

Welcome to Battle of the Books

Twenty years running, more than 4,500 participants, 583 teams, 106 books read, over 3,000 questions answered. That is the legacy of the Buffalo & Erie County Public Library's outstanding *Battle of the Books* initiative.

This wildly successful summer reading competition is celebrating its 20th anniversary on August 4, 2018 at Erie Community College South. A projected 30 library teams will answer questions about five pre-selected books they have read over the summer. From Grand Island to North Collins; from Newstead to downtown Buffalo; and everywhere in between, the teams represent libraries from all over Erie County.

"Battle" began in 1999 when Donna Locker of the Julia Boyer Reinstein Library in Cheektowaga returned with the idea after attending a New York Library Association conference. Gaining interest from some of her neighboring libraries, a total of six libraries participated that first year - Audubon, Depew, Elma, Julia Boyer Reinstein, Lancaster and Orchard Park. The first Battle was held at the Julia Boyer Reinstein Library in Cheektowaga. The next year, the family friendly pre-teen and teen competition grew so much that a larger venue was required. Twenty teams participated and the location was changed to Erie Community College North. Since 2001, the Battle has been held at Erie Community College South.

Teams represent their local library and consist of four to eight kids who are entering grades 6 through 9. The two teams that answer the most questions correctly over five rounds face off in the final - a Jeopardy game-style competition in which individuals on each team buzz in to answer. This final round is timed at eight minutes and is held in the gym in front of all participants and supporters. The team answering the most questions correctly is declared champion.

Four libraries have participated in Battle of the Books every year since its beginning: Cheektowaga, Elma, Lancaster and Orchard Park. The Clarence Library has won the most often, with a total of four wins. The Lancaster and City of Tonawanda libraries have won three times each.

Battle has impacted thousands of young people over the years. Dozens of former Battle participants have gone on to become volunteer coaches. The Library System is proud of all the wonderful players, families, coaches, readers, volunteers and staff who have contributed so much to make Battle of the Books the success that it is.

We welcome you to today's Battle of the Books and we look forward to the next 20 years!

"Battle of the Books is different because you are not shooting an arrow, or throwing a ball, but it is just as hard, with just as much practice."

- Cassidy Setzer, sixth-grader at Iroquois on Battle of the Books, 2013