

Illinois Reading Council



Empowering  
Lives  
Through  
Literacy

# Communicator

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and follow us on:



**"A writer only begins a book. A reader finishes it."**

~ Samuel Johnson

## RESOURCES

### ***EL DICTADO AS A BILITERACY WRITING METHOD***

**By Elvira Pichardo, Lewis University**

One of the most useful methods for biliterate writing is the use of *El Dictado* ( Literacy Squared, 2014) or dictation. *El Dictado* is an explicit writing method where students learn the rules of language including phonics and phonemic awareness, and conventions of grammar through the use of an explicit cross linguistic lens (Escamilla et al, 2014). The following steps are based on Literacy Squared's Dictado chapter (Escamilla et al, 2014).

1. Select a standard that you are teaching as a grade team or a writing convention that has

arisen from multilingual student writing. Is there a grammar convention that needs to be explicitly taught to students? If so, in what language?

2. The Dictado is like three reads; students will listen to you read a text, quote, math problem, etc., and will write the writing prompt across three days. The dictado takes 15-20 mins.
3. Make sure to teach and include standard markings. Students use the same editing symbols in English and Spanish. They can apply these standard corrections when editing writing across genres.
  - **Day 1 of Dictado:** Students note language conventions as they correct their Dictado with the teacher. Afterwards, we read the text where this Dictado came from to gain deeper context and rich discussion.
  - **Day 2 of Dictado:** Students are encouraged to hear it, say it, write it. They authentically access Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing in the Dictado. Students will self-correct their own work and compare their errors..
  - **Day 3 of Dictado:** Students are analyzing the rules that govern language, and how those rules compare across Spanish and English. They are **leveraging both their linguistic repertoires and taking ownership** of their learning.
    - Students practice and are able to read back dictado in target language with expression and fluidity.
  - **After day 3 of Dictado:** Students can use a rubric or a checklist to analyze what they are proud of (orgullosa) and what they want to work on (trabajar), increasing student voice and accountability.

The following resources can facilitate your planning and implementation of the Dictado.

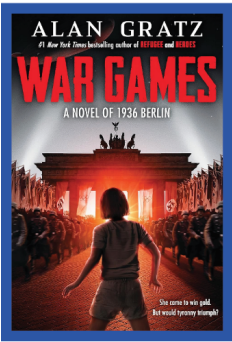
1. [Literacy Squared Website](#)
2. [The Dictado 2nd Grade Example](#)
3. [Literacy Squared's Planning a Dictado Using a Student's Writing Sample.](#)
4. Escamilla, K., Hopewell, S., Butvilofsky, S., Sparrow, W., Soltero-González, L., Ruiz-Figueroa, O., & Escamilla, M. (2014). *Biliteracy from the start: Literacy squared in action*. Philadelphia, PA: Caslon Publishing.

## IRC BOOK CLUB

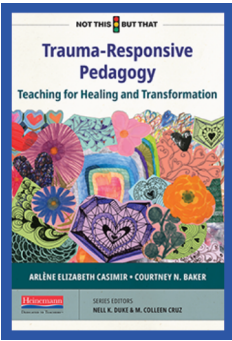
Join educators from all over the state in the online **Summer 2026 IRC Book Club!** Choose one, two, or all three book clubs!

Beginning **June 21**, participants will be reading, reflecting on, and responding in the **War Games**

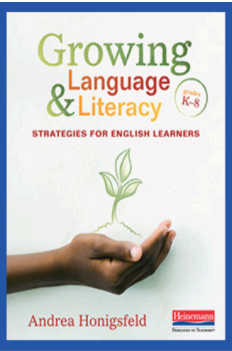
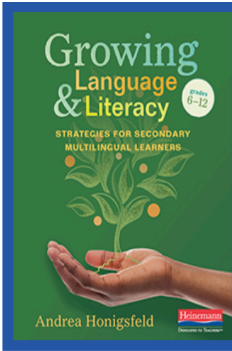
book club and/or the **Trauma-Responsive Pedagogy** book club and/or **Growing Language & Literacy** book club during the seven weeks of online discussions.



**War Games** was written by Alan Gratz. In the book club, participants will learn how to hold book clubs with their own middle grade classrooms based on this historical fiction novel about Olympic gold, Nazi gold, and a daring heist during the 1936 Berlin Olympics.



**Trauma-Responsive Pedagogy** was written by Arlene Elizabeth Casimir, Courtney N. Baker, Nell K. Duke, and M. Colleen Cruz. In the book club, participants will be provided an actionable guide that offers research and inclusive frameworks to help create a trauma-responsive classroom with the tools needed to support their students through challenges.



The *Growing Language & Literacy* books were written by Andrea Honigsfeld. In this book club, participants will choose between **Growing Language & Literacy: Strategies for English Learners** that provides K to 8th Grade Teachers with strategies to support EL students' academic language and literacy development based on the TESOL framework of language acquisition OR **Growing Language & Literacy: Strategies for Secondary Multilingual Learners** that provides secondary 6th to 12th grade teachers practical strategies to support adolescent multilingual learners across all grade levels and content areas.

Register by **June 21, 2026**, to participate in the book club. Registration is FREE for IRC Members. The cost for non-members is \$50, which includes IRC membership for one year. PLEASE NOTE: The cost of book is not included.

Register today!

# #WhatIAmReading



## BOOKS TO READ THIS SUMMER

By Laura Beltchenko, IRC Professional Learning and Development Chair

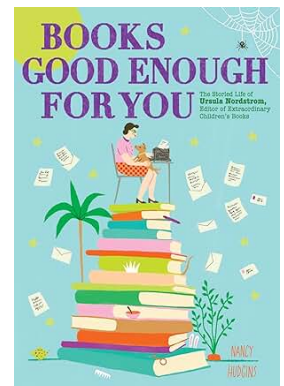
It is no secret that I have a passion for children's literature and in particular, picture books. Through his Substack, author/illustrator Mac Barnett introduced me to his new book, [\*Make Believe: On Telling Stories to Children\*](#) (2026). He is the current U.S. National Ambassador for Young People's Literature, appointed by the Library of Congress. He offers a thoughtful and engaging reflection on the power of children's literature, arguing that stories written for young people deserve the same artistic respect and critical attention as books written for adults. It is a very short (less than 100 pages) book that is reflective of his humor, personal insight and belief that storytelling is a vital act of imagination that fosters joy, curiosity and authentic human connection in the lives of children.

MAKE BELIEVE



*On Telling Stories to Children*  
MAC BARNETT

In the same vein of books about children's books I was introduced in the *New York Times* Book Review to [\*Books Good Enough for You: The Storied Life of Ursula Nordstrom, Editor of Extraordinary Children's Books\*](#) (2026). Author Nancy Hudgins provides a chronology of the life and legacy of one of the most influential children's literature editors of all time. Think of *Goodnight Moon*, *Stuart Little*, *Charlotte's Web*, *The Rabbits Wedding*, *Where the Wild Things Are* and *Stevie*. Nordstrom embraced these groundbreaking authors in a period that was known as the "Golden Age of American Children's Literature." Before Nordstrom's influence, many children's books were highly sentimental, moralistic, and didactic. Nordstrom rejected what she called "goody-goody" literature and instead encouraged books that reflected authentic childhood emotions, fears, humor, rebellion, and imagination.

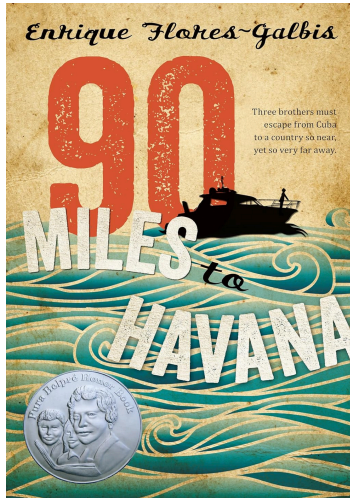


Both books are information-packed and perfect for a pleasurable summer professional read.

# Family Literacy Bookshelf

## By Barb Ashton

With the school year coming to an end, we welcome June with its sunny and warmer weather. During this month, we will also be celebrating Father's Day, LGBTQ Pride, Alzheimer's Awareness month, and our newest holiday – Juneteenth.

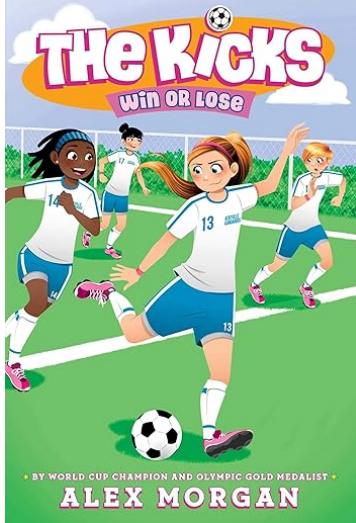


[90 Miles to Havana](#) is a story of three brothers finding their way to a new country by Enrique Flores-Galbis. When unrest hits the streets of Havana, Cuba, Julian's parents must make the heartbreaking decision to send him and his two brothers away to Miami via Operation Pedro Pan. But when the boys get to Miami, they are thrust into a world where bullies seem to run rampant and it's not always clear how best to protect themselves. Inspired very much by his own experiences of leaving Cuba when he was a boy, Flores-Galbis offers up a coming-of-age story that explores the feelings of isolation and confusion that come with leaving one's homeland, especially when that country is only ninety miles away.



