

Brains On (APM) | Smash Boom Best Bats vs. Owls 1QGZ2M0HX4WB46E1R784C18E4G

KATIE MCVAY: Oh my gosh, you and the disease of bats.

BRANDI I don't want to die from a bat. I'm a friendly person, but I also use Purell after shaking some people's hands.

BROWN:

KATIE MCVAY: Listen, I live dangerously.

[LAUGHS]

INTERVIEWER: From the brains behind *Brains On*, it's *Smash Boom Best*.

HOBTE The show for people with big opinions.

MARTON:

MOLLY BLOOM: Hello. I'm Molly Bloom, and this is *Smash Boom Best*. The show where we take two things, smash them together, and as you to decide which one is best. Today, wings out, eyes wide. We're swooping in on a battle between a perfect pair of creatures of the night. Get ready for bats versus owls.

SUBJECT 1: I personally believe that owls are cooler because they can turn their head all the way around. I like their hoo hoo. They have huge eyes. It's unbelievably huge.

SUBJECT 2: Owls because I'm a Harry Potter fan.

SUBJECT 3: I'm Team Bat. They're just slicker, spookier, I guess.

SUBJECT 4: They hang upside down.

SUBJECT 5: Bats are blind, and they have echolocation.

SUBJECT 6: They see with sound. It's cool.

MOLLY BLOOM: Will Team Bat or Team Owl be crowned the winner? Don't worry, you'll get a chance to weigh in and vote for your favorite. But today, the only person who holds the answer is our judge, Hobte Marton. Hi, Hobte.

HOBTE Hello.

MARTON:

MOLLY BLOOM: So Hobte, when I say the word "bat," what pops into your mind? What's the first thing?

HOBTE Webbed wings. Flying around a cave.

MARTON:

MOLLY BLOOM: Flying around a cave. When you hear the word "owl," what pops into your head?

HOBTE It is night, and then the owl is gripping its feet onto a tree. Like Hedwig from *Harry Potter*, but with brown spots.

MARTON:

MOLLY BLOOM: Excellent. Well, to help you choose, we're going to hear lots of facts and feelings from our debaters. Representing those nocturnal steely-eyed birds of prey, it's Brandi Brown for Team Owl.

BRANDI Yay, hello.

BROWN:

MOLLY BLOOM: OK, Brandi. One sentence. Why should you pick owls?

BRANDI They eat bats.

BROWN:

MOLLY BLOOM: Oh, that's good. And here for cave-dwelling night loving bats of all kinds is Katie McVay.

KATIE MCVAY: Hello.

MOLLY BLOOM: Hi, Katie.

KATIE MCVAY: Hi.

MOLLY BLOOM: So Katie, in one sentence, why are bats better?

KATIE MCVAY: Bats are better because they're cool mammals who do cool things and hang out in cool caves and also cool cities, and they're cool, cool, cool, cool.

MOLLY BLOOM: The bottom line-- they're cool. OK. Before we get started, let me explain how this debate battle's going to go down.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

We'll hear four rounds of arguments from Team Bat and Team Owl. Each one is a little different. The first round is called Declaration of Greatness. And it's when both teams take us on a deep dive into the science, history, and lore of their side. Next up is the Micro Round. Every episode, it's a new creative challenge that both sides have come prepared for.

And the third round is Sneak Attack, when we give our debaters a challenge that's a complete surprise to both of them. They'll have to think fast and talk even faster. Last but not least is the Final Six, when our contestants have one more chance to sway the judges in just six words. Our judge Hobte will award a point after each round. And listeners, you can do the same. When all the rounds are wrapped, you'll tally up your points to see who won. And don't forget to cast your vote at smashboom.org after the show.

All right. Hobte, are you ready to do this?

HOBTE Ready.

MARTON:

INTERVIEWER: Declaration of Greatness.

MOLLY BLOOM: It's time for both teams to make their declaration of greatness. We flipped a coin, and Bats, you're up first. Katie, take it away.

