

Course Title:

Battle of the Books

Length:

Eight months
Grades 7 & 8

Schools:

Pierrepoint
Union

RUTHERFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Rutherford, New Jersey

GIFTED AND TALENTED DEPARTMENT

BATTLE OF THE BOOKS
MINI-COURSE
GRADES 7 & 8

1. Introduction/Overview/Philosophy

Battle of the Books is a reading motivation program. The goal is to encourage reading for pleasure, to broaden reading interest, and to recognize students who enjoy reading. It also provides an opportunity for academic competition.

The original idea for Battle of the Books came from a radio program sponsored by the Chicago Public Library in the 1940's. A student participant in that radio show became a school librarian and reconstructed her memory of the radio show for use in her library.

Librarians shared this experience and, in the fall of 1986, New Jersey began its own Battle of the Books.

2. Objectives

a. Students will be able

1. To read for pleasure and information (3.1, 3.5);
2. To answer questions about details from the selected titles (3.3, 3.4, 7.2);
3. To create questions to be used in practice competition (3.2);
4. To gain an understanding of other cultures through literature (7.2).

3. Course Outline

The course focuses on fifteen books chosen annually by groups of volunteer librarians. Student teams read the books over a period of months, quiz each other on the contents, and then compete in teams to correctly answer questions based upon the books. The questions are phrased so that the answer is the title and author of the book.

Students do not need to meet regularly until the time of the county competition approaches. Battle of the Books is effective at stimulating an interest in reading.

The list of books for the 2008-2009 school year is in the appendix.

4. New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards

The following New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards are integrated into this course:

Language Arts Literacy List of Standards

- 3.1 (Reading) All students will understand and apply the knowledge of sounds, letters, and words in written English to become independent and fluent readers, and will read a variety of materials and texts with fluency and comprehension.
- 3.2 (Writing) All students will write in clear, concise, organized language that varies in content and form for different audiences and purposes.
- 3.3 (Speaking) All students will speak in clear, concise, organized language that varies in content and form for different audiences and purposes.
- 3.4 (Listening) All students will listen actively to information from a variety of sources in a variety of situations.
- 3.5 (Viewing and media literacy) All students will access, view, evaluate, and respond to print, nonprint, and electronic texts and resources.

World Languages List of Standards

- 7.2 (Culture) All students will demonstrate an understanding of the perspectives of a culture(s) through experiences with its products and practices.

Technological Literacy List of Standards

- 8.1 (Computer and Information Literacy) All students will use computer applications to gather and organize information to solve problems.

5. Proficiency Levels

This mini-course is offered to students in grades 7 & 8 who have qualified for the Gifted and Talented Program.

6. Methods of Assessment

a. Student Assessment

The teacher will provide a variety of assessments which may include, but are not limited to, the following: teacher observation, class discussions, practice competition, and the results of the actual competition with other school districts in the spring.

b. Curriculum Assessment/ Teacher Assessment

The teacher/ Gifted and Talented Department coordinator will review this course and continue to modify and update its content.

7. Grouping

Students self-select this mini-course in grades 7 & 8.

8. Articulation/ Scope & Sequence/ Time Frame

Over a period of approximately eight months, students will read the selected novels and submit questions to the teacher electronically. Much of this work is done outside of class, so students continue to choose other mini-courses to participate in during this time.

9. Resources

a. Technology

Students use email to submit questions and track their progress throughout the course through Homework Hero.

b. Texts

Each year, at least two copies of each of the fifteen selected novels are made available for the students to borrow. In addition, both Union and Pierrepont school libraries are given the list early in the school year so that they will make these books available to students. A list of the books for the 2008-2009 school year is in the appendix.

10. Methodologies

Methods include but are not limited to:

- Class discussion
- Practice competition
- Retelling of stories

11. Suggested Activities

- Objective questioning
- Showing videos of selected works
- Student-generated questions

12. Interdisciplinary Connections

Reading fosters an appreciation of other cultures; it also encourages empathy for others through fictional characters and their situations. This course fulfills standards in Language Arts Literacy and, through an appreciation of other societies and cultures, in World Languages.

13. Professional Development

As per the PDP/100 hour statement: the teacher will continue to improve expertise through participation in a variety of professional development opportunities. Specialized professional development for teachers in the Gifted and Talented Department is offered through the Bergen County Consortium of Teachers of the Gifted (BCCTG), the New Jersey Association for Gifted Children (NJAGC), and the Summer Institute for the Gifted (SIG).

BATTLE OF THE BOOKS
2008-2009

Travel Team by Mike Lupica

They Cage the Animals at Night by Jennings Michael Burch

Holes by Lois Sachar

Al Capone Does My Shirts by Gennifer Chaldenko

Inkheart by Cornelia Funke

Homeless Bird by Gloria Whelan

Things Not Seen by Andrew Clements

Hoot by Carl Hiassen

Candidate for Murder by Joan Lowery Nixon

Catherine Called Birdie by Karen Cushman

Stormbreaker by Anthony Horowitz

Drums, Girls, & Dangerous Pie by Jordan Sonnenblick

Touching Spirit Bear by Ben Mikelsen

Among the Hidden by Margaret Peterson Haddix

Hope was Here by Joan Bauer