

BATTLE OF THE BOOKS

2022-2023



Karthik Delivers by Sheela Chari (Realistic Fiction)

It's the summer before high school starts, and Karthik is miserable. Forced to deliver orders for his parents' struggling grocery store, pining after Juhi Shah, and harassed by neighborhood bullies, Karthik Raghavan can't think of a worse way to spend his vacation. But Shanthi, a Boston University graduate student and aspiring playwright with a weakness for the Raghavan family store's spicy chips, asks him to play the lead role in her play about the early life of Leonard Bernstein. Karthik starts to imagine himself as more than just a rising ninth grader: The more he learns about acting, the more he likes it, and it doesn't hurt that his stunning memory helps him quickly master his lines. Karthik isn't sure if he wants to grow up to be an actor, but he is sure that he wants to explore the possibility of doing so, a wish he's positive his parents won't support.

All Thirteen: The Incredible Cave Rescue of the Thai Boys' Soccer Team by Christina Soontornvat (Non-Fiction)

An in-depth account of a harrowing real-life mission that succeeds against all odds. This book logs the 18 days that elapsed in the summer of 2018 as 12 boys—all members of the Wild Boars soccer team—and their coach were trapped inside Tham Luang Nang Non, or the Cave of the Sleeping Lady, after it flooded in northern Thailand. The world watched as a daring rescue ensued. Instructive on many levels, the present-tense narration re-creates the hair-raising suspense and tension, rendering details of the extreme dangers of dive rescues and the seemingly insurmountable logistical challenges created by the landscape and heavy rainfall.

The Last Cuentista by Donna Barba Higuera (Science Fiction)

When a solar flare knocks Halley's Comet off course and sends it hurtling toward Earth, a small group of citizens is selected to leave the planet and colonize a new one to ensure humanity's survival. Once onboard, the citizens are put in suspended animation for the four-century journey to the new planet, Sagan. When twelve-year-old Petra Pena wakes up, however, she learns that a cult-like group, The Collective, has taken over the ship, "purging" citizens who fail to comply and erasing all memory of Earth and its diverse inhabitants. As an aspiring storyteller and one of the only people who remembers life before The Collective, Petra must rely on her Mexican storytelling heritage to protect the remaining humans from the fate of living life as Collective drones.

Living With Viola (Graphic Novel)

Do you have a voice in your head telling you to doubt your self-worth? Enter Chinese Canadian Olivia Siu Leen Tong. She loves art, books, and making dumplings with her mom, but she struggles with being carefree and happy like her peers. Even harder, her parents enroll her in a new, better middle school, where she struggles to make friends. As immigrants from Hong Kong, her parents have sacrificed so much to give her opportunities, but with this come high expectations to be the perfect daughter. All the pressure causes her self-doubt to manifest as Viola, a shadowy version of herself. Viola spews insidious, undermining messages, causing Livy to fall into depression and have panic attacks. Although she finally makes some good friends and even starts enjoying school, Viola lurks in the back of Livy's mind and sabotages her at every turn. As her life starts unraveling, she must decide whether to reveal her secrets and ask for help.

The Blackbird Girls by Anne Blankman (Historical Fiction)

On a spring morning, neighbors Valentina Kaplan and Oksana Savchenko wake up to an angry red sky. A reactor at the nuclear power plant where their fathers work, Chernobyl, has exploded. Before they know it, the two girls, who've always been enemies, find themselves on a train bound for Leningrad to stay with Valentina's estranged grandmother, Rita Grigorievna. In their new lives in Leningrad, they begin to learn what it means to trust another person. Oksana must face the lies her parents told her all her life. Valentina must keep her grandmother's secret, one that could put all their lives in danger.

Black Brother, Black Brother by Jewell Parker Rhodes (Sports Fiction)

Sometimes, 12-year-old Donte wishes he were invisible. As one of the few black boys at Middlefield Prep, most of the students don't look like him. They don't like him either. Dubbing him "Black Brother," Donte's teachers and classmates make it clear they wish he were more like his lighter-skinned brother, Trey. When he's bullied and framed by the captain of the fencing team, "King" Alan, he's suspended from school and arrested. Terrified, searching for a place where he belongs, Donte joins a local youth center and meets former Olympic fencer Arden Jones. With Arden's help, he begins training as a competitive fencer, setting his sights on taking down the fencing team captain, no matter what. As Donte hones his fencing skills and grows closer to achieving his goal, he learns the fight for justice is far from over. Now Donte must confront his bullies, racism, and the corrupt systems of power that led to his arrest.

The Canyon's Edge by Dusti Bowling (Adventure Fiction)

One year after a random shooting changed their family forever, Nora and her father are exploring a slot canyon deep in the Arizona desert, hoping it will help them find peace. Nora longs for things to go back to normal, like they were when her mother was still alive, while her father keeps them isolated in fear of other people. But when they reach the bottom of the canyon, the unthinkable happens: A flash flood rips across their path, sweeping away Nora's father and all of their supplies. Suddenly, Nora finds herself lost and alone in the desert, facing dehydration, venomous scorpions, deadly snakes, and, worst of all, the Beast who has terrorized her dreams for the past year. If Nora is going to save herself and her father, she must conquer her fears, defeat the Beast, and find the courage to live her new life.

When Stars are Scattered by Victoria Jamieson (Graphic Novel)

Omar Mohamed was a child when soldiers attacked his village in Somalia. Separated from his parents, he and his younger brother, Hassan, eventually made their way to Dadaab, a crowded refugee camp in Kenya where he now spends his days scrambling for food and taking care of Hassan, who is nonverbal and suffers from debilitating seizures. A chance to attend school is a dream come true, but the opportunity weighs heavily on Omar; school is a selfish choice when you have no parents and a brother who needs constant looking after.

Bloom by Kenneth Oppel (Science Fiction)

First, the rains come, soaking the entire world in a three-day downpour. Then, strange plants grow with incredible speed, ruining crops and poisoning water. When they bloom, everyone develops severe allergies, but the plants don't just make the environment hostile; they lure, trap, and digest people, too. Three teens on an island near Vancouver are immune to this botanical massacre; in fact, they feel healthier than ever, and their bodies are adapting to this new environment. Drawn together, Anaya, Petra, and Seth must discover their connection to the invasion if they are to have any hope of stopping it.

City Spies by James Ponti (Mystery Fiction)

Caught hacking into the NYC juvenile justice system's computers, 12-year-old Sara Martinez faces years in detention centers, but a British secret agent rescues her and takes her to Scotland. There she joins his small, top-secret team of gifted young spies, each recruited from a different continent. Sara, renamed Brooklyn, trains with Paris, Rio, Kat, and Sydney for a few short weeks before joining the team for a mission in Paris. They are realistically wary of their newest member until she earns their trust. Working undercover as students attending a summit on the environment, they plan to break into a secret research facility and outwit an evil genius.

Spirit Hunters by Ellen Oh (Horror Fiction)

Harper feels it from the second her family moves into the creaky, old house: there is something deeply evil lurking there. She's always been attune to the spirit world, a fact that has frightened her parents into denial. She even had an encounter with a ghost so terrifying and damaging that she was sent to a mental institution for a while. This relocation to D.C. was supposed to be a fresh start for their family, but Harper soon realizes with horror that her sweet little brother Michael is being possessed by the malevolent ghost of an evil boy who died in the house years before. As Michael grows more and more violent under the spirit's control, Harper realizes that her family is in grave danger. Can she learn to master her powers and conquer her fears to defeat the spirit before it overtakes her brother completely?

Amari and the Night Brothers by B.B. Alston (Fantasy Fiction)

Ever since her big brother, Quinton, disappeared six months ago, life's been hard for Amari—especially staying out of trouble at her fancy private school. But when a strange delivery arrives, containing a way-too-real vision of Quinton and a world more akin to a fantasy film than real life, it's hard to tell if Amari is dreaming or straight losing her mind. As the vision comes to an end, Amari is left with an invitation to join a summer internship at the Bureau of Supernatural Affairs and a glimmer of hope. Crazy or not, this opportunity might be her chance to find Quinton and bring him home! Thrust into a world of magic, technology, and mysticism, the fortitudinous Amari, alongside Elsie, her new best friend and yet-to-shift dragon, leads readers through a plot to save Quinton and his partner, Marie.