Dr. Seuss’s Battle of the Books

Create your own classroom “madness” with Reading Madness and The Tournament of Books
Dr. Seuss's Battle of the Books

Encourage kids to vote for their favorite Dr. Seuss books bracket-style! Battle of the Books is a competition among top titles, with kids voting in a number of matchups to choose the big winner.

Dr. Seuss’s Battle of the Books has several rounds. When the Big March tournament starts, begin your own with the Seuss Sixteen and take favorite titles all the way to the championship! When choosing which titles to battle, you can announce the starters, have a random matchup, or let kids vote for which books will battle it out.

Getting Started

There are a number of ways you can set up Dr. Seuss's Battle of the Books to generate classroom or school-wide excitement for reading:

• In a classroom battle, kids can advance books and choose a winner by consensus. Hold a show-of-hands vote, submit a secret ballot, or come to an agreement where the class establishes criteria for choosing winners.
• Run parallel tournaments with other classrooms. Start with the same lineup and see which titles emerge victorious. If classrooms select different titles as winners, have those winning titles battle it out.
• Use the school library as battle central and hold one big school-wide tournament! Ask your principal or guest readers to read titles aloud over your school’s broadcast system or during school-wide assemblies.

Building a Bracket

When it comes to building your bracket, think big! Dominate the hallway or a classroom or library wall with your display. Using strips of black or colorful tape is the easiest way to create the lines for your bracket (or you can cut strips of construction paper). See the sample bracket design on the next page, which is broken into three match-ups: Seuss Sixteen, Excellent Eight, and Fabulous Four. Remember that your frames should be large enough to fit actual-size (or close-to-actual) images of the books’ covers. When your bracket is set up, hang the book covers for the Seuss Sixteen in matchups, and let the battle begin!

If wall space is at a premium, hang a poster-size bracket on your classroom wall. Display copies of the books nearby so kids can get excited about hearing their favorites read aloud.

You may also want to distribute the reproducible bracket in this guide for each student so they can predict the winners of your Battle of the Books. Students can completely fill out the bracket or predict a winner of each pair of books right before they are read aloud. Consider creating a Google Form to collect everyone’s predictions and tally them with ease. Students can earn points for prizes as they correctly predict winners in each bracket, and you could offer prizes for whoever correctly predicts the champion!
Suggested Matchups

You know your students best, so you may want to fill your Seuss Sixteen bracket slots with student favorites or use the opportunity to introduce them to Dr. Seuss titles they are less familiar with. You could also have students nominate the titles and randomly make the matchups. Or write the titles of all of Dr. Seuss’s books on strips of paper, put them in a hat, and then randomly draw the Seuss Sixteen. There are also these matchups to consider:

**Classic Dr. Seuss (Big Books) vs. Dr. Seuss Beginner Books (Little Books)**

- *How the Grinch Stole Christmas!* vs. *The Cat in the Hat*
- *Horton Hears a Who!* vs. *One Fish Two Fish Red Fish Blue Fish*
- *The Lorax* vs. *Green Eggs and Ham*
- *Horton Hatches the Egg* vs. *Hop on Pop*
- *On Beyond Zebra!* vs. *Dr. Seuss’s ABC*
- *Bartholomew and the Oobleck* vs. *Fox in Socks*
- *Oh, the Places You’ll Go!* vs. *Mr. Brown Can Moo! Can You?*
- *And to Think That I Saw It on Mulberry Street* vs. *I Can Read with My Eyes Shut*

**Dr. Seuss Fiction vs. the Cat in the Hat’s Learning Library Nonfiction**

- *The Cat in the Hat* vs. *What Cat Is That? All About Cats*
- *Horton Hatches the Egg* vs. *Fine Feathered Friends: All About Birds*
- *One Fish Two Fish Red Fish Blue Fish* vs. *Wish for a Fish: All About Sea Creatures*
- *Green Eggs and Ham* vs. *Oh, The Things You Can Do That Are Good for You*
- *What Pet Should I Get* vs. *Oh, the Pets You Can Get! All About Our Animals Friends*
- *The Lorax* vs. *Oh Say Can You Seed? All About Flowering Plants*
- *Bartholomew and the Oobleck* vs. *Oh Say Can You Say What’s the Weather Today? All About Weather*
- *If I Ran the Zoo* vs. *Is a Camel a Mammal? All About Mammals*
Critical Moves

Before reading and voting begins, you and your students should establish criteria for choosing winners. You want them to think beyond “I liked it” or “I didn’t like it” before they cast their votes. The idea is to get them talking about how the book made them feel, find out what connections they made, and get them to comment on specific illustrations, characters, or events that support why they think it is an okay, good, or great book!

