



We've heard that you're missing Battle of the Books! Since we can't get together in person this year, the libraries in Burlington, Halton Hills, Milton, and Oakville have joined forces to create a Battle of the Books Reading Program to celebrate your love of reading... right in your own home or classroom.

What *is* the Battle of the Books Reading Program?

A self-directed program that features great Canadian books, reading guides, and virtual author talks.

How do you participate? Get the books from your local library, download the reading guides, and tune in to the author talks. Work independently or as a group to read the selected books and answer the guide questions. Attend the virtual author talks to discover more about the authors, the books, and the writing process.

Why participate? Battle of the Books has always been about promoting a love of reading. Even though we're doing things a bit differently this year, the Battle of the Books Reading Program continues to foster the love of reading by encouraging children to read, reflect, and connect - to great books, to libraries, and to each other.



Events

In working to foster a love of reading, and in the absence of a 2021 Battle of the Books, Halton Regional Libraries have worked to arrange some Author Events to share with our communities. Please see event details below, and feel free to share with your classes or network.

Event Name: Virtual Author Visit with Heather M. O'Connor

Date & Time: Wed March 31 at 2:00 pm

Event Information: Join Heather M. O'Connor, author of *Fast Friends* as she discusses her new picture book and the inspiration behind it. During this program, participants will learn to identify nonverbal cues, both in the illustrations of the book, as well as with their peers, using fun interactive activities. The presentation has strong curriculum connections to body language and is **best suited for students in SK-Grade 3**, but all are welcome.

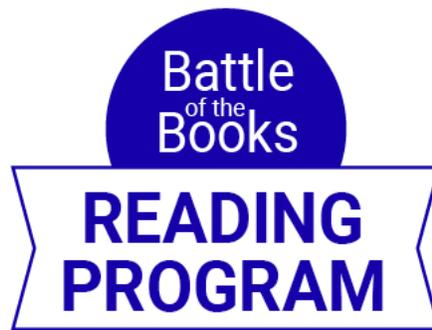
Event Link: [Virtual Author Visit with Heather M. O'Connor](#)

Event Name: Meet the Author: J.Torres

Date & Time: Recording available Wednesday, April 21, 2021 at 2:00 pm to Tuesday, April 27

Event Information: Join J. Torres, author of *Planet Hockey: First Star of the Game*, as he discusses how he writes his graphic novels. Hear more about his 2021 Silver Birch Express Nominated book and answer questions from students in Halton Hills. This author talk will be pre-recorded and will be released on April 21 at 2:00pm. An email with a link to the video will be sent to participants once they register. Teachers and the public are welcome to register.

Event Link: [Meet the Author: J. Torres](#)



Event Name: Battle of the Books Reading Program presents Meet the Author: Heather Fawcett

Date & Time: Recording Available April 1 to April 30, 2021

Event Information: Sit back and enjoy a Question and Answer session with children's author Heather Fawcett. Hear more about her 2021 Silver Birch Nominated book, 'Ember and the Ice Dragons' and find out what it takes to become an author.

Event Link: [Meet the Author: Heather Fawcett](#)

Event Name: Virtual Talk with Sherry Saevil

Date & Time: Available starting April 1, 2021

Event Information: Join Sherry Saevil, Aboriginal Liaison at the Halton Catholic District School Board for a discussion about Brianna Jonnie's *If I Go Missing*, and how the issues therein connect to our community and lives. This discussion is best suited to children aged 10+

Event Link: [OPL YouTube](#)



READING GUIDE

Fast Friends by Heather M. O'Connor

ABOUT THE BOOK

Tyson does everything fast – so fast he sometimes knocks over chairs and paint and even other kids! His teacher is always saying, “Too fast, Tyson!” Then Suze joins the class. She wears a helmet, just like a race car driver, that matches her shiny red wheelchair. Will Suze and Tyson be on the fast track to friendship?

QUESTIONS

1. Does Tyson tend to do everything quickly or slowly?
2. When it is time for recess, what frustrates Tyson the most?
3. What did Suze do when she was wheeled into her new classroom for the first time, and the teacher introduced her?
4. How does Suze eat her lunch?
5. What colour are Suze’s helmet and wheelchair?



Fast Friends by Heather M. O'Connor

ANSWERS

1. Tyson does everything quickly/fast
2. Having to wait for his classmates to get ready to go outside
3. She didn't smile or say hello. She looked at the race car picture on the wall.
4. With a feeding tube
5. Suze's helmet and wheelchair are red



READING GUIDE

Grandmother School by Rina Singh

ABOUT THE BOOK

Based on a true story from the village of Phangane, India, this brilliantly illustrated book tells the story of the grandmothers who go to school for the first time in their lives.

QUESTIONS

1. What do the Grandmothers use to practice writing their alphabet?
2. How did Ajoba's Grandfather feel about her Grandmother going to school?
3. What was Ajoba's Grandmother most excited to learn?
4. What did the "Grandmother School" look like?
5. After an evening meal, Ajoba's Grandmother tells her stories. What are Ajoba's favourite stories about?



Grandmother School by Rina Singh

ANSWERS

1. The Grandmothers practice the alphabet on their slates.
2. Ajoba's Grandfather felt that learning at this age was a waste of time.
3. Ajoba's Grandmother was most excited to learn to sign her name.
4. Grandmother school was a one-room bamboo hut. It had a thatched roof and mud floor covered with mats for the grandmothers to sit on.
5. Ajoba's favourite stories are about the warrior king who was brave, kind and clever.



READING GUIDE

My Day with Gong Gong by Sennah Yee

ABOUT THE BOOK

May is not having a good time on her trip to Chinatown with her grandpa. Gong Gong doesn't speak much English, and May can't understand Chinese. She's hungry, and Gong Gong's errands are boring. But just when May can't take any more, Gong Gong has a surprise...

QUESTIONS

1. Why is May worried about being left at Gong Gong's house for the day, without her mother?
2. When May is shopping with Gong Gong, she sees lots of things, like a toy monkey. Why was the monkey her favourite?
3. What does Gong Gong give to May?
4. What were Gong Gong's friends doing in the park?
5. What did a pigeon do to May?



My Day with Gong Gong by Sennah Yee

ANSWERS

1. May is worried because she doesn't know Chinese.
2. The monkey is May's favourite because it's her Chinese zodiac sign
3. The toy monkey she saw in the gift shop and a pork bun from the dim sum restaurant
4. They were playing cards and feeding pigeons
5. A pigeon pooped on May's coat



READING GUIDE

Planet Hockey by J. Torres

ABOUT THE BOOK

In this graphic novel Isaac and Lily are warped away to Planet Galaxia to be the new superstars of the worst hockey team in the Galaxian Hockey League. Unfortunately, interstellar hockey isn't like hockey on Earth.

QUESTIONS

1. On the planet Galaxia, what happens to the losing hockey teams?
2. What does SKOU7 give Isaac and Lily so that they will be able to understand the different languages spoken on Galaxia?
3. What is The PODS special ability and how do they use it to beat The Streak?
4. Why do you think Isaac tell the PODS that he will be their coach but not their captain?



***Planet Hockey* by J. Torres**

ANSWERS

1. "The more you lose ... the more taxes you pay" and "the team with the worst stats also cleans everyone else's equipment". (p.8)
2. Ear Worms (p.30)
3. Hydroplaning (p.41) - When The Streek's electricity creates a thicker layer of water on the ice Isaac tells The PODS to take off their skates and they are able to move faster by hydroplaning (p.106&108)
4. He's still afraid of playing real hockey and the risk of getting hurt again and letting the team down.



READING GUIDE

Genius Jolene by Sara Cassidy

ABOUT THE BOOK

In this illustrated early chapter book, Jolene travels with her long-haul trucker father to Los Angeles.

QUESTIONS

1. Every year Jolene and her dad choose a specific food to try at every place they go to. What are some of the foods that they have compared and rated according to how much they like them?
2. In addition to regular homework, what is the special homework assignment that Ms. Formosa gives to Jolene?
3. What does Jeremy do after his mom is rude to Jolene's dad in the hospital?



***Genius Jolene* by Sara Cassidy**

ANSWERS

1. Jolene and her Dad have rated hash browns, milkshakes, cheeseburgers, and onion rings. (p.8-9)
2. Jolene's teacher challenges her to take three photos a day of things that strike her as important. (p.13)
3. Jeremy quietly apologizes for his mother's behavior. (p.78-80)



READING GUIDE

Terry Fox and Me by Mary Beth Leatherdale & Milan Pavlovic

ABOUT THE BOOK

Told from the point of view of his childhood friend, Doug, this book tells the story of Terry Fox and how he went from being the worst athlete in elementary school to becoming a marathon runner with a prosthetic leg and a Canadian hero raising money for Cancer research.

QUESTIONS

1. What was the phrase that Terry used to encourage Doug when he was nervous about running a cross-country race and that Doug said to Terry at the start of his Marathon of Hope?
2. What was the one sport that Terry did not like when he was in high school?
3. Before he was able to start running with a prosthetic leg what sports did Terry do to build his strength?



Terry Fox and Me by Mary Beth Leatherdale & Milan Pavlovic

ANSWERS

1. The phrase that Terry and Doug repeated to each other was, "One step at a time."
2. Terry did not like Cross-country running when he was in High School.
3. Terry built his strength up by doing weight training and wheelchair basketball.



READING GUIDE

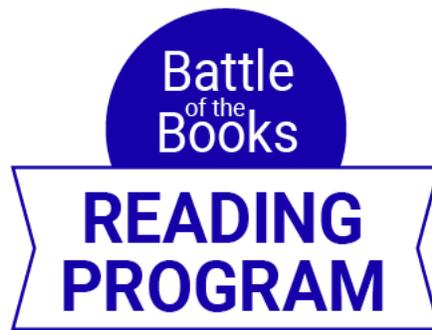
Ember and the Ice Dragons by Heather Fawcett

ABOUT THE BOOK

Ember St. George is no ordinary girl. When her Magician father stumbled upon a baby fire dragon, he turned her into a human girl to keep her safe from dragon hunters. After accidentally causing yet another fire, Ember is sent to stay with her aunt in Antarctica, where she learns about the Winterglass Hunt, a yearly tradition where rare ice dragons are hunted for their jeweled scales. Determined to sabotage the hunt, Ember must accept the help of others if she's to be successful in this dangerous quest. This fantasy book has it all – magic, friendship, adventure, and... dragons!

QUESTIONS

1. Ember's father, Lionel St. George, has placed a spell on Ember so she can live with him as a human girl. What are some of the limitations of this spell and what does this mean for Ember?
2. There are many magical elements in *Ember and the Ice Dragons*. What item does Ember find at the bottom of her suitcase and what does it enable her to do? If you had this item, where would it take you?
3. What career does Ember dream of having one day, and what is she studying to help her achieve this goal?
4. Ember reveals that there are bitter feelings between Magicians and Scientists. She explains, 'Science, so far, could not understand magic, while magic could not understand the value of science.' If you could choose, would you want to be a Magician or a Scientist? Why?



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5. What is the name of the flightless birds that Ember meets when she arrives in Antarctica? What object does one of them take from her pocket, and what effect does this have on the group?
6. Ember meets two good friends in Antarctica, both of whom have had some difficulties in their lives. What are the names of Ember's friends and what kind of difficulties have they faced?
7. How do Ember and her friends attempt to sabotage the Winterglass Hunt? In what way, does Ember find herself the victim of sabotage?
8. Ember and her friends encounter some vicious beings that produce a melody meant to lure you to sleep. What are these beings called and what do we learn about how they came to be?
9. What are the names of the dragons that Ember and her friends encounter while trying to rescue Prince Gideon? What must the friends do before they receive permission to see the Dragon King?
10. At the end of the story, Prince Gideon gives something to Ember. What does he give her? Why do you think he does this?



***Ember and the Ice Dragons* by Heather Fawcett**

ANSWERS

1. The limitations of the spell cast on Ember include:

- Invisible wings
- Bursting into flames at certain temperatures
- A scarlet diamond heartscale on Ember's neck

These limitations mean that Ember must:

- Be careful around other people so they do not discover her differences, making it hard for her to make friends
- Leave her father for the colder climate of Antarctica until he can fix the spell and she can return to London without fear of bursting into flames in the warmer temperature
- Wear a lot of scarves around her neck to hide the heartscale

2. Ember finds a doorknob named Montgomery at the bottom of her suitcase. It can be used on any door to allow Ember to travel to different places.

3. Ember wants to be a zoologist one day, so to prepare she memorizes a new species every week from Takagi's Compendium of Exotic Creatures.

4. This is a personal reflection question.

5. The flightless birds that Ember encounters are Adélie penguins. One of the penguins take a piece of flagstone from Ember's pocket giving the group some magical abilities.



***Ember and the Ice Dragons* by Heather Fawcett**

ANSWERS – page 2

6. Ember's friends are Nisha and Moss. Difficulties: Nisha's twin sister, Aditi, died of an illness years earlier, while Moss wandered into the Firefly one stormy night with no memory of his past.

7. Ember and her friends try to sabotage the hunt by swapping out the cannon balls with coloured snowballs; breaking arrows; sprinkling freckled ivy on the hunters' tent flaps; using fire to weaken Prince Gideon's bow. Someone tried to sabotage Ember by planting burrs on her sled dog causing him to run wild with pain, nearly pulling the sled over a cliff.

8. The vicious beasts are called Grimlings or the Hungry Ones. Ember and her friends learn that these beasts come into being when the heartscale, which holds the dragon's spirit, is taken from the dragon's kin.

9. The dragons are Aquamarine, Rose Gold, and King Zaffre. The children must solve riddles before they can see the King.

10. Prince Gideon gives Ember three heartscales.



READING GUIDE

If I Go Missing by Brianna Jonnie (with Nahanni Shingoose)

ABOUT THE BOOK

If I Go Missing is a graphic novel that tells the story of one teen's fight for missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. Based on a letter the author, Brianna Jonnie, wrote to the Winnipeg Police Chief when she was just 14 years old, this graphic novel is a call to action. With illustrations by Indigenous artist Neal Shannacappo, and support from her aunt Nahannie Shingoose.

QUESTIONS

1. Would you consider this fiction or non-fiction? Why?
2. What do you think artist Neal Shannacappo was trying to express with his use of colour in the illustrations?
3. *If I Go Missing* is nominated for a Red Maple award through the Forest of Reading. Red Maple Awards celebrate books for readers aged 12-14 years. Who do you think the intended audience is for Brianna Jonnie's book and why? How might other audiences receive this book?
4. What is the impact of starting the book with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People? Why that specific statement?



If I Go Missing by Brianna Jonnie (with Nahanni Shingoose)

5. Why do you think Brianna Jonnie included the information about Missing & Murdered Indigenous Girls & Women after her story? What is the impact? What if Brianna Jonnie left this information out?
6. How does reading Brianna's letter to Chief Clunis change the way you read the story?
7. Throughout the text we see the image of a sage pouch. What is the importance of this item in the text, and to indigenous cultures?
8. Tone is such an influential aspect of how a message is received. How does Brianna's tone and word choice affect her message? Can you find specific examples?
9. The last page of the graphic novel is of a red dress flowing in the wind from a tree. What does this image mean? What is the significance of ending with this image?
10. In her afterward, Brianna Jonnie states "But there is hope. It starts with awareness." What do you think this means?