Start the Insanity: March Madness for Young Readers
By Allison Floyd

In the spirit of college basketball’s March Madness, but with less dribbling and more words, the Idaho Battle of the Books (IBOB) is, in the organizers’ own words, “…a statewide voluntary reading motivation and comprehension program open to all Idaho students in grades 3-12, regardless of ability,” in other words, “Like sports, but with books. (http://idahobattleofthebooks.org/).

Not participating in a regional tournament this month? No worries – your classroom can get in on the action this March. The IBOB website has everything you need, from the 2018-19 Official Handbook, to this season’s book roster (divided into Elementary and Middle/Junior High titles), plus resources and downloads. Even if you haven’t officially registered your team, your classes can still take part in the fun, using the IBOB framework to launch your own book competitions.

If you decide to go rogue and choose your own roster of contenders for your book battle, NoveList Plus K-8, a readers’ advisory database available via Lili.org, is an excellent resource. Browse books by popular award winners and pit, for example, Parents’ Choice award winners against Golden Kite award winners, in the Ages 0-8 category, or Agatha Awards winners against Edgar Allan Poe Awards winners in the Teens category — just for example! There are many possibilities.

Another source of inspiration can be found in School Library Journal’s pioneering Battle of the Kids’ Books program: http://blogs.slj.com/battleofthebooks/. While the sun set on the final battle in 2017, the battles of yore just might provide the spark that ignites your own program.


However you carry it out in your classroom, staging a book battle is a fun, creative way to engage readers, reluctant and otherwise, with the written word — and each other!