

Illinois Reading Council



Empowering  
Lives  
Through  
Literacy

# Communicator

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**"The oldest books are only just out to those  
who haven't read them."**

~ Samuel Butler

## 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.



For lovers of the book [The Carrot Seed](#), originally published in 1945, there is a new crop of 10 picture books featuring young gardeners. Successful gardening necessitates vision, resourcefulness, perseverance and patience and the children in the books below manifest those traits.

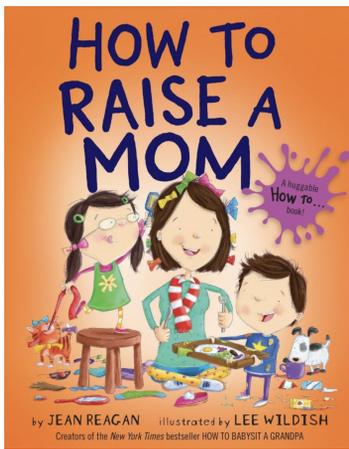
More moderate temperatures in the Spring can remind teachers to embrace the outdoors as an additional learning environment. It is also a perfect time to initiate a STEM project-based learning activity, such as gardening, and this bouquet of books will inspire all readers to plant and problem-solve as they wait for their seeds to grow!

- [Anywhere Farm](#) written by Phyllis Root and illustrated by G. Brian Karas
- [The Bear's Garden](#) written by Marcie Colleen, illustrated by Alison Oliver; Marcie Colleen reads her book in this [video](#).
- [Errol's Garden](#) written and illustrated by Gillian Hibbs
- [The Extraordinary Gardener](#) written and illustrated by Sam Boughton
- [Florette](#) written and illustrated by Anna Walker
- [Gwendolyn's Pet Garden](#) by Anne Renaud and illustrated by Rashin Kheiriyeh
- [Mary Had a Little Plan](#) written by Tammi Sauer and illustrated by Vanessa Brantley-Newton
- [Millie Fleur's Poison Garden](#) written and illustrated by Christy Mandin; Christy Mandin reads her book in this [video](#).
- [Oscar's Tower of Flowers](#) written and illustrated by Lauren Tobia
- [Something, Someday](#) written by Amanda Gorman and illustrated by Christian Robinson; Amanda Gorman reads her book in this [video](#).

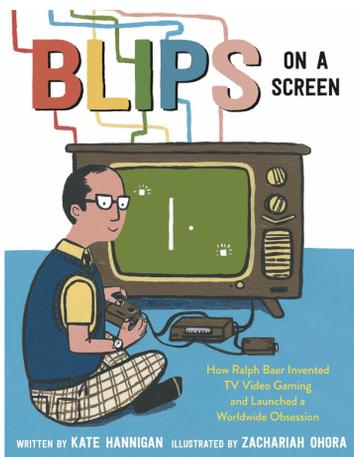
**Kristin Rydholm** received her BA in education from National Louis University and her MS in Reading/Literacy from Bank Street College of Education. She has been a classroom teacher, a school administrator, and has written numerous education articles featuring picture books for *Edutopia* and the American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



We welcome May by honoring our moms on Mother's Day. We also celebrate Cinco de Mayo, Asian Pacific Islander Month, Jewish American Heritage Month, and Mental Health Awareness Month, along with cheering 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.



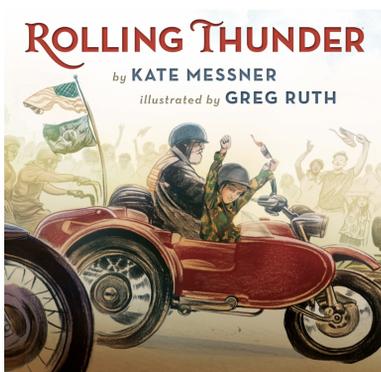
Mother's Day is fast approaching. A delightful and humorous book to read is [\*How to Raise a Mom\*](#) by Jean Reagan. This is a story of a brother and sister who take the reader into a reversal of roles with their mother for a day. Instead of mom waking the kids in the morning, they (the children) wake her. As the day continues the children run errands, wait in line at the grocery store, clean up after dinner, advise on eating vegetables, and various other situations. The clever and creative illustrations also add to the humor of the story. While *How to Raise a Mom* is an easy read, it is also a reminder to children of how important and wonderful moms are. This book would make a nice gift for Mother's Day.



Do you like to play video games? Did you ever wonder how they were invented and became part of our everyday life? Read [\*Blips On A Screen: How Ralph Baer Invented TV Video Gaming and Launched a Worldwide Obsession\*](#) by Kate Hannigan.

This is the story of Ralph (Rudolf) Baer, who, as a teenager, fled from Germany to America after Hitler and the Nazis came to power. He was fascinated by the inner workings of the radio and what we now call electronics. Using his knowledge and talent for electronics, Ralph worked as a radio operator during World War II. After the war Ralph began a career in the new industry of television design, manufacturing, and repairs. He wanted to make TV more enjoyable, interactive, and fun. So over the next few years, during his free time, Ralph tinkered and tested various versions of a game box, a prototype of a video game. It took several more years to fine-tune and fully develop his invention.

Magnavox took a chance on Ralph's video game and it became an instant success with large sales and thus began the video game craze. The cartoon-like illustrations add fun and capture Baer's life as an inventor and "Father of Video Games." *Blips On A Screen* is the fascinating story of Ralph Baer but it's also a story about overcoming challenges, self-motivation, hard work, and the reality of a dream come true. The back of the book contains more information about Ralph Baer's life, photographs, a detailed timeline, and additional resources for further reading. This book can be enjoyed by students of all ages.



Each May on Memorial Day, we honor those who paid the ultimate price. It is also the time when veterans hop on their motorcycles for the Ride for Freedom to Washington D.C. To learn about this event read [\*Rolling Thunder\*](#) by Kate Messner. The story is told in couplets. A grandpa and his grandson are headed to Washington D.C. to honor American veterans and those who lost their lives. The ride is also a reminder that there are still soldiers who are MIA (Missing in Action) and POWs (Prisoners of War), with the hope of bringing them home someday. While riding through the streets of Washington D.C. and passing by iconic buildings the riders end up at the Vietnam Memorial, The Wall, which lists the names of all service members who fought and died in Vietnam. Grandpa

rides "for his friends Joe and Tom who lost their lives in Vietnam." His grandson rides "for Uncle Zack who's flying airplanes far away." At The Wall they search for the names of friends and loved ones. The grandson makes a charcoal rubbing of the names. There are also "speeches and memory sharing by different vets." Before grandpa and his grandson leave, they place a flower, kneel and offer prayers. As the day draws to a close the grandson understands the experience

and realizes the significance of the day. Through the use of “bright oranges, warm reddish-browns, khaki, and olive green,” the illustrations “reflect the mood and feelings” of the characters. *Rolling Thunder* is a great read to share with your students and parents on the importance of freedom, our military men and women, and being an American. This is a book that belongs in all libraries.

## 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 3: Kentucky Derby Day** – Visit [www.derbymuseum.org](http://www.derbymuseum.org) for classroom lessons

**May 5: Cinco de Mayo** – Enjoy some tacos or have a family dinner with a Spanish menu

**May 5-9: Teacher Appreciation Week** – Special thanks to all teachers for everything they do

**May 6: National Teacher’s Day** – Don’t forget to thank your teachers today

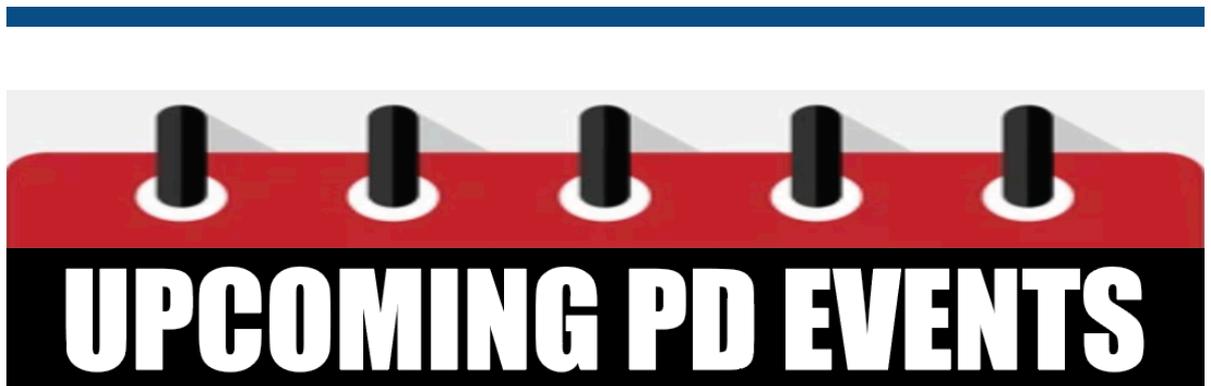
**May 6: National Nurses Day** – Thank the nurses in your family, school, and neighborhood

**May 7: 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 11: Mother’s Day** – Thank the moms and grandmothers for all they do for you

**May 26: 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, 2025: IRC** is accepting applications for the International Literacy Grant and Literacy Support Grants.
- **May 1, 2025: Starved Rock Reading Council** will host the Young Author Celebration from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm at the Grand Bear Lodge, 2643 N State Rte 178, Utica, Illinois.
- **May 3, 2025: Illini Reading Council** and **Vermilion Valley Reading Council** will host Blended/Flipped: Using Technology to Differentiate Literacy Lessons with Tim Wheeler from 10:30 am to 12:30 pm at Champaign Public Library, Robeson Pavilion Room C, 200 West Green Street, Champaign, Illinois.
- **May 7, 2025: IRC Webinar** on **African Conceptualizations of Trauma** with Guilaine Kinouani from 7:00 to 8:00 pm via Zoom Webinar.
- **May 16, 2025: Fox Valley Reading Council** will host Wine, Dine, & Collaborate from 5:30 to 7:00 pm at Up North Tasting Room, 9 N 2nd Street, Geneva, Illinois.
- **May 20, 2025: Will County Reading Council** will host Unlocking the Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan-Part VI Writing from 7:00 to 8:00 pm via Zoom.
- **May 31, 2025: Illinois Literacy Academy** with Kate Seltzer, Kim Parker, and Shawna

Coppola will be held from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm at the I Hotel Conference Center, 1900 S First St, Champaign, Illinois. This academy is limited to 50 P-12 Teachers Interested in Literacy Education. Complete interest form at <http://tinyurl.com/3sewr92h>.

- **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!

[Visit the IRC Website](#)

## QUICK LINKS

[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:

