

## Competitive reading at NHHS



Bryan Dingle, left, and Zach Smith, right, lend support as Mason Douglas argues on behalf of his group's book *Blood Red Road*.  
TONY PEARSON Special to This Week

By Tony Pearson

Heather Taylor, English teacher at North Hastings High School, believes that reading should be a participation sport. Accordingly, she challenged her 11C English class to form teams and battle it out to determine who read the best book.

Taylor, like most English teachers, was looking for a way to get more student involvement in literature ? to achieve their buy-in to reading. She struck on the idea of a competition modelled on the popular CRC radio series *Canada Reads*. In the case of *Taylor Reads*, groups of students took turns outlining the book's plot and characters, identifying its literary devices, describing its setting and atmosphere, and setting out its theme. Thus, the traditional (and somewhat boring) elements of novel study were transformed, as each group tried to make their case that their book was exciting and engaging.

Most of the novels were in what is called the ?post-apocalyptic? or ?dystopian? category of the science fiction/fantasy genre ? where the characters live in a world which is built following a disaster. This world is often based on a Darwinian struggle for survival. The best-selling and box-office smashing *Hunger Games* is an example of this type of literature, and it was one of the books discussed during *Taylor Reads*.

In the end, the panel ? which included principal Ken Dostaler ? decided that the best presentation was from the group presenting Canadian Ken Oppel's award-winning novel *Airborn*, a kind of ?steam-punk? adventure involving airships, pirates, and sky-creatures. Members of the winning team were Riley Graf, Jaggar McCormack, Josh Nichols, and Hunter Nicholson.