[I Survived the Battle of D-Day, 1944](#) by Lauren Tarshis commemorates the Normandy landings in this pulse-pounding story of the largest seaborne invasion in history. Eleven-year-old Paul's French village has been under Nazi control for years. His Jewish best friend has disappeared. Food is scarce. And there doesn't seem to be anything Paul can do to make things better. Then Paul finds an American paratrooper in a tree near his home. The soldier says the Allies have a plan to crush the Nazis once and for all. But the soldier needs Paul's help. This is Paul's chance to make a difference. Soon he finds himself in the midst of the largest invasion in history. Can he do his part to turn horror into hope? The graphic novel tells the story of the battle that became the foundation for the Allied victory in World War II. This book includes a section of nonfiction backmatter with more facts about the real-life event.

[The Kicks: Win or Lose](#) is written by star soccer player and Olympic gold medalist Alex Morgan. Against all odds, the Kicks have made it to league playoffs. With the championship trophy in sight, it's time to step into high gear. But the road to victory is littered with challenges. Some of the Kicks think Devin is taking all the credit for their success. Zoe's upcoming bat mitzvah has taken her head out of the game. Worst of all, Coach Flores has to leave town at the Kicks' most critical moment — and her replacement is no treat. Read this fun and empowering middle



grade book series to find out if the Kicks will be able to continue their unlikely winning streak all the way to the championship title.

## Looking Ahead

**June is Caribbean American Heritage Month:** Take time to learn about their heritage

**June is Dairy Month:** Enjoy your favorite ice cream along with reading a good book

**June is Audio Book Month:** Pick up an audio book to listen to during your summer travels

**June 5: World Environment Day** – Take a moment to view the beautiful world around you

**June 6: Anniversary of D-Day** – Visit the National D-Day Memorial's Virtual Field Trip

**June 14: Flag Day** – Display our American Flag

**June 19: Juneteenth:** Celebrate the culture and history of our second Independence Day

**June 21: Father's Day** – Send or make a Father's Day card.

**June 21: Summer Solstice and International Yoga Day** – Great time to stretch outdoors

**June 26: National Food Truck Day** – Enjoy a treat with your family and friends today



Don't forget to take advantage of some upcoming PD opportunities planned throughout Illinois.

- **June 3, 2026: IRC Webinar** on A Summer of Inquiry & Justice: Build Your Stack & Your Inquiry Journal with Samira Ahmed and Sara K. Ahmed from 7:00 to 8:00 pm via Zoom Webinar.
- **June 15, 2026: IRC is accepting nominations for the 2027 Prairie State Award.**
- **June 18, 2026: Suburban Council of IRA (SCIRA)** will host Cultivating Genius and Joy through Culturally and Historically Responsive Pedagogies with Ghody Muhammad from 8:15 am to 2:30 pm at the Holiday Inn & Suites Northshore-Skokie, 5300 W Touhy, Skokie, Illinois.

- **June 21, 2026: Summer 2026 IRC Book Clubs** will begin for the *War Games* book club and/or the *Trauma-Responsive Pedagogy* book club and/or *Growing Language & Literacy* book club.

To view the full **IRC Events Calendar**, please visit the [IRC Website](#).

# CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

Members are encouraged to submit articles at any time to [irc@illinoisreadingcouncil.org](mailto:irc@illinoisreadingcouncil.org).

**#WhatIAmReading:** Share a book that you are reading, in 3 to 4 sentences. Creative pictures of you and your book in your favorite reading spot are encouraged.

**IRC Highlight Reels:** Share snapshots of successes in your classrooms in 100 to 300 words. Remember no success is too big or too small to share and pictures welcomed!

**Other Literacy Topics:**

- Books the Kids Loved This Year
- My New Favorite Professional Books and Resources
- Skills and Strategies
- Current Research in Literacy
- And any other literacy topics that interests you!

Thank you for helping to inspire your fellow educators! Posts will be shared on social media too!

## QUICK LINKS

[Visit the IRC Website](#)

[Full IRC Events Calendar](#)

[Latest on the IRC Conference](#)

[Available IRC Awards and Grants](#)

[Bring IRC PD to your School District](#)

[Learn more about the Illinois Reads Program](#)

Questions? Please feel free to reach out to the Illinois Reading Council by email at [irc@illinoisreadingcouncil.org](mailto:irc@illinoisreadingcouncil.org) or by phone at 309-454-1341.

See what's also happening on our social media sites:

