

Ames Public Library's Battle of the Books FAQ

1. What is the "Battle of the Books?"

Ames Public Library's Battle of the Books is a way for kids to have fun and compete in a book-related challenge. Students in grades 5 and 6 form teams, read a designated list of books, and come to a program that the Ames Public Library hosts for a final competition. Questions in the competition are based on facts from the books. Students have many months to read and prepare before the Battle event in the spring. Winners receive a traveling plaque and, of course, bragging rights for a whole year!

2. Can you give me some example questions?

Our questions are always phrased like: "In *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle, what does the caterpillar turn into at the end of the book?" The team would then discuss, one member would stand and (hopefully) give the answer, "A butterfly."

All of our questions have definite, clear answers.

We never ask for interpretive answers or yes/no or true/false.

When preparing students, make sure they are very familiar with who the main characters are (names), what the main plot points are, where does the story take place (time in history, setting/location) etc.

They DO NOT need to know page numbers of where to find the answers.

3. How many people may participate in the Battle?

Four (4) children per team. If for some reason a team member is sick or otherwise unable to attend the Battle, teams may participate with fewer than four. Exceptions may also be that a given school has six (6) children and rather than have one team of four (4) and two (2) alternates they can elect to have two (2) teams of three (3).

4. Who may participate in the Battle?

5th graders may compete in the 5th grade Battle and 6th graders in the 6th grade Battle. Mixed grade level teams must compete in the Battle for the highest grade represented on their team.

Homeschooled families are encouraged to form grade appropriate teams with other home or public schooled students.

5. Who can be a team sponsor and what does that mean?

Any parent, teacher or responsible adult may be a team sponsor. This means that person is pledging to form a team, make sure the kids are reading the selected books from the Battle list and preparing the kids for competition day. The sponsor must also commit to being at the competition to check in the team, make sure they arrive on time to each room, and remain in the room with the team in case adult assistance is needed. The sponsor may appoint another parent to be in the room with the team. The Battle coordinator needs to be given their name.

6. Can a person be a sponsor for more than one team?

Absolutely! However, for the day of the Battle we do require each team to have a designated adult representative in the room at all times in case adult assistance is needed. This adult will make sure the team gets to the right room at the right time and is also responsible for the behavior of the team members during the competition portion. The sponsor may assign these duties to any responsible adult.

7. Do the sponsors need to have read every book on the list?

No. However it is in the best interest of the team if the sponsor has read all the books to best prepare the team members ahead of time.

8. The web site states that I need to have a person available to be a judge and commit to reading all the books. What if I cannot find anyone willing to do that?

It is preferred that someone could step in and be a judge. Although we have never needed one, it is helpful to have identified one in the case that a judge that has been assigned is unable to fulfill that obligation.

9. How does the Battle work so I can better prepare my kids?

There will be 3 rounds. All teams will participate in the first two qualifying rounds. The teams with the highest scores from the first two rounds will advance to the Final Battle. Teams sit together at a table in their designated room and, during the Battle, will answer random questions about the books. Questions will be randomly drawn from a container and read twice to the team. The team will then discuss their answer and one person will stand and give the answer.

Each team will be given different questions and no question will be asked twice.

At the end of the round, teams will be given a short break before the next round begins.

10. How long does the Battle last?

Depending on how many teams participate, each round normally takes around 45 minutes and then each team is given a short break before the next round. We generally plan on about three hours for the whole competition.

11. How does the scoring system work?

Each team will be awarded ten (10) points for a correct answer. If an incorrect answer is given, no points will be deducted or earned so guessing is encouraged! The first two (2) Battles are qualifying rounds. Their point totals will be added together to determine the teams that will compete in the Final Battle. For the Final Battle, all teams begin with a clean slate. No points are carried over.

12. How many books should each child be expected to read?

Book lists tend to be around 20 books (give or take a couple titles.)

Teams in the past have tried many strategies for reading through the list.

Some teams divide the list into groups and each kid is responsible for reading and knowing well their handful of books.

- Other groups divide the list in half and have a couple kids overlap their reading.
- Some kids just read the ones they are interested in and hope that all the books are covered by someone on the team.
- Yet others try and encourage every member to read all the books.

No matter what strategy you use, try to have every book on the list read by someone. Each round's set of questions includes questions from every book on the list. But because the questions are drawn randomly from the entire set, any team may receive *any number of* questions for any book at any time. This is why it is important for the team as a whole to be prepared to answer questions from all the books on the list. It is heartbreaking for everyone when a team has to stand up and say, "We don't have an answer because we didn't read that book."

13. Do teams need to wear matching uniforms?

No. Team unity definitely is apparent when kids on a team match, but it is definitely not required to do so.

14. Can families and spectators come and watch?

Absolutely! We encourage everyone to come support the teams during the Battle. There will be designated seating areas in each room for spectators. However, for the respect of the participants, we ask that all cell phones and electronic devices be silenced and young children be taken out of the room if they become distracting.

15. How are the Battle lists created?

Each spring youth librarians from Ames Public Library put out a call for other teachers, librarians, or interested parties to make suggestions for Battle titles. Once gathered, all titles that were suggested along with previous Battle selections and Iowa award lists (Children's Choice, etc.) are vetted, read, and compiled into the next year's lists. The final list for each grade takes many weeks to finalize to make sure it is well balanced with topics, genres, formats, and reading levels. Once finalized, lists are available via Ames Public Library's web site (amespubliclibrary.org) and by stopping in the Library.

16. What happens if there is a book on the list that I do not want my child to read?

Creators of the lists try very hard to include a wide range of reading topics, genres and levels as the final selections. Because each child is not required to read every book on the list, we would encourage you to have your child skip the book you find unappealing. And by all means, please let us know what book and why, so we may take that into consideration for future years.

If you have a question that was not covered here, please feel free to contact us at any time.

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