch December 2003)

Requirements for Libraries

All libraries chosen for the **Assimilating America** project are required to:

- Present a minimum of one program featuring the life and/or stories of Isaac Bashevis Singer between May 2004 and November 2004. The program should occur as close as possible to the centennial of the birth of Isaac Bashevis Singer, July 14, 2004. Please see the "Types of Programs Supported" section below for ideas for Singer Centennial programs.
- Provide a program that is free, open to the public, and marketed to a public audience.
- Provide details about your program for the www.Singer100.org website calendar, where you and your patrons will be able to see listings of all the programs organized as part of the centennial celebration.
- Complete a brief final report after the program has been completed. Failure to submit a final report in a timely manner may result in forfeiting your library's opportunity to participate in future ALA-sponsored public programs.

Types of Programs Supported

The Singer Centennial will provide support for the following types of programs:

- **Lectures** by Singer scholars from local universities, colleges, and schools; independent scholars; writers; and others knowledgeable about Singer and his work. People who are familiar with the featured themes of the centennial project (Singer as an American writer, what makes a writer American, the immigrant experience in American literature, history, and culture) will make good speakers, as long as they use Singer's life and work as a point of departure. People who knew Singer personally can be an added attraction.
- **Panel discussions** featuring any of the above. Mixing three or four scholars or writers in a talk led by a knowledgeable moderator can make a great program.
- **Film showings** of Singer's novels or stories made into films, such as *The Magician of Lublin*; *Enemies: A Love Story*; *The Beard*; *Isaac in America*; *The Cafeteria*; and *Yentl*, can make an exciting program. Screenings of these films could be followed by a discussion with a local film critic or historian. A list of Singer-related films is available at the website at www.Singer100.org.
- **Book discussions.** Particularly stimulating for the public could be book discussions led by scholars or teachers. All of Singer's stories will be available in the three-volume set to be published by The Library of America in July 2004. Many of these are haunting parables that could lend themselves to a fascinating give-and-take.
- **Book-into-film discussions.** An interesting event might be to ask participants to read a novel and then show the film adaptation at your library, followed by a scholar- or teacher-led discussion about the differences and similarities between the two, and the choices the director and screenwriters made in adapting Singer's work.
- **Readings of Singer's stories** by local performers, or by actors who have agreed to make themselves available to libraries as part of the Singer Centennial.
- **Dramatizations**, such as "Dreamers and Demons: The Three Worlds of Isaac Bashevis Singer," a play by Isaiah Sheffer, host of the National Public Radio show "Selected Shorts," and a friend of Singer. Sheffer's play for three actors, based on Singer's stories and memoirs and on the personal relationship between the playwright and Singer, is available upon request (Run time: 70 minutes).

How to Apply

Read these guidelines and the attached application form and questions carefully. Then start thinking about the type of program you would like to present and possible dates for the event(s). Next, complete the attached form and questions. Enclose any supporting materials or letters of intent as instructed.

When you have completed the enclosed form, please mail the original and three copies to The Library of America, 14 East 60th Street, New York, NY 10022. **Applications must be received by December 15, 2003. Late or incomplete reports will not be accepted.**

Need help developing a Singer program?

The Singer Centennial will be happy to help you develop a program or answer questions about the grant application. We have a roster of university- and college-based scholars who are willing to speak about Singer, for a fee, with whom we can put you in touch. Call The Library of America at 212-308-3360 or email info@loa.org for assistance and more information. You can also reach the American Library Association at 312-280-5045 or publicprograms@ala.org.