To help kids form opinions about the books, you may want to kick things off with a discussion about the elements that make a great story. Get them thinking, too, about the importance of illustrations and how the art works with the text. To give students time before they share their feelings, reactions, ideas, and questions, consider having them write their thoughts in a reader’s response notebook.

Remind kids it is good to share opinions! All people are different and react to stories and illustrations in different ways. Talk about how a person’s experiences might shape how they feel about a book or influence what they find interesting, funny, confusing, silly, or sad.

As you read and lead discussions about the titles facing off, be prepared for lively discussions about subjects as varied as environmental conservation, prejudice, power, customs, human rights, greed, perseverance, and self-discovery.

Battle Action

The real action of the Dr. Seuss’s Battle of the Books takes place when you read aloud! Plan to read a different pair of titles in your Seuss Sixteen each day. Students vote, and their favorites move on to the next round of Excellent Eight. Read these new matchups aloud, and keep advancing titles and reading aloud all the way to the championship round.

The champion deserves a celebration and a special read-aloud! Invite a guest reader to come and read your winning title. Guest readers can also play other roles in your Battle of the Books:

• Have a special guest reader for each bracket. Local sports celebrities, sportscasters, coaches, or high school or college athletes can read aloud and offer their own insights into other types of tournaments.

• Pair each title with a guest reader. Make sure your guest readers are available to return to reread their books as their titles advance in the tournament. Older students in your school, support staff, or retired teachers make great return readers!

• Have a pair of guest readers face off and each read a book in a bracket. Spice up the battle with additional competition among readers—mom vs. dad, fireman vs. policeman, singer vs. dancer, etc. Provide them with hats and/or props to make these read-aloud battles epic.

ACTIVE READ-ALOUD

Because you want to have discussion and debate about the books before voting takes place, help prep your guest readers with tips for an interactive read-aloud.

★ Remember that reading aloud can include thinking aloud! After reading, get kids asking and answering thoughtful questions by posing questions of your own.

★ Read with expression, use gestures and movement, vary the pace, and make plenty of eye contact.

★ Interpret details in illustrations, connect them to text, and encourage kids to do the same.

★ As kids ask questions, think out loud and make predictions and connections, giving time to listen and respond to their input. Encourage them to listen to each other’s ideas during reading, too.
Add excitement to your read-aloud sessions by varying your environment. Head outside to read on a sunny day, bring in pillows and blankets for a cozy reading session, or bring younger reading buddies to visit the classroom of older readers.

**Championship Celebration**

Launch when the Big March tournament starts, then decide on a time to hold a second culminating celebration for your champion and all the books that battled it out! Plan to read aloud or invite guest readers to read aloud the winning title and other student favorites. Serve up Dr. Seuss–themed snacks, such as Cat in the Hat kebabs (skewered strawberries and bananas), fish-shaped crackers, or helpings of green eggs and ham. And make everyone feel festive with hats! Have kids use items in the recycling bin to create hats inspired by the characters in the winning title.

Your celebration is also a good time to award prizes to students who earned points or selected the winning title when completing their own book brackets. If possible, give prizes to every student!

**Other ways to honor your Champion:**

- Hold a competition to design a special sticker for the winning book that proclaims it as the Champion of 2016. Unveil the sticker and the winning book at your celebration.
- Work with your school music teacher or a local musician and have students write and perform a song of tribute to the winning book, the epic book battles, or the joys of reading Dr. Seuss.
- Have students create a book trailer for the winning title so that future readers learn about its merits.
- Perform a Reader’s Theater version of the winning title for the entire school.

ADD FUEL TO THE READING MADNESS WITH ADDITIONAL MOTIVATIONAL ACTIVITIES:

- Plan a day for students to dress up as the characters in your Battle of the Books bracket. Encourage them to wear simple costumes they made or use accessories they picked out.
- Start the day off right with books and breakfast! Make your Battle of the Books read-alouds extra special with breakfast treats and guest readers.
- Send home Reading Madness activities for families to continue growing the enthusiasm for reading. The simple reading-related activities in the reproducible on the last page of the guide are presented as bookmarks. Send home a new bookmark every week for an entire month of Reading Madness!
The Tournament of Books

To hold the Tournament of Books, use the same ideas for building a bracket as you used for Dr. Seuss’s Battle of the Books. Choose titles for this bracket from popular books circulated in your public, school, or classroom library. Use recent award-winning titles, or pick from titles along an “across America” theme, such as books that take place in different states, or titles that show how diverse our country is.

Start with students completing their own brackets, then have special guest readers read the competing titles aloud. Let kids debate the matchups, then vote. Plan activity breaks between read-aloud sessions, such as a long jump, paper-plate discus throw, and cotton-ball shot put—measuring the distances achieved by taking the titles in the bracket and using them as units of measurement! Award prizes to those who predicted the winner of the tournament and those who scored big in the activities as you celebrate the winning title with a special snack.

Tournament-Style Battle

Tournament-style battles introduce readers to lots of different titles and can work for all grade levels. These activities extend learning, broaden reading interests, focus on comprehension, and get kids thinking about ideas and characters!

Quiz Show

For this quiz bowl–style activity, divide your class into teams and have kids come up with creative, alliterative team names such as the Reading Rockets or the Dive into Books Dolphins. To answer questions about books, kids need to read or have books read to them, so give them lots of time to prepare for this activity. They should talk with their team members about the books and ask and answer questions about what they’ve read. You can use the questions they create in discussion in your quiz bowl, or you can create the questions. Make the questions simple, but try to avoid questions that are too obvious. Play a practice round with a moderator asking the questions and individuals on teams “buzzing” in with an answer, or start the questions with the team that wins a coin toss and have teams take turns offering answers. Schedule your quiz show and let kids show how much they know about the titles you have chosen.

Character Matchups

For kids who really want to celebrate a particular character during your Tournament of Books, give them a chance to be that character and debate with a character from another book. Choose simple topics for characters to debate that give students a chance to show how well they know their characters. Students should draw on evidence from the book to justify the opinions they are offering as that character. Offer guidance on developing arguments and responding to them.

The Mighty Pen

School Library Journal holds its own annual Battle of the Kids’ Books, pitting great books for kids against each other in a bracket-style tournament. Winners are chosen through rich analysis offered by a diverse group of writers. This idea can work in the classroom, too! Choose titles for your bracket, have students read two books in the starting lineup, write about each, and select one as the winner. Advance the winners and have kids read and write about the newest matchup. Keep going until students reach a consensus and you have a winner!
Dr. Seuss’s Battle of the Books!

And the champion is . . .

This bracket was carefully crafted by . . .
**Reading Madness**

Teachers: Copy and cut out these reading-related activities for families. Send a new one home with students every week during the Battle of the Books.

**READING MADNESS!**

Try these activities at home this week.

- Read a picture book to your child without showing the pictures. Have your child draw the pictures and retell the story.
- Let your child practice reading to you and your family pet (or a favorite stuffed animal).
- Read Dr. Seuss's *The Foot Book* aloud and encourage kids to create dance moves to go with the book.
- Take a field trip in your own backyard or a local park, and start a nature guide with your child's observations.
- Check out or download an audiobook from the library. Listen to it as a family.
- Read books about the same topic by different authors and ask questions about the differences.
- Read a book at the breakfast table or bring books and breakfast back to bed.

**READING MADNESS!**

Try these activities at home this week.

- Use markers and scraps of fabric and paper to turn plastic spoons into puppets of favorite book characters and act out stories.
- Learn about real people and how things work. Read a nonfiction book together!
- What activities can you do without electricity or batteries? Make a list, and then do one of the activities!
- Read *Oh, the Places You’ll Go!* get out a map, and talk about all the places your family would like to visit.
- Play rhyming games with your child. Take turns thinking of words that rhyme with an object in the room.
- Watch a movie that is based on a book. Read the book and talk about how it compares with the movie.
- Look at family photos together. Tell stories about your childhood and your child’s early years.

**READING MADNESS!**

Try these activities at home this week.

- Hide a book for your child. Create a treasure map with simple clues to find the book, then read it together.
- Time to try something new! Read Dr. Seuss's *Green Eggs and Ham*, and then try a new food.
- Sit outside and talk about the shapes you see in the clouds. Make up a story together based on the shapes.
- Do some research about a favorite author or illustrator and find out more about what that person likes to do.
- Help your child surprise someone with the gift of a favorite book or a handmade book.
- Visit the public library and ask the librarian for a book recommendation.
- Read the label! Show your child all the important information that can be found on products in your home.

**READING MADNESS!**

Try these activities at home this week.

- Read Bartholomew and the Oobleck by Dr. Seuss and keep a weather journal for a week, noting rain, temperature, and wind speed.
- Build an indoor reading tent with blankets and pillows and have a reading campout with your child.
- Have a family reading night with a wordless picture book. How many different stories can your family tell using the book?
- Be a little silly today. Make up nonsense words or change some of the words in a book you read to your child.
- Read a recipe together and cook it for your family, or write down a family recipe to share with others.
- Call or video chat with a family member or friend who lives far away and read books together.
- Organize the books in your home. Make sure there are no overdue library books!