

Illinois Reading Council



Empowering
Lives
Through
Literacy

Communicator

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 [Pinterest.com/illinoisreading](https://www.pinterest.com/illinoisreading)

*"Just the knowledge that a good book is awaiting one
at the end of a long day makes that day happier."*

~ Kathleen Norris

2025 IRC CONFERENCE

March 13-14, 2025
Springfield, Illinois



ILLINOIS READING COUNCIL
**LIBERATING
LITERACY**
Embrace Love, Joy, & Empowerment

The Illinois Reading Council invites you to join us for
the 56th Annual Conference,

**LIBERATING LITERACY:
EMBRACE LOVE, JOY, & EMPOWERMENT**

March 13-14, 2025
in Springfield, Illinois.

The following speakers will be joining us at the conference:

- Laurie Halse Anderson
- Darcie Little Badger
- Candace Fleming
- Liz Kleinrock
- Kass Minor
- Adam Peterson
- Darius Phelps
- Shamari Reid
- Dan Santat
- Amy Stewart
- Duncan Tonatiuh
- Julia Torres
- Becky Anderson Wilkins
- Alicia D. Williams
- Kristin Ziemke
- Illinois Reads Authors
- And More to Come!

IRC is currently accepting Program Proposals to present at the 2025 IRC Conference. Proposals are due by **September 1, 2024**. Teachers, researchers, librarians, administrators, and others interested in promoting reading and related literacy areas are encouraged to submit program proposals. Please take a moment to review the 2025 Program Proposal format, general information, and criteria for selection that are available online.

The Preliminary Program with the Conference Registration and Housing Forms will be available at www.illinoisreadingcouncil.org on October 1st. We hope to see you at the 2025 IRC Conference!

Submit a Program Proposal by September 1st

2024 ILLINOIS READS BOOK LIST

The Illinois Reads Program is a statewide reading program that encourages people to read books by Illinois Authors. Each year, the program offers a new list of books at six different age levels. Illinois Reads

icks off in February with the Book Festival, followed by the annual IARC Conference, and concludes in November with Family Reading Night, an annual statewide event sponsored by the Illinois State Library.

The Illinois Reading Council would like to encourage everyone to get involved by becoming an Illinois Reads Ambassador, hosting or participating in a Family Reading Night, and/or reading from the rich list of titles. This is also a great time to order bookmarks and posters for an upcoming Family Reading Night celebration. **Order today as supplies are limited!**

For more information or to order your bookmarks, visit illinoisreads.org.



SEL Picture Book Round-Up For Educators By Kristin Rydholm

Young students must learn and accumulate a multitude of skills and strategies to become proficient readers and writers. What sometimes gets left on the sidelines during this time is a focus on a child's feelings about themselves as they navigate a love/hate relationship with the reading and writing process.

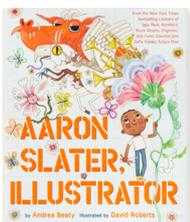
Listed below are 11 picture books that put the topic of social and emotional challenges associated with reading and writing front and center. These books offer teachers and caregivers a platform to have relevant and meaningful discussions about how it feels to be a new reader and writer.

In each of the books, the main character confronts social and emotional challenges associated with becoming a reader and/or writer, but with determination, perseverance and guided support from other characters, the character ultimately grows in skills, strategies and confidence in reading and/or writing.

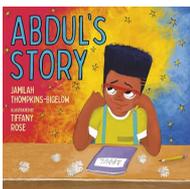
The picture books listed feature the following social and emotional learning scenarios as defined by [CASEL](#):

- **Self-awareness: Identifying one's emotions.**
- **Self-management: Showing the courage to take initiative.**
- **Social awareness: Recognizing situational demands and opportunities.**
- **Relationship skills: Seeking and offering support and help when needed.**
- **Responsible decision-making: Recognizing how critical thinking skills are useful both inside and outside of school.**

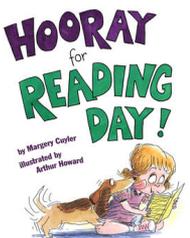
The following picture book titles are available for purchase or to check out at your local library.



[Aaron Slater, Illustrator](#) by Andrea Beaty, illustrated by David Roberts.



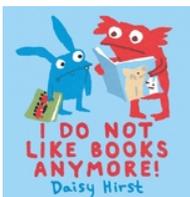
[Abdul's Story](#) by Jamilah Thompkins-Bigelow and illustrated by Tiffany Rose. Check out the corresponding [activities and discussion prompts](#).



[Hooray for Reading Day!](#) by Margery Cuyler and illustrated by Arthur Howard.

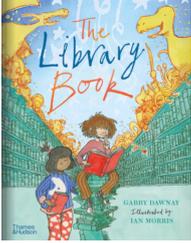


[How This Book Got Red](#) by Margaret Chiu Greanias and illustrated by Melissa Iwai. Check out the corresponding [activity kit](#).

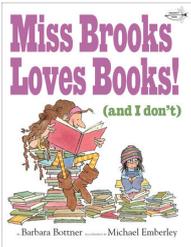


[I Do Not Like Books Anymore!](#) by Daisy Hirst.

[**The Library Book**](#) by Gabby Dawney and illustrated by Ian Morris.



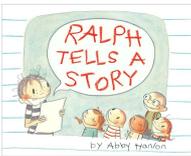
[**Miss Brooks Loves Books! \(and I don't\)**](#) by Barbara Bottner and illustrated by Michael Emberley.



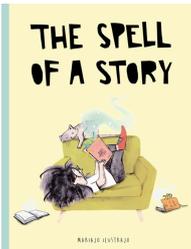
[**Nothing Ever Happens on 90th Street**](#) by Roni Schotter and illustrated by Krysten Brooker.



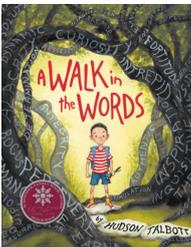
[**Ralph Tells a Story**](#) by Abby Hanlon.



[**The Spell of a Story**](#) by Mariajo Ilustrajo.



[**A Walk in the Words**](#) by Hudson Talbott.



Further Reading:

- [**13 Picture Books for Young Students About Learning to Read**](#)
- [**Classroom Connections: The Writing Process**](#)

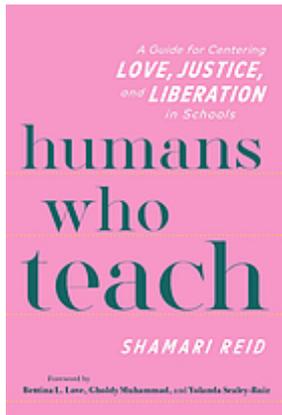
She received her BA in education from National Louis University and her MS in reading/literacy from Bank Street College of Education. She has been a classroom teacher, a school administrator, and written numerous articles featuring picture books for Edutopia and the American Library Association's Book Links Magazine.

#WhatIAmReading



I am reading [*Humans Who Teach: A Guide for Centering Love, Justice, and Liberation in Schools*](#) by Shamari Reid.

~ Cindi Koudelka, IRC Vice President

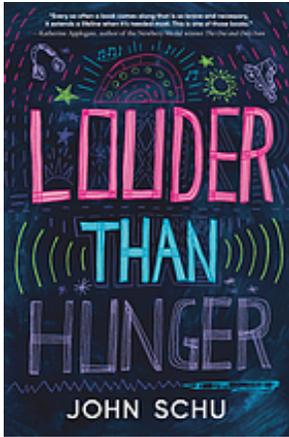


This book is a love letter to all teachers. Post-covid, the emphasis has been on students being behind so much that we have lost sight of the humanity in education. Maybe that is why teachers are feeling so overwhelmed ... the conflict between their hearts and the pressure from outside sources. This book reminds us that centering love in our teaching is the most important thing we must do. What I love most about the book is how he includes work space for the reader to reflect on his message and their own experiences. He uses research blended with concrete examples to share a framework for teachers to ground their lessons in love. This book is the fresh-air moment we need to find our joy and purpose again ... not only for our students but for ourselves as well.

