



# Official Handbook

2020-2021

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For more information and resources, visit our website  
<https://sites.google.com/targetrangek8.com/montanabattleofthebooks/home>



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## Past State Winners

2015-2016	3rd/4th	Target Range School, Missoula
	5th/6th	Russell School, Missoula
2016-2017	3rd/4th	Hawthorne School, Missoula
	5th/6th	Target Range School, Missoula
2017-2018	3rd/4th	Paxson School, Missoula
	5th/6th	Paxson School, Missoula
	7th/8th	Target Range School, Missoula
2018-2019	3rd/4th	Sussex School, Missoula
	5th/6th	Target Range School, Missoula
	7th/8th	Target Range School, Missoula
2019-2020	3rd/4th	Broadus School District
	5th/6th	Target Range School, Missoula

## Introduction and Organization

### Introduction

An enthusiastic group of Montana librarians is working to make the Montana Battle of the Books (MTBoB) a true statewide program. Students in grades 3-8, regardless of ability, are exposed to quality literature representing a variety of literary styles and viewpoints. Book selections include a wide range of genres, including everything from graphic novels to classics. The mission is to recognize and challenge students who enjoy reading, to encourage and motivate reluctant readers, to broaden reading interests, to increase reading comprehension and fluency, to promote academic excellence, and to foster cooperative learning and teamwork among students.

MTBoB is run completely by volunteers.

### Organization

The Montana Battle of the Books is organized locally by participating schools and by the Statewide MTBoB Committee. The Committee is composed of representatives from each region of the state and meets in person or online in November, January, February and April of each year to discuss policies and issues, and to select titles for the next school year. Librarians and school personnel interested in joining the Committee should contact Lisa Brennan. All MTBoB Committee members are volunteers.

The MTBoB Committee oversees the collection and distribution of information, questions and book lists. Registration of participating school teams takes place each fall on the MTBoB website. Registration must be completed prior to announced deadlines for a school to participate in the State battles. A participation fee is required of schools to support the MTBoB committee in operating state battles. Registration information is available on the MTBoB website. Schools should conduct their local battles according to rules and procedures set out in this handbook.

The MTBoB Committee is responsible for the guidelines and rules stated in this official handbook. The MTBoB program strives to be inclusive of all Montana students in grades 3-8. From time to time special accommodations are required to allow students with unique abilities to participate on a team. Accommodations will be approved by the Committee prior to the beginning of the state battles. Accommodations will not be allowed which give a team an unfair advantage during competition.

## Battle of the Books Rules

### Teams

1. Teams consist of up to three members each, plus one alternate. There can be a total of four team members with only three competing in a Battle at a time. The alternate team members will switch at half time.
2. Students may participate in a higher level than their current grade, though this is not encouraged. For instance, it is acceptable for a 4th grade student to compete on a 5th/6th grade team. A student may not participate at a lower level. For instance, a 5th grade student may not compete on a 3rd/4th grade team.
3. Team members do not have to be in the same grade.
4. Each school district may send only one team, per division, to the State competition.

### Battle Procedures

5. Ten minutes prior to the beginning of the Battle, teams will take their seats at their school's designated table, the floor will be cleared of all non-competitors, and pencils will be handed out. At this time, teams may record the titles and authors of the Battle books from memory on the back of the official answer sheet. No electronic devices may be in use.
6. There will be two Judges keeping score for each Battle.
7. The Moderator will review the rules with the participating teams prior to the start of the battle.
8. Each team will be allowed to have one official answer sheet and two pencils with them at the table during a Battle. No other items should be on the table. All writing is done by the team's recorder.
9. When possible, the questions and a timer will be available to the teams visually, such as projected on a screen using a slideshow or other method.
10. A proctor will be assigned to monitor each team and verify the keyword answer written by the recorder. If possible, the proctor will not be the parent of a child on the team being proctored or the coach of the team. It may be necessary to have one proctor monitor more than one team.
11. The Moderator will ask a single question of all teams at once. A repeat of the question will be read automatically. Timing, however, starts immediately after the question has been read for the first time. Teams will use the allotted time to quietly discuss the question among themselves. Each team will have 30 seconds in which to discuss and record their answer to the question.

12. The team's response will be written on the official answer sheet in keyword form, which means a unique word from the title of the book and the last name of the author. For instance, for the book *I Survived the Attack of the Grizzlies, 1967* by Lauren Tarshis, an acceptable written answer would be "Grizzlies/Tarshis," as long as there were not two books with the word "grizzlies" in the Battle. Written answers need to be legible, and keywords need to be complete and spelled well enough to be easily recognized by the proctor.
13. Sixteen questions will be asked in a single Battle, and each team competing in that Battle will answer the same 16 questions. At the end of 8 questions, a halftime score for each team will be announced, and at the end of 16 questions, the team with the highest score will be declared the winner.
14. If the Moderator makes a mistake while reading a question, such as giving the answer, the question shall be thrown out and another question substituted in its place.
15. Questions for the State Battles will be selected by the Statewide Committee. Multiple questions may appear on certain titles and some titles may not be asked about at all.
16. Discussion and writing must stop as soon as time is called.
17. No answers will be given until the time period expires. When time is called, the Moderator will call on the speaker of each team to say the team's answer out loud. The teams will alternate giving the first oral response. In other words, Team A will answer first on question one and Team B will answer first on question 2, etc.
18. After all teams have stated their answers, the Moderator will then state the correct answer. The Judges will award points to the teams, allowing 5 points for the correct title and an additional 3 points for the correct author. To be judged correct, the title and author must be stated in order and in full, just as they are on the official list. The stated answer must match the title and author keywords as written on the official answer sheet. Teams will be given partial credit (5 points) for the correct title, but an incorrect or no author. No credit will be given if the title is incorrect.
19. If the answer given orally differs from the keyword answer on the official answer sheet, no points are awarded for that answer and the team is disqualified. The team may remain to finish the Battle, but the Judges will stop awarding points to the disqualified team going forward. If a spokesperson begins to give an incorrect answer and then corrects him/herself, the team's proctor will be called on to verify that the correct keyword and author were written on the answer sheet. If the error was only a "slip of the tongue" then that team will be awarded full points for the question.
20. If any team gives an incorrect answer, the Moderator will ask if anyone would like to challenge. If any team decides to do so, they will follow the challenge rules listed below. No matter how many teams give an incorrect answer, a challenge may be declared by any (or all) teams.

## Challenges

21. In the event of a CHALLENGE, this procedure will be followed: Each team is allowed 3 challenges. If the challenge is successful, it does not count as one of the three. Each challenging team will have TWO minutes to find the answer in the book they named. Each challenging team will be given 1-3 unmarked copies of the chosen book. At the end of two minutes, if the team(s) has found an answer, one team at a time will approach the Judges and the speaker will show the Judges the exact passage in the book that supports their challenge. The Judges determine whether the challenge is successful or not. An answer may be considered correct by way of inference. If the Judges accept the challenge as successful, the points shall be awarded and the Battle shall continue. The Judges' decision is final.

## Tie Breakers

22. If there is a tie at the end of 16 questions, a sudden death tie-breaker round will be played to break the tie between two or more teams. As soon as one team has answered a question incorrectly, they are out of the round. The team that has answered correctly when others have not will be declared the winner. If no team has answered incorrectly after 10 tiebreaker questions, the teams will be declared dual winners. Challenges are allowed during tiebreaker rounds with the usual challenge procedures in effect.

## End of Battle Procedures

23. At the conclusion of the Battle, teams will be given the opportunity to accept and confirm the score as provided by the Judges. The Battle will be considered complete when each team has been provided an opportunity to review their score and the score sheets have been initialed by each spokesperson. If a team disagrees with the scoring or has other questions about a judgment that affects the outcome of the Battle, these concerns must immediately be brought to the attention of the Moderator by the speaker of the team. The Moderator and Judges will consult in order to make a final decision.
24. At no point during a Battle will anyone other than members of the participating teams approach the Judges or Moderator for any reason.
25. In the event of a situation that is not specifically addressed in the MTBoB rules, the decision of the Moderator and Judges will be final. Members of the Statewide Committee may be asked for input.
26. The MTBoB State Committee has the authority to refuse to allow a team to participate in the event of unsportsmanlike behavior or other extenuating circumstances.



## Battle Officials

The Moderator, Judges and Timekeeper/Technical Operator will work collaboratively to provide a fair and enjoyable battle for all participants.

### Moderator's Role

#### Site Logistics

- Cluster team chairs in such a way that team members can confer easily with physical separation between the teams.
- Have teams face the Moderator and screen (with backs to the audience).
- Provide each team with two sharpened pencils and one official answer sheet.
- Number each table so the number is visible to the Judges. Optionally, provide a placard with the school name for each team.
- Provide a Judges' table, complete with a laptop, pencils and score sheets.
- Teams will provide the Moderator copies of the books when they arrive for the battles, to be used in the event of a challenge.

#### Battle Procedures

- Be familiar with the rules and regulations provided in this handbook.
- Have on hand an official list of the titles and authors.
- Preview the slideshow with the battle questions prior to the battle.
- Speak slowly and clearly.
- Ten minutes prior to the start of the battle, clear the floor of everyone but the team members participating.
- Pass out two pencils and an official answer sheet to each team. When each team has their supplies, indicate they may write down titles and authors from memory, if they wish.
- Introduce yourself and the teams.
- Politely request cell phones be turned off.
- Review the rules for the battle.
- Ask the Judges if they have each team's school indicated on a score sheet.

- Only the team's speaker can give the answer to the questions. Only the first answer the speaker gives will be accepted, and must match what the recorder has written on the official answer sheet.
- Teams have 30 seconds after the questions has been read the first time to collaborate and write the keywords on the official answer sheet.
- The Moderator will repeat the question twice.
- After all teams have stated their answers, the Moderator will then state the correct answer.
- If any team gives an incorrect answer, the Moderator will ask if anyone would like to challenge.
- At the end of halftime, the Moderator will announce the score of each team as provided by the Judges.
- Ask the speaker of each team to initial the final score on the scoresheet provided by the Judges.
- At the end of the battle, announce the scores of the top three teams, indicating the winner.

## Judge's Role

- The Judges will be familiar with the rules and regulations as provided in this handbook.
- The Judges will sit next to or behind the moderator.
- The Judges will award points to the teams, allowing 5 points for the correct title and an additional 3 points for the correct author. To be judged correct, the title and author must be stated in order and in full, just as they are on the official list, and this stated answer must match the title and author keywords as written on the official answer sheet. Teams will be given partial credit (5 points) for the correct title, but incorrect or no author. No credit will be given if the title is incorrect.
- If the Moderator forgets to ask if there are any challenges, the Judges will remind him/her.
- In the case of a challenge, at the end of two minutes, if the team(s) has found an answer, one team at a time will approach the Judges and the speaker will show the Judges the exact passage in the book that could be the correct answer to the question. The Judges determine whether the challenge is successful or not. An answer may be considered correct by way of inference. If the Judges accept the challenge as successful, the points shall be awarded and the Battle shall continue. The Judges' decision is final.
- At halftime and at the end of the battle, Judges will add up the scores of each team.
- Judges will compare scores with one another to assure accuracy.

- At the conclusion of the battle, the Judges will give the scoresheets for each team to the Moderator to distribute to the teams for the speakers to initial.
- At any time, a Judge may remind the Moderator of a procedure that may have been forgotten.

## Timekeeper/Technical Operator's Role

- Be familiar with the rules and regulations as provided in this handbook.
- Know what equipment is available at the battle location and be familiar with its operation.
- Make arrangements to procure any equipment that may not be at the location.
- Project the slideshow of the battle rules when the Moderator is providing that information.
- Project each question as soon as the Moderator announces readiness for it.
- Project the answer to each question only after every team has provided their answer.
- Begin a timer for 30 seconds as soon as the Moderator reads a question the first time. An audible sound should indicate the end of 30 seconds.
- If there is a challenge, as soon as the Moderator indicates each team that is challenging has been provided with a copy (or copies) of the book in question, begin a timer for 2 minutes. An audible sound should indicate the end of 2 minutes.
- If teams are competing remotely, provide an iPad or other device for each team's participation. Be certain to have on hand a charging cord for each device.
- Arrange to have an operator for each device/remote team (one person to operate the device and communicate with the remote team).

## Additional Personnel/Volunteers

- Greeter to check teams in as they arrive and help them to draw a number or otherwise determine their table number for the battle. This should be someone who is able to arrive early and is not responsible for the supervision of students.
- Person responsible for devices for remote participants, including charging the devices
- Proctors for each team during each battle
- Person to cut and serve the cake or other refreshments provided at the conclusion of each battle.
- Someone to provide the refreshments and all the accoutrements (napkins, plates, cups, silverware, etc.)
- Clean up crew at the end of the event

## Awards and Prizes

The trophy for each division, 3rd/4th, 5th/6th and 7th/8th, will be engraved with the year of the battle, the name of the winning school and the names of the team members. The trophy will be kept at the winning school until the date of the next Battle. It is the responsibility of the team in possession of the trophy to transport it to the State Battle to be awarded again.

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Where do I find basic information about Montana Battle of the Books?

Visit the website at : <https://sites.google.com/targetrangek8.com/montanabattleofthebooks/home>

How does a student participate?

A student participates by reading from the book list provided for that year's MTBoB and discussing those titles and competing in battles with their teammates. Battles are initially held at a student's school.

Who competes at the State MTBoB battles?

Any school registered with MTBoB may send one team per division to the State battles. Larger schools will have battles among the teams within their school, selecting the winning teams to participate at the State battles.

Where do students get the books?

School libraries should have at least one copy of each book on the list. Public libraries will also be apprised of the titles and will most likely have them available, both in print and electronic formats.

When do students read the books?

The school battles must be completed prior to the State battles, which are held each year in March. The reading list for the following school year is announced in the spring, typically sometime in May. Reading through the summer is completely optional but available to students.

How do I get practice questions and questions for my school battles?

Practice questions and local school battle questions are distributed to registered schools usually in October. The questions are available on the MTBoB website and require a

password. Please do not share the password or questions with non-registered schools or parents.

What is a battle?

A typical battle is a tournament or game, somewhat like Jeopardy, in which student teams earn points by answering questions about the books on the book list.

Do students have to read all the books?

No. Many students read only about half of the books. There are a few readers who complete the whole list, but there are some who might only be able to read a portion. As long as some member of the team has read each of the books, the team will be prepared for the battle.

Do we need to have awards for the winning teams?

We suggest that you find ways to honor all participants.

Does my school need to have a team at each level?

No. It is often best to start small, with a team competing at only one level the first year.

Who else is participating in Montana?

Participants are listed on the MTBoB website.

Who can I contact if I need help or would like more information?

You can contact any one of the MTBoB Statewide Committee members.

## Criteria for the Selection of Titles

Montana Battle of the Books is designed to be an optional program in the schools. A child's participation is **voluntary**. Different criteria are used for the selection of these titles than those used in selecting materials for required activities in individual school districts.

**Note to parents:** Montana Battle of the Books is a voluntary program. MTBoB welcomes students in grades 3-8 to participate. The titles are selected with the reading level and maturity in mind - depending on the grade level. You may feel that the content and/or theme of one or more of the titles are inappropriate for your child. Not all MTBoB team members are required to read all books on that year's list and students should not be assigned specific books to read.

**Books chosen for the Montana Battle of the Books are selected keeping in mind the following criteria:**

### Number of titles

- 3rd/4th Grade - 12 titles
- 5th/6th Grade - 12 titles
- 7th/8th Grade - 10-12 titles

### Grade Level/Reading Level

Approximately half of the books selected will be at the reading level of the students.  
Approximately 25% of the books will be above the reading level of the students.  
Approximately 25% of the books will be below the reading level of the students.

### Interest

- A variety of subject areas, plots, settings and styles.
- Balanced interest for boys/girls and a wide range of maturity levels within divisions
- A variety of genres: realistic fiction, nonfiction, fantasy, science fiction, historical fiction, mystery, classics, graphic novel, multicultural, and Montana representation

### Quality of the Books

- Select high quality, well-reviewed, age-appropriate titles.
- Consider award winners, such as Newbery, Young Readers Choice, Beverly Cleary Children's Choice Award, etc.

### Books on Previous Lists

- Titles may have been used as MTBoB titles previously.

- Titles must not be repeated within at least three years of being on the list.

#### Publication Information

- Books should be available in paperback format whenever possible.
- Titles must be available in sufficient numbers for purchase through major book distributors such as (but not limited to) Ingram, Follett, Scholastic, etc.
- Published by a recognized, mainstream publisher (no self-published titles will be considered).

#### Intellectual Freedom

In accordance with the Library Bill of Rights and its interpretations, titles that otherwise meet the selection criteria will not be excluded “because of the origin, background or views of those contributing to their creation;” or “because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval;” or “because of actual or suspected parental objections;” or “in an effort to avoid controversy with parents.”



## Book Selection Process

Title selection is a year-long process that is taken very seriously by members of the Title Selection Committee.

### Title Selection Committee Members

All members of the Title Selection Committee are trained professionals. They must be teachers, librarians or instructional coaches, or a person retired from one of these positions. There may be up to twelve individuals on the committee. Committee members will be appointed for one year by the MTBoB Statewide Committee. Appointments will be made by September of each year. If you have interest in being on the committee, contact any member of the Statewide Committee.

### Title Nomination

- Starting September 1 and ending January 1, title nominations will be solicited from members of the general public for consideration for the next year's reading list. All members of the reading community are encouraged to nominate titles, including parents, students, teachers, librarians, etc. Each individual may nominate up to three titles per division.
- Titles from the YRCA (Young Readers' Choice Award) are considered by the committee, though these titles don't typically become available until late spring.

### Committee Procedure

- The committee will meet in April to finalize book lists for the following year.
- A book will only be selected for the final list if a committee member has read the book and believes it is a good choice for the list.
- The committee will make publishing considerations, such as if the book is available in paperback.
- The committee will check availability of titles prior to putting the book on the list.



### Final Title Lists

- Final lists of the titles for the following year will be made available to the public by May 15. Until that date, all selection negotiations will remain confidential.
- Once a title has been placed on the final list and announced to the public, it cannot be removed, except in the event that a title will be unavailable in adequate numbers for participating schools.

## Question Writing Guidelines

After the books lists are finalized, titles are assigned by the Title Selection Committee to individuals or groups who write the questions.

Completed sets of questions must be submitted to the Question Chair by **September 15** (or earlier) so that they can be edited and made available in a timely manner. Practice questions will be available on the MTBoB website to registered schools by October 15.

Prepare for writing questions by first reading the entire book. For each book, try to write approximately 60 questions.

- Select the BEST 5 questions for the State battle.
- Select the NEXT BEST 5 questions for Local school battles.
- The REMAINING questions will be practice questions.

### Writing the Questions

- Begin each question with, "In which book ...".
- When citing page numbers, use the edition which is listed on the Official Title List. It is vital that the answer can be verified in the event of a challenge.
- Do not use a character's name in a question.
- Do not use key words from the title within the questions.
- Avoid writing questions that are so specific that the book or answer is given away.  
NOT: "In which book is a character hospitalized for many months because of polio?"  
BETTER: "In which book is a character hospitalized for many months because of an illness?"
- Use direct quotes only when they are an integral part of the story.
- Try to include a variety of types of questions. Cover significant events, character development, major themes and unique settings in time or place.

## Submitting the Questions

Question writers will be given a template to submit the questions to the Question Chair. It is important to honor the September 15 deadline. The Question Chair will be available to answer questions from the writers.

**The questions should be kept confidential at all times to protect the integrity of this program.**

Practice questions will be made available to registered schools on the MTBoB website by the Question Chair by October 15.