**2018-19 Battle of the Books Synopses**

***Doll Bones*** by Holly Black—Suspense/Gothic

Zach, Poppy, and Alice have been friends forever. And for almost as long, they’ve been playing one continuous, ever-changing game of pirates and thieves, mermaids and warriors. Ruling over all is the Great Queen, a bone-china doll cursing those who displease her.  
  
But they are in middle school now. Zach’s father pushes him to give up make-believe, and Zach quits the game. Their friendship might be over, until Poppy declares she’s been having dreams about the Queen—and the ghost of a girl who will not rest until the bone-china doll is buried in her empty grave.  
  
Zach and Alice and Poppy set off on one last adventure to lay the Queen’s ghost to rest. But nothing goes according to plan, and as their adventure turns into an epic journey, creepy things begin to happen. Is the doll just a doll or something more sinister? And if there really is a ghost, will it let them go now that it has them in its clutches?  
  
*Doll Bones* is a winner of the Newbery Honor, is the recipient of six starred reviews, was on five Best Book lists, and was called “perfect” by *The New York Times*.

***The Pinballs*** by Betsy Byers—Realistic Fiction

You can't always decide where life will take you—especially when you're a kid.

Carlie knows she's got no say in what happens to her. Stuck in a foster home with two other kids, Harvey and Thomas J, she's just a pinball being bounced from bumper to bumper. As soon as you get settled, somebody puts another coin in the machine and off you go again.

But against her will and her better judgment, Carlie and the boys become friends. And all three of them start to see that they can take control of their own lives.

***12 Again*** by Sue Corbett—Fantasy/Paranormal

In this captivating novel, wife and mother of three Bernadette McBride makes a wish she never expects to have granted—to be young again. When she awakens—transformed into a twelveyear- old—on what should be the morning of her fortieth birthday, she is at first jubilant, and then quickly realizes how complex life has suddenly become. She enrolls in her son’s seventh-grade computer class in hopes of enlisting his help, but it’s not that easy. . . . Patrick, Bernadette’s oldest son, has no idea what happened to his mother, but he refuses to give up hope. Unless he can get her back, he faces a life of waiting on his brothers. Can Patrick do the impossible? Can he rescue his mother . . . and return his family’s life to normal?

***The Watsons Go to Birmingham*** by Christopher Paul Curtis—Historical Fiction

Enter the hilarious world of ten-year-old Kenny and his family, the Weird Watsons of Flint, Michigan. There's Momma, Dad, little sister Joetta, and brother Byron, who's thirteen and an "official juvenile delinquent."  
  
When Byron gets to be too much trouble, they head South to Birmingham to visit Grandma, the one person who can shape him up. And they happen to be in Birmingham when Grandma's church is blown up.

***The Midwife’s Apprentice*** by Karen Cushman—Historical Fiction

From the author of *Catherine, Called Birdy* comes another spellbinding novel set in medieval England. The girl known only as Brat has no family, no home, and no future until she meets Jane the Midwife and becomes her apprentice. As she helps the sharp-tempered Jane deliver babies, Brat--who renames herself Alyce--gains knowledge, confidence, and the courage to want something from life: "A full belly, a contented heart, and a place in this world." Medieval village life makes a lively backdrop for the funny, poignant story of how Alyce gets what she wants. A concluding note discusses midwifery past and present. A Newbery Medal book.

***Mockingbird*** by Katherine Erskin—Realistic Fiction

Caitlin has Asperger's. The world according to her is black and white; anything in between is confusing. Before, when things got confusing, Caitlin went to her older brother, Devon, for help. But Devon was killed in a school shooting, and Caitlin's dad is so distraught that he is just not helpful. Caitlin wants everything to go back to the way things were, but she doesn't know how to do that. Then she comes across the word closure--and she realizes this is what she needs. And in her search for it, Caitlin discovers that the world may not be so black and white after all.

***Julie of the Wolves*** by Jean Craighead George—Adventure/Survival

Jean Craighead George’s Newbery Medal–winning classic about an Eskimo girl lost on the Alaskan tundra now features bonus content. This edition, perfect for classroom or home use, includes John Schoenherr’s original scratchboard illustrations throughout, as well as extra materials such as an introduction written by Jean Craighead George’s children, the author’s Newbery acceptance speech, selections from her field notebooks, a discussion guide, and a further reading guide.

Julie of the Wolves is a staple in the canon of children’s literature and the first in the Julie trilogy. The survival theme makes it a good pick for readers of other wilderness stories such as My Side of the Mountain, Hatchet, or Island of the Blue Dolphins.

To her small Eskimo village, she is known as Miyax; to her friend in San Francisco, she is Julie. When her life in the village becomes dangerous, Miyax runs away, only to find herself lost in the Alaskan wilderness.

Miyax tries to survive by copying the ways of a pack of wolves and soon grows to love her new wolf family. Life in the wilderness is a struggle, but when she finds her way back to civilization, Miyax is torn between her old and new lives. Is she Miyax of the Eskimos—or Julie of the wolves?

***Shelter*** by Harlan Coben—Mystery/Suspense

Mickey Bolitar's year can't get much worse. After witnessing his father's death and sending his mom to rehab, he's forced to live with his estranged uncle Myron and switch high schools. Fortunately, he's met a great girl, Ashley, and it seems like things might finally be improving. But then Ashley vanishes. Mickey follows Ashley's trail into a seedy underworld that reveals that Ashley isn't who she claimed to be. And neither was Mickey's father. Soon Mickey learns about a conspiracy so shocking that it leaves him questioning everything about the life he thought he knew.   
  
First introduced to readers in Harlan Coben's novel *Live Wire* Mickey Bolitar is as quick-witted and clever as his uncle Myron, and eager to go to any length to save the people he cares about. Follow Mickey Bolitar on his next adventure in *Seconds Away*!

***Everything on a Waffle*** by Polly Horvath—Realistic/Humor

Primrose Squarp simply knows her parents did not perish at sea during a terrible storm, but try convincing the other residents of Coal Harbour on that score. For all practical purposes, at least for the time being, Primrose is an orphan, and there's no great clamoring of prospective adopters. After realizing the impracticality of continuing to pay Miss Perfidy (a mothball-scented elderly lady) an hourly wage to baby-sit her, the town council is able to locate a relative, Uncle Jack, who reluctantly takes Primrose into his care. Primrose does warm up to living with him and in his home, despite the eerie noises resembling a hockey game that haunt her in the night. But true sanctuary can always be found at a restaurant called The Girl in the Swing, where everything―including lasagna―is served on a waffle, and where the proprietor, Miss Bowzer, offers a willing ear, as well as sage advice. Through a mixture of eccentric humor and probing philosophy, author Polly Horvath makes Primrose's search for peace and understanding a most memorable one.

***Swindle*** by Gordon Korman—Adventure/Suspense

After a mean collector named Swindle cons him out of his most valuable baseball card, Griffin Bing must put together a band of misfits to break into Swindle's compound and recapture the card. There are many things standing in their way -- a menacing guard dog, a high-tech security system, a very secret hiding place, and their inability to drive -- but Griffin and his team are going to get back what's rightfully his . . . even if hijinks ensue.  
This is Gordon Korman at his crowd-pleasing best, perfect for readers who like to hoot, howl, and heist.

***The Wreckers*** by Iain Lawrence—Historical Fiction/Adventure

There was once a village bred by evil. On the barren coast of Cornwall, England, lived a community who prayed for shipwrecks, a community who lured storm-tossed ships to crash upon the sharp rocks of their shore. They fed and clothed themselves with the loot salvaged from the wreckage; dead sailors' tools and trinkets became decorations for their homes. Most never questioned their murderous way of life.  
  
Then, upon that pirates' shore crashed the ship *The Isle of Skye.* And the youngest of its crew members, 14-year-old John Spencer, survived the wreck. But would he escape the wreckers? This is his harrowing tale.

***A Long Walk to Water*** by Linda Sue Park—Historical Fiction

*A Long Walk to Water* begins as two stories, told in alternating sections, about a girl in Sudan in 2008 and a boy in Sudan in 1985. The girl, Nya, is fetching water from a pond that is two hours’ walk from her home: she makes two trips to the pond every day. The boy, Salva, becomes one of the "lost boys" of Sudan, refugees who cover the African continent on foot as they search for their families and for a safe place to stay. Enduring every hardship from loneliness to attack by armed rebels to contact with killer lions and crocodiles, Salva is a survivor, and his story goes on to intersect with Nya’s in an astonishing and moving way.

***Maniac Magee*** by Jerry Spinelli—Realistic Fiction

Jeffrey Lionel "Maniac" Magee might have lived a normal life if a freak accident hadn't made him an orphan. After living with his unhappy and uptight aunt and uncle for eight years, he decides to run--and not just run away, but run. This is where the myth of Maniac Magee begins, as he changes the lives of a racially divided small town with his amazing and legendary feats.

***King of the Mound: My Summer with Satchel Paige*** by Wes Took—Historical Fiction

When Nick is released from the hospital after suffering from polio, he is sure that his father will never look at him in the same way again. Once the best pitcher in youth league, Nick now walks with a limp and is dependent on a heavy leg brace. He isn’t sure he will ever return to the mound, never mind be the star he once was.  
  
When Nick starts working for Mr. Churchill, the owner of the semiprofessional team Nick’s dad plays for, he meets Satchel Paige, arguably the best pitcher in the world. Not allowed in the major leagues because of his skin color, Satchel teaches Nick that some things can be overcome with hard work and dedication, and that just because you’re down, you are most certainly not out.  
  
As Satchel and his unique teammates barnstorm toward a national baseball tournament, Nick wonders if he can really overcome what seems like the impossible and pitch again.

***The One and Only Ivan*** by Katherine Applegate—Fantasy/Adventure

This unforgettable novel from renowned author Katherine Applegate celebrates the transformative power of unexpected friendship.

Inspired by the true story of a captive gorilla known as Ivan, this illustrated book is told from the point of view of Ivan himself. This paperback edition includes an author's note highlighting the differences between the fictional story and true events, a version of the author's Newbery Medal acceptance speech, Ivan's "signature," discussion questions, and more.

Having spent twenty-seven years behind the glass walls of his enclosure in a shopping mall, Ivan has grown accustomed to humans watching him. He hardly ever thinks about his life in the jungle. Instead, Ivan occupies himself with television, his friends Stella and Bob, and painting. But when he meets Ruby, a baby elephant taken from the wild, he is forced to see their home, and his art, through new eyes.

In the tradition of timeless stories like Charlotte's Web and Stuart Little, Katherine Applegate blends humor and poignancy to create an unforgettable story of friendship, art, and hope.

The One and Only Ivan features first-person narrative; author's use of literary devices (personification, imagery); and story elements (plot, character development, perspective).

***Refugee*** by Alan Gratz—Historical Fiction

JOSEF is a Jewish boy living in 1930s Nazi Germany. With the threat of concentration camps looming, he and his family board a ship bound for the other side of the world . . .  
  
ISABEL is a Cuban girl in 1994. With riots and unrest plaguing her country, she and her family set out on a raft, hoping to find safety in America . . .  
  
MAHMOUD is a Syrian boy in 2015. With his homeland torn apart by violence and destruction, he and his family begin a long trek toward Europe . . .  
  
All three kids go on harrowing journeys in search of refuge. All will face unimaginable dangers -- from drownings to bombings to betrayals. But there is always the hope of *tomorrow*. And although Josef, Isabel, and Mahmoud are separated by continents and decades, shocking connections will tie their stories together in the end.  
  
This action-packed novel tackles topics both timely and timeless: courage, survival, and the quest for home.

***The Crossover*** by Kwame Alexander—Sports/Realistic Fiction

*"With a bolt of lightning on my kicks . . .The court is SIZZLING. My sweat is DRIZZLING. Stop all that quivering. Cuz tonight I’m delivering,*" announces dread-locked, 12-year old Josh Bell. He and his twin brother Jordan are awesome on the court. But Josh has more than basketball in his blood, he's got mad beats, too, that tell his family's story in verse, in this fast and furious middle grade novel of family and brotherhood from Kwame Alexander.

Josh and Jordan must come to grips with growing up on and off the court to realize breaking the rules comes at a terrible price, as their story's heart-stopping climax proves a game-changer for the entire family.

***Wolf Hollow*** by Lauren Wolk—Historical Fiction

Growing up in the shadows cast by two world wars, Annabelle has lived a mostly quiet, steady life in her small Pennsylvania town. Until the day new student Betty Glengarry walks into her class. Betty quickly reveals herself to be cruel and manipulative, and while her bullying seems isolated at first, things quickly escalate, and reclusive World War I veteran Toby becomes a target of her attacks. While others have always seen Toby’s strangeness, Annabelle knows only kindness. She will soon need to find the courage to stand as a lone voice of justice as tensions mount.  
  
Brilliantly crafted, *Wolf Hollow* is a haunting tale of America at a crossroads and a time when one girl’s resilience, strength, and compassion help to illuminate the darkest corners of our history.

***The Boys in the Boat*** (young reader’s edition) by Daniel James Brown—Non-Fiction (pre-WWII)

For readers of *Unbroken*, out of the depths of the Great Depression comes the astonishing tale of nine working-class boys from the American West who at the 1936 Olympics showed the world what true grit really meant. With rowers who were the sons of loggers, shipyard workers, and farmers, the University of Washington’s eight-oar crew was never expected to defeat the elite East Coast teams, yet they did, going on to shock the world by challenging the German boat rowing for Adolf Hitler.   
   
At the center of the tale is Joe Rantz, a teenager without family or prospects, whose personal quest captures the spirit of his generation—the generation that would prove in the coming years that the Nazis could not prevail over American determination and optimism.  
   
This deeply emotional yet easily accessible young readers adaptation of the award-winning #1 *New York Times* bestseller features never-before-seen photographs, highly visual back matter, and an exclusive new introduction.