

Happy Birthday, June Authors
By Laura Stoll, Assistant Director

June is a wonderful month for a birthday! Spring has finally sprung, and it seems like between Father's Day, anniversaries, and graduations, celebration is in the air. I am fortunate to share this birthday month with many fellow book lovers, including my dad, my brother-in-law, a few of my coworkers (HBD Dennis, Shari, and Delilah), and Jennifer S. and I even share the same day!

There are a lot of authors who were also born in June. Here are a few who made an impression on me or my loved ones.

My husband is a big fan of Norton Juster, born on June 2, 1929. He is best known for "The Phantom Tollbooth," about a bored boy named Milo who travels through a mysterious tollbooth to the Kingdom of Wisdom. Juster started his adult life working as an architect, and the illustrations for his books were done by his friend and neighbor Jules Feiffer.

My whole family loves Richard Scarry, who was born on June 5, 1919. As a child, I can remember dutifully looking for Dingo in his little red sports car on every page of "Cars and Trucks and Things that Go." Our kids can still recite the grocery list from Huckle and Lowly's "Best Mistake Ever," and even now, we debate whether the schoolteacher Miss Honey and her partner/roommate Bruno were a married couple or siblings.

When I need an escapist book, I often turn to young adult author Sarah Dessen, born on June 6, 1970. All of her books are so good, I can't recommend one more than another. They are usually about teenagers living in North Carolina, sometimes on the coast, who experience normal teenage angst. Things are usually neatly wrapped up by the end of the book, making it perfect for summer reading.

Noted diarist Anne Frank was born on June 10, 1929. She kept her diary, Kitty, during her time in hiding from the Nazis, using it to write about her everyday trials and tribulations while genocide was happening outside. Her father, Otto, found her diary among the things left behind in the Secret Annex, and it was published in 1947. For me, Anne serves as a reminder to keep writing in my journal every day. Personal histories are an invaluable legacy.

When my husband taught middle school English, one of his favorite texts was "The Book Thief" by Marcus Zusak, born on June 23, 1975. I confess, it's a little hard to get into this book, but stick with it. It's a tribute to books, reading, and human kindness during very dark times.

On a lighter note, if you ask my mom her favorite movie, she will undoubtedly say, "Love Story." The 1970 movie is based on the novel by Erich Segal, born on June 16, 1937. The movie stars Ryan O'Neal as Oliver Barrett IV (also known as "Preppy") and Ali MacGraw as Jenny. The ending is tragic, but the romance is incomparable.

June 27, 1880, is the birthday of Helen Keller. Although we might be familiar with her for activism for the rights of people with disabilities, particularly those who are deaf-blind, she considered herself an author first and foremost. According to the American Foundation for the Blind, she wrote 14 books and over 475 speeches and essays on topics such as faith, blindness prevention, birth control, the rise of fascism in Europe, and atomic energy. Her autobiography has been translated into 50 languages and remains in print. I'm going to add that to my list...after the group birthday party, of course!