

# Middle School Battle of the Books, 2017

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## 1. **Enchanted Air: Two Cultures, Two Wings: A Memoir** By [Margarita Engle](#)

In this poetic memoir, which won the Pura Belpré Author Award, was a YALSA Nonfiction Finalist, and was named a Walter Dean Myers Award Honoree, acclaimed author Margarita Engle tells of growing up as a child of two cultures during the Cold War.

Margarita is a girl from two worlds. Her heart lies in Cuba, her mother's tropical island country, a place so lush with vibrant life that it seems like a fairy tale kingdom. But most of the time she lives in Los Angeles, lonely in the noisy city and dreaming of the summers when she can take a plane through the enchanted air to her beloved island. Words and images are her constant companions, friendly and comforting when the children at school are not.

Then a revolution breaks out in Cuba. Margarita fears for her far-away family. When the hostility between Cuba and the United States erupts at the Bay of Pigs Invasion, Margarita's worlds collide in the worst way possible. How can the two countries she loves hate each other so much? And will she ever get to visit her beautiful island again?

## 2. **The Good Dog by Avi**

When the Wild Calls

McKinley, a malamute, is a good dog -- he's reliable and trustworthy. Whether it's watching over the other dogs of Steamboat Springs, Colorado, or taking care of his human pup, Jack, McKinley never even thinks of letting anyone down -- until he meets Lupin. Lupin is a she-wolf and she's urging the dogs of Steamboat Springs to leave their domesticated lives and join her wild pack. And though she scares McKinley, he also finds himself drawn to her and the life of freedom that she offers. For the first time, McKinley's loyalties are torn. Should he stay with his humans and continue to lead the dogs of Steamboat Springs? Or should he join the wolf and live freely, like his ancestors did? When the wild calls, what will McKinley's answer be?

## 3. **Uglies by Scott Westerfield**

The Uglies series has more than 3 million books in print, has been translated into twenty-seven languages, and spent more than fifty weeks on the *New York Times* bestseller list. Now all four books feature fresh new covers and will reach an even wider audience. Tally's adventures begin in *Uglies*, where she learns the truth about what life as a Pretty really means.

## 4. **The Wednesday Wars by Gary Schmidt**

In this Newbery Honor-winning novel, Gary D. Schmidt offers an unforgettable antihero. *The Wednesday Wars* is a wonderfully witty and compelling story about a teenage boy's mishaps and adventures over the course of the 1967–68 school year in Long Island, New York.

Meet Holling Hoodhood, a seventh-grader at Camillo Junior High, who must spend Wednesday afternoons with his teacher, Mrs. Baker, while the rest of the class has religious instruction. Mrs. Baker doesn't like Holling—he's sure of it. Why else would she make him read the plays of William Shakespeare outside class? But everyone has bigger things to worry about, like Vietnam. His father wants Holling and his sister to be on their best behavior: the success of his business depends on it. But how can Holling stay out of trouble when he has so much to contend with? A bully demanding cream puffs; angry rats; and a baseball hero signing autographs the very same night Holling has to appear in a play in yellow tights! As fate sneaks up on him again and again, Holling finds Motivation—the Big M—in the most unexpected places and musters up the courage to embrace his destiny, in spite of himself.

## 5. The Seventh Most Important Thing by Shelly Persall

This “luminescent” (*Kirkus Reviews*) story of anger and art, loss and redemption will appeal to fans of Lisa Graff’s *Lost in the Sun* and Vince Vawter’s *Paperboy*.

Arthur T. Owens grabbed a brick and hurled it at the trash picker. Arthur had his reasons, and the brick hit the Junk Man in the arm, not the head. But none of that matters to the judge—he is ready to send Arthur to juvie forever. Amazingly, it’s the Junk Man himself who offers an alternative: 120 hours of community service . . . working for him.

Arthur is given a rickety shopping cart and a list of the Seven Most Important Things: glass bottles, foil, cardboard, pieces of wood, lightbulbs, coffee cans, and mirrors. He can’t believe it—is he really supposed to rummage through people’s trash? But it isn’t long before Arthur realizes there’s more to the Junk Man than meets the eye, and the “trash” he’s collecting is being transformed into something more precious than anyone could imagine. . . .

Inspired by the work of folk artist James Hampton, Shelley Pearsall has crafted an affecting and redemptive novel about discovering what shines within us all, even when life seems full of darkness.

“A **moving** exploration of how there is often so much more than meets the eye.” —*Booklist*, starred review

“There are so many things to love about this book. **Remarkable.**” —*The Christian Science Monitor*

## 6. The House of Scorpion by Nancy Farmer

Series: National Book Award Winner for Young People's Literature, Newbery Honor Book, Printz Honor Book

Matteo Alacrán was not born; he was harvested.

His DNA came from El Patrón, lord of a country called Opium—a strip of poppy fields lying between the United States and what was once called Mexico. Matt's first cell split and divided inside a petri dish. Then he was placed in the womb of a cow, where he continued the miraculous journey from embryo to fetus to baby. He is a boy now, but most consider him a monster—except for El Patrón. El Patrón loves Matt as he loves himself, because Matt is himself.

As Matt struggles to understand his existence, he is threatened by a sinister cast of characters, including El Patrón's power-hungry family, and he is surrounded by a dangerous army of bodyguards. Escape is the only chance Matt has to survive. But escape from the Alacrán Estate is no guarantee of freedom, because Matt is marked by his difference in ways he doesn't even suspect.

## 7. Life As We Knew It by Susan Beth Pfeffer

*I guess I always felt even if the world came to an end, McDonald's still would be open.*

High school sophomore Miranda’s disbelief turns to fear in a split second when an asteroid knocks the moon closer to Earth, like “one marble hits another.” The result is catastrophic. How can her family prepare for the future when worldwide tsunamis are wiping out the coasts, earthquakes are rocking the continents, and volcanic ash is blocking out the sun? As August turns dark and wintery in northeastern Pennsylvania, Miranda, her two brothers, and their mother retreat to the unexpected safe haven of their sunroom, where they subsist on stockpiled food and limited water in the warmth of a wood-burning stove.

Told in a year’s worth of journal entries, this heart-pounding story chronicles Miranda’s struggle to hold on to the most important resource of all—hope—in an increasingly desperate and unfamiliar world. An extraordinary series debut!

Susan Beth Pfeffer has written three companion novels to *Life As We Knew It*, including *The Dead and the Gone*, *This World We Live In*, and *The Shade of the Moon*.

## 8. Drowned City: Hurricane Katrina & New Orleans by Don Brown

On August 29, 2005, Hurricane Katrina's monstrous winds and surging water overwhelmed the protective levees around low-lying New Orleans, Louisiana. Eighty percent of the city flooded, in some places under twenty feet of water. Property damages across the Gulf Coast topped \$100 billion. One thousand eight hundred and thirty-three people lost their lives. The riveting tale of this historic storm and the drowning of an American city is one of selflessness, heroism, and courage—and also of incompetence, racism, and criminality.

Don Brown's kinetic art and as-it-happens narrative capture both the tragedy and triumph of one of the worst natural disasters in American history. A portion of the proceeds from this book has been donated to Habitat for Humanity New Orleans

## 9. Island of the Blue Dolphins by Scott O'Dell

Far off the coast of California looms a harsh rock known as the island of San Nicholas. Dolphins flash in the blue waters around it, sea otter play in the vast kelp beds, and sea elephants loll on the stony beaches.

Here, in the early 1800s, according to history, an Indian girl spent eighteen years alone, and this beautifully written novel is her story. It is a romantic adventure filled with drama and heartache, for not only was mere subsistence on so desolate a spot a near miracle, but Karana had to contend with the ferocious pack of wild dogs that had killed her younger brother, constantly guard against the Aleutian sea otter hunters, and maintain a precarious food supply.

More than this, it is an adventure of the spirit that will haunt the reader long after the book has been put down. Karana's quiet courage, her Indian self-reliance and acceptance of fate, transform what to many would have been a devastating ordeal into an uplifting experience. From loneliness and terror come strength and serenity in this Newbery Medal-winning classic.

## 10. Ophelia and the Marvelous Boy by Karen Foxlee

"Magic is 'messy and dangerous and filled with longing,'" we learn in this brave tale of grief, villainy and redemption that borrows from the story of the Snow Queen. Set in a vast, chilly museum, the tale brings together a valiant girl, a charmed boy, a magical sword and a clock ticking down to the end of the world."—*The Wall Street Journal*

This is the story of unlikely heroine Ophelia Jane Worthington-Whittard who doesn't believe in anything that can't be proven by science. She and her sister Alice are still grieving for their dead mother when their father takes a job in a strange museum in a city where it always snows. On her very first day in the museum Ophelia discovers a boy locked away in a long forgotten room. He is a prisoner of Her Majesty, the Snow Queen. And he has been waiting for Ophelia's help.

As Ophelia embarks on an incredible journey to rescue the boy everything that she believes will be tested. Along the way she learns more and more about the boy's own remarkable journey to reach her and save the world.

A story within a story, this a modern day fairytale about the power of friendship, courage and love, and never ever giving up.

## 11. One Came Home by Amy Timberlake

"An adventure, a mystery, and a love song to the natural world. . . . Run out and read it. Right now."—*Newbery Medalist Karen Cushman*

In the town of Placid, Wisconsin, in 1871, Georgie Burkhardt is known for two things: her uncanny aim with a rifle and her habit of speaking her mind plainly.

But when Georgie blurts out something she shouldn't, her older sister Agatha flees, running off with a pack of "pigeoners" trailing the passenger pigeon migration. And when the sheriff returns to town with an unidentifiable body—wearing Agatha's blue-green ball gown—everyone assumes the worst. Except Georgie. Refusing to believe the facts that are laid down (and

coffined) before her, Georgie sets out on a journey to find her sister. She will track every last clue and shred of evidence to bring Agatha home. Yet even with resolute determination and her trusty Springfield single-shot, Georgie is not prepared for what she faces on the western frontier.

## 12. **Liar & Spy by Rebecca Stead**

The instant New York Times bestseller from the author of the Newbery Medal book *When You Reach Me*: a story about spies, games, and friendship. Seventh grader Georges moves into a Brooklyn apartment building and meets Safer, a twelve-year-old self-appointed spy. Georges becomes Safer's first spy recruit. His assignment? Tracking the mysterious Mr. X, who lives in the apartment upstairs. But as Safer becomes more demanding, Georges starts to wonder: what is a lie, and what is a game? How far is too far to go for your only friend? Like the dazzling *When You Reach Me*, *Liar & Spy* will keep readers guessing until the end.

## 13. **Echo by Pam Munez Ryan**

**An impassioned, uplifting, and virtuosic tour de force from a treasured storyteller!**

Lost and alone in a forbidden forest, Otto meets three mysterious sisters and suddenly finds himself entwined in a puzzling quest involving a prophecy, a promise, and a harmonica.

Decades later, Friedrich in Germany, Mike in Pennsylvania, and Ivy in California each, in turn, become interwoven when the very same harmonica lands in their lives. All the children face daunting challenges: rescuing a father, protecting a brother, holding a family together. And ultimately, pulled by the invisible thread of destiny, their suspenseful solo stories converge in an orchestral crescendo.

Richly imagined and masterfully crafted, *Echo* pushes the boundaries of genre, form, and storytelling innovation to create a wholly original novel that will resound in your heart long after the last note has been struck.

## 14. **Schooled by Gordon Korman**

Capricorn Cap Anderson has been homeschooled by his hippie grandmother, Rain. When Rain is injured in a fall, Cap is forced to attend the local middle school. Although he knows a lot about Zen Buddhism, nothing has prepared him for the politics of public school.

## 15. **The Saturday Boy by David Fleming**

If there's one thing I've learned from comic books, it's that everybody has a weakness—something that can totally ruin their day without fail.

For the wolfman it's a silver bullet. For Superman it's Kryptonite. For me it was a letter.

With one letter, my dad was sent back to Afghanistan to fly Apache helicopters for the U.S. army.

Now all I have are his letters. Ninety-one of them to be exact. I keep them in his old plastic lunchbox—the one with the cool black car on it that says *Knight Rider* underneath. Apart from my comic books, Dad's letters are the only things I read more than once. I know which ones to read when I'm down and need a pick-me-up. I know which ones will make me feel like I can conquer the world. I also know exactly where to go when I forget Mom's birthday. No matter what, each letter always says exactly what I *need* to hear. But what I *want* to hear the most is that my dad is coming home.

## 16. **A Wrinkle in Time by Madeline L'Engle**

It was a dark and stormy night; Meg Murry, her small brother Charles Wallace, and her mother had come down to the kitchen for a midnight snack when they were upset by the arrival of a most disturbing stranger.

"Wild nights are my glory," the unearthly stranger told them. "I just got caught in a downdraft and blown off course. Let me sit down for a moment, and then I'll be on my way. Speaking of ways, by the way, there is such a thing as a tesseract."

A tesseract (in case the reader doesn't know) is a wrinkle in time. To tell more would rob the reader of the enjoyment of Miss L'Engle's unusual book. *A Wrinkle in Time*, winner of the Newbery Medal in 1963, is the story of the adventures in space and time of Meg, Charles Wallace, and Calvin O'Keefe (athlete, student, and one of the most popular boys in high school). They are in search of Meg's father, a scientist who disappeared while engaged in secret work for the government on the tesseract problem.

### **17. Harry Potter and the Cursed Child by J.K. Rowling**

Based on an original new story by J.K. Rowling, Jack Thorne and John Tiffany, a new play by Jack Thorne, *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child* is the eighth story in the Harry Potter series and the first official Harry Potter story to be presented on stage. The play will receive its world premiere in London's West End on July 30, 2016.

It was always difficult being Harry Potter and it isn't much easier now that he is an overworked employee of the Ministry of Magic, a husband and father of three school-age children.

While Harry grapples with a past that refuses to stay where it belongs, his youngest son Albus must struggle with the weight of a family legacy he never wanted. As past and present fuse ominously, both father and son learn the uncomfortable truth: sometimes, darkness comes from unexpected places."

### **18. The Wild Robot by Peter Brown**

*Can a robot survive in the wilderness?*

When robot Roz opens her eyes for the first time, she discovers that she is alone on a remote, wild island. She has no idea how she got there or what her purpose is--but she knows she needs to survive. After battling a fierce storm and escaping a vicious bear attack, she realizes that her only hope for survival is to adapt to her surroundings and learn from the island's unwelcoming animal inhabitants.

As Roz slowly befriends the animals, the island starts to feel like home--until, one day, the robot's mysterious past comes back to haunt her.

From bestselling and award-winning author and illustrator Peter Brown comes a heartwarming and action-packed novel about what happens when nature and technology collide.

### **19. The Falconer's Knot by Mary Hoffman**

The award-winning author of the Stravaganza series has done it again with this atmospheric adventure set in Renaissance Italy. Sixteen-year-old Silvano da Montacuto has wealth, good looks, and a new hawk--but none of these can save him when his bloody dagger is found near a dead body. For his own protection, he is sent to a Franciscan House, where he poses as a novice, or a young monk. There, he lays eyes on Chiara, a lovely novice at a nearby abbey who is also living in secret. When they fall in love, their secret identities make it impossible to reveal their feelings to one another.

Murder seems to have followed Silvano, and soon several other dead bodies turn up. Who is committing the crimes? Will a young man accused of multiple murders be able to clear himself? And what about the girl he adores? Fans of Mary Hoffman's critically acclaimed Stravaganza series won't be disappointed in the romance, colorful web of intrigue, and rich, marvelous setting.

## 20. **Hattie Big Sky** by Kirby Larson

This Newbery Honor winning, *New York Times* bestseller celebrates the true spirit of independence on the American frontier.

For most of her life, sixteen-year-old Hattie Brooks has been shuttled from one distant relative to another. Tired of being Hattie Here-and-There, she summons the courage to leave Iowa and move all by herself to Vida, Montana, to prove up on her late uncle's homestead claim.

Under the big sky, Hattie braves hard weather, hard times, a cantankerous cow, and her own hopeless hand at the cookstove. Her quest to make a home is championed by new neighbors Perilee Mueller, her German husband, and their children. For the first time in her life, Hattie feels part of a family, finding the strength to stand up against Traft Martin's schemes to buy her out and against increasing pressure to be a "loyal" American at a time when anything—or anyone—German is suspect. Despite daily trials, Hattie continues to work her uncle's claim until an unforeseen tragedy causes her to search her soul for the real meaning of home.

This young pioneer's story is lovingly stitched together from Kirby Larson's own family history and the sights, sounds, and scents of homesteading life.

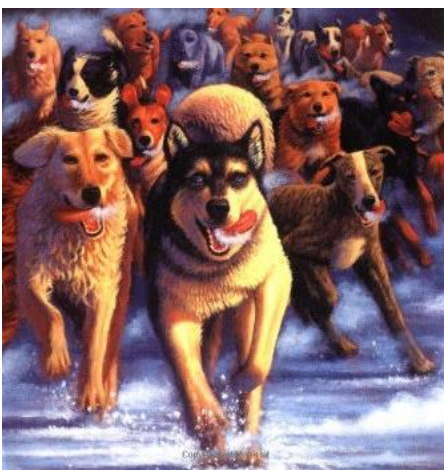
**AN AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION BEST BOOK FOR YOUNG ADULTS**

**A SCHOOL LIBRARY JOURNAL BEST BOOK**

**A BOOKLIST EDITORS' CHOICE**

**NAMED TO 13 STATE AWARD LISTS**

"A marvelous story about courage, loyalty, perseverance, and the meaning of home." --Newbery Award-Winning Author Karen Cushman



1. LIGHTBULBS
2. FOIL
3. MIRRORS
4. PIECES OF WOOD
5. GLASS BOTTLES
6. COFFEE CANS
7. CARDBOARD



