

Reading is one of the pillars of a successful life and the key to building a lifelong love of learning. Inspiring passion for really amazing books is essential. Freedom Hill teachers are working hard to stoke this fire, so we're launching our first ever Battle of the Books!

Freedom Hill's Battle of The Books competition will inspire all 5th and 6th grade students to read good quality literature. Our teachers have read many of the books from the Virginia Reader's Choice Awards Elementary list (2013-2014) and I've chosen the ones that we enjoyed the most. (see list below). There will be a nice range of book levels and interest areas for the students to choose from. Battle of the Books will encourage students to read 10 books and demonstrate their detailed knowledge of the books through a friendly team-based competition.

Every 5th and 6th grade classroom will have a bin with at least 1 copy of all the titles and every student will have access to every book. Students will read the books and write 3-5 questions for the Battle, to be entered into a Google Doc form that can be accessed from each class/grade level Blackboard site. They will also be asked to rate the book and provide a review of it. The Battle is scheduled for April 11th 11:00-12:00 and will include all 5th and 6th graders. Battle of the Book teams will be determined by teachers a few weeks before the Battle and will be based on specific knowledge of the books and assessed through a short test.

Not every student involved in reading the books will be on a Battle team, but students can make the team based on the extensive knowledge they demonstrate for a particular book. 5th and 6th grade students who didn't participate in reading Battle books and writing questions/reviews or who aren't on a Battle team will cheer the teams on during the competition.

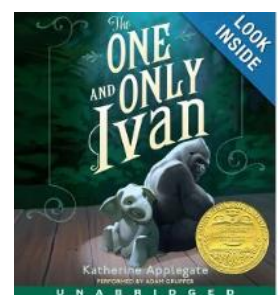
I cannot wait to begin visiting classes and giving book talks to engage all of our students in reading with their peers! Building lifelong learners (and reading!) is my passion. To this end, students can (but are not required to) join me Wednesdays (6th graders 9:05-9:25, 5th graders 1:30-2:00) to discuss specific titles and ensure that they understand every book they are reading and/or access the books on Audible.com if they have an interest in reading a book beyond their current reading level.

Encourage your 5th and 6th grade students to read our Battle books! The content in *most of the books is appropriate for our 3rd and 4th grade students too. Help them stretch by reading challenge books with them or downloading it on Audible.com for them to listen to. Talk to them about what they're reading and, most importantly, ask them what they thought of the book and why. Love of a great book is an experience that binds us together and our students need to see and experience this. Let's work together, parents and teachers, to bring our students together around BOOKS!

Please send me an email if you have any questions, Melissa.Rossman@fcps.edu

Battle of the Book Titles:

One and Only Ivan, By Katherine A. Applegate



Ivan is an easygoing gorilla. Living at the Exit 8 Big Top Mall and Video Arcade, he has grown accustomed to humans watching him through the glass walls of his domain. He rarely misses his life in the jungle. In fact, he hardly ever thinks about it at all.

Instead, Ivan thinks about TV shows he's seen and about his friends Stella, an elderly elephant, and Bob, a stray dog. But mostly Ivan thinks about art and how to capture the taste of a mango or the sound of leaves with color and a well-placed line.

Then he meets Ruby, a baby elephant taken from her family, and she makes Ivan see their home—and his own art—through new eyes. When Ruby arrives, change comes with her, and it's up to Ivan to make it a change for the better.

Katherine Applegate blends humor and poignancy to create Ivan's unforgettable first-person narration in a story of friendship, art, and hope.

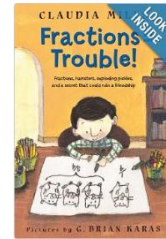
Waiting for the Magic by Patricia MacLachlan



People may drift apart, but love can hold them together. A touching tale of pets and family told in the "venerable spare and moving style" of Newbery Medalist Patricia MacLachlan, author of *Sarah, Plain and Tall* (*Booklist*).

When William's father leaves, his mother promptly goes out and adds four dogs and a cat to their lives. William's sure that nothing can fill the hole left by his father, but the new additions to the family are determined to help. With his sister, Elinor, and his mother, William will learn that "family" can come in all shapes and sizes, because sometimes we find love through magic, and sometimes that magic is all around us.

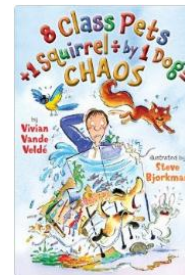
Fractions = Trouble! by Claudia Mills



If Wilson Williams thought multiplication was difficult, he is finding fractions impossible. And when his parents hire a math tutor for him, he is sure he's the only kid in the history of Hill Elementary to have one. Wilson is determined to make sure that no one finds out, not even his best friend, Josh. At least his pet hamster, Pip, is sympathetic. Pip is going to be part of Wilson's science fair project, because any project with hamsters in it is bound to be wonderful. But Josh has the coolest project of all: at what temperature does a pickle explode? Unfortunately, it looks as if Wilson's secret may end up exploding their friendship.

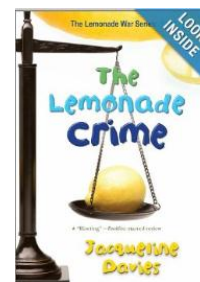
Claudia Mills' *Fractions = Trouble* is a fun and thoroughly relatable story that *Kirkus Reviews* calls an "excellent selection for early chapter-book readers."

8 Class Pets + 1 Squirrel Divided By 1 Dog = Chaos Vande Velde, Vivian



Twitch, the school yard squirrel, has really gotten himself into a bind this time. While trying to escape from a hungry owl, he roused the principal's dog and got chased into the school. Now he's locked in for a dangerous and disastrous night. Can Green Eggs and Hamster, Sweetie the library rat, and the other school pets save Twitch from the crazed dog, Cuddles? In this uproarious chapter book, a group of small animals manages to turn an elementary school into a real zoo.

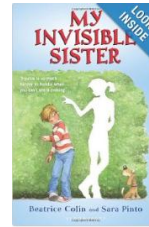
The Lemonade Crime by Jacqueline Davies



Following the laws of our legal system, Evan and Jessie's fourth grade class concocts a courtroom on the playground, putting Scott Spencer, alleged thief, on trial. They create a legitimate courtroom—with a judge, witnesses, a jury of their peers—and surprising consequences.

As she explores the difficulties of fairness, Jacqueline Davies once again reveals how good she is at understanding the complex emotions of children this age.

My Invisible Sister by Beatrice Colin and Sara Pinto



Ten-year-old Frank and his family have moved nine times in eleven years, and Frank has had it. No more new schools or new friends. This time Frank's going to make his sister love the place so much she never wants to leave. Because, you see, when your sister is invisible, she can do pretty much whatever she likes. And if she gets unhappy . . .

Hound Dog True by Linda Urban



Do not let a mop sit overnight in water. Fix things before they get too big for fixing.” Fifth-grader Mattie Breen writes it all down. She has just one week to convince Uncle Potluck to take her on as his custodial apprentice before school starts. As his apprentice, she’ll have important work to do during lunch and recess . . . work that will keep her safely away from other fifth-graders. But when Mattie’s plans come crashing down, she ends up with a friend who is hound dog true.

Star in the Forest by Laura Resau



Zitlally's family is undocumented, and her father has just been arrested for speeding and deported back to Mexico. As her family waits for him to return—they’ve paid a coyote to guide him back across the border—they receive news that he and the coyote’s other charges have been kidnapped and are being held for ransom. Meanwhile, Zitlally and a new friend find a dog in the forest near their trailer park. They name it Star for the star-shaped patch over its eye. As time goes on, Zitlally starts to realize that Star is her father’s “spirit animal,” and that as long as Star is safe, her father will be also. But what will happen to Zitlally’s dad when Star disappears?

Wonder by R.J. Palacio

I won't describe what I look like. Whatever you're thinking, it's probably worse.



August Pullman was born with a facial deformity that, up until now, has prevented him from going to a mainstream school. Starting 5th grade at Beecher Prep, he wants nothing more than to be treated as an ordinary kid—but his new classmates can’t get past Auggie’s extraordinary face. **WONDER**, now a #1 *New York Times* bestseller and included on the Texas Bluebonnet Award master list, begins from

Auggie's point of view, but soon switches to include his classmates, his sister, her boyfriend, and others. These perspectives converge in a portrait of one community's struggle with empathy, compassion, and acceptance.

"Wonder is the best kids' book of the year," said Emily Bazelon, senior editor at Slate.com and author of *Sticks and Stones: Defeating the Culture of Bullying and Rediscovering the Power of Character and Empathy*. In a world where bullying among young people is an epidemic, this is a refreshing new narrative full of heart and hope. **R.J. Palacio** has called her debut novel "a meditation on kindness" — indeed, every reader will come away with a greater appreciation for the simple courage of friendship. Auggie is a hero to root for, a diamond in the rough who proves that **you can't blend in when you were born to stand out.**

***You'll Like it Here* by Ruth White**



While Meggie and David Blue are from another planet, they're a lot like Earth kids, with similar hopes and dreams, and can't wait to grow up. BUT they also have GROSSLY UNIQUE qualities, such as blue streaks in their hair that pop up randomly and language skills that sound like nothing on this planet. The story takes these alien kids, along with their mother and grandfather, by accident, to a far planet in which the society is not only oppressive but hostile to individual freedom. People are kept submissive through drugs and brainwashing. The Blues, who have spent time in free societies recognize the upside-down-ness of this world. They're almost helpless to do anything, but do what they can, plan their escape, and vow to help others.