

Collins, Joan. *Motivating Readers in the Middle Grades*. Columbus, Ohio: Linworth Publishing, Inc., 2008. 128 p. \$36.95 (ISBN: 978-158683-297-1).

Most appropriate for those brand new to the middle school library, this title offers well-organized planning documents and a prescribed process for reading contests and promotional programs such as the traditional Battle of the Books and author visits. The book includes helpful handouts such as quizzes and answer sheets, reward coupons, and numerous book lists to use when planning and implementing the programs. In addition, the “Booked Conversations” program provides an interesting model to continue to promote books and reading beyond sixth and seventh grades by offering eighth graders an opportunity to have more in-depth discussions with teachers about books that they have read. Technology is integrated into reading promotions via student-produced, video booktalks, and Part Two includes genre-based lists of books recommended for the middle school library collection.

While Collins’ book provides good fodder for reading promotions and motivating middle schoolers, the author’s approach is sometimes a bit limited, the rhetoric displays some personal biases, and sweeping generalizations can be misleading for the audience. Examples:

- Most of the rewards offered are tangible in nature, with a heavy emphasis on “ice cream” coupons.
- The Battle of the Books program, while motivating to some students, can be off-putting to reluctant or struggling readers because of the competitive nature of the program. A wider variety of more up-to-date program ideas would have been valuable.
- Telling students that “no one complains about these books” can be dangerous as students’ tastes may not be the same as the librarian’s.
- While we librarians would love to believe that “All children still love to read and be read to . . .” this is certainly not always the case.
- Both the Battle of the Books and Booked Conversations programs could be richer by including nonfiction titles.

Despite these limitations, this title still offers useful tools and helpful tips and handouts for those who need assistance with organizing motivational reading programs for this age group.

Donna Miller
Teacher Librarian, West Middle School
Grand Junction, Colorado