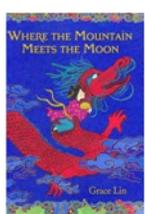
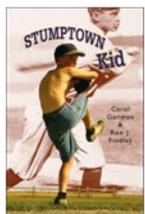
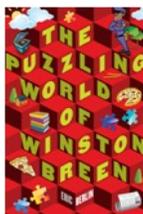
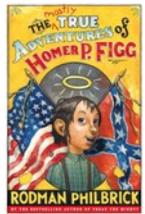


2011

Battle of the Books Parent Newsletter



Calling all 4th and 5th graders!

Dear Parents,

Welcome to the Battle of the Books! Reading is the most important skill our children will ever acquire. Library Media Specialists are excited about reading and have selected ten fantastic books for Battle, sure to keep students engaged and eager as Battlers. The Battle of the Books, a reading incentive program, encourages all 4th and 5th graders to read various genres of books. **Parents must return a signed permission slip for children to participate, as Battle reading is strictly choice and outside of the regular curriculum. We encourage families to read together.** The Battle (16 wks) is actually three Battles in one. **1st)** Students Battle with themselves to set aside time for reading. Students must pass an AR test on 6 of the 10 books to make a Battle Team. **2nd)** The books Battle each other as Battlers vote for their favorite title. **3rd)** Teams Battle each other on the District-Wide Battle Day via a friendly competition by answering trivia and challenge questions about

Battle books. New to Battle this year is our **Battle Song** (to the tune of The Battle Hymn of Republic) and the opportunity for parents to buy personal copies of six of the books through the **BEF Amazon link** with a percentage being donated to our Education Foundation. Battle commences November 7, 2011 and ends March 2, 2012 just as "March is Reading Month" begins. The richness of Battle lies in the various themes, and genres students will experience. Book reading levels range from 3.7 - 5.5 and include: historical fiction, poetry, fantasy, realistic fiction, mystery and a bit of sci-fi, all of which employ different kinds of reading strategies. Battle will cause discussions about: the mood and character of our nation during WW II; a youngster's first encounter with racism; the importance of fathers; a make-believe world where child safety is so endeared that children have no pets, choice or opportunity for decision making or responsibility; caution about strangers; various perspectives of the civil

war period through the eyes of an orphaned child; the importance of trees to our environment; and themes of honesty, loyalty, courage, bullying, and heroism. *Character Education* and our *Core Democratic Values* are prominent in our titles. We encourage audio reading for our not so strong readers. There are also two stretch books (layering, perspective, & time travel) for our ablest readers. Battlers will experience both serious and laugh out loud moments. Book summaries are on pages 2 & 3 along with **Book Notes** for book club leaders and parents.

Thank --you parents, staff, and Baldwin Library, our public library partner, for your continued support. PTAs & Baldwin have generously purchased multiple copies of books. Check with your building Media Specialist for any special programming during the Battle months. Have fun Reading! --Barbara Clark, Dept. Head K-12 Library Media Services.

Meet our 2011-2012 Battle Author

Helen Frost, Author of Diamond Willow
Monday, January 9, 2012 at 7 PM
Baldwin Library



Winner of a Printz Honor Medal, a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship in Poetry, and many other awards and honors, Helen Frost will be discussing Diamond Willow. Set in a small Alaskan town, this is the story of a 12-year-old girl who is more comfortable with her family's sled dogs than with people. Part survival story, part mystery, Diamond faces intense adventure and the discovery of a family secret. Told in intricate diamond-shaped verse, don't miss this chance to meet and hear about the personal Alaskan experience of noted poet and author Helen Frost. Books will be available for purchase and a book signing will follow the event.

Other Battle of the Books Events at Baldwin

December 7 at 7 PM—Phil Handleman presents "Flying Legends of WWII". Award-winning filmmaker, longtime pilot of a WWII bi-plane, Phil Handleman will share his expertise, including information on the P-40 Warhawk that Bird McGill learned to fly in Born to Fly.

February 8 at 6:30 PM—Learn to "Fingertalk" using American Sign Language. See if you can understand what the instructors are saying, and discover how Goldie and Toadspit from Museum of Thieves could speak using their hands and fingers. Don't miss this chance to try a new skill and have fun!

BATTLE BOOK SUMMARIES (* denotes audio available)

Born to Fly by Michael Ferrari

Feisty Bird McGill regards her dad as her best friend. He takes her up in the planes he repairs, lets her take the controls, and he encourages her dream of becoming a pilot. A special bulletin disrupts her 11th birthday: Japan has attacked Pearl Harbor, and Bird's world is turned upside down. Her dad is shipped overseas and her best and only friend is gone. During the next few months, the local airstrip is turned into a military flight school and Kenji, a Japanese-American boy joins Bird's class. He is met with distrust and thought to be a spy. To escape Farley, the class bully, Kenji and Bird join forces and in the process stumble upon evidence of an enemy submarine. When Kenji's uncle is blamed for a local murder, only Bird can clear him. Will she find the courage to do so, when the real murderer slips an anonymous note threatening her family?

BOOK NOTE: Students are mildly introduced to the cruel treatment of Japanese Americans during WWII. The spy in the book uses the German swear word 'shiesse' (pronounced shy-sa). Our explanation to students, if asked, is that it is a German swear word and should not be used. Our heroine stumbles into the adult spy world of real traitors when she sees him in the bay, even though she only knows his voice and that she hit him. Ferrari keeps readers on pins and needles as she escapes from a basement to save the day. Bird is a strong female character.

Cosmic by Frank Cottrell Boyce *

Liam, a 12-year-old who looks like he is thirty, is a big lad stuck between two worlds. Strangers think he is an adult, and even his teachers seem to conflate tall with old. So heaven forbid he should ever make a mistake. Then it's all, "You should know better, big lad like you." Life sure is hard for poor, burdened Liam until he decides to enter the

Greatest Dad Ever Contest and in short order finds himself on a rocket ship that is off course and 200,000 miles over the earth. Yes, quite a few things—some of them cosmic and all of them extremely funny—do happen in between, with *laugh out loud* moments. There are lots of surprises in Liam's story, and without spoiling any of them by saying more, just know

that this is not only a story about big lads, but also about dads and dadliness! **BOOK NOTE:** While Liam lies and plans ahead to deceive his parents, along the way, he appreciates even more how important his dad is while he is pretending to be one. It has a few words of strong language and is an awesome father son read, first published in the UK.

Diamond Willow by Helen Frost *

When a diamond willow's bark is removed, sanded, and polished, it reveals reddish brown diamonds, the dark center of which are the scars of missing branches. Set in a remote part of Alaska, this story in easy-to-read verse blends exciting survival adventure with a contemporary girl's discovery of family roots and secrets. Diamond Willow, whose dad is Anglo and mother is

Athabaskan is named for the tree, but prefers "Willow" and muses that if her parents had called her "Diamond," "...would I have been one of those sparkly kinds of girls?" When her beloved dog, Roxy, is blinded in an accident (partly Willow's fault), and her parents want to put the dog down, Willow tries to take Roxy to Grandma and Grandpa. The two are caught in a raging blizzard. Is it the

ancestors voices (Red Fox, Spruce Hen, Mouse, Chickadee, Lynx) who guide her to safety? **BOOK-NOTE:** Find the hidden messages printed in darker type of these diamond shaped poems. This poetry offers pensive imagery and glimpses of character, and strong emotion. The audio is outstanding! Find the hidden messages printed in darker type of these diamond shaped poems. The audio is outstanding!

Museum of Thieves by Lian Tanner (Book 1 in the Keepers Trilogy) * (stretch read)

In the make-believe city of Jewel, child safety is the most important order of the day. All children must wear a silver guard chain on their left wrist attached to their parents or Blessed Guardian by day and to their bed head by night until their Separation Day. The Separation Day age has been lowered from 16 to 12 by the Grand Protector and the Blessed Guardians are furious. Readers will immediately be drawn to Goldie, bold and impetuous and eagerly awaiting her Separation Ceremony. When tragedy strikes and the city's sly and deceptive Fugleman cancels all Separations indefinitely, Goldie decides she's had enough of safety and runs away landing in the fascinating but mysterious Museum of Dunt. Along with historical artifacts, the museum has moods and feelings like a living being, shape-shifting rooms, and terrible powers. Enter a quirky cast of misfits: Toadspit, an Oliver-Twist-like ragamuffin living in the museum; Sinew, a harp-playing spy; Olga Ciavolga, keeper of the wind; and Broo, a talking dog with secret ferocious powers of his own. Only the cunning mind of a thief can understand the museum and its strange shape shifting rooms. Fortunately, Goldie has a talent for thieving. Which is just as well, because the Fugleman, leader of the Blessed Guardians, has his own plans for the museum—plans that threaten the lives of everyone Goldie loves and plans to over throw his sister, the Grand Protector who safeguards the museum. It will take a daring thief to stop him. It's up to Goldie, Toadspit, and Broo. Filled with characters who are oddball but meaningful, a plot that is at once serious and silly, and a pace fast enough to draw in even reluctant readers, this is a delicious fantasy that *Rick Riordan* fans will love. The thrilling conclusion is a lesson in the virtues of courage and freedom, even if they mean a few scrapes along the way. **BOOK NOTE:** While we teach that thievery is a bad thing, being a thief, or knowing how to steal is a good thing in this fantasy. To save the city, Goldie and Toadspit must enter the war room of the museum and are temporarily caught as spies for whom the penalty is death by a firing squad. Quick thinking save them from the being at the fatal end of a firing squad rifle as they race to save the day. A layered stretch read.

Operation Redwood by Terrell S. French

His uncle plans to cut down some of the oldest remaining California redwood trees, and it's up to Julian and a ragtag group of friends to figure out a way to stop them. This fantastic novel, full of clever stunts and pranks, shows the power of determined individuals, no matter what their age, to stand up to wrongdoing. It introduces readers to a memorable cast of characters—smart kids who care about the world around them. **BOOK NOTE:** While Julian and Danny make some really good friends with Robin over the Internet, and later her family, Julian's incognito visit to them is very ill advised and dangerous. Parents and staff will need to remind children of the **dangers of meeting acquaintances on the internet**, and that incidents in this book are fictional. **Meeting strangers from the Internet alone in real life is an absolute no-no.**

BATTLE BOOK SUMMARIES (Use the pacing guide to pace your reading)

The Mostly True Adventures of Homer P. Figg by Redman Philbrick *

When his older brother Harold, gets conscripted into the Union Army, Homer runs away from his mean uncle. He sets out after Harold but has many misadventures along the way. He survives thanks to courage, luck, and his talent for telling lies. Homer relates his own adventures in colorful language as he

crosses paths with con men, rogues, and scoundrels. Things take a more somber tone when Homer sees the horrors of the battlefield. The final reunion of the brothers during the Battle of Gettysburg is bittersweet. Homer's escapades introduce some interesting features of the year 1863, including the Underground

Railroad, a traveling medicine show, Civil War spies, and an early version of the hydrogen balloon. Homer runs into plenty of danger but there's more comedy than suspense in most episodes.

The Puzzling World of Winston Breen by Eric Berlin

Winston Breen loves puzzles and he finds them everywhere—books, newspapers, even pizzas. When Winston buys a small box for his sister's birthday gift he has no idea that the box holds clues to a great mystery. The birthday box is actually a treasure puzzle. Glenville's richest resident Walter Fredericks died years ago, and now his puzzles have reemerged. Winston and Katie solve the puzzles alongside an ex-cop, a librarian, two treasure hunters, and a news reporter. The only problem is, someone else wants the reward at the end of this game, someone who's willing to do almost anything to get it. Winston inadvertently let's Dilmer (whom they met on the treasure hunt) in their home. He turns out to be a villain with a weapon. While all turns out well, it is Winston who musters his courage and is quick thinking. Technology of course helps him. Law enforcement is not far behind and to the rescue when Dilmer forces Winston to find the treasure. Berlin, true to a good mystery writer, keeps readers on the edge of their seats as the last tense chapters read like a made for TV movie. What a treasure Winston and Kathy receive! **BOOKNOTE:** There is a lesson to be learned—book club leaders and parents will need to remind students about stranger danger, even when they are people we have met that we don't really know. Along the way, readers get to solve the puzzles along with Winston, checking their answers in the back of the book. The critical thinking possibilities are endless.

Stumptown Kid by Carol Gorman and Ron J. Findley *

Set in a small Iowa town in 1952, Charlie Nebraska, 11, misses his father, who died in the Korean War; dislikes his mother's domineering, prejudiced boyfriend, Vern; and loves baseball. After failing to make the premier Wildcats team, Charlie meets Luther Peale, a former professional Negro League player with a fugitive past. Luther serves up baseball expertise and kindness, and Charlie becomes his friend, inviting the young man home for dinner and helping him find a job. When Luther agrees to

coach Charlie's "Stumptown" team in a game against the Wildcats, wary white parents and townspeople become more accepting. Charlie is shocked to find that many neighbors judge Luther by the color of his skin, but knows that his father, would have been proud to know Luther. However, Vern, his mother's new friend, does not approve of Luther and works to discredit him. Charlie is a feisty, lonely kid who fiercely defends and proudly stands up for Luther even when Ruckus, from Luther's past, seeks revenge and puts both Luther and

Charlie's lives in danger. Charlie's mother, devoted to her son and his happiness, gradually realizes the truth. **BOOK NOTE:** Charlie experiences racism for the first time. Thinking Luther will be defenseless against Ruckus, Charlie unwisely takes him his father's Korean War bayonet. Many of the adults in the book prove to be good role models, while those who are not are clearly depicted as such. Luther's concerns and actions always put Charlie's safety first.

When You Reach Me by Rebecca Stead * (stretch read)

Get a slice of life in 1979. Miranda is just starting 6th grade. HER MOM GOT THE POST CARD! After 3 years of trying, she is going to be a contestant on The \$20,000 Pyramid, hosted by Dick Clark. Tutoring her mom is just one of many things happening in Miranda's life. She and her best friend Sal have parted ways, and she doesn't know why. They've been friends since kindergarten. One day Sal gets kicked and punched by a school mate and Sal now acts like he hardly knows her. Miranda's all time favorite book is a *Wrinkle in Time* by Madeline L'Engle, about time travel, and there seems to be a bit of Time Travel in her own life. Her angst about gaining and losing friends, takes on a new twist when she discovers mysterious notes that appear to be from someone who can see into the future. "I'm coming to save your friend's life, and my own...you must write me a letter. Who is sending the notes? How do they know these things? And why Miranda? Could time travel possible like in a *Wrinkle in Time*?" When you finish, you just might be a believer in time travel. **BOOKNOTE:** A stretch quiet read giving 5th graders a peek at middle school dynamics. Subplots: game show, mystery time travel notes, losing/gaining friends, and bullying. She and her Mom prove to be positive role models when dealing with bullying. Discerning readers will recognize the ties between Miranda's mystery and L'Engle's plot. Expect discussion about honesty and Miranda's mom's actions in relation to office supplies. Girl readers will identify with Miranda's angst over acceptance by ones whose home is better than hers.

Where the Mountain Meets the Moon by Grace Lin *

Living under the shadow of the Fruitless Mountain, Minli and her parents spend their days working in the rice fields, barely growing enough to feed themselves. Every night, Minli's father tells her the stories about the Jade Dragon that keeps the mountain bare, the greedy and mean Magistrate Tiger, and the Old Man of the Moon who holds

everyone's destiny. Determined to change her family's fortune, Minli sets out to find the Old Man of the Moon, urged by a talking goldfish who gives her clues to complete her journey. She makes new friends including a dragon and an orphan and proves her resourcefulness when she tricks a group of greedy monkeys and gets help from a king.

Minli's determination to help her family and her parents' grief during her absence are compelling. **BOOK NOTE:** Typical fairytale/fantasy violence—A tiger kills some of the village's livestock and injures some hunters as well as the dragon

BATTLE EXTRAS—Battle Song; Where to get Battle Books; AR Points

[Click her for downloads and more Battle information.](#)

Where to Buy Battle Books

[The Birmingham Education Foundation Amazon Link](#)



- Your School Book Fair
- Book Beat Book Store in Oak Park

Where to Borrow Battle Books

- From your school's Library Media Center
- From Public Libraries
Baldwin, Bloomfield, Franklin, Southfield, Troy, and West Bloomfield



BFS
BATTLE OF THE BOOKS
2011-2012

BATTLER: _____

BATTLE DATES
Team Qualifying Day-Fri 1/27/12
(You must read 6 books/pass AR tests)
Gold Medal Qualifying Day-2/15/12
District-Wide Battle Day-Fri 3/2/12

The Battle of the Books is Here!
(To the tune of the Battle Hymn of Republic)

VERSE 1

We've got **Where the Mountain Meets the Moon** and **When You Reach Me** too!
Homer Figg, Stumptown Kid, and a Girl that's **Born to Fly**.
We're excited here in Birmingham and here's the reason why:
The Battle of the Books is here!

VERSE 2

We've got **Operation Redwood, Cosmic Diamond Willow** too!
A Museum of Thieves and the **Puzzling World of Winston Breen!**
There are ten great books to Battle with,
let's give them all a cheer!
The Battle of the Books is here!

CHORUS

Come along and join the Battle!
Read with me! Let's join the Battle!
Fourth and fifth graders of Birmingham:
The Battle of the Books is here!

Accelerated Reader Points						
Battle of the Books 2011-2012						
Audio	Title	Genre	Author	AR Points	Reading Level	Pages
Kindle	Born to Fly	Historical Fiction	Michael Ferrari	6	4.3	212
Kindle / Audio	Cosmic	Fiction	Frank Cottrell Boyce	9	4.5	313
Audio	Diamond Willow	Poetry	Helen Frost	2	4.3	144
Kindle / Audio	Museum of Thieves	Fantasy	Lian Tanner	9	4.6	312
Kindle	Operation Redwood	Fiction	Terrell S. French	11	4.6	368
Kindle	Puzzling World of Winston Breen	Mystery	Eric Berlin	8	4.2	240
Audio	Stumptown Kid	Historical Fiction	Carol Gorman and Ron J. Findley	7	3.7	224
Audio	The Mostly True Adventures of Homer P. Figg	Historical Fiction	Rodman Philbrick	7	5.6	218
Kindle / Audio	When You Reach Me	Fiction	Rebecca Stead	6	4.5	208
Kindle / Audio	Where the Mountain Meets the Moon	Fantasy	Grace Lin	7	5.5	278