

## Fiddlers Elementary Battle of the Books Summaries and Content Advisories

We hope this will be a tool to help you and your child find the books that will best suit them. We feel each of these books have merit but want to give parents more information to help guide their family choices.

A BIG Thanks to the several people who helped screen these books for content. If we have missed something, please email [ariseandshineforth@gmail.com](mailto:ariseandshineforth@gmail.com). Thanks!

### 3<sup>rd</sup> GRADE

*The Boxcar Children* (book one) by Gertrude Chandler Warner— Henry, Jessie, Violet, and Benny are orphans. They want to make it on their own, so they set out to find a safe place to live. They discover an old, red boxcar that provides shelter from a storm. Against all odds, they make it into their home—and become the Boxcar Children. Grade Level 3.2.

*Charlotte's Web* by E.B. White— A loving pig named Wilbur makes friends with a spider named Charlotte, who lives in the rafters above his pen. In this story of friendship and hardship, readers will open their eyes to the wonder and miracle found in the simplest of things. Content: Death of a main character. Grade Level 4.9.

*Freckle Juice* by Judy Blume— Nicky has freckles; they cover his face, his ears, and the whole back of his neck. Sitting behind him in class, Andrew once counted 86 of them, and that was just the start! If Andrew had freckles like Nicky, his mother would never know if his neck was dirty. Grade Level 3.6.

*James and the Giant Peach* by Roald Dahl— In this story, James escapes from his miserable life with two nasty aunts and becomes a hero to his new insect family, including Miss Spider, and the Old-Green Grasshopper. Content: A few uses of the “a-word”. Grade Level 6.7.

*A Lion to Guard Us* by Clyde Robert Bulla— In this true story from the year 1609, three young children are left alone in London. Together they try to make their way to America in search of their father. Grade Level 3.9.

*Little House in the Big Woods* by Laura Ingalls Wilder— Laura Ingalls Wilder and her family live deep in the Big Woods of Wisconsin. Miles of trees surround their log cabin, and their closest neighbors are the bears, wolves, and panthers. Daily chores keep Laura and her sister Mary busy, but they still find time to go exploring with their dog, Jack. Grade Level 4.2.

*Molly's Pilgrim* by Barbara Cohen— Molly is embarrassed by her mother who tries to help with her Thanksgiving project. She makes a pilgrim doll—but dresses it in Russian clothing. Soon however, Molly learns that it takes all kinds of “pilgrims” to make a Thanksgiving. Grade Level 2.8.

*Mr. Popper's Penguins* by Richard and Florence Atwater— The Poppers unexpectedly come into possession of a penguin, and then get another penguin from the zoo. They have 10 baby penguins. Before long, something must be done before they eat the Poppers out of house and home! Grade Level 4.9.

*Muggie Maggie* by Beverly Cleary— When Maggie's first attempt at cursive writing earns her the name of “Muggie Maggie” because she doesn't make the “a” correctly, she promises never to write in cursive again...after all, she can always use the computer. Will Maggie really go on printing her whole life? Grade Level 5.0.

*My Father's Dragon* by Ruth Stiles Gannett— When Elmer Elevator hears about the plight of an overworked and underappreciated baby flying dragon, he stows away on a ship and travels to Wild Island to rescue the dragon. Grade Level 4.8.

*Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes* by Eleanor Coerr and Ronald Himler—Sadako is lively and athletic—the star of her school’s running team, when the dizzy spells begin. Soon, sick with leukemia, the “atom bomb disease,” Sadako faces her future with spirit and bravery. Remembering a Japanese legend, Sadako sets to work folding paper cranes, for the legend says that if a sick person folds one thousand cranes, the gods will grant her wish and make her healthy again. Based on a true story. Content: Death of a main character. Grade Level 5.2.

*Tornado* by Betsy Byars— When Pete was a young boy, a tornado struck his family farm, and brought with it a doghouse complete with a dog inside! Now another twister is on its way, and as a new family of farmers takes shelter from the howling winds, Pete passes the time with story after story about the amazing dog named Tornado. Grade Level 3.5.

#### **4<sup>th</sup> GRADE**

*All About Sam* by Lois Lowry— This book describes the adventures of Sam, Anastasia Krupnik’s younger brother, from his first day as a newborn through his mischievous times as a toddler. Grade Level 5.1.

*The Best School Year Ever* by Barbara Robinson— The six horrible Herdmans, the worst kids in the history of the world, cause mayhem throughout the school year. Content: a few uses of the Lord’s name. Grade Level 5.4.

*Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* by Roald Dahl— Trustworthy, kind, and poor Charlie Bucket, greedy Augustus Gloop, spoiled Veruca Salt, gum-chewing Violet Beauregarde, and TV-addict Mike Teavee have amazing adventures in a magical chocolate factory. Content: one use of the “a-word”. Grade Level 5.9.

*The Courage of Sarah Noble* by Alice Dalgliesh— And eight-year-old girl finds courage to go alone with her father to build a new home in the Connecticut wilderness, and to stay with the Indians when her father goes back to bring the rest of the family. Grade Level 4.4.

*Each Little Bird That Sings* by Deborah Wiles— Comfort lives in a funeral home and has been to more than 200 funerals, so she thinks she knows about death. But then her great-uncle Edisto dies, and her great-great-aunt Florentine slips away just six months later. At Florentine's funeral, Comfort is in charge of watching her cousin, Peach. Content: Discussion of death; Death of a pet. Grade Level 4.3.

*Island of the Blue Dolphins* by Scott O’Dell— A young Indian girl learns the art of survival when she is stranded on an isolated Pacific island. Content: Deaths of family members. Grade Level 5.5.

*Jeremy Thatcher, Dragon Hatcher: A Magic Shop Book* by Bruce Coville—Small for his age but artistically talented, twelve-year-old Jeremy Thatcher unknowingly buys a dragon’s egg. Grade Level 5.9.

*The Magic School Bus, Inside the Earth* by Joanna Cole—On a special field trip in the Magic School Bus, Ms. Frizzles’ class learns firsthand about different kinds of rock and the formation of the earth. Grade Level 3.6.

*Million Dollar Shot* by Dan Gutman— Eddie Ball enters the poetry contest sponsored by Finkle Foods and wins. He must make a basket from the foul line at the NBA Finals to win a million dollars. Content: Adult drinking and kissing. Grade Level 4.8.

*Miss Rumphius* by Barbara Cooney— As a child, Great-aunt Alice Rumphius resolved that when she grew up she would go to faraway places, live by the sea, and do something to make the world more beautiful. She does all those things, the last being the most difficult of all. Grade Level 2.9.

*Night of the Twisters* by Ivy Ruckman— After a devastating tornado destroys his neighborhood and much of Grand Island, Nebraska, Dan Hatch—who survived with his baby brother and best friend—fears for the safety of the rest of his family. Content: Lord’s name used in vain several times. Grade Level 5.9.

*Original Adventures of Hank the Cowdog* by John R. Erickson— Hank the Cowdog gives his perspective on his efforts to track down the brutal murderer of several unfortunate chickens while he continues his on-the-job training of his disappointing student, Drover. Along the way, he rescues a female in distress and temporarily tastes the irresponsible life as an adopted member of the band of outlaw coyotes. Content: One mild swear word, insults, and a drunk dog. Grade Level 3.5.

*Ralph S. Mouse* by Beverly Cleary— Fed up with life at the Mountain View Inn, Ralph persuades his friend Ryan to take him to school, where he is an instant hit with Ryan’s classmates and where mishaps occur that threaten his life. Grade Level 4.1

*Regarding the Fountain* by Kate Klise— This hilarious collection of letters between an artist and a fifth-grade class chronicles a comedy of errors and uncovers the town of Dry Creek’s secret history. Grade Level 4.8.

*Ruby Holler* by Sharon Creech— Dallas and Florida have been known at the orphanage as the trouble twins. Can they make a new start with Sairy and Tiller? Follow them on their new adventure into the world. Content: Mistreatment of children. Grade Level 5.4.

*Running Out of Time* by Margaret Peterson Haddix— When a diphtheria epidemic hits her 1840 village, thirteen-year-old Jessie discovers it is actually a 1996 tourist site under unseen observation by heartless scientists, and it’s up to Jessie to escape the village and save the lives of the dying children. Grade Level 6.4.

*Sarah, Plain and Tall* by Patricia MacLachlan— When their father invites a mail-order bride to come live with them in their prairie home, Caleb and Anna are captivated by their new mother and hope that she will stay. Grade Level 4.2.

*Seven Wonders of Sassafrass Springs* by Betty G. Birney— After making a bet with his father, Eben McAllister sets out to find Seven Wonders in his small town in 1923 Missouri so that he can take a train trip out West. Grade Level 4.5.

*Snow Treasure* by Marie McSwigan— When the Germans start to enter Norway during World War II, the children of Riswyk must secretly transport gold bricks to be shipped out of the country. This book tells the story of twelve-year-old Peter and the danger he encounters as he participates in this mission. Grade Level 4.9.

*Summer of the Monkeys* by Wilson Rawls— Fourteen-year-old Jay tries to recover a group of wily monkeys escaped from a circus train with the hope that the reward will buy him the gun and pony he has wanted for so long. Grade Level 5.1.

*The Sign of the Beaver* by Elizabeth G. Speare— In the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, eleven-year-old Matt befriends an Indian boy of the Beaver clan who helps him survive alone in the wilderness. Grade Level 5.7.

*The Velveteen Rabbit* by Margery Williams— A toy rabbit learns that a child’s love can make him real. Grade Level 4.2.

*Wanted...Mud Blossom* by Betsy Byars— Junior is excited to bring home the class pet and show it the secret tunnel he has dug. But when he can’t find Scooty, the likely culprit is the family dog, Mud. In addition, a

family friend is also missing. Will Mad Mary be found? Will Mud be convicted in the mock trial? Join the Blossoms in more hilarious adventures. Content: One use of “Lord knows”; young love, including a few kisses. Grade Level 4.8.

*The Westing Game* by Ellen Raskin— When 16 people are called together for the reading of wealthy Sam Westing’s will, they are surprised to learn that the will is actually a contest in which they are all to participate. Working with their partners, the potential heirs take their clues to try to find the elusive answer to the Westing game and thus take their shares of the wealth. Grade Level 6.1.

*Worth* by A. LaFaye— In this award-winning book, eleven-year-old Nate’s bitterness over a permanent injury begins to dissipate when he realizes that the orphan boy brought to do his farm chores has also experienced great loss. Content: Discussions about death. Grade Level 5.0.

## 5<sup>th</sup> GRADE

*A Wrinkle in Time* by Madeleine L’Engle—In this adventure book, three children embark on a strange and perilous journey to save their father who disappeared some time ago into something called a tesseract. Can they bring him home? Read to find out. Grade Level 4.7.

*Anne of Green Gables* by Lucy Maude Montgomery-- In this loveable story Matthew and his sister Marilla plan to adopt a boy, but are surprised when they are sent a girl instead. Grow up with Anne and laugh and cry at her many adventures along the way. Grade Level 5.9.

*Be a Perfect Person in Just Three Days* by Stephen Manes-- Is it possible to become perfect in just three days? Milo thinks so, but what if you have to wear Broccoli around your neck to do it? Would you try it? Better read this one to see what happens. Grade Level 4.5.

*Because of Winn-Dixie* by Kate DiCamillo-- Do you love dogs? How about dirty, stray dogs that hate thunder? Well, the dog in this book is more than just a stray. With the help of a little girl they manage to change the town for good. Grade Level 4.1.

*Boxes for Katje* by Candace Fleming-- After World War II Katje’s family must go without many things. One day a special box arrives from America sent from a little girl. Find out what helpful things the box contains, and how this long distance friendship grows. Grade Level 2.3.

*By the Great Horn Spoon!* by Sid Fleischman-- Wouldn’t it be amazing to find gold, and lots of it? Well that’s what Jack and his butler set out to do during the California Gold rush. Follow them on their journey and meet many strange characters along the way. Grade Level 6.2.

*Castle in the Attic* by Elizabeth Winthrop-- Imagine yourself holding a tiny silver knight as he suddenly comes to life. Imagine being transported to a medieval land and facing a dragon, and an evil sorcerer. Could you handle it? Follow the adventures of William in this amazing book. Content: Frequent lying and one reference to hell. Grade Level 5.9.

*Clementine* by Sara Pennypacker-- What would your mom do if you cut and colored a neighbor girl’s hair? Well this main character did just that. You better read this book to find out what other crazy things happen. Grade Level 4.5.

*Ella Enchanted* by Gail Carson Levine--This modern-day Cinderella story begins as Ella is given a special gift, the gift of obedience. Through her quest to reverse this gift, Ella meets many exciting characters, and makes lasting friendships. If you love fairy tales you'll love this book. Grade Level 5.1.

*Esperanza Rising* by Pam Munoz Ryan-- This is a story of tragedy and struggle during the Great Depression. Follow Esperanza as she learns about herself after her family loses everything in Mexico, and she must migrate to work in America. Grade Level 5.5.

*Harry's Mad* by Dick King-Smith-- In this story, Harry is a boy, and Mad is a parrot. After an uncle dies, Harry inherits Madison and finds out about his special talents. Grade Level 5.6.

*Hatchet* by Gary Paulsen— After a plane crash leaves Brian alone in the middle of nowhere, Brian must use everything he has learned to survive. With a trusty hatchet and a few other things from the plane, Brian builds a home and survives for months. Quite an adventure! Content: Uses the Lord's name in vain. Grade Level 5.0.

*Ice Magic* by Matt Christopher-- The author of this book combines hockey and magic to make this book a great read. When two boys find an old toy hockey game they soon find out that whatever they do on the game actually happens on the rink in their games. Grade Level 5.2.

*Knights of the Kitchen Table* by Jon Scieszka—In this book, Joe is given a magic book for his birthday. When he opens the book he and his three friends are transported back in time to King Arthur's day. Read along as the boys escape trouble in every direction. Grade Level 5.1.

*Love, Ruby Lavender* by Deborah Wiles-- This story begins as Ruby and her grandmother secretly rescue chickens from a slaughterhouse. But when her grandmother leaves for the summer, Ruby must learn to become independent. Grade Level 4.5.

*Meet Addy: An American Girl* by Connie Rose Porter-- This great Civil War story is told from the eyes of a slave girl. Addy learns many life lessons including how to keep quiet as her family plans an escape. Grade Level 5.1.

*My Rotten, Redheaded Older Brother* by Patricia Pollaco-- Patricia hates her older brother. He is always doing things better than her. Then one night she wishes on a star to be better than him. You'll be surprised at what happens in this book. Grade Level 3.9.

*My Side of the Mountain* by Jean Craighead George-- Would you like to live inside a tree? Sam does just that. After running away from home, taking only a penknife, ax, string, and \$40, Sam must learn survival skills fast. Grade Level 6.7.

*Number the Stars* by Lois Lowry—This novel takes place during WWII as the Nazis begin to take over Denmark. Annemarie finds out that her friend is Jewish and will be relocated. Her family decides to hide her and help her escape at great danger. Content: Two uses of the Lord's name and one mild swear word. Grade Level 5.1.

*Old Yeller* by Fred Gipson-- This is an amazing dog story. Travis reluctantly adopts a dog to help him on the farm, but after a series of scrapes with raccoons, snakes and bears, they become true friends. Don't forget the tissues. Content: Death of a main character; one use of "Lord." Grade Level 5.4.

*The Patchwork Quilt* by Valerie Flourney--“I’m gonna make a masterpiece,” says Tanya’s grandmother, “It can tell your life story.” Working together as grandmother becomes ill, this family creates a quilt that they won’t forget. Grade Level 3.5.

*Phineas L. MacGuire...Erupts!* by Frances O’Roark Dowell-- Here's what you need to know about Phineas L. MacGuire, boy-scientist extraordinaire, aka Mac: He's allergic to purple, telephone calls, and girls, and can prove it. Grade Level 4.8.

*Redwall* by Brian Jacques— As the inhabitants of Redwall Abbey bask in the glorious Summer of the Late Rose, all is quiet and peaceful. But things are not as they seem. Cluny the Scourge, the evil one-eyed rat warlord, is bent on destroying the tranquility as he prepares to fight a bloody battle for the ownership of Redwall. Content: War violence, several references to hell, and a few mild obscenities. Grade Level 7.8.

*Scared Stiff* by Willo Davis Roberts— Rick and Kenny's Pa was right -- troubles really do happen in threes. First Pa's truck was robbed, then Pa ran off, leaving Rick, Kenny, and Ma to fend for themselves, and now Ma has disappeared, too. Content: Children in peril and implied profanity (i.e. “He swore”). Grade Level 6.5.

*Sheep* by Valerie Hobbs-- The sheep closed in around him like a big, woolly blanket. The puppy had never been so scared or so excited in his life. Soon he is learning what it means to be one of the proud breed of Border collies, the finest shepherders in the world. Then, almost overnight, his life is turned upside down. Content: Death and animal abuse. Reading Level 4.3.

*There’s a Boy in the Girls’ Bathroom* by Louis Sachar-- Bradley is the oldest kid in the fifth grade. He tells enormous lies. He picks fights with girls. No one likes him—except Carla, the new school counselor. She thinks Bradley is sensitive and generous, and knows that Bradley could change, if only he weren’t afraid to try. Grade Level 5.5.

*Time for Andrew: A Ghost Story* by Mary Downing Hahn— Aunt Blythe's house gives Andrew the creeps -- full of dark rooms, creaky noises, and the sound of a woman sobbing somewhere in the shadows. Then, in the middle of the night, Andrew awakens to find a boy standing in his room...a boy who is Andrew's double, except he looks as if he's come from the grave. A story of intergenerational family relationships. Content: Mildly scary moments; several uses of the Lord’s name. Grade Level 5.9.

*What’s the Big Idea, Ben Franklin* by Jean Fritz— No matter how busy he was, Ben Franklin always found time to try out new ideas and he was a man of many talents. He was also an ambassador to England, a printer, an almanac maker, a politician, and even a vegetarian (for a time). Content: Cartoon illustrations of a male’s nude backside. Grade Level 4.6.

*The White Mountains* by John Christopher— This compelling science fiction novel is about the interplanetary Tripods and Masters who threaten all life on earth. “*Strong in action and suspense.*” Grade Level 6.1.

*The Wish Giver: Three Tales of Coven Tree* by Bill Brittain— In this account of strange doings in Coven Tree, Stew Meat relates the King Midas luck that came to three young people, each of whom had a wish fulfilled. Grade Level 4.7.