



Not Our Kind

Kitty Zeldis

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With echoes of *The Rules of Civility* and *The Boston Girl*, a compelling and thought-provoking novel set in postwar New York City, about two women—one Jewish, one a WASP—and the wholly unexpected consequences of their meeting

One rainy morning in June, two years after the end of World War II, a minor traffic accident brings together Eleanor Moskowitz and Patricia Bellamy. Their encounter seems fated: Eleanor, a teacher and recent Vassar graduate, needs a job. Patricia's difficult thirteen-year-old daughter Margaux, recovering from polio, needs a private tutor.

Though she feels out of place in the Bellamys' rarefied and elegant Park Avenue milieu, Eleanor forms an instant bond with Margaux. Soon the idealistic young woman is filling the bright young girl's mind with Shakespeare and Latin. Though her mother, a hat maker with a little shop on Second Avenue, disapproves, Eleanor takes pride in her work, even if she must use the name "Moss" to enter the Bellamys' restricted doorman building each morning, and feels that Patricia's husband, Wynn, may have a problem with her being Jewish.

Invited to keep Margaux company at the Bellamys' country home in a small town in Connecticut, Eleanor meets Patricia's unreliable, bohemian brother, Tom, recently returned from Europe. The spark between Eleanor and Tom is instant and intense. Flushed with new romance and increasingly attached to her young pupil, Eleanor begins to feel more comfortable with Patricia and much of the world she inhabits. As the summer wears on, the two women's friendship grows—until one hot summer evening, a line is crossed, and both Eleanor and Patricia will have to make important decisions—choices that will reverberate through their lives.

Gripping and vividly told, *Not Our Kind* illuminates the lives of two women on the cusp of change—and asks how much our pasts can and should define our futures.

Not Our Kind Details

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Author : Kitty Zeldis

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From Reader Review Not Our Kind for online ebook

Vivian Payton says

Kitty Zeldis creates an intriguing story about Eleanor Moskowitz, an educated young Jewish woman who's a teacher and lives on Second Avenue in New York City, and Patricia Bellamy, a high society WASP who lives on Park Avenue. These two women's lives and worlds couldn't be further apart, and she takes you on their journey and what it was like living in New York City postwar 1947 describing how social and economic divisions were in that time period.

Patricia hires Eleanor to tutor her thirteen-year-old daughter, Margaux. Margaux was struck by the Polio epidemic that left her leg crippled and, as a result, she is tutored at home. Margaux can be quite difficult at times, mostly due to the insecurities she developed due to the effects of the disease and her dislike of her previous tutors. Patricia is worried about what her family and society friends will think because she hired a Jewish woman even though she is extremely happy with the effect she has on Margaux. Eleanor is asked to join the Bellamy family to their summer home in Connecticut to continue tutoring Margaux. At first, Eleanor and Patricia are polite, cordial and begin to form a bond, but their relationship soon plummets.

Adding to the story are Tom, Patricia's brother, who is instantly attracted to Eleanor, and Wynn, Patricia's husband, who dislikes Eleanor due to her heritage. Eleanor soon learns that she can't live with this dysfunctional family and can no longer be in their employ. It takes Patricia to realize that her bond with Eleanor began with Margaux, and whatever animosity she felt toward her she needs to correct.

Zeldis does an incredible job describing the role of women in the past, religious animosity, class division, the family dynamic, and she explores what it was like living in different ethnic communities in that era. I thoroughly enjoyed this historical fiction story, and I loved the way she describes the City. I also enjoyed Eleanor's character who is very sophisticated, extremely mature for her age, and knows exactly the right thing to say. I highly recommend this book.

Sarah says

In terms of things I like to read about this book covered so many bases: Judaism, teachers, the 1940's a New York City setting, disease, five checks!

Not Our Kind tells the tale of two women from vastly different circumstances. Eleanor Moskowitz, the daughter of a widowed milliner and Patricia Bellamy, the wealthy privileged mother of a teenage daughter. Like two dogs sniffing each other out, circling, both curious and apprehensive. Together they share a common interest, Margaux, Patricia's daughter. Margaux has survived polio but, as it has left her crippled, she is reluctant to return to school. Hired by the Bellamy's as her private tutor, Eleanor is the only person who has been able to bring Margaux out of her depression. But the rules of polite society and the subtle snubs of a anti-Semitic elitism permeate their interactions.

This novel manages to skillfully capture the unwritten taboos of society and the result of attempting to initiate change. The characters are richly crafted, the story is engaging, and the subject matter thought-provoking.

Claudia Silk says

Great historical fiction about a time period that isn't usually covered - the late 1940's. I loved the fact that this story stayed in the time period and didn't flip back and forth with present day. The story revolves around 2 women one a WASP and one a Jewish woman and the way their lives literally collide. I loved the settings both in the city and in the country (Connecticut). Well done and Kitty Zeldis will be appearing at our library in September!!

Susan Peterson says

Not Our Kind is a riveting story featuring two women: a young Jewish girl and the rich woman who hires her to tutor her young daughter. The book takes place in New York City in 1947 and the author does an excellent job of putting the reader in that time and place. The characters in this book are complex and interesting, as they deal with friendships and relationships that are tainted with bigotry and misogyny. This is a very thought-provoking novel which kept my interest from the first page through the last.

Tammy says

Not Our Kind is a captivating story of discrimination and anti-Semitism soon after WW2. Eleanor, a young Jewish teacher and Patricia, a rich WASP, are thrown together after an accident. Patricia hires Eleanor as a tutor for her young daughter. The story is told from the viewpoints of Eleanor and Patricia and it gave me a lot of insight to each character. I enjoyed reading this book! Kitty Zeldis beautifully described the clothing and scenery. Historical fiction is my favorite genre and I loved Not Our Kind!

Angela M says

3.5 stars.

The setting is New York City two years after WWII has ended and two women who couldn't be more unlike cross paths in a chance meeting when their taxis are involved in an accident. Eleanor Moskowitz, a young disillusioned woman has just resigned from her first teaching job at an exclusive private school when money and status win out over the honesty she stands up for. She's from a Jewish working class family and Patricia Bellamy who seems to have it all - affluence, a beautiful apartment, fabulous clothes, is from a world that Eleanor has dreamed of being a part of. Taking a job as a private tutor for Patricia's thirteen year old daughter Margaux, who has recovered from polio, makes Eleanor feel a little closer to these people, this circle, that has evaded, actually avoided her. Is it possible that Patricia would want her for a friend? The world she wants to be a part of is not a very nice place to be actually. It is filled with shallow, anti Semitic people who were happy that the war was over and thought Hitler was evil, but yet they insist that Eleanor use the name Moss instead of Moskowitz when announcing herself at their apartment building or is introduced to their friends.

This continues when Eleanor goes with them to their summer home in Connecticut so that Margaux can continue to catch up on the studies she missed. It's here that something happens that makes Eleanor realize

she she can't work for this family no matter how fond she has become of Margeaux. In many way, though it is as much about class and the have and have nots as it is anti Semitism. It's realistic in its portrayal of marriage that is not what it seems to be . While there is some food for thought here and some serious issues at the heart of the story, at times it lacked the depth I was expecting and leaned more towards women's fiction with a focus on marital issues and a romance story rather than literary fiction as it as billed as. Having said that, it was still a good story and I liked enough about to round up to 4 stars.

I received an advanced copy of this book from HarperCollins through Edelweiss.

Kathleen says

Definitely an interesting perspective of US history - antisemitism after WWII - not a time period that I remember having read before. The author really does an amazing job with setting that time and place and really grounded the reader into that age through the NYC location, the summering up north, the clothes, and the hats - can't forget to mention the hats! The story itself didn't really blow me away, but it was great vehicle to impart this time of US history through a historical fiction read. *Many thanks to Goodreads and the publisher for providing me with a copy of this book in exchange for an honest review.*

Crumb says

An honest portrayal of life in Brooklyn immediately following WWII. A MUST READ for historical fiction fans.

Eleanor Moskowitz never would have imagined that while on her way to a job interview, her world was about to completely change course. A traffic accident forced Patricia Bellamy and Eleanor to be introduced. After that, a domino effect took place.

This novel takes place two years after WWII in Brooklyn New York. There is still much prejudice against Jewish people. This book is unique in that it takes place after the war, and not during. The wreckage of the war is apparent, yet the world is recovering. I couldn't help but fall in love with Eleanor. She is a strong heroine and a perfect woman to root for. The relationship between Patricia and Eleanor is a fascinating one to watch and certainly complex. Patricia is clearly hesitant to have a relationship with Eleanor because of how society would view it (hence the title "Not Our Kind"). Yet as the novel progresses, we see a change that occurs in Patricia.

Kitty Zeldis paints a beautiful picture of life in Brooklyn following the war. This was an interesting narrative and one that I've never had the pleasure of reading before. Her writing is fluid and dazzling. Zeldis is one to watch!

Camille Maio says

I was quickly captivated by this story of two women from different worlds, though only blocks away. I found the characters to be realistic and engaging and the story of one that is at the same time simple and deep. Though I am usually a plot-driven reader, I found myself wholly engaged with Eleanor, Patricia, Tom,

Wynn, and Margeaux. I would love to see a sequel!

Renee says

This was a 2.5 star read for me. I was sooooo excited about the premise—Jewish woman facing discrimination and anti-Semitism in post-WW2 America—but sadly, the writing and storyline fell flat.

Characters had every opportunity for depth and complexity, but instead, I found them to be drawn with broad strokes. Emotions ran hot and cold—there was absolutely no in-between. One minute, a character was sorrowful and withdrawn; the next, chipper and flamboyant. Decisions were made with about as much thought as it takes to flip a light switch. Major conflicts were resolved in a...convenient...manner. Often, writing felt like a juvenile novel—excessive cliches, adjective overload, cringe-worthy metaphors. *sigh*

I know that sounds bad, and, well, it wasn't great. That being said, I did have an interest in the storyline and feel the novel would have been stronger if an editor had told the writer: don't make this such a preachy book—just tell the damn story. (Themes like consent and racism ended up feeling like just that—generic themes the author liked but couldn't quite write effectively for an adult audience.)

Actually, now that I wrote that, I think if you took out a couple of steamy sex scenes, this would be a perfect book for young adult audiences. The emotional rollercoaster feels akin to YA tropes. Hmm.

In all, if you're not looking for a super deep or dense story & want a hist fic distraction, this one would be a good pick.

*thanks to Harper Books for sending me a review copy!

Linda Zagon says

My Review of "Not Our Kind" by Kitty Zeldis Harper Collins Publishers September 4, 2018

Kitty Zeldis, Author of "Not Our Kind" had me captivated and mesmerized by her vivid and thought-provoking images and descriptions of the characters and landscape. The Genres for this Novel are Fiction, Women's Fiction and Historical Fiction. The time period of this novel is set two years after World War Two, in both New York City and Connecticut.

The author describes her colorful cast of characters as complex and complicated possibly due to the circumstances in this story. Eleanor Moskowitz, a young Jewish teacher is headed in a taxi in New York City for a job interview. Eleanor is a Vassar graduate, and has left her other teaching job for personal reasons. It is raining, and traffic is exceptionally slow. Suddenly another cab, hits the taxi that Eleanor is in. Eleanor's lip is bleeding, and now it looks like Eleanor has missed her interview. It seems like fate when a kind stranger steps in. Little does Eleanor realize how this encounter will change her life forever. Patricia Bellamy invites Eleanor to her home which is close by.

Patricia Bellamy is a wealthy, attractive and stylish woman. She lives in a dignified, elegant, older deluxe apartment house on Park Avenue. Patricia is a WASP, and hasn't had Jewish people come to her apartment. Margaux Bellamy, her young daughter has recently recovered from Polio, and is left with a disfigured leg and limp. Margaux's last tutor has resigned, and now a new one is needed. Margaux likes Eleanor immediately and requests that her mother hire her as a tutor.

Eleanor feels uncomfortable in Patricia's home. Eleanor's mother is a gifted hat-maker, and they live in smaller crowded dwellings. Eleanor somehow feels an attachment to Margaux and takes the job. Eleanor now finds that she is using the last name Moss instead of Moskowitz, when she enters the building. Another problem is that Patricia's husband is anti-semitic.

Kitty Zeldis has written a novel that makes one think. I appreciate that the author writes about significant problems of the historical period, the aftermath of the war, the epidemic of Polio, differences in class, and religion, and discrimination. Is it possible for people from different backgrounds to be friends? The author also discusses family, traditions, friendship, love and hope. I loved everything about this book and highly recommend this to readers who enjoy the historical time period after World War Two, and the set of challenges it presents. I received an Advanced Reading Edition from the Publisher for my honest review.

Jennifer ~ TarHeelReader says

4 sophisticated stars to Not Our Kind! ?? ?? ?? ??

It seems like I was just writing a review for another World War II story, and in fact I was. Not Our Kind stands out because of its unique perspective on being Jewish in a post-WWII United States.

To set the stage, two women are brought together by a chance encounter in Brooklyn two years after the war. Eleanor Moskovitz is Jewish and a teacher. She meets Patricia Bellamy whose challenging teen daughter, Margaux, needs a tutor due to being diagnosed with polio. Conditions are so uncomfortable for Jews at this time that Eleanor has to use a different last name to enter the Bellamys' building, and she spends ample time worrying about what Mr. Bellamy thinks of her, and even sometimes Patricia because she never knows just where she stands. Nonetheless, she easily forms a bond with Margaux, and that's why she's there.

Patricia's brother makes a visit, and he and Eleanor hit it off. At the same time, the true friendship between Eleanor and Patricia grows stronger until something happens to put it all in jeopardy.

I found the sense of time and place interesting in Not Our Kind with the recovery efforts combined with the stagnant feelings about groups of people that had not yet changed. Patricia and Eleanor, especially, were champions in this book. They each come into their own and offer insight when hopefully change was on the horizon. The writing is charming and sophisticated, and I enjoyed Zeldis' storytelling with the unique perspective of post-WWII fiction. A tale of unlikely friendship, Not Our Kind is a must-read for historical fiction fans.

Many thanks to the most generous Harper Books for the complimentary ARC. All opinions are my own.

My reviews can also be found on my blog: www.jennifertarheelreader.com

Jane says

Thanks to Suzy's Approved Books (FB), the author, and Harper for this ARC.

A fast moving book that I devoured in 3 days. I absolutely loved this book. The characters, the plot, and everything.

I'm a big fan of Jewish fiction and this one didn't disappoint. I always find it interesting that in the 1940's how anti-semitic people were and how they "Weren't Our Kind" and found means to change or shorten their name so they wouldn't be known as Jews. Thank G-d I grew up in the 1970s where I didn't face this problem but probably many people of my parents generation born in the 1920s and before did. My grandparents changed their names when they came over to Ellis Island from Russia and Poland due to long, unpronounceable names not for the reasons above.

Good job Kitty Zeldis and hope to read many more books from you and in this genre.

Mary says

I was fortunate to have an ARC to preview for the book festival. I was intrigued by the blurb that this was Rules of Civility meets The Boston Girl ... and the book lived up to those high expectations. Yes it covers themes of anti-Semitism, disability and feminism, but it's (mostly) set in New York City, which I love. in the late 1940's, always a favorite. with multiple strong female characters. and a few plot twists that made it seem fresh.

(also Book Bingo - originally published this year - it's scheduled to come out in September)

Suzanne Leopold says

Eleanor Moskowitz is stuck in a taxi in New York City during a visit from President Truman. She is without employment and is running late for a job interview for a teaching position. Her cab is hit by another vehicle leaving her with minor injuries. The other taxi's passenger, Patricia Bellamy, feels responsible and takes her to her apartment for treatment.

Eleanor is introduced to Patricia's thirteen-year-old daughter, Margeaux, who is crippled from polio. Because of her condition, Margeaux has been homeschooled by an inconsistent parade of tutors. The two meet and it is soon decided that Eleanor will take over her teaching responsibilities. The perfect job isn't as great as she expected because Patricia's husband dislikes her Jewish heritage. That bias requires her to disguise her name so other building residents won't know her religion. During the summer, Eleanor joins the Bellamys at their Connecticut home where she forms a connection with a more liberal member of the family.

I enjoyed reading the historical fiction novel "Not Our Kind". It was an interesting view of New York City through the eyes of people from different backgrounds. These two women forge an unlikely friendship after they discover they are more alike than expected. I look forward to reading more books by Kitty Zeldis.