I am reading [*Louder Than Hunger*](#) by John Schu.

~ Julie Hoffman, IRC President

I received an advanced reader copy (ARC) at a literacy conference in November. I read this novel-in-verse in one sitting (one flight, actually) and couldn't put it down. John Schu writes in a way that brings the real emotions without making it triggering or too painful. This is a beautiful novel-in-verse about Jake and his journey through an eating disorder. Oh, I almost forgot to mention ... the allusions to the musical *Into the Woods* were everything! In a recent conversation with a student who is reading this book, she said, "I love this book so much. I think people can get into Jake's head and understand how an eating disorder affects us. This book is good for someone in recovery,



because it's not triggering, but it still goes there." John Schu did a great job writing realistic fiction that protects the main character and the reader!

I am reading [*Good Night, Irene*](#) by Luis Alberto Urrea.

~ Diana Wilkie, IRC Treasurer

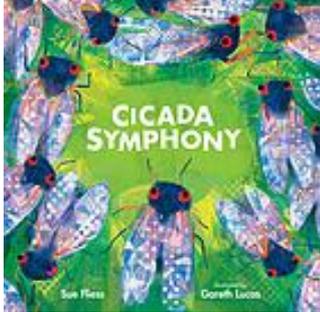


Luis Alberto Urrea brings this historical fiction story to life with unforgettable characters. He tells the story of women who served in WWII as Donut Dollies, who were in charge of Clubmobiles at the front lines to provide companionship and a taste of home to young soldiers. This is a part of history I did not know so it made for a fascinating read. The story moves along with friendship, a love affair and plenty of danger. The book is based on Urrea's own mother's Red Cross service and is deeply personal.

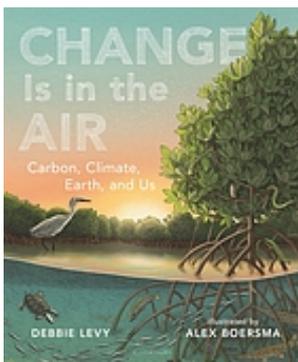
Family Literacy Bookshelf By Barb Ashton

During May, we honor our moms on Mother's Day, celebrate Cinco de Mayo, Asian Pacific Islander Month, Jewish American Heritage Month, Mental Health Awareness Month, and of course, cheering for that favorite horse in the Kentucky Derby. Let's not forget to remember and honor those who have served our country on Memorial Day.

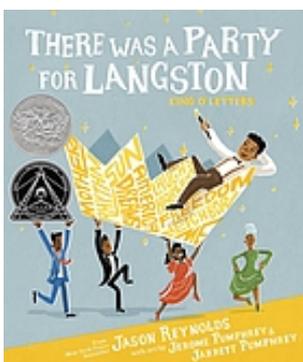
This summer Illinois will be serenaded by the awakening of the cicada insect after its 13 or 17 year nap. The life cycle of the cicada is told in rhythmic rhyming couplet/verse in the book [*Cicada Symphony*](#) by Sue Fliess and illustrated by Gareth Lucas. In this delightful picture book, the author takes the reader on the cicada's life cycle from being a purply yellow nymph to emerging from



underground as an adult cicada that sometimes appears to be an alien. The author also describes the anatomy of the cicada including its beady red eyes. Additional fun facts about this unusual insect are included on each page. Large two-page colorful and detailed illustrations engage the reader. The back of the book contains additional information about the cicada, a glossary, an author's note, along with a detailed diagram of the cicada. *Cicada Symphony* can also be viewed on YouTube.



Climate Change continues to be a hot topic and pressing problem. To get a better understanding of this problem read the book [*Change Is In the Air: Carbon, Climate, Earth, and Us*](#) by Debbie Levy and illustrated by Alex Boersma. As you open the book, the reader will be introduced to brief definitions and illustrations of terms such as carbon, carbon dioxide, photosynthesis, fossil fuels, and the greenhouse effect. The author explains the cause of excess carbon in the air and the ways the earth removes carbon from the air, and the crisis we face with global warming. The author shows how kelp forests, mangroves, and even the dirt can assist in capturing the carbon. The book concludes with a call for action: "For the Earth to keep helping us, we must help the earth." Some suggestions include "using alternative energies, public transportation, scientific innovation" and research. *Change Is In the Air* is written in poetic text and short sentences accompanied by colorful, detailed, and realistic illustrations. Within the author's note are resources, websites, and things people are doing to protect and preserve the environment. If you're looking for books to build your Climate Crisis – Global Warming library, then *Change Is In the Air* is definitely a book to add to this collection.



[*There Was A Party For Langston*](#) was written by Jason Reynolds and illustrated by Jerome Pumphrey and Jarrett Pumphrey. His first picture book for students is basically a love letter to Langston Hughes and an appreciation of Langston's use of words that made him one of America's great African American writers. Jason became inspired to write this book when he saw a photograph of two of his favorite poets dancing at the party on the grand opening night in 1991 of the museum that now honors Langston Hughes at the New York Public Library. Within his written text Jason pays tribute to Langston by incorporating parts of Langston's poems into his written text. The handmade stamp art of the Pumphrey brothers adds to the fun being enjoyed by the characters in the story. *There Was A Party For*

Langston would make a nice introduction to Langston Hughes or a study of the African American writers/poets mentioned in the story, and learning about the Harlem Renaissance. This book would make a nice read-aloud for middle school and young adult readers.

Looking Ahead

May is Get Caught Reading Month: Great time to share books and magazines with everyone

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

May 4: Kentucky Derby Day – Visit www.derbymuseum.org for classroom lessons/programs

May 5: Cinco de Mayo – Learn about the Battle of Puebla, enjoy an authentic Mexican dinner

May 6-10: Teacher Appreciation Week – Thank your teachers for all they do for you

May 7: National Teacher's Day – This year's theme is **Teachers Are Shining Stars**

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

May 8: School Nurses Day – Thank your school nurse for all she does to care for you each day

May 8: V-E Day – World War II in Europe ended today with Germany's surrender
May 12: Mother's Day – Thank your mom or grandmother for all they do for you
May 27: Memorial Day – Thank a Veteran for his/her service to our country



UPCOMING PD EVENTS

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

- **May 1, 2024: IRC Webinar on Rebellious Read Alouds with Vera Ahiyya** from 7:00 to 8:00 pm via Zoom Webinar.
- **May 1, 2024: Illinois Reading Council** is accepting **Literacy Support Grant** and **International Grant** applications. To find out more, visit Awards and Grants under About IRC on the [IRC Website](#).
- **May 1, 2024: Secondary Reading League (SRL)** will host a Spring Book Talk at 5:00 pm at Anderson's Bookshops, 5112 Main Street, Downers Grove, Illinois.
- **May 2, 2024: Lewis and Clark Reading Council** will host Empowering Engagement Strategies for Enhancing Explicit Instruction with Illinois SLD Support Project from 3:30 to 4:30 pm via a Virtual Event.
- **May 17, 2024: Fox Valley Reading Council** will host Wine, Dine, & Collaborate from 5:30 to 7:30 pm at Up North Tasting Room, 9 N 2nd Street, Geneva, Illinois.
- **June 5, 2024: IRC Webinar on Swing into Summer with the Tuckers: A Few Strategies to Begin Curating Your Classroom Library to Prepare for Readers, Writers, and Researchers** with **Karen Biggs-Tucker and Brian Tucker** from 7:00 to 8:00 pm via Zoom Webinar.
- **June 13, 2024: Suburban Council of IRA (SCIRA)** will host a Summer Renewal Conference on Biliteracy Instruction in Diverse Educational Settings with Jose Medina from 8:30 am to 3:30 pm at the Holiday Inn Northshore-Skokie, 5300 W. Touhy, Skokie, Illinois.
- **June 15, 2024: IRC Prairie State Award** nominations are due.
- **June 23, 2024: Summer 2024 IRC Book Club** will begin. Visit the website for more information.

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.

#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:

- SEL via Literacy
- For the Love of Librarians
- Trauma Informed Practices
- Culturally Responsive Teaching and Literature
- 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:

