

Empowering
Lives
Through
Literacy

Communicator

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SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING CONNECTION

By Keo E. Thompson, McLean County Unit District No. 5

Schools play a critical role in supporting young people's social and emotional development. As educators we no longer simply teach reading, writing and math. Social and emotional learning is an integral part of educating the whole child. School districts have understood this reality and have implemented programs designed to teach social and emotional strategies to students from kindergarten through high school. This seemed to be working fine. Then, the pandemic hit education hard. Schools were forced to educate students through remote learning environments. For two years, students were not in our classrooms. What students lost in this time from a social and emotional standpoint is being seen today in every classroom.

So where do we go from here? We are in the second year of being completely back in person and most teachers are feeling the effects of the two lost years. Our students are a mess and we have to increase our support for their social emotional well being. The question is: How do we meet our students' educational needs while at the same time meeting their emotional needs? The answer is to bring the two together and conquer them with the same enthusiasm we had for teaching in the past. Just as we teach students to read, multiply and write well-constructed papers, we can teach students to share ideas responsibly and respectfully, meet challenges head on, and have empathy for others. If we can work toward teaching these social and emotional skills within the context of each subject, the lessons will come more naturally and the results more normalized.

We can't expect students to make up two years of lost academics in a few lessons. It's the same with intertwining social emotional skills into daily lessons. It will take time, practice and probably a lot of patience. Social and emotional learning takes practice, just like academic learning requires concepts being taught several times over. We don't teach the multiplication tables in one day and we can't teach students to be a good lab partner in one lab class. By teaching students social and emotional skills in the natural environment of the classroom, over and over, the skills will come over time. When we put academics and SEL together, we can educate the whole person. When we build the social emotional skills into our classes and our lessons, we take away the idea of having another thing to do. SEL woven into the core of your classroom will lead to children who are prepared academically and emotionally to meet the world's challenges.

WINTER 2023 IRC BOOK CLUB STARTS JANUARY 22, 2023

By the Illinois Reading Council

Join educators from all over the state in the online
Winter 2023 IRC Book Club! Choose one or two books!

Read, reflect on, and respond to ***Being the Change: Lessons and Strategies to Teach Social Comprehension*** by Sara K. Ahmed and/or ***Rebellious Read Alouds: Inviting Conversations About Diversity With Children's Books*** by Vera Ahiiya. Beginning January 22, these seven-week online



discussions will help your students develop skills of social comprehension to make sense of themselves and the world as they navigate relevant topics in today's society and/or to spark meaningful conversations about race, identity, and social justice in your classroom using read alouds as an entry point. Participants who complete all assignments will be eligible to receive 15 PD clock hours for each book club. Participants who complete one book club during the Winter will have the opportunity to participate in the other one during the Spring session.



Register by **January 22, 2023**, to participate in the book club. Registration is FREE for IRC Members. The cost for non-members is \$45, which includes IRC membership for one year. PLEASE NOTE: The cost of book(s) is not included.

REGISTER TODAY!

GET YOUR READING OPINIONS READY FOR THE 2023 MOCK CALDECOTT

By Laura Beltchenko (with a little help from my friends)

It's that time again when lists begin to appear from librarians and literacy specialists with their selections for the Randolph Caldecott Award! For this issue of the *Communicator*, I scoured lists from the *School Library Journal*, the *New York Times*, and the Mock Caldecott List created by Colby Sharp and John Schu. Most of the books on this list appeared on two or more of the lists. As a reminder, here are the Terms of Selection for the Caldecott Medal Honor.

"The Medal shall be awarded annually to the artist of the most distinguished American picture book for children published in English in the United States during the preceding year. There are no limitations as to the character of the picture book except that the illustrations be original work. Honor Books may be named. These shall be books that are also truly distinguished. The Award is restricted to artists who are citizens or residents of the United States." American Library Association.

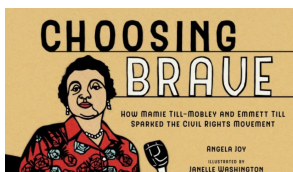
Engaging our students of all reading levels with these books as read alouds or other literacy learning opportunities provides students with an adventure in literary analysis and illustrative style. Among the literacy learning opportunities are critical thinking, comparing and contrasting book features, illustrative style and how the pictures enhance the text, and developing informed opinions both verbally and in writing. Each of these learning opportunities support and are embedded in the ELA Common Core Standards.

This list of 10 books will get you started on your class or school selections for the 2023 winners. Each book has a link that will provide additional information on each text. To further differentiate your review of these books, have your student investigate the winners from [1938-Present Caldecott Medal](#) recipients of this prestigious award. Enjoy!



[**Blue: A History of the Color as Deep as the Sea and as Wide as the Sky**](#)

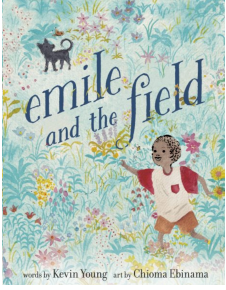
Written by Nana Ekua Brew-Hammond and Illustrated by Daniel Minter



[**Choosing Brave: How Mamie Till-Mobley and Emmett Till Sparked the Civil Rights Movement**](#)

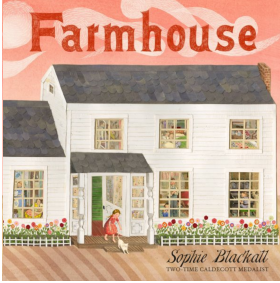


Written by Angela Joy and Illustrated by Janelle Washington



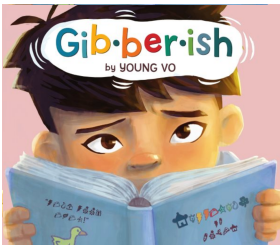
Emile and the Field

Written by Kevin Young and Illustrated by Chioma Ebinama



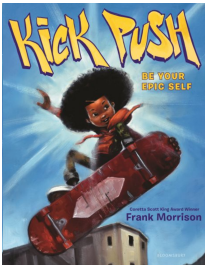
Farmhouse

Written and Illustrated by Sophie Blackall



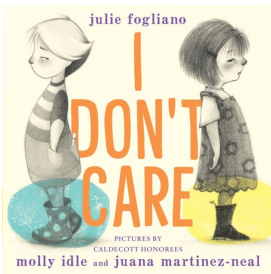
Gibberish

Written and Illustrated by Young Vo



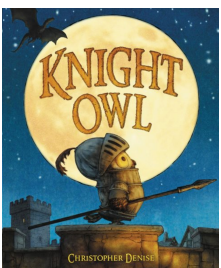
Kick Push: Be Your Epic Self

Written and Illustrated by Frank Morrison



I Don't Care

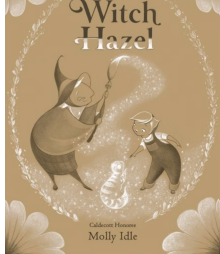
Written by Julie Fogliano and Illustrated by Molly Idle and Juana Martinez-Neal



Knight Owl

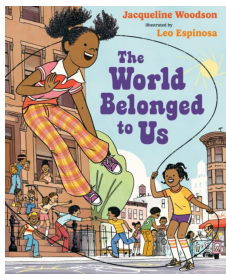
Written and Illustrated by Christopher Denise





[Witch Hazel](#)

Written and Illustrated by Molly Idle



[The World Belonged to Us](#)

Written by Jacqueline Woodson and Illustrated by Leo Espinosa

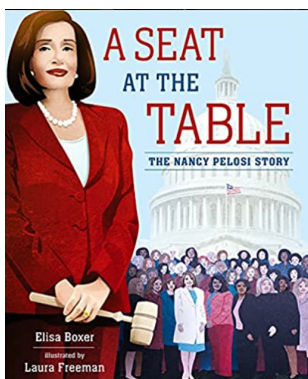
FAMILY LITERACY BOOKSHELF

By Barb Ashton, IRC Family Literacy Committee Chair

Christmas music, store decorations, and Black Friday advertisements are clear indications that the December holidays and the busiest time of the year have arrived. Our thoughts turn to Christmas, Hanukkah, and Kwanza.

December is **Human Rights Month**. It commemorates the passage of the Universal Declaration of the Human Rights Document by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948 guaranteeing everyone has basic rights and freedoms regardless of who you are.

December is also **Read a New Book Month** which encourages everyone and especially families to take time out from this hectic season to spend some time reading. Books also make nice gifts to give or receive.



Read ***A Seat at the Table: The Nancy Pelosi Story*** by Elisa Boxer to learn about the only woman to serve as Speaker of the House of Representatives. As a young girl Nancy saw how her parents served the people of Baltimore, Maryland. Her father was Mayor and would often invite his constituents home to sit around the dining table to discuss their concerns. Her mother worked behind the scenes supporting her husband by volunteering to do all types of jobs necessary to help her husband get reelected. As a young girl Nancy often accompanied her father to political meetings and events. She also helped her mom do volunteer work. After college, getting married, moving to San Francisco, and raising her family, Nancy became an active volunteer for local and state elected officials. Approached by a retiring congressional woman representative to run for political office, Nancy eventually said yes after discussing the opportunity with her family. Nancy was elected to the U.S. Congress. Serving several

terms as a representative Nancy began to serve in various leadership positions, including being elected the first and only woman to serve as Speaker of the House. She held that position not once but twice, thus breaking “the marble ceiling” as Nancy calls it. *A Seat at the Table* is an inspiring book for young girls today. The book concludes with her insistence and courage that the House continue the vote to confirm that Joe Biden was the newly elected president, despite the assault on the Capitol on January 6. The back of the book contains an informative Author’s Note, an interview with Speaker Nancy Pelosi, along with a bibliography and other sources for additional information. This is a book that can be used at all grade levels. ***Madam Speaker*** by Carole Boston Weatherford is a nice companion book as well.

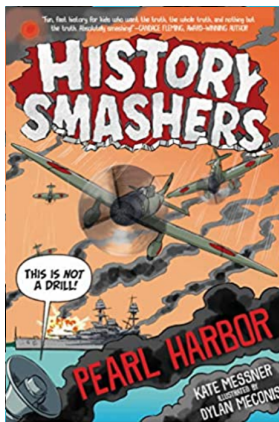


It’s Christmas time and one of the favorite stories to read or see performed on the stage is *The Nutcracker*. While there are various versions of the original by ETA Hoffmann, you can add ***Jan Brett’s The Nutcracker*** to the collection. While following



the basic version of the story, Jan Brett creates her own version. The story is now set in Russia rather than in Germany. The main Character is named Marie rather than Clara. Marie enters the Land of the Snow Princess rather than the Land of the Sugar Plum Fairy through a gingerbread house. There she meets the dancing bears, arctic foxes, reindeers with candles on their antlers, and waltzing hedgehogs whose quills are covered

with little yellow flowers. Following Jan Brett's signature illustrations, the side panels on each page contain additional details of what's happening on the main page or what is to come. The illustrations are beautiful and rich in color and detail, and help to bring the story to life. Since *Jan Brett's The Nutcracker* takes a different approach to a traditional Christmas story, it can make a nice compare and contrast lesson. Head over to You Tube to see and hear the author read this delightful Christmas story.



December 7, 1941 will always be remembered as “The Day that will live in Infamy.” However, the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor may not have been unpredictable. To learn and uncover some of the myths surrounding the attack, read *History Smashers: Pearl Harbor* by Kate Messner. In this book the author not only addresses the facts surrounding the attack but also takes the reader back in time to 1853 when Commodore Matthew Perry went to Japan to encourage this island country to trade with other countries. Following this advice Japan began to seek more land and natural resources. This eventually led to Japan's invasion of Manchuria and China in the 1930's. Seeing what Germany was doing in Europe, Japan turned to the island countries in the Pacific wanting to expand its empire. Japan also began training pilots, designing torpedoes, and building a strong naval force. At the same time American military advisers and experts suggested that Pearl Harbor could be a target, gave warning signs, and those in authority paid little attention to the reports. The author also addresses the

internment of Japanese Americans, and the role women played as nurses and helping out on the “Home Front.” *History Smashers: Pearl Harbor* is an engaging read for all middle grade and ESL students that is enhanced by black-and-white comic illustrations, photographs, maps, additional informative text box inserts and sidebars. The back of the book includes an author's note, a timeline, an extensive bibliography, websites, and museums to visit. The History Smashers series makes a nice supplement to the curriculum.

Looking Ahead

December 6: St. Nicholas Day

December 7: Pearl Harbor Day

December 15: Bill of Rights Day – President Franklin Roosevelt declared this day guaranteeing the basic rights of all citizens.

December 18: Hanukkah begins – Learn to play the Dreidel game

December 21: Crossword Puzzle Day – Do a crossword puzzle for fun

December 24 – Christmas Eve

December 25 – Christmas Day

December 26-January 1: Kwanza – Learn about the 7 Principles of Kwanza

December 31: New Year's Eve – Say Good Bye to 2022!

UPCOMING PD EVENTS

By the Illinois Reading Council

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

- **December 6, 2022: MID-State Reading Council** will host The High Five Habit Book Study from 4:30 to 5:30 pm at Gill Street Bar & Restaurant, 3002B Gill Street, Bloomington, Illinois.
- **December 7, 2022: IRC Webinar on Writing Great Nonfiction With Kids** with Candace Fleming from 7:00 to 8:00 pm via Zoom Webinar.
- **January 4, 2023: IRC Webinar on Using Inclusive Texts in the K-6 Classroom** with Aimee Ellis from 7:00 to 8:00 pm via Zoom Webinar.

- **January 10, 2023: Lewis and Clark Reading Council** will host The Nightingale Movie Private Showing from 6:30 to 9:00 pm at Marcus O'Fallon Cinema, 1320 Central Park Drive, O'Fallon, Illinois.
- **January 17, 2023: East Central-EIU Reading Council** will host Illinois Reads New Year's Party from 6:00 to 7:30 pm at Eastern Illinois University, Buzzard Hall, 1920 9th Street, Charleston, Illinois.
- **January 22, 2023: IRC Book Club** will read, reflect on, and respond to *Being the Change: Lessons and Strategies to Teach Social Comprehension* by Sara K. Ahmed and/or *Rebellious Read Alouds: Inviting Conversations About Diversity With Children's Books* by Vera Ahijya. These seven-week online discussions will help your students develop skills of social comprehension to make sense of themselves and the world as they navigate relevant topics in today's society and/or to spark meaningful conversations about race, identity, and social justice in your classroom using read alouds as an entry point. Participants who complete all assignments will be eligible to receive 15 PD clock hours for each book club.
- **January 25, 2023: Suburban Council of IRA (SCIRA)** will host the SCIRA Winter Conference on Patterns of Power with Whitney La Rocca from 6:00 to 7:30 pm via Zoom.
- **January 26, 2023: Prairie Area Reading Council** a Family Literacy Night at 6:00 pm at Westmont Public Library, 428 N Cass Avenue, Westmont, Illinois.

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

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:

