

Summer Reading for Heart & Mind

By Peg Sawyer, Open Circle Literature Specialist, Trainer and Coach

As a child, my summer days were unstructured except for one hour each day. When my mother announced, “Siesta!” my three siblings and I had to lay flat for at least 60 minutes after lunch—no exceptions! She claimed that this strictly enforced rest period aided in our digestion, though I suspect that it was mostly a chance for Mom to catch her breath. After a mad dash for the coveted spot on the screened-in porch, the four of us would settle down to read or doze off. Usually, a Nancy Drew mystery was my book of choice. My fascination with that series of books went beyond the fact that Nancy had her own zippy roadster and was a youth sleuth. I admired her pluck and the way she navigated one sticky situation after another. I didn’t know any Open Circle vocabulary at the time, but in retrospect, I recognize that Nancy had significant social and emotional skills. She could calm herself down, she did not hesitate to speak up for herself or others, she was an expert at the problem-solving process, and she could read body language cues. Did Mom know that her siesta policy was laying the groundwork for good reading habits and social awareness?

These days, a child’s summer is usually more structured than the ones I remember. Day camps, community center programs, and other sources of organized activities fill the days. Still, there are those pauses in summer schedules for “Nancy Drew” moments. To promote retention of literacy skills, many teachers tuck a summer reading list into their students’ backpacks on the last day of school. And as long as children are reading in the summer, why not encourage the retention of social and emotional learning alongside literacy? Good fiction usually revolves around relationships and conflict, so any summer reading list is likely to include titles that have strong ties to social and emotional themes. For example, the characters in *Frog and Toad*, *Minn and Jake*, and *Danitra Brown* work through emotional upsets and misunderstandings by using empathy and communication skills. Books for older children such as *Also Known as Harper*, and *How to Steal a Dog* describe the difficult decision-making processes that come with more complex problems and relationships. These and other books offer opportunities for maintaining and sharpening children’s social awareness.

For some children, connections between stories and Open Circle concepts arise quite easily. They recognize when a character is trying to calm down or when someone is a bystander to a bullying or discrimination situation. Other readers may not make these connections as readily. A few simple, strategic questions can raise awareness of the social and emotional themes in books and how those themes connect to children’s lives. When you hand out your summer reading lists, you might want to remind children that they can look at stories through an Open Circle lens using prompts such as:

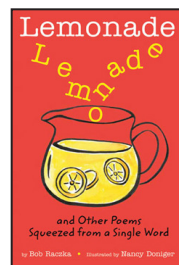
- Think about how characters might be feeling and whether or not they use calming-down strategies. What are some ways that you calm yourself down?
- What do you notice about how characters deal with dangerous, destructive, or annoying behaviors?
- Do you notice teasing or bullying behavior in the story? Who are the targets? Who are the bystanders in those situations?

We’ve compiled a few suggestions for book titles to incorporate into your children’s summer reading list to keep their minds and hearts active. You can find them on pages 2-3. **Happy summer! Happy siesta!**

continued on page 2

Summer Reading Bonus!

Gather some friends to share this book of unique poetry:



Lemonade: and Other Poems Squeezed from a Single Word, by Bob Raczka

Encourage children to work together to write some poems built from one word! Guaranteed to strengthen your intellectual, cooperative, and listening skills.

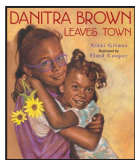
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Grades K- 1

Baker, Jeannie. **Mirror**

Croza, Lorel. **I Know Here**

DiCamillo, Kate. **Bink and Gollie**



Grimes, Nikki. **Danitra Brown Leaves Town**

Hill, Meggan. **Nico and Lola: Kindness Shared Between a Boy and a Dog**

Howe, James. **Houndsley and Catina: Plink and Plunk**

Kasza, Keiko. **Ready for Anything!**

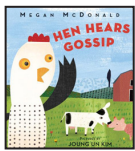
Khan, Rukhsana. **Big Red Lollipop**

Kraus, Ruth. **The Carrot Seed**

Lin, Grace. **Ling and Ting: Not Exactly the Same**

Lobel, Arnold. **Frog and Toad series**

Long, Loren. **Otis**



McDonald, Megan. **Hen Hears Gossip**

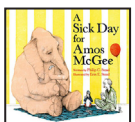
McDonnell, Christine. **Goyangi Means Cat**

Mollet, Tololwa. **My Rows and Piles of Coins**

Otoshi, Kathryn. **Zero**

Parker, Barbara. **Junie B. Jones Series**

Ransome, James. **New Red Bike**

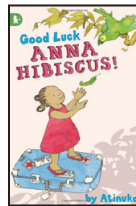


Stead, Philip. **A Sick Day for Amos McGee**

Urban, Linda. **Mouse Was Mad**

Willems, Mo. **Elephant and Piggie series: My Friend is Sad; Are You Ready to Play Outside?**

Grades 2 – 3



Atinuke. **Good Luck Anna Hibiscus**

Bromley, Anne. **The Lunch Thief**

Cameron, Ann. **Stories Julian Tells**

Coffelt, Nancy. **Fred Stays with Me!**

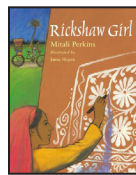
Estes, Eleanor. **The Hundred Dresses**

Harper, Cherise Mericle. **Just Grace**

Look, Lenore. **Alvin Ho series**

Lowry, Lois. **Gooney Bird Greene series**

Pennypacker, Sara. **Clementine**

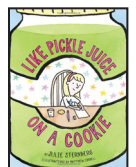


Perkins, Mitali. **Rickshaw Girl**

Reynolds, Aaron. **Back of the Bus**

Rosenthal, Amy Krauss. **Duck, Rabbit**

Spinelli, Eileen. **Where I Live**



Sternberg, Julie. **Like Pickle Juice on a Cookie**

Wong, Janet S. **Minn and Jake**

Lin, Grace. **The Year of the Rat**

Grades 4 – 5

Cotler, Steve. **Cheesie Mack**

Curtis, Christopher Paul. **The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963**

Davies, Jacqueline. **The Lemonade Crime**

Davies, Jacqueline. **The Lemonade War**



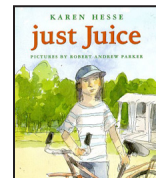
Dowell, Frances O'Roark. **Shooting the Moon**

Draper, Sharon M. **Out of My Mind**

Going, K.L. **The Liberation of Gabriel King**

Gutman, Dan. **The Homework Machine**

Haywood Leal, Ann. **Also Known as Harper**



Henkes, Kevin. **Junonia**

Hesse, Karen. **Just Juice**

Holm, Jennifer. **Penny From Heaven**

Lord, Cynthia. **Rules**

Mckissack, Patricia. **A Friendship for Today**



Naylor, Phyllis. **Shiloh**

Erskine, Carolyn. **Mockingbird**

O'Connor, Barbara. **How to Steal a Dog**

Park, Linda Sue. **Keeping Score**

Schmidt, Gary. **Lizzie Bright and the Buckminster Boy**

Telegmeier, Raina. **Smile**

Williams-Garcia, Rita. **One Crazy Summer**

Zimmer, Tracie Vaughn. **42 Miles**