Illinois Reading Council
IRC
Empowering Lives Through Literacy

Communicator

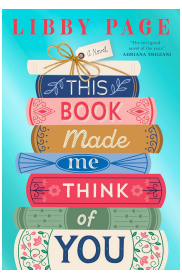
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and follow us on:

"That's the thing about books. They let you travel without moving your feet."
~ Jhumpa Lahiri



I am reading *This Book Made Me Think of You* by Libby Page
~ Cindy Gerwin



This is a story that will really resonate with book lovers! However, even if you are not a book lover, you will enjoy this story. Either way, keep a box of tissues close by! Tilly's (a bibliophile) husband, Joe (the love of her life) passes away. Six months later she gets a phone call from Alphie, the owner of a small bookshop, that he has a present for her birthday from her husband, Joe. But that cannot be—he passed away. Before his death, he selected a book to gift to Libby each month for a year and wrote a note to go with each book. This is a story of love, loss, forgiveness, friendship, family, hope, and so much more! LOVED this book!

I am reading *Birdy* by N. West Moss
~ Ashley Falkos



After their mother dies, Birdy and her younger brother, Mouse, move in with relatives they have never met. While Mouse begins to feel at home, Birdy struggles with grief and fears losing another family. Through a difficult summer, Birdy learns about trust, belonging, and the meaning of family.

I am reading *Theo of Golden: A Novel* by Allen Levi
~ Carrie Sheridan



If you haven't read ***Theo of Golden*** yet, I would highly recommend that this book move to the top of your must read pile! In the book, it all starts when Theo arrives in a the city of Golden and visits the local coffeehouse. Theo doesn't explain why he is visiting their city but starts buying the



pencil portraits of the people of Golden that are available for purchase on the walls of the coffeehouse. As Theo gives each person their own portrait, he only asks for them to sit with him for a short time and share a little about their life in return. It weaves into a beautiful but sad story about the gift of giving and receiving, really looking at the good in people, a reminder to connect with the amazing people around you, and what kindness can do in this world.



2027 ILLINOIS READS BOOK LIST

The Illinois Reading Council has just released the list of Illinois Reads books for 2026. Illinois Reads is a statewide program that promotes reading for all Illinois citizens. The program features six books in each of the six different age categories by authors and illustrators who have ties to Illinois. The books range from read-to books for infants to books for adult readers. Bookmarks and posters highlighting the Illinois Reads books will be available in early 2027. Order early as supplies are limited!

Ages Birth to 4

- *Tiny T. Rex Tries Soccer* by Jonathan Stutzman and illustrated by Jay Fleck
- *I was Born a Baby* by Meg Fleming
- *Roaring Mad Riley: An Anger Management Story for Kids* by Allison Szczecinski, M.Ed.
- *A Home Like This* by Laura Purdie Salas and illustrated by Miriam Nerlove
- *Sleepy Solar System* by Dr. John Hutton and illustrated by Doug Cenko
- *The Pool is Cool* by Dwayne Reed

Grades K to 2

- *I Know Things* by Karla Clark
- *Jayden Noticed* by Carolyn Crimi
- *Not a Dog* by Claudia Guadalupe Martínez
- *Pumpkin Smash!* by Michelle Schaub
- *I am Not a Costume* by Maria DesJarlait
- *Chinese Kite Festival* by Rich Lo

Grades 3 to 5

- *Growing Together* by Ruth Spiro
- *My Word, Theodore!: How Books, Writing, and Reading Saved Theodore Roosevelt* by Kate Hannigan
- *Quetzal's Labyrinth* by Karla Arenas Valenti
- *Golemcrafters* by Emi Watanabe Cohen
- *Framed: A Graphic Novel* by Karina Evans and Andrea Bell
- *Stick Dog Meets Poo-Poo* by Tom Watson

Grades 6 to 8

- *Sisters Alone* by Shifa Saltagi Safadi
- *Shook* by Julian Randall
- *The Forgotten War: A World War II Battle on American Soil* by Candace Fleming
- *Where the Wild Horses Are* by Amy Alznauer
- *Wyatt the Wild* by Jeff Miller
- *Every Story Ever Told* by Ami Polonsky

Grades 9 to 12

- *The Sixth Faction* by Veronica Roth
- *Adam, Mine.* by K. Ancrum
- *If We Survive the Night* by Jo Salazar
- *One Word, Six Letters* by Adib Khorram
- *Verity Vox and the Curse of Foxfire* by Don Martin
- *Rabbit & Juliet* by Rebecca Stafford

Adult

- *It's Not Her* by Mary Kubica
- *The Book of Lost Hours: A Novel* by Hayley Gelfuso
- *Savvy Summers and the Sweet Potato Crimes: A Mystery* by Sandra Jackson-Opoku
- *Better Good: A Simple System for Creating Lasting Impact* by Scott M. Curran
- *Simple Sugar: Comforting Baking Recipes with Midwestern Heart* by Jenna Barnard
- *The Girl Who Was Taken* by Charlie Donlea

The Illinois Reads Program will be featured at the annual **2027 IRC Conference** on March 11-12, 2027 in Springfield. IRC is thrilled to share that many authors will be attending to share their books during the Illinois Reads Author Panels. Conference registration is now open for educators, librarians, and others interested in promoting literacy.

The 2027 Illinois Reads Program will also be featured at the **Illinois Reads and Young Authors Book Festival** on April 10, 2027 at Wilmington Middle School in Wilmington, Illinois. Readers throughout Illinois are invited to this free event.

Visit **www.illinoisreads.org** to find out more about each book and other upcoming Illinois Reads events.



SHARE YOUR "EACH ONE, REACH ONE" STORY FOR A CHANCE TO WIN BOOKS OR A CLASSROOM LIBRARY!

Hello IRC Members,

Congratulations to the six (6) September Raffle Winners in our **"Each One, Reach One" Membership Campaign**.

- **Erin Gergen** (new member) from Prairie Area Reading Council
- **Melissa Stinnett** (current member) from Western Illinois Reading Council who invited **Michelle Franzoni** (new member) to join (also a winner)
- **Adena Horwitz** (current member) from Secondary Reading League
- **Chrystal Holmes** (current member) from South Eastern Reading Council
- **Amber Reece** (new member) from Southern Illinois Reading Council

Our **Membership Goal** is to increase our membership from the current 1,479 members to 2,000+ members by June 2028 (or roughly 1,750 by June 2027) with a focus on preservice and early career teachers since our data shows about half of our membership is either retired or close to retirement. If you are hosting a student teacher in your classroom, gifting them an Illinois Reading Council (IRC) membership is a great way to continue learning alongside of each other.

While our membership goal is an audacious goal, it is also a necessary goal—one reason professional organizations like IRC exist is to help shape the public narrative by sharing teacher stories and research that prove professional educators have the greatest impact on student outcomes. Your autonomy to flexibly make decisions for your students by responsibly tapping into your foundational knowledge, *not programs*, is critical to helping students grow to become lifelong readers. That is why your membership and active involvement in IRC matters, because ***YOU MATTER! YOUR VOICE MATTERS! We exist to amplify your voice!***

To better serve you, our members, IRC leadership is also reviewing data related to the "Area of Interest" each of you shared on your membership form to better meet your needs. Below are the top five (5) "Area of Interest" listed:

1. **Children's and Young Adult Literature**
2. **Comprehension**
3. **Content Area**
4. **Assessment**
5. **Teacher Education (Professional Development)**

"**Each One** of us can **Reach One** new member." We continue to welcome your feedback to better serve your needs and grow IRC. Make sure to **FOLLOW IRC ON THE VARIOUS SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS.** Feel free to email me at directorofmembership@illinoisreadingcouncil.org with feedback on how we can best serve you.

Cindy Gerwin
IRC Director of Membership

CLICK HERE TO SHARE YOUR STORY TODAY!



The Global Read Aloud (GRA) 2026 program kicks off on **October 5, 2026**, and runs for six weeks through **November 13, 2026**. The purpose is to connect students globally through shared reading and digital collaboration.

It is free and voluntary. The 2026 Book Selections are:

- **Picture Book Creator Study: Features a 6-week exploration of works by Dan Santat, including:**
  - Week 1: *The Adventures of Beekle: The Unimaginary Friend*
  - Week 2: *After the Fall (How Humpty Dumpty Got Back Up Again)*
  - Week 3: *Don't Trust Fish*
  - Week 4: *Harold & Hog Pretend for Real*
  - Week 5: *Are We There Yet?*
  - Week 6: Choice of any Dan Santat title
- **Early Reader Choice:** *Growing Home* by Beth Ferry and the Fan Brothers
- **Middle Grade Choice:** *The Second Life of Snap* by Erin Entrada Kelly
- **Middle School Choice:** *The Lion's Run* by Sara Pennypacker
- **Young Adult Choice:** *One Word, Six Letters* by Adib Khorram





Dolly Parton's Imagination Library has reached a major early literacy milestone, mailing its 5 millionth book to an Illinois child. The program sends a free, high quality, age-appropriate book every month to enrolled children from birth through age 5, regardless of family income.

Dolly Parton created the Imagination Library in 1995 as a tribute to her father, who never learned to read. What began as a local program in her home county in Tennessee has grown into an international early literacy initiative that gives children the joy of receiving books addressed to them in the mail. In Illinois, the Imagination Library now serves more than 111,000 families and operates in 95 of the state's 102 counties. Program leaders are working with local partners and donors to close the remaining coverage gaps and make free books available to every eligible child in the state. Imagination Library of Illinois has a long-standing partnership with Governor JB Pritzker and the Illinois' 50/50 State Match helps local communities expand the program by matching every dollar raised locally with state funding. Because of that match, a local donation of just $16 can provide one child with an entire year of books.

Families can check availability and enroll eligible children at imaginationlibrary.com/illinois Community organizations and donors interested in helping the program reach more Illinois children can also find information on the website.

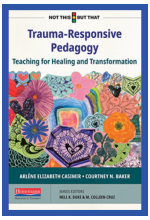


Join educators from all over the state in the online **Fall 2026 IRC Book Club!** Choose one, two, or all three book clubs!

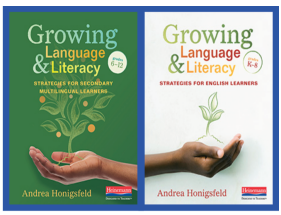
Beginning October 18, participants will be reading, reflecting on, and responding in the ***War Games*** book club and/or the ***Trauma-Responsive Pedagogy*** book club and/or ***Growing Language & Literacy*** book club during the seven weeks of online discussions.



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 Arlène 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 acquistion 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 **October 18, 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!

Family Literacy Bookshelf

By Barb Ashton

Autumn has arrived. During October we're reminded that it's bullying and hazing prevention month, school safety, fire prevention, and family history month. Columbus Day or Indigenous People Day and Halloween are also part of the October calendar of events.

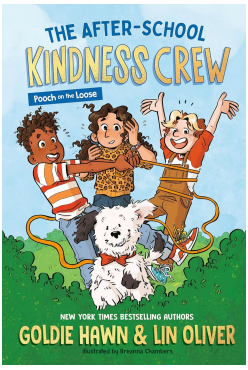


Halloween will soon be here. **I'm Not Scary** by Raahat Kaduji will certainly put you into the scary season. This is a story about a little bat who wants to be friends with the other animals of the forest but everyone is scared of him, especially when they see his shadow as he flies by their homes or windows at night. Little bat wants friendship but is also an excellent baker and only wants to share some cake and cookies with the forest animals. In the meantime the forest animals decide to find out where this monster lives. As they venture into the forest the bear discovers where bat lives. He is surprised when bat opens the door and invites him in for some sweet treats. Bear gives the OK that everything is fine and little bat shares his treats with his new friends. *I'm Not Scary* is a delightful story to share with your preschoolers through second grade. It also makes for a nice introduction to Halloween.



Keeping with the Halloween theme read ***Hour of the Pumpkin Queen: Tim Burton's The Nightmare Before Christmas*** by Megan Shepherd**.** This is the sequel to *Long Live the Pumpkin Queen* by Shea Ernshaw**.** In this sequel the time is about a year after Sally married Jack Skellington and became Pumpkin Queen of Halloweentown. Sally has enjoyed being Queen and has worked tirelessly to form community between the leaders and citizens of the other towns. Sally wants to host a gathering of all the towns to encourage peace and to celebrate Halloween. Feeling a bit overwhelmed with all that needs to be done, she hires an assistant (Luna) to help her. The day of the celebration/ gathering finally arrives. During the festivities a potion demonstration goes wrong and things begin to unravel and magical things start to happen. Sally and Luna fall into a mysterious tunnel and end up in Time Town. While looking for a way out they discover someone has tampered with the clock that controls Halloween Town. Sally can't return to present day Halloween unless she finds the culprit and can reset the clock. Will Sally and Luna find the culprit and reset the clock before time runs out in order to save Jack and the citizens who came to the Halloween celebration? Read *Hour of the Pumpkin Queen* to discover the answer and what the future holds for Sally. This is an engaging story that will be enjoyed by middle grade through Jr High students

and fans of *The Nightmare Before Christmas* books and movies.



Are you looking for a book about friendship, community, and kindness? Read ***The After-School Kindness Crew: Pooch on the Loose #1*** by Goldie Hawn and Lin Oliver. Meet fourth grade classmates Tony, Mia, and River as they begin the school year in Mr. Ortega's classroom. As a way of getting to know about his students, Mr. Ortega has a Surprise Us Day where each student brings something from home that tells something about each student. Some surprises include a pet goldfish, a Spiderman drawing, tap dancing, and Mia's pet snake Albert. Although Mia keeps an eye on Albert she notices he is acting a bit upset and jittery due to the strong smell of the strawberry jam that Tony's younger brother spilled on his Spider Man drawing. Mia tells Tony that snakes are bothered by strong smells and will act aggressively. Mia has to go to the office and wait for her mom to come and pick up Albert. While waiting for Mia's mom Tony tells her about Ms. Gold's classroom where he goes for after school care. He mentions that her classroom is also open during lunch period. Joined by River, the kids have lunch with Ms. Gold. She gives the trio some advice about bullying and they decide to form the After School Kindness Crew. Read this enjoyable story that is adventurous, full of laughs, and the power of kindness. The black and white illustrations help to engage readers from late primary through middle school while also fostering reading for pleasure and enjoyment. This series of new books is part of the Goldie Hawn Foundation's Mind Up Program which offers resources to children to learn emotional and stress management while fostering kindness, self-awareness, and empathy.

Looking Ahead

It's the 60th anniversary of *It's the Great Pumpkin Charlie Brown* by Charles M. Schulz. Take time to read this classic or view the video while enjoying a piece of pumpkin pie.

The American Library Association is celebrating 150 years defending intellectual freedom in libraries and providing support, guidance, and resources to librarians faced with censorship.

October 4-10: Banned Book Week
October 5: World Teacher Day
October 14: Illinois Great Apple Crunch Day – Check out this Guide of Activities
October 12: Columbus Day – Indigenous People Day
October 16: National Dictionary Day
October 20: National Day of Writing – Check out this Toolkit of Writing Activities
October 24: United Nations Day
October 23-31: Red Ribbon Week
October 31: Halloween



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

- **October 1, 2026: IRC** is accepting nominations for the **Boomer Crotty Joy in Literacy Early Career Award**. This award celebrates educators who are promoting joyful literacy and making a difference in the literate lives of students in their early years as educators. IRC will honor an educator who is still in their first through fifth years in the profession. The award was established in memory of Boomer Crotty, a long-time IRC member and advocate of spreading laughter through books.

- **October 1, 2026: Lake Area Reading Council (LARC)** will host a Membership Drive from 4:30 to 6:30 pm at Bliss, 201 S Main St Ste A, Wauconda, Illinois.

- **October 6, 2026: West Suburban Reading Council** will host Comprehension is More Than Asking Questions with Timothy Rasinski from 6:00 to 7:30 pm via Zoom.

- **October 7, 2026: IRC Webinar** on Honoring our Learners: Formal and Informal Classroom Assessments with Pamela A. Mason from 7:00 to 8:00 pm via Zoom Webinar.

- **October 8, 2026: Northern Illinois Reading Council** will host 50 Nifty Picture Books to Ramp Up Your Read-Aloud Routine with Maria Walther from 5:30 to 7:30 pm at Pizza Villa, 824 W Lincoln Highway, DeKalb, Illinois.

- **October 8, 2026: Prairie Area Reading Council (PARC)** will host a Night at the Theatre: Broadway Series Performance of Mean Girls from 7:00 to 9:00 pm at the Paramount Theatre, 23 E. Galena Bovd, Aurora, Illinois.

- **October 15, 2026: Fox Valley Reading Council** will host a Reading Round Table from 4:30 to 5:30 pm at Geneva Public Library District, 227 South 7th Street, Geneva, Illinois.

- **October 18, 2026: Fall 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.

- **October 20, 2026: Black Hawk, Illinois Valley, Two Rivers,** and **Will County Reading Councils** are co-hosting the Classroom Management That Cultivates Care with Melissa & Tim Wheeler from 5:30 to 6:30 pm via Zoom.

- **October 21, 2026: Central Illinois Reading Council** will host a Book Chat from 4:30 to 6:00 pm at Ink & Imprint, 125 N Kickapoo St, Lincoln, Illinois.

- **October 21, 2026: Lewis and Clark Reading Council** will host Pours and Pages Book Trivia from 6:30 to 8:30 pm at O'Fallon Brewery in O'Fallon, Illinois.

- **October 21, 2026: Prairie Area Reading Council (PARC)** will host the Reading Between the "Wines": A Virtual Monthly Book "Tasting" from 7:00 to 7:30 pm via Zoom.

- **October 22, 2026: MID-State Reading Council** will kick off the Book Study of *Fostering Resilient Learners Strategies for Creating a Trauma - Sensitive Classroom* from October 22, 2026 to February 25, 2027.

- **October 22, 2026: MID-State Reading Council** will host Increasing Student Engagement with Learning with Culturally Responsive Teaching and Leading Standards with Melissa Wheeler and Jaclyn Turner from 6:30 to 8:00 pm at Bloomington Public Library, 205 E Olive St, Bloomington, Illinois.

- **October 23, 2026: Secondary Reading League (SRL)** will host the 47th Day of Reading with Jenny French from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm at the Tinley Park Convention Center, 18501 Convention Center Drive, Tinley Park, Illinois.

- **October 29, 2026: Black Hawk, Illinois Valley, Two Rivers,** and **Will County Reading Councils** are co-hosting the R.L. Stine Virtual Author Visit from 12:30 to 1:30 pm via online. Contact one of these councils to participate!

- **October 29, 2026: Suburban Council of IRA (SCIRA)** will host a Fall Conference on The Vocab Toolbox with Liz Bramley and Natalie Biancalana from 4:30 to 6:00 pm at National Louis University, 1000 Capitol Drive, Wheeling, Illinois.

- **October 29, 2026: Illinois Council for Affective Reading Education (ICARE)** will host Bringing Children's Literature to Life in ASL: A Workshop Exploring Storytelling, Accessibility, and the Art of Literary Interpretaton with Crom Saunders and Amy Alznauer from 6:00 to 7:30 pm at Depaul University, McGowan South Room 104, 1110 W Belden, Lincoln Park, Chicago, Illinois.

- **October 30, 2026: East Central-EIU Reading Council** will participate in the Scare on the Square from 6:00 to 8:00 pm at Charleston Downtown Square, 7th and Jackson Avenue, Charleston, Illinois.

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:

- 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: