

Illinois Reading Council



Empowering  
Lives  
Through  
Literacy

# Communicator

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*"We need myths to get by. We need story; otherwise the tremendous randomness of experience overwhelms us. Story is what penetrates."*

~ Robert Coover

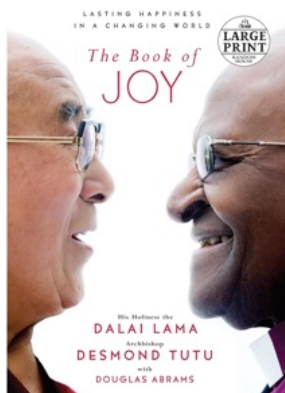
RESOURCES

## THREE BOOKS TO SUPPORT TEENS AND THEIR SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL NEEDS

By Matt Renwick

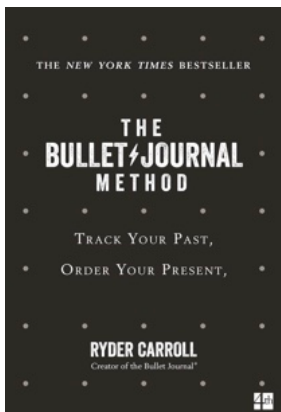
Adolescents continue to struggle with anxiety and other mental health challenges. Pressure from school, social media, and just being a teenager are common obstacles.

Teens can benefit from practical tools offered in self-help literature to address social and emotional needs. It's not a genre commonly covered in schools, yet now seems an opportune time to introduce it. The following three books offer wisdom and strategies that can empower students to improve their wellbeing.



**[The Book of Joy: Lasting Happiness in a Changing World](#)** by His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, and Douglas Carlton Abrams

Although this dialogue between two spiritual leaders is not a step-by-step guide, *The Book of Joy* provides a practical framework for cultivating joy despite one's obstacles. Both the Dalai Lama and the Archbishop demonstrate how their struggles transformed how they interact with the world for the better.



**[The Bullet Journal Method: Track the Past, Order the Present, Design the Future](#)** by Ryder Carroll

Ryder Carroll struggled with ADHD in school. His saving grace was drawing and doodling in his notebook. Over time, he leveraged his notebooking to develop a system for being more productive and present. I personally use a bullet journal every day to manage my work as a systems coach, writer, parent, and husband.



**[The Power of Character Strengths: Appreciate and Ignite Your Positive Personality](#)** by Ryan M. Niemiec and Robert E. McGrath

This resource helps readers become more aware of their signature strengths and how to leverage them in life. It also minimizes our weaknesses which can combat negativity bias. My wife and two teenage kids took the free companion character assessment and had an insightful conversation as we shared our results with each other.



## FIVE DYSTOPIAN NOVELS TO READ THIS SUMMER

By Jennifer Erickson

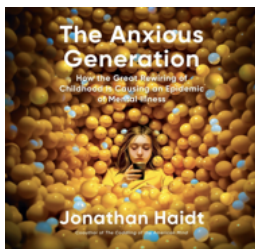
Below please find five dystopian novels by female authors that promote equity and engage middle/high school readers.

- [\*The Hunger Games\*](#) by Suzanne Collins, 2008
- [\*The Neverborn\*](#) by B.B. Brighton, 2022
- [\*Legend\*](#) by Marie Lu, 2011
- [\*Trail of Lightning\*](#) by Rebecca Roanhorse, 2018
- [\*We Set the Dark on Fire\*](#) by Tehlor Kay Mejia, 2019

## IRC BOOK CLUB

Join educators from all over the state in the online **Summer 2025 IRC Book Club**! Choose one, two, or all three book clubs!

Beginning **June 22**, participants will be reading, reflecting on, and responding in the ***The Anxious Generation*** book club, the ***Rebellion 1776*** book club, and/or the ***La Enseñanza en el Aula Bilingüe*** book club during the seven-weeks of online discussions.



[\*The Anxious Generation: How the Great Rewiring of Childhood Is Causing an Epidemic of Mental Illness\*](#) was written by Jonathan Haidt. The book is an investigation into the collapse of youth mental health in the era of smartphones, social media, and big tech with a plan for a healthier and freer childhood.

[\*Rebellion 1776\*](#) was written by Laurie Halse Anderson. The book club participants will delve into this novel study on a thoroughly researched and emotionally resonant historical fiction book for middle grades.



[La Enseñanza en el Aula Bilingüe: Content, Language, and Biliteracy](#) was written by Sandra Mercuri, Sandra Musanti, and Alma Rodriguez. The book club will help educators who dedicate their work to bilingualism, biliteracy, and equity for bilingual learners as well as strengthen their own academic reading and writing in Spanish. The book is mostly written in Spanish with previews in English.

Register by **June 15, 2025**, 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.

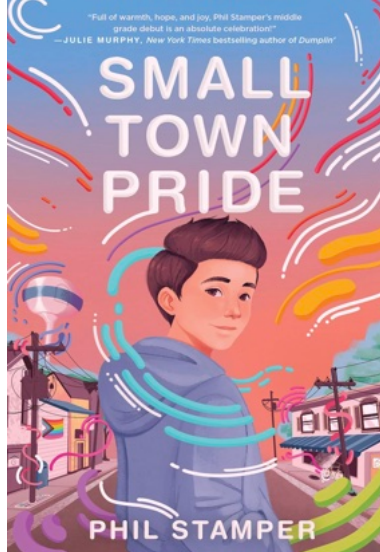
Register today!



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.

[Small Town Pride](#) by Phil Stamper is a poignant coming-of-age, contemporary middle grade debut novel about finding your place, using your voice, and the true meaning of pride. Jake is just starting to enjoy life as his school's first openly gay kid. While his family and friends are accepting and supportive, the same can't be said about everyone in their small town. When Jake's dad hangs a large pride flag in their front yard in a show of love, the mayor begins to receive complaints. A few people

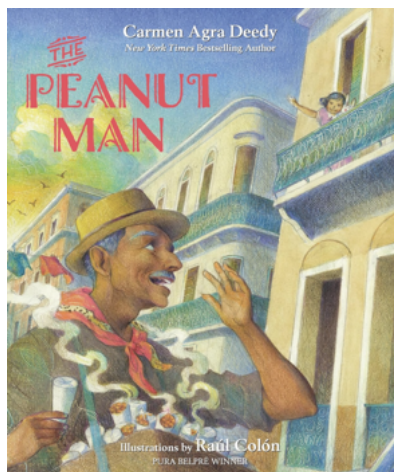




are even concerned the flag will lead to something truly outlandish: a pride parade. Except Jake doesn't think that's a ridiculous idea. Why *can't* they hold a pride festival in Barton Springs, Ohio? As Jake and his friends try to find a way to get approval from the town council and mayor, it seems suspicious that the mayor's son, Brett, suddenly wants to spend time with Jake. But someone that cute couldn't possibly be in league with his mayoral mother, could he?



**Free at Last: A Juneteenth Poem** by Sojourner Kincaid Rolle is a lyrical celebration of Juneteenth, deeply rooted in Black American history, spanning centuries and reverberating loudly and proudly today. Deeply emotional, evocative free verse by poet and activist Sojourner Kincaid Rolle traces the solemnity and celebration of Juneteenth from its 1865 origins in Galveston, Texas to contemporary observances all over the United States. This is an ode to the strength of Black Americans and a call to remember and honor a holiday whose importance reverberates far beyond the borders of Texas.



**The Peanut Man** by Carmen Agra Deedy is the story of a Cuban refugee and her joy in an unexpected encounter that connects her beloved home in Havana with her new home in Atlanta. Each evening, Coqui waits for Emilio, the Peanut Man, watching for him to appear on the street below her window. They always greet each other in their own special way. Night after night, the two friends continue their ritual until one evening, she tells him that her family is moving to the United States. After several years have passed and she has forgotten her beloved Peanut Man, her father surprises her with two tickets for a Braves game to see their favorite player, Hammerin' Hank Aaron. At the game, Coqui hears a man yelling "Peanuts! Get your peanuts!" The delicious smell of roasted peanuts reaches her and memories of home and Emilio rush into her head.

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

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

**June 15: Father's Day** – Send or make a Father's Day card.

**June 20: Summer** officially begins



# UPCOMING PD EVENTS

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

- **June 4, 2025: IRC Webinar on Students Should OWN It! Fostering Secondary Students' Ability to Independently Navigate Complex Texts** with Rachel Lesinski-Roscoe from 7:00 to 8:00 pm via Zoom Webinar.
- **June 6, 2025: MID-State Reading Council** will host Breathe, Books, & Brunch from 10:00 to 11:00 am at The Yoga Lab, 207 S Prospect Rd, Suite 2, Bloomington, Illinois.
- **June 18, 2025: Suburban Council of IRA (SCIRA)** will host the SCIRA Summer Renewal Conference with Valentina Gonzalez who will be presenting Every Language, Every Learner: The Heart of Teaching Multilingual Learners from 9:00 am to 2:45 pm at the Holiday Inn & Suites Northshore-Skokie, 5300 W Touhy, Skokie, Illinois.
- **June 22, 2025: Summer 2025 IRC Book Clubs** will begin for **The Anxious Generation** book club, the **Rebellion 1776** book club, and/or **La Enseñanza en el Aula Bilingüe** 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:

