



FIRST ANNUAL BATTLE OF THE BOOKS SETS THE BAR HIGH AT BYERS!

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Summer of Reading 2013 started off in a flurry of excitement at the [Byers Branch](#) on 7th and Santa Fe. Since the Denver Public Library began the program before children were released from school for the summer, there was no delay in igniting their excitement to start reading!

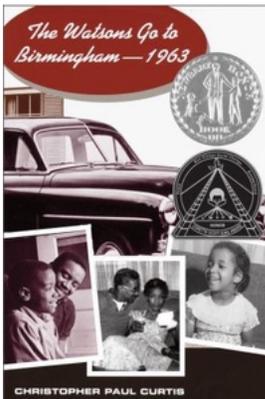
This year, we wanted to do something different—something to show our community that even though we’re a small branch, we can achieve great things by working together.



We began the summer in an impassioned attempt to win the ice cream party that the Mayor offered to the branch with the greatest increase in registrations in the first two weeks. Our staff and community rallied together, and although we did not win, we came in third overall with 418 registrations as compared to 277 last year (that’s 150% of last year’s total for that time)!

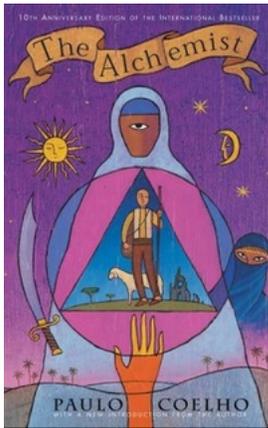


We were incredibly pleased with the initial enthusiasm shown at Byers, and we wanted to encourage everyone to maintain that drive and continue reading throughout the summer. In order to do this, we began the first ever Battle of the Books program at Byers. 36 books were selected from 3 different reading levels: picture books, juvenile fiction, and young adult fiction. They were paired within these levels by various criteria (theme, topic, primary characters, etc.), kids and adults were allowed to vote one time for one of the pair to “win” that round, and at the end of every two weeks, the votes were tallied and the “winners” advanced to the next round. Two more weeks were allotted for the second round of votes, and two additional weeks were allotted for the third and final round of voting. At the end of 6 weeks, we had a winner from each of the three categories: [The Three Ninja Pigs](#) by Corey Rosen Schwartz, [The Watsons go to Birmingham, 1963](#) by Christopher Paul Curtis, and [The Alchemist](#) by Paulo Coelho.



The readers were then given two final weeks to prepare for our final “showdown” by reading any or all of these “winning” titles.

Our final Summer of Reading celebration and the Battle of the Books Final Showdown happened at the same time. The morning of July 31 was warm and hectic as we gathered ice cream, chips, drinks, and red Cheetos, set up the meeting room, and anxiously awaited the arrival of our competitors. All who attended were encouraged to sign in, choose snacks, and find a seat at a table facing



the white board. After explaining the premise of the program, we dove into 16 questions per book, beginning with *The Three Ninja Pigs* and working our way up. Each team had a name and a team captain who answered the questions on behalf of the team. The teams were scored by each correct answer, and the winning team won brand new chess sets! The runners up were given Chipotle gift cards.

We had several other prizes to give out, one of which was an iPod Nano. There was a drawing for this and various other prizes. The little girl who won the Nano was unbelievably excited, and even said that she would share the prize with her sisters. She was very grateful and exclaimed: "I've

never had an iPod before!" :)

Once all of the prizes had been given away and we were beginning to clean up, several children erupted with questions about when the next Battle of the Books will be happening and what books we will be choosing for that competition. It looks like we'll be continuing this project next year! Maybe we'll even add a category for adults as well...

One particular family, Jenuine, Aleia, and Nayah S. (and their mom, Candice!) attended numerous programs throughout the summer, including Gaming with Eric, Canvas Art with Mary, and the final Battle of the Books competition. They said that thanks to the Summer of Reading program at the Denver Public Library, they've started reading more, and Aleia (6) says that reading makes her happy. :) Nayah, the youngest at 3 years old, shared with me one of the activities she did for her first prize. I asked her what kinds of songs she liked to sing, and we sang "Where is Thumbkin" together, complete with hand motions! The oldest of the three girls, Jenuine, is only 9 years old and read *The Alchemist* as part of the Battle of the Books competition. Her mom, Candice, said that it is next on her list of books to read! The Summer of Reading program brought this family into the library on several occasions and encouraged them to reach outside of their reading comfort zone to experience new things! They are all very excited to participate in Summer of Reading programming again next year.

Overall, we had a wonderful and memorable Summer of Reading 2013 at Byers! The Battle of the Books was an awesome conclusion. The summer could not have gone even half as well without the amazing staff here and the community that surrounds and supports us.

Story submitted by Mary, Library Program Associate at the Byers Branch Library.

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