



Empowering
Lives
Through
Literacy

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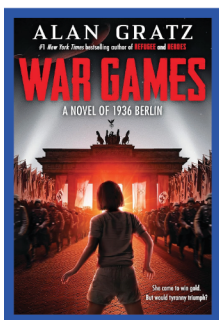
"Keep reading. It's one of the most marvelous adventures that anyone can have."

~ Lloyd Alexander

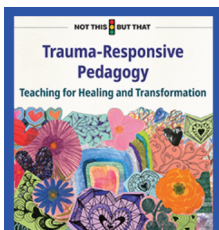
IRC BOOK CLUB

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!



BEDTIME BOOKS! By Kristin Rydholm

One of the best back-to-school items to arrive on the first day of school is a well-rested child. Here to help achieve this essential SEL goal is a list of 11 bedtime picture books featuring young children. These tales of imagination and relaxation can supplement a summer reading list and/or feature in a welcome back-to-school letter.

- [*Bedtime!*](#) written by Joan W. Blos and illustrated by Stephen Lambert (1998)
- [*I Am Not Sleepy and I Will Not Go to Bed*](#) written by Lauren Child (2001)
- [*Bedtime for Mommy*](#) written by Amy Krouse Rosenthal and illustrated by LeUyen Pham (2010)
- [*Mitchell's License*](#) written by Hallie Durand and illustrated by Tony Fucile (2011)
- [*Night Knight*](#) by Owen Davey (2012)
- [*Tell Me About Your Day Today*](#) written by Mem Fox and illustrated by Lauren Stringer (2012)

- [George and His Nighttime Friends](#) by Seng Soun Ratanavanh (2022)
- [The Bedtime Boat](#) written by Sital Gorasia Chapman and illustrated by Anastasia Suvorova (2024)
- [Daddy, Tell Me a Story](#) written by Kathleen Long Bostrom and illustrated by Ela Smietanka (2024)
- [If You Run Out of Words](#) by Felicita Sala (2024)
- [Rose Signs: Good Night!](#) written by Rose Ayling-Ellis and illustrated by Margarida Sampaio. (2025)

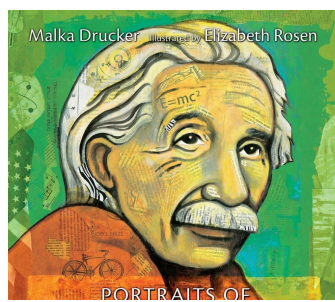
And for Remote Learning, click [here](#) for a video adaptation of Lauren Child's book *I'm Not Sleepy and I Will Not Go to Bed*.

Family Literacy Bookshelf By Barb Ashton

In May, we look forward to celebrating Mother's Day, Cinco de Mayo, Asian Pacific Islander Month, Jewish American Heritage Month, and Mental Health Awareness Month. We cheer for our favorite horse in the Kentucky Derby. May also reminds us to honor and remember those who have served our country and paid the ultimate sacrifice on Memorial Day.

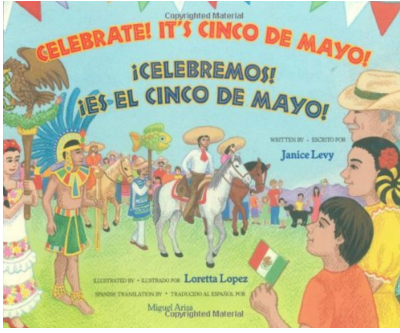


[Special](#) by Nancy F. Goodfellow is a story about friendship, identity, loss, and belonging. It is told through the alternating perspectives of two seventh-grade girls, Meg who has Down syndrome and Madison who doesn't. Madison and Meg have never let Down Syndrome affect their friendship until junior high changes everything. As Madison struggles with grief after her father's death and the pressure to fit in with new classmates, she finds herself pulled between popularity and loyalty. Meg, who has always trusted their bond, begins to feel the shift and must find her own strength when the friendship she relies on feels uncertain. As both girls navigate seventh grade, they are forced to confront difficult questions: Who am I without the people who protect me? Do I need to change to belong? And what does it really mean to be a good friend? This is a great book that explores disability representation, inclusion, and social and emotional learning (SEL) that will resonate with all readers.



[Portraits of Jewish-American Heroes](#) by Malka Drucker shares how America was founded on religious freedom and has been a land of opportunity for Jews, socially, economically, and spiritually. In this book, Author Rabbi Malka Drucker shares twenty compelling individuals who have enriched our country by their achievements. In areas including science, sports, filmmaking, and civil rights, we meet male and female heroes who set an example, made a positive difference, and took a risk to do it. This beautifully produced volume spans three centuries

of history, beginning with Haym Solomon and ending with Daniel Pearl. Each individual's likeness, spirit, and contribution are captured in a distinctive and striking color portrait created with a variety of different media.



[**Celebrate! It's Cinco De Mayo**](#) by Janice Levy shows how everyone is celebrating the holiday in their own way. "Mama marches in the parade. Papa plays in a mariachi band. Abuelita cooks a special meal." Why do we celebrate Cinco de Mayo? A very simple history of the holiday is interspersed with the story of a young boy celebrating Cinco de Mayo with his family. This bilingual book features a section with "find what's missing" pictures and simple crafts perfect for any child's Cinco de Mayo celebration. Loretta Lopez's engaging and cheerful pictures complement Janice Levy's child-friendly introduction to this important Mexican holiday.

Looking Ahead

May is Get Caught Reading Month – Share a book, magazine, or audio book with a friend

May 1: Mother Goose Day – Read a nursery rhyme to a younger student

May 2: Kentucky Derby Day – Visit www.derbymuseum.org for classroom lessons

May 2-3: Route 66 – The first of many [100th Route 66 Anniversary Celebrations](#) across Illinois

May 4: Star Wars Day – Join in the "May the 4th Be With You" events happening near you

May 5: Cinco de Mayo – Enjoy authentic Mexican cuisine

May 4-8: Teacher Appreciation Week – Special thanks to all teachers for everything they do

May 5: National Teacher's Day – Don't forget to thank your teachers today

May 6: National Nurses Day – Thank the nurses in your family, school, and neighborhood

May 6: School Nurses Day – Give special thanks to your school nurse

May 8: V-E Day – World War II in Europe ended today with Germany's surrender

May 10: Mother's Day – Thank the moms and grandmothers for all they do for you

May 25: Memorial Day – Thank a Veteran for his/her service



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

- **May 1, 2026: IRC** is accepting applications for the International Literacy Grant and Literacy Support Grants.
- **May 5, 2026: MID-State Reading Council** will host the AI Classroom Monthly Book Club from 4:30 to 5:30 pm at Gill Street Restaurant, 3002B Gill Street, Bloomington, Illinois.
- **May 6, 2026: IRC Webinar** on Look Again! Inviting Students and Teachers into Possibilities for Revision with Whitney La Rocca from 7:00 to 8:00 pm via Zoom Webinar.
- **May 14, 2026: Secondary Reading League (SRL)** will host Book Swap Party from 5:30 to 6:30 PM at Geneva Public Library, 227 S. 7th Street, Geneva, 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 Gholdy 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](#).



Through this new column, the Illinois Reading Council (IRC) hopes to share other Professional Development opportunities from our Partners in Literacy that are happening across Illinois.

- **UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS CHICAGO**: Researchers at the University of Illinois Chicago are looking for districts to participate in the evaluation of WORDS in IL. This is a FREE professional development focused on the implementation of evidence-based literacy instruction in PreK-3 grade classrooms. WORDS in IL is a 2-year professional development program where they go directly to schools to support them in improving reading outcomes for students. WORDS includes: 10 workshops focused on instructional strategies, 8 one-on-one classroom-based coaching sessions provided by WORDS coaches, support around existing curriculum and benchmark assessment systems, financial support for after school tutoring targeting students scoring below benchmark on reading, and additional leadership training. Through federal funding we are able to provide WORDS for free as well as financially support schools participating in the evaluation. Those interested in learning more about WORDS can contact Rachel Schachter.

Please note that the above opportunities are not a program being held or sponsored by the Illinois Reading Council. Please contact the appropriate organization for more information.

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

Members are encouraged to submit articles at any time to 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 or by phone at 309-454-1341.

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

