

Battle of the Books

Guide for Parents and Coaches



Battle of the Books Committee, 2022-2023

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Getting Started...

1. What is the Battle of the Books?

The North Country Battle of the Books is a book trivia program coordinated by public and school libraries in Jefferson, Lewis, and St. Lawrence counties for students in grades 4-6. Book Battle programs are competitions similar to Jeopardy or whiz quiz games but questions come from a controlled list of books that participants read in preparation for the matches.

Public library staff and volunteers are responsible for planning, promoting, and implementing local battles and are encouraged to partner with school library staff. When a local public library is not able to participate, the school library may coordinate the local battle in place of the public library.

2. Who can be on a team?

Teams are made up of 3-4 students from grades 4-6. Team members can be from the same grade or mixed grades, classes, scout troop, homeschool group, etc. All team members should be active participants and be aware that they are signed up on a team. Once a team has been formed and officially registers at the library, changes cannot be made. Teams may not assign alternate players.

3. Who is responsible for the team?

The Team Coach is responsible for helping the team prepare for the battle. The Team Coach also serves as a contact person for the team and will receive all relevant program information from the Battle Coordinator. **A coaching guide is included in this toolkit.** A parent or other adult can serve as team coach, but it is up to the students to make sure that they read the books on the list. A team captain is also necessary for each team, since only one student can give the answers during the actual match.

4. When is the Battle?

Local battles take place in the spring, culminating with the Regional Battle in early May. The date of the Regional Battle for 2022 will be determined within a week or two. The dates of the local battles are determined by each participating library.

5. How are books selected for the book list?

Books are chosen by the committee members the previous spring, prior to the end of the school year. Considerations when selecting titles for the list include reading level, popularity/appeal, diversity, awards received, promotion of excellent titles that may not be well known, the number of available copies of each title in the NCLS catalog, and availability of paperback, e-book, or audio copies.

6. Will there be enough copies of the titles to go around?

Public and school libraries are encouraged to add the books on the list to their collections. Every effort will be made on the part of the library system to acquire e-books, when available.

7. How are local battles structured?

- Each match lasts approximately 15-30 minutes and contains 20 questions (10 per team, alternating).
- A coin toss determines which team goes first. The teams sit facing the question reader; the team that wins the coin toss will sit so that they are at the question reader's left. (This makes for easier scorekeeping.)
- Each team has 20 seconds to answer questions directed to them.
- Questions are all in the same format – “*In what book...?*”
- Answers are always in the form of the title and author of the book. The correct title is worth 5 points, and the author's full name is worth 3 points for a maximum of 8 points per question.
- A sample question would be “In what book is there a dog named after a grocery store?” The correct answer, delivered by the team captain, would be “Because of Winn-Dixie by Kate DiCamillo” for 8 points.
- If an answer or partial answer cannot be given by a team, once the 20 seconds has elapsed, the other team has five seconds to answer and get the remaining points for that question.

For more information on the way battles are structured, see the **Rules of Play**.

8. Our library only has one team. Can we still participate?

In small communities, it's not uncommon for a library to have only one team participating in the Battle of the Books. In that event, your library may decide not to hold a local battle and to simply use the local questions for practice. They may also decide to partner with a nearby library and have your team compete with theirs on the local level. In this situation, both teams go on to represent their libraries in the regional battle.

9. Are there prizes?

Each participating library can determine prizes for local battles. Libraries competing against each other in the Regional Battle will be competing for the Book Battle Champions trophy. The winning library will get to display this trophy in their home library until the next regional meet is held. Each member of the first, second, and third place teams will receive a medal on a ribbon. All participants in the Regional Battle will receive a paperback book.

Team Rules

1. Any combination of up to four 4th- 6th graders may form a team and then sign up at their home library. The home library does not have to be the library closest to home, but it should be the library the team uses the most; for example, the library where readers pick up holds or use the space to practice. Students who register for a team must really want to be on that team and cannot be signed up by their friends without their permission.
2. Students must choose a name for their team. **Names cannot include Battle titles or corresponding author names.**
3. Each team competing at the Regional Battle is encouraged to bring a poster to represent their team. It may be helpful to create a poster as they choose their team name. Libraries can display these as they compete at their local battles!
 - a. Poster Rules:
 - i. Teams must put their team name somewhere on the poster.
 - ii. Teams may not include any titles, authors, pictures of book covers, or any other important title information.
4. No substitutions or additions can be made to a team once it has been officially registered. Teams may not assign alternate players.
5. Students may not be on more than one team. Coaches may coach one team only.
6. Each team must have an adult coach/contact person. This may be a parent, teacher, or another adult that is able to coordinate between the team and the library. For more information about coaching, visit the Role of the Coach section in this toolkit.
7. One team member must be appointed the captain/spokesperson. The captain is the one who will speak the team's answers in each match. The team can confer with each other, but it is the captain that gives the answer. Teams may decide to split up the reading lists instead of everyone reading all the titles. It will be very important that all team members show up for all the matches if they choose to do this.
8. Teams must register for their local battle by the deadline assigned by their local public library, or school library, if the public library is not participating.

Rules of Play

1. There will be twenty (20) questions per game. Each question will be read through twice before timing begins and an answer is given. Questions will not be repeated after the timekeeper has started the clock.
2. A correct response is composed of two parts: the title and author of the work as written on the official list.
3. Each team has twenty (20) seconds to give the correct book title and author. A warning will be given when ten (10) seconds remains.
4. The team receives five (5) points for each correct title and three (3) points if they can correctly give the full name of the author, for a possible total of eight (8) points per question. Points will not be given for a partial author's name, such as the last name only.
5. Team members may confer with each other if they wish but only the captain may answer. One (1) point will be subtracted from the team's score for each answer that does not come through the captain.
6. Only one answer may be given in the allotted time period – the first answer spoken aloud by the captain will be the one that is judged.
7. If, at the end of twenty seconds, the team is unable to answer the question, the opposing team has five seconds to give the correct answer. They are allowed only one answer.
8. Initial articles, like 'A' and 'The', in titles will be disregarded when determining if a title is given correctly. All other words in the title must be correct. When a title is lengthy, acceptable abbreviations will be denoted on the official booklist, and judges at the local and regional battles will accept all approved abbreviations.
9. Only team members may challenge whether a question might apply to more than one book. If there is a challenge, the judges will consult the page numbers referenced for the question. Team members have until the next question is asked to challenge a question. No challenges will be accepted after that time.
10. If the challenge is accepted, the question will be thrown out and the team who was originally asked the question will be given a new one.
11. The pronunciation of the title and author shall be deemed acceptable if it is understood by the Questioner. There may not be a challenge on pronunciation.
12. If a team member is absent the remaining players may choose to either play with the members available or forfeit the game. No additional players may be added.

13. The intention of the NCLS Battle of the Books program is to provide an environment where competitors may enjoy a spirit of competition and fair play. A supportive and attentive audience enhances this experience for book battle teams. Audience members choosing to interfere with this intention, however, may be asked to leave a match, their team may be disqualified for the day and may be prohibited from participating in future battles. Disqualifying behavior during a match may include, but is not limited to:

- keeping score,
- any form of coaching
- any signaling to team members
- any recording of questions and/or answers

Out of respect for competitors and their judging teams, additional spectators will not be allowed to enter a competition room after the coin toss.

Role of the Coach

The coach has many different jobs throughout the entire Battle of the Books season. These roles vary from time to time, but the most important stays the same—the coach serves as the main contact point for the library staff. This means that the coach will be responsible for checking their email/voicemail regularly for important scheduling reminders and then reporting the reminders to the rest of the team. In the event of schedule changes, the library will contact the coach immediately, and it is their responsibility to relay this information to their team.

Other roles that a coach will fulfill:

- Discussion leader—make sure that each team member understands which books on the list he or she is expected to read. Coaches are encouraged to read the books too! Talk about the books with team members—what did they like or dislike about each book? Why?
- Meeting facilitator—meet with the team regularly to offer encouragement, check on reading progress, foster team cohesiveness, and help team members learn author’s names and facts from the books.
- Main contact point—act as the communicating link between the library, team members, and parents with all information regarding the Battle of the Books. Please keep the library informed of any problems or changes.
- Team supervisor on battle days—ensure that your team members and their families understand the rules and expectations, and make sure your team demonstrates sportsman-like behavior during the battles. We request that coaches be present during battle days to help the library contain the noise level while teams are waiting to compete. If you are unable to attend, please send a substitute in your place.

Coaches can also help their team foster and maintain team spirit throughout the battle season. We want this to be a friendly and exciting competition for all involved! Methods of building team spirit may include:

- Decorating team t-shirts or costumes
- Wear the same color or item of clothing to battles
- Make a poster to display at your table during the battles

Some ways to encourage and reward your team are:

- Give praise and words of encouragement
- Serve snacks at meetings
- Play a board game before you begin battle meetings
- Have a pizza party or an ice cream outing at the completion of the battles
- Keep it fun and make happy memories!

****Please note: Due to the double-elimination structure of the regional battle, there can be a considerable amount of down-time between matches. Coaches are encouraged to bring activities to keep their teams entertained.**