

The Battle of the Books has been fought. No it wasn't a war; it was a book battle. About eighty fourth graders participated in the tournament. There were 16 teams each consisting of groups of four or five 4th graders who were all well-coached by parent volunteers. The bleachers were filled with supporters--parents, siblings, fellow students, and even a few third graders who wanted to know what this battle was all about.

The Battle itself took place on Thursday evening, April 18th in the Lafayette gym, but the preparation began months ago when students and parents were informed of the new event by fourth grade reading teachers, Ms. Fratto and Ms. Hallstrom. Once students decided to participate, they formed and named their groups, came up with slogans, designed t-shirts and posters, and most importantly, read, read, read!

They studied on their own time under the direction of one or more parent volunteers who served as coaches to the groups. The coaches read with them, drilled the teams on questions that might be asked in the battle, and helped them decide which students would become "experts" on which books. (Some students decided to read and become authorities on all the books).

The five books were *Turtle in Paradise*, *The Year of Miss Agnes*, *The Chocolate Touch*, *The Enormous Egg* and *A Strong Right Arm*. They ranged from easy to hard, and covered the genres of biography, realistic fiction, historical fiction and fantasy. [For a survey of which books the fourth graders liked best, read the Bear Facts. A link is provided here].

The groups all had unique and interesting names like the Washington Readskins, the Super Pages, the Avengers--Earth's Mightiest Readers, the Break Dancing Book Worms, and DJs Bears Book Club to name a few. With names like these and others like the Rebel Readers, Reading Warriors and the Bookinators, you just knew the competition would be fierce and it was. Only a few points separated the first-, second-and third-place winners, and there were multiple ties for other places.

The first place winners were the Breakdancing Bookworms a team that consisted of four girls: Samantha Jolles, Maddie Eggen, Gigi Cestari and Ally Han. The second place winners were the Jalapeño Dogs a team of five boys; Andy Burris, Alex Metzger, Ben McDaniel, Theo Greiff and Nate Belman. Third place was taken by the Dawn of the Cookies, another all-girls team consisting of Angeline Daniels, Kathlyn Dell Bosak, Grace Foose and Alissa Simon. Another group member, Maddie Vassalo, was unable to attend.

There was a pizza party for all participants on Friday, April 19, and then at 2 p.m. there was yet another special treat. Michelle Y. Green, the author of *A Strong Right Arm* came to talk with all the fourth graders about her book and about her experiences writing it. Students were able to ask her many questions about Mamie Peanut Johnson and about writing books. After Ms. Greene left, prizes were awarded. All prizes were paid for by the HSA or donated by Broad Branch Market. Each participant received a treat bag filled with goodies and everyone went home tired, but happy.

Battle of the Books is a tradition dating back to a Chicago radio program in the 1940s. It was transplanted into the Evanston, Il. schools by a librarian who had been a child contestant on the program. Her idea spread to other school districts and, eventually, to other states, and now *Battle of the Books* is almost as well known as the National Spelling Bee.

Nonetheless, it is little known in this area and wouldn't be known at all at Lafayette, if it weren't for the efforts of Ms. Fratto, who had seen *Battle of the Books* successfully done by fourth graders in a Pennsylvania school where she previously taught. She told Ms. Echave about her idea last year, but while Ms. Echave liked the idea, the two of them didn't succeed in launching it until this year.

This year's successful launch, while spearheaded by Ms. Fratto, depended on the work of a Battle of the Books committee and of several parent volunteers. The faculty committee consisted of Ms. Echave, Ms. Hallstrom. Ms. Main, Ms. Perlin and Ms. Snowden. Together they selected and wrote the questions for the five books. Ms. Hallstrom prepared a powerpoint and read the questions

at the event. Ms. Snowden and Ms. Main were the official time and scorekeepers, and Ms. Fratto and Ms. Echave, who had read all the books, acted as the chief judges.

An army of parent volunteers was led by Kate Mazza who communicated Battle Night rules and logistics and periodically emailed suggestions for team meetings throughout the weeks leading up to the big event.

---from information gathered by Bear Facts reporters Jordan Engel and Jonathan Morris and compiled by Ms. Echave



The Breakdancing Bookworms



The Washington Readskins came prepared to do battle.



The author of *A Strong Right Arm*, Michelle Y. Green



Hank Aaron's uniform from his years in the Negro League as an Indianapolis Clown.