



West Virginia Center for the Book

Letters About Literature

West Virginia Center for the Book
West Virginia Library Commission
Culture Center
1900 Kanawha Boulevard, East
Charleston, WV 25305
304-558-3978

May 2013

Special Notice

The response to this project is so great that the West Virginia Center for the Book will publish only the essays receiving Top Honors, Honors, and Honorable Mention Awards. The letters appearing in this publication depict the students' writing as it was submitted for judging. All attempts were made to keep the grammar and spelling true to the students' submissions, with the exception of necessary corrections to titles and authors. The order of appearance does not reflect students' scoring. Names are withheld by request, or in the event that documentation permitting the release of a student's name is unavailable.

Directory

Level 1

Top Honors:

Kennah Salmons—8

Honors:

India Chahar—8

Kaitlyn Steidley—9

Honorable Mention:

Adele Gulley—9

Autumn Gouveia—9

Bryce Mutterback—10

Name Withheld—10

Name Withheld—10

Name Withheld—11

Sydney Daniels—11

Teagan Kuzniar—12

Notable Mention:

Listed on page 28

Level 2

Top Honors:

Mckenzi Olonko—12

Honors:

Cassandra Griffin—13

Emily Duncan—13

Honorable Mention:

Name Withheld—14

Name Withheld—14

Cody Prince—14

Name Withheld—15

Elijah Akers—15

Kayla Jude—16

Name Withheld—16

Name Withheld—16

Name Withheld—17

Name Withheld—17

Samantha Ravita—18

Savannah Smith—19

William Ward—19

Notable Mention:

Listed on page 28

Level 3

Top Honors:

Althea Wheaton—20

Honorable Mention:

Abby Miller—23

Amber Morris—23

Bonnie Walton—24

Name Withheld—24

Name Withheld—25

Lucas Facemire—25

Name Withheld—26

Sydney Hale—26

Tyler Easley—27

Honors:

Name Withheld—21

Name Withheld—22

Notable Mentions:

Listed on page 30

Blank Pages for notes, autographs, or mementos—32—33



STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
1900 KANAWHA BOULEVARD, EAST
CHARLESTON, WV 25305
(304) 558-2000

EARL RAY TOMBLIN
GOVERNOR

GREETINGS FROM GOVERNOR TOMBLIN

I'm pleased to welcome you to the Culture Center for the 2013 Letters About Literature awards ceremony.

Showcasing our talented young writers, Letters About Literature is a wonderful program which highlights the significant role literature plays in the lives of our state's youth. I commend the hard work of today's finalists and winners. Congratulations on a job well done.

Books provide us endless opportunities to do anything, go anywhere and be anyone - without ever leaving the comfort of our favorite chair. A doorway to faraway lands, the written page introduces us to exciting characters and unique adventures.

I'd like to take this opportunity to recognize the Library Commission and the West Virginia Center for the Book for sponsoring this contest and for promoting the love of reading in our young people.

Again, congratulations to all of our 2013 finalists and winners!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Earl Ray Tomblin".

Earl Ray Tomblin
Governor



Dear Honorees, Parents, Teachers and Friends,

West Virginia is proud of you!

The young writers we honor today have demonstrated, through their writing skills, how much literature impacts the lives of everyone. We may not immediately recognize it, but literature has great impact many of the things we do, say, think and feel daily. On a larger scale, literature reflects on our culture, our thought, and our destiny as a state and nation. It demonstrates our values.

The West Virginia Center for the Book, an affiliate of the National Center for the Book at the Library of Congress, strives to foster an appreciation of the literature that shapes our lives daily. Through programs such as *Letters About Literature*, our *One Book, One West Virginia* selection, and the *West Virginia Children's Choice Book Awards*, we help West Virginians further appreciate books and literature while promoting our state's rich literary heritage. We know that books change lives.

The letters from those we honor today demonstrate this vital fact. More importantly, the letters of these young writers serve as a shining example of what is good and wonderful about this great state and nation we call home. Most importantly, the impact literature has had on these young lives will live with them long after today's ceremony ends and will positively impact our state and nation for generations to come.

Warmest congratulations!

John Paul Myrick, MLS
Library Development Director, West Virginia Library Commission
Coordinator, West Virginia Center for the Book

FEATURED SPEAKER



Marc Harshman, West Virginia's poet laureate, was born October 1, 1950, in Randolph County, Indiana. He received his bachelor's degree from Bethany College and master's degrees from Yale Divinity School and University of Pittsburgh. He began to write as a high school student and published his first poem while a student at Yale. His first book of poetry, *Turning Out the Stones*, was published in 1983. In 1989, his first children's book, *A Little Excitement*, was published. He has since published several other children's books,

including *The Storm* (1995), which was named a Smithsonian National Book for Children, and *Only One Neighborhood* (2007). Another of his books, *Red Are the Apples* (2001), was co-written with his wife, Cheryl Ryan Harshman. Marc Harshman, who lives in Wheeling, has also published two other collections of poetry. He says living in West Virginia is important to his work: "I am the kind of writer who needs to know where the woods are and that there are good friends and neighbors nearby."

Harshman taught for many years, first at the college level and then in grade schools. For a time he taught fifth and sixth grade at Sand Hill School in Marshall County, one of the last three-room schools in the state. He continues to visit schools and present workshops about writing.

Governor Earl Ray Tomblin named Harshman the state poet laureate on May 18, 2012, following the death of Irene McKinney, who had served in the post since 1994. Harshman is the ninth person to serve in that capacity since the position was established by the legislature in 1927.

JUDGES

Belinda Anderson

Author
Asbury, WV

Eva McGuire

Director, Craft Memorial Library
Bluefield, WV

Cheryl Harshman

Director,
Paul N. Elbin Library
West Liberty University
West Liberty, WV

June Robinson

Program Director, WVPASS
WV Dept. of Education and the Arts
Charleston, WV

Jay Cole

Chief of Staff
Office of the President
West Virginia University
Morgantown, WV

T.W. McNemar

Author
Stonewood, WV

Level I

Top Honors

Kennah Salmons – Crum Middle School

***Number the Stars* by Lois Lowry**

Dear Lois Lowry,

Have you ever consumed a book into your mind that just truly spoke a message way down deep in your soul? I know I have, and it just so happened to be your book, Number the Stars. As my teacher assigned the book, the sound of it didn't appeal to me. Throughout the first few pages, I realized that my assumption was incorrect. I came to fall in love with your phenomenal description and your superior way of making the reader feel as if they are in the story as well. Your book has inspired my life since I was just an adolescent girl. It has helped me through a lot of struggles and many challenging toils. Lois Lowry, you are my definite role model. The life lesson behind all of this is simply amazing. My life has taken a turn for the better after reading your book, Number the Stars. Every word crafts a diminutive place to rest inside of your fulfilled mind. From the bottom of my heart, I truthfully thank you for spending precious, countless hours writing this incredible book.

To start off with, your book has given me a new perspective on the view of such an amazing gift called life. One of the numerous lessons I acknowledged through this book was that a harsh and cruel world is possible and is at risk of taking place. In today's world, we never seem to consider all of the harmful things that we as human beings could encounter. To endure these excruciating tragedies, we have to cooperate, or work together, to battle through our hardships. Another lesson that was spoken in the book was that everybody comes across hardships and you have to tolerate cruel people, places, and things. Just like Ellen was approaching a struggle of being a Jew. She had to step up and do what she had to do to face Adolf Hitler and the Nazi's plan to seize all of the Jews and any other ethnic groups. Words cannot describe how far this book has guided me during the few years of my life.

Another lesson erudite was that you always need to appreciate what you have and take care of what you are given. This is one of the best lessons taught by your novel because it can squeeze its way into any type of circumstance. You never know when your life may take a turn for the worse, or when you may lose everything you once had in your possession. This is the main reason that you need to appreciate each and every modest thing you have. Just like Ellen and her family had to leave her house, friends, and personal items behind as they evacuated Copenhagen and transferred to Sweden. She absolutely had no other choice. Ellen and her family taught me a very valuable life lesson by their careful actions. I hope that everybody who reads Number the Stars gathers the same information as I did.

To continue with, your wonderful book taught me to assist others and always be there to catch them when they fall. As this lesson was preached throughout the book, tears came to my eyes because I could relate to the characters and their actions. In January of 2012, my beloved father was diagnosed with two types of

cancer. It was an excruciating tragedy that I never thought would happen. All of my friends caught me when I fell, and they always provided a shoulder to lean on. I thank my friends and most importantly, God, every day of my life for always being there for me. I realized through your book that I can relate to Ellen's situations and personality the most. My family can relate to the Johansen family. Without my friends there for me, I would have never made it through this issue. This made me realize how important it was to be there for family and friends. Once again, thank you for leading me through this horrifying situation.

Last but definitely not least, your book, Number the Stars, taught me that life don't always turn out like you plan it should. I would know this because like I mentioned earlier, my father was diagnosed with cancer and I had to go through some pretty rough times. In the story, Ellen was forced to transfer locations to Sweden because it was the only country free from Germany. This related to me because I had to relocate homes to be closer to my father's doctor. I didn't want to move, but I had no other choice. Through my experiences in life, I have come to realize that sometimes what seems like the worse things can actually be for the better. This lesson is a lesson for each and every person of any age or race to know and keep with them through struggles.

To sum it all up, Number the Stars helped me gain a new outlook on life itself. As I read the book, I began to catch myself illustrating the setting throughout my broad mind. This book always finds a way to leap into my thoughts whenever I approach any kind of struggle. Your description made me feel as if I were a character in the book with emotions that matched the events taking place in the story. I do have to admit it; at first I thought your book was just another book about the Holocaust, but boy was I wrong! Lois Lowry, thank you truly for taking the precious time to speak to my soul and brighten up my unfurnished mind.

From your reader,
Kennah Salmons

Honors

India Chahar – Mercer Elementary School

***Missing May* by Cynthia Rylant**

Dear Cynthia Rylant,

Your book, Missing May, was very helpful to me because a few months ago my great grandmother passed away. It was very tough and tragic for both my family and me. But, your book showed me how to stay strong, turn away but never forget, and that it is okay to let out your pain and feelings when someone dies.

First, Missing May showed me how to stay strong and keep my head up. Like Ob and Summer, at first it was not easy, but the more we realized that this was reality and that my Maw Maw was not coming back, we grew stronger. For example, my great grandmother was my Paw Paw's mom and it was VERY tough on him, but after he got used to her not being there, the easier the pain was for him. Also, one of the reasons the pain has gotten so much easier is because, we know that she is right beside us wherever we go and she loves us.

Next, your book helped me turn away but never forget her. I know that in Missing May, Ob and Summer did not get over May very quickly but they did after a while. When Ob and Summer met Cle-tus their healing escalated quicker than it would have before they met him, kind of like my family! Your book also showed me that whenever someone dies you just have to find the right shoulder to cry on (like Summer did with Ob).

Lastly, this book showed me it is okay to release your feelings and pain when someone dies. See, I was like Summer when my great grandmother died. I was quiet, sad, worried, and not very outgoing. However, after a while I got used to her not being there and Summer did too over time. Sometimes I would cry about it just like Summer did and like her, I became less sad and worried and happier. But *unlike* her, I became more outgoing!

In conclusion, your book, Missing May