[VOCALIZING]

KATIE MCVAY: Bats. There might only be one Batman, but bats are everywhere. There are over 1,000 bat species on Earth. And bats make up 20% of all mammals. That's one in five. Whether you live in the country or the city, there's a good chance you have a bat as a neighbor.

[DOORBELL]

BAT: Hi, I was wondering if I could--

MAN: A bat!

BAT: Borrow a cup of--

[YELLS]

Oh, never mind.

KATIE MCVAY: Being surrounded by bats can sound pretty scary when you first think about it. But bats are actually our friends. Do you like bananas, avocados? Well, fruit eating bats help pollinate bananas and avocados. Not to mention dates, figs, mangoes, cocoa, and peaches. So if you like banana splits, chocolate, or guacamole, thank a bat.

[BUZZING]

Ouch. I hate mosquitoes. Mosquitoes are annoying and can also be pretty dangerous. They're huge carriers of disease, like West Nile virus and Zika. Thankfully, some bats eat mosquitoes. In fact, one colony of bats in Texas is said to eat 500,000 pounds of mosquitoes every night.

AUDIO TRACK: That's every night!

KATIE MCVAY: That should make the summer a little more enjoyable. And mosquitoes aren't the only insects bats are eating. While you're snoozing in bed, there are some types of bats out in the night eating half their body weight in insects. That's helped protect crops by eating insects that could harm them. A group of scientists at Boston University estimated that bats save farmers approximately \$22.9 billion a year by eating all those bugs.

Bats have a big impact wherever they go. And talking about going, bat poop, also known as guano, is a huge help to humans. Nitrogen rich guano is frequently used as a fertilizer. And it has been for centuries. At one point, guano was so valuable that people actually went to war over it.

[TRUMPETS]

[BOOM]

Throughout the 1800s, bird and bat guano was big business. Conflicts were fought over who had access to it. The President of the United States, Millard Fillmore, even addressed the issue of guano in his 1850 State of the Union. Crazy.

But bats aren't just cool because they're helpful. Bats are just cool. Bats on the whole have better vision than humans, especially at night. And those bats that are blind use echolocation to navigate. Echolocation means that bats make a sound-- some screech, others click-- and use the echoes produced by that sound to create a mental picture of where they are.

[CHITTERING]

And sure, owls can fly. But so can other kinds of birds. Bats are the only mammals that can. Not only do bats fly, but they're the best at it.

[TRUMPET]

Bat wings mimic the four fingers of the human hand, allowing them greater maneuverability than birds. Maneuverability means the ability to make quick turns in the sky. Bird wings are much more rigid. Bird wings can only move in a few directions-- up, down. Bat wings, on the other hand, can move in many directions. It's like the difference between your arms and your fingers. Bat wings move like fingers. Bird wings move more like arms.

And finally, let's not forget.

BATMAN: I'm Batman.

KATIE MCVAY: That's right. Batman. I don't see any owls inspiring major motion picture superhero stars. What would Owlman even do? Hoot at crime? Batman, on the other hand, I get it. Batman, just like bats, wants to help humanity and look cool while doing it.

MOLLY BLOOM: Excellent work, Katie. So Hobte, how are you feeling about bats after that round? What fact in there stood out to you?

HOBTE MARTON: I was really surprised that bats made one fifth of the mammal population. And that they are faster than most birds.

MOLLY BLOOM: That is very amazing. Well, I think it's only fair that we let Brandi from Team Owl respond. So Brandi, you have got 30 seconds for a rebuttal. Go.

BRANDI BROWN: All right, first of all, bats can't take off from the ground. They basically are gliding squirrels. They have to drop down for the most part. Also, she talks about, bats eat mosquitoes. Bats are the animal with the most diseases. Ebola, rabies. All sorts of stuff. You can get that from touching a bat, you can get that from guano. They're disgusting.

So great. Something gross eat something gross. That's a point for Katie, I guess. Oh and also, Batman's rival is Owl Man. There's a rivalry there, so.

KATIE MCVAY: Batman's rival is the Joker.

[LAUGHS]

MOLLY BLOOM: OK, Hobte, try to reserve your judgment for now, because you're about to hear more heat coming from Team Owl. Brandi, it's your turn.

BRANDI All right. Owls. What are they? Birds. Where are they located? Pretty much everywhere but Antarctica. Are they
BROWN: better than bats? Absolutely. To kick things off, here's a friend of mine to tell you a big reason why owls are better than bats.

SHARON This is Sharon Stiteler. I work for the National Park Service. I run Birdchick.com, and I'm an internationally known
STITELER: bird expert. Owls are better than bats because owls can eat bats. I've personally found bat jawbones in great horned owl pellets.

[BUZZ]

BRANDI Wow. That's a huge strike against bats. You might be wondering what an owl pellet is. Owls swallow the animals
BROWN: they eat whole. Their bodies can't digest fur, feathers, and bones. So they later throw up those things in the form of pellets. Anyway, I could stop this debate after learning that owls swallow bats whole. But I won't. There are so many reasons why owls are better than bats.

First, bats are great at hunting for insects and nectar and whatever else they eat, but nowhere is good at hunting as owls. Bats have pretty decent eyesight. Some bats have better eyesight than humans. Still, owl eyesight is better. Owls can't roll their large eyes at bats because they are fixed into long eye sockets. But their eyes do allow them to see long distances, especially at night, when most owls hunt.

In fact, owls have the best night vision of all animals. Bat people are always talking about echolocation. It's neat that bats can use their great hearing to determine the location of objects. But many bats can't use echolocation. Owls, on the other hand, have amazing hearing. Many owls have asymmetrical ears. That means one ear is located higher or lower on their head than the other.

They figure out exact locations of prey by turning their heads and seeing how long it takes for sound to reach each ear. If there is no difference in time, the owl knows the prey is directly in front of it. By the way, the pointy tufts on some owls that look like ears, those are just feathers.

[OWL HOOT]

According to the San Diego Zoo, an owl can hear a mouse stepping on a twig from 75 feet away. And the Georgia Southern Center for Wildlife Education says some owls can hear a mouse heartbeat underneath snow. Barn owls can locate prey in complete darkness just by sound. Imagine playing Marco Polo on a football field with an owl. You'd lose every time.

Speaking of things on the ground, most bats can't take off from the ground. They have to drop from several feet to start flying. Owls can take off from almost anywhere. Burrowing owls even live in abandoned animal burrows. And snowy owls actually make nests right on the ground in the Arctic, where they may need to flee polar bears.

Owls' hunting adaptations make for great party tricks. They can turn their heads 270 degrees without moving their body, allowing them to scan most of the room. So they can tell who's at the party, where the chips are, if there's a line for the bathroom, all without taking a step.

[OWL HOOT]

They also have an outer toe that can point forward and backward. This helps owls not to drop the squirming meal they caught. Imagine the dance moves they could do with that.

[OWL HOOT]

What can bats do at parties? Hang upside down and sleep. That's no fun. And owls are stronger than bats. Talons, the claws on owl feet, are serious business. They use them to grab and crush prey before using their beak to further crush their food. Big bat-- that's what I call the bat lobby-- will tell you that bats eat a lot of bugs and they produce guano. But you have to harvest it from caves, and it's full of viruses that people can catch.

Bats are great pollinators. But owls eat rodents and insects. Owls are more helpful to farmers and the environment because they help farmers avoid using poisons to stop pests from eating their crops. Just building boxes for a few barn owls to nest in can save farmers a lot of money and kill thousands of rodents. It doesn't matter how much a bat helps plants grow if animals destroy them all.

Finally, a group of owls is called a parliament. That's a name that really makes you feel like owls get stuff done. Such a dignified word, parliament. Do you know what a group of bats is called? A colony. That's just a word for settling in a spot. Boo. What a terrible name, bats. As you can see, bats, they're just fine. But owls, owls are way better than bats.

MOLLY BLOOM: Nicely done, Brandi. Hobte, do you have a favorite fact there from Brandi's owlsplanation?

HOBTE I liked how owls can turn their head almost 360 degrees. And they have a toe that could point both forward and
MARTON: backward.

MOLLY BLOOM: That is really amazing. Well Katie, the ball is in your court. You've got 30 seconds to respond, starting now.

KATIE MCVAY: Brandi spoke a lot about parties. But consider this. Who would you want to invite to a party? A bat, the gymnast of the sky, who also has provided you an abundance of food through its pollination. Avocados, it's bringing them. Bananas, it's bringing them. Chocolate, it's bringing them. What are owls bringing? Nothing. Basically, what I'm saying is that owls have great night vision so that they can see dinner guests at a party be disgusted by the fact that they're constantly vomiting up their own food. And that is disgusting.

[LAUGHS]

MOLLY BLOOM: Thank you, Katie.

BRANDI Can I rebut this? I feel like there's a lot of owl slander going on here. First of all, owls would know when you were
BROWN: out of chips, because they heard nothing in the bowl. They heard you looking for chips. They would stop by with chips. They'd grab them in their talons. They would bring them. And also, they eat all sorts of things. So they would bring you a variety of snacks.

MOLLY BLOOM: I want to go to this bat and owl party, that's all I can tell you. Now Hobte, I want you to think on what you just heard from Brandi and Katie about bats and owls and award a point to the side that you think did the best job winning you over.

HOBTE This is a hard choice.
MARTON:

MOLLY BLOOM: Oh, Hobte, you just got to think. Think about all the things you heard. What was more interesting? Don't say it out loud. Just mark it on your paper.

HOBTE I marked it.

MARTON:

[DINGS]

MOLLY BLOOM: It's tough decision.

HOBTE Yeah, very tough.

MARTON:

MOLLY BLOOM: Well, we have got three more fierce rounds of debate coming up, so consider this your halftime break. Stretch your legs, grab a snack, and get ready for more *Smash Boom Best*.

HOBTE And help us spread the word. We're a brand new show, and if you post about us, talk about us, recommend us,
MARTON: we'll be able to keep this show going.

MOLLY BLOOM: You could casually drop us into conversation.

HOBTE Like, oh, I was listening to this new debate show on my way to jet ski practice.

MARTON:

MOLLY BLOOM: Or, after I defeated all those robot ninja hackers, I turned on *Smash Boom Best* to unwind.

HOBTE Name dropped in super normal conversations.

MARTON:

MOLLY BLOOM: And you know what's exciting? There are so many cool things in this world that there's also a million matchups we could debate. Our listeners are on the same wavelength, because they have a lot of ideas about the showdowns they want to hear. Here's a good one from Amelia.

AMELIA: My debate idea is warm-blooded versus cold-blooded.

MOLLY BLOOM: We'll hear from her at the end of the show to find out which side she would pick in that match-up. If you have an idea for a debate, head over to smashboom.org, and click on Submit An Idea. Thanks.

AUDIO TRACK: Boom. Boom. Boom, boom. Boom. Boom. Boom. Boom. Boom, boom. Boom. Smash. Boom. Best.

MOLLY BLOOM: This is *Smash Boom Best*, the show about showdowns. And today, we're talking bats and owls. Which is cooler? I do not envy Hobte having to judge this one, because they are both so cool. But don't worry. You don't have to decide just yet, Hobte. Brandi and Katie have three more rounds to convince you how cool their side is. Next up, the Micro Round.

AUDIO TRACK: Micro Round.

[DINGS]

MOLLY BLOOM: Brandi and Katie got this challenge in advance so they could perfect their response. And that challenge is--

[TYPING]

Letter to the editor. We've asked them both to write a complaint to their local newspaper about the other side.
Katie, you first.

KATIE MCVAY: Dear editor. I have seen that you have yet again come to the defense of the indefensible. The owl. I subscribe to your periodical for the facts, not for owl focused vanity pieces. We've heard it all before. Owls can turn their heads up to 270 degrees. Owls are birds of prey.

Well, you are preying on my patience with all of these owl reports. Did you know that some species of owls eat bats? Yes. That's right, bats. Bats, the humble insect and fruit eating mammal who has done nothing but improve the lives of everyone around it are sometimes eaten by these cretins. There are no recorded incidents of a bat eating an owl, on the other hand.

And that's not the only downside to owls. Owls are so praised for their flying and camouflage. But can they compare to bats? I do not think so. Many species of bat fly faster than owls. And although they are not camouflage experts, bats are better at hiding themselves than these often praised birds. I advise you to keep your owl praise to a minimum if you want to continue getting a subscription from this particular bat lover.
Sincerely, Katie McVay, Esquire.

MOLLY BLOOM: That is some quality complaining. Brandi, your turn.

BRANDI BROWN: To the editor, or whom it may concern. See what I did there? Who-- OK. Well, because-- never mind. Recently, a bat colony moved into my garage. While I think bats are wonderful, adorable creatures, I need them to leave. I'd rather build an owl box for a nice owl family to live in instead. Owls would eat the rodents destroying my garden and possibly any bats who refuse to leave.

There are so many bats and so much poop. And it stinks. I already use compost in my small garden, and I'm tired of risking my health to clean up their guano. Yuck. Also, bats are so noisy when they come and go at night. Do you hear that?

[CRICKETS]

That's the sound of an owl coming or going. Well, you just heard crickets. You can't hear an owl fly. Their feathers don't make noise when they fly. They can sneak up on prey and in and out of my yard. And owls are pretty solitary, so there won't be that many of them. I can deal with a little hooting. Please, help me get these bats out of my garage. Thank you, Brandi Brown.

MOLLY BLOOM: Excellent work. Very persuasive. All right, Hobte and listeners. Mark your point for the person you think won that round. Talk it over with the person next to you if you need to. Hobte, have you decided?

HOBTE MARTON: OK, I got it.

[DINGS]

MOLLY BLOOM: Listeners at home, feel free to pause if you need some more time to deliberate.

KATIE MCVAY: And if you are listening alone, maybe consider texting a bat related GIF to a friend.

BRANDI Or if you don't want to creep your friend out, send an adorable owl pic. They may not get the context, but who doesn't love a random owl picture? I'll tell you who doesn't. Katie, because I sent her one, and she got mad.

[LAUGHS]

KATIE MCVAY: So many pictures of Usher hanging out with an owl.

BRANDI They're amazing pictures.

BROWN:

[LAUGHS]

MOLLY BLOOM: All right. Now it is time for--

AUDIO TRACK: Sneak Attack.

MOLLY BLOOM: We like our debaters to think on their feet, so the Sneak Attack round is always a total surprise to both sides. They aren't prepared. They don't know what's coming. So let's not keep them waiting anymore. Ladies, your challenge today is--

[DRUMROLL]

Haiku. Haiku is a Japanese style of non-rhyming poetry that consists of seventeen syllables. Those seventeen syllables are broken into three lines. The first line has five syllables, the second, seven, and the last has five. We'd like you to come up with two haikus. The first in favor of your side, and the second arguing against the other side. Brandi and Katie, we'll give you a moment to come up with your haikus. Everyone else, please enjoy this hold music.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

(SINGING) Bats and owls. Bats and owls. And bats and owls. Bats and owls. And bats and owls. Bats and owls. And bats. Owls and bats. Owls and bats. And owls and bats. Owls and bats. And owls and bats. They both fly at night.

OK. Brandi and Katie are ready with their haikus. Katie went first last time, so Brandi, you start.

BRANDI Owls. They hunt the best. Versatile eaters, save crops. So few diseases.

BROWN:

MOLLY BLOOM: Katie, let's hear your pro-bat haiku.

KATIE MCVAY: Bats are great friends, pal. They help humans everywhere. Cities, countryside.

MOLLY BLOOM: Very nice. OK, Brandi, now it's time for your anti-bat haiku.

BRANDI All right. On the ground, can't fly. Bats, a cesspool of disease. Batman? Guy in suit.

BROWN:

MOLLY BLOOM: OK, Katie. Now it is time for your anti-owl haiku.

KATIE MCVAY: Owls eat bats. Rude dudes. You should not eat your best friends. Owls, can you trust them?

[LAUGHS]

BRANDI I didn't know this was an attack add round. Oh no, an owl.

BROWN:

KATIE MCVAY: You called bats cesspools of disease.

BRANDI But they are.

BROWN:

KATIE MCVAY: They're beautiful sky mammals.

BRANDI Look, we all have a disgusting friend. Pigpen, bats.

BROWN:

KATIE MCVAY: Pigpen has never pollinated an avocado.

MOLLY BLOOM: OK. Hobte, you got to give a point. Listener, you, too.

HOBTE I'm thinking about it.

MARTON:

MOLLY BLOOM: OK, I know it's tough. They are both really great arguments and haikus.

HOBTE I marked it.

MARTON:

[DINGS]

MOLLY BLOOM: Next up is our fourth and final round.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

AUDIO TRACK: The Final Six.

MOLLY BLOOM: This is the last chance either side gets to make a stand. It's time for the Final Six. You've got just six words. Katie, you're up first.

KATIE MCVAY: Bats. Friendly kings of the sky.

BRANDI Brandi, you're up. Bats, so gross. Owls, much better.

BROWN:

MOLLY BLOOM: Concise and persuasive. And that's it. No more hemming and hawing. It is time for a winner in this nocturnal flying beast brawl. Everyone add up your points.

HOBTE So I'm marking the vote.

MARTON:

MOLLY BLOOM: OK, OK. Let me know when you're ready.

HOBTE OK. Owls won.

MARTON:

KATIE MCVAY: A shocking upset!

[LAUGHS]

HOBTE You two did very amazing.

MARTON:

BRANDI Thank you. You did a great job, too, as a judge.

BROWN:

KATIE MCVAY: I would disagree. But I think you were very friendly.

HOBTE That was a very hard choice.

MARTON:

MOLLY BLOOM: Yeah. I mean, you said you wanted you wanted to judge this debate because you wanted to learn about bats and owls. And you learned a lot.

HOBTE Yeah. Bats and owls have a lot in common. They both help farmers. They both are nocturnal.

MARTON:

MOLLY BLOOM: But what put owl over the top?

HOBTE They're talking a lot about bats having diseases, which grossed me out.

MARTON:

BRANDI It's rough stuff.

BROWN:

MOLLY BLOOM: You've heard what Hobte thinks. Now, tell us what you think. Head to smashboom.org and cast your vote for bats or owls. And don't forget to rate, review, and share our show. It helps us grow.

Before we go, let's see who Amelia thinks would win in a hot-blooded versus cold-blooded showdown.

AMELIA: I think cold-blooded would win, because they don't need as much food. Because they use the environment's temperature as their own. If they are cold, they can go into the sun. And if they are hot, they can move to shade.

MOLLY BLOOM: Strong points from Amelia. Now, Katie, Brandi, thank you so much for joining us today. Would you mind helping me out with the show credits?

KATIE MCVAY: Sure.

BRANDI Yeah.

BROWN:

MOLLY BLOOM: *Smash Boom Best* is a production of Brains On.

BRANDI The show is produced by Sanden Totten, Molly Bloom, and Marc Sanchez.

BROWN:

KATIE MCVAY: We had engineering help today from Zach Rose, Ryan Roberts, and Tui Mao.

MOLLY BLOOM: And production help from Alyssa Dudley.

BRANDI I'd like to thank Sharon Stiteler or weighing in on owls.

BROWN:

KATIE MCVAY: I'd like to thank Brandi for sending me so many pictures of owls and really getting me amped up for this.

BRANDI I just sent you another one, so.

BROWN:

KATIE MCVAY: Oh no.

EVERYONE: Bye!

MOLLY BLOOM: Thanks for listening.

KATIE MCVAY: Thanks for listening.

BRANDI Bye!

BROWN:

[MUSIC PLAYING]

(SINGING) Ooh, you're the Smash Boom Best. Ooh, pushing through the test. Ooh, you're the Smash Boom Best.
Ooh, better than the rest. You're the Smash Boom Best. You're the Smash Boom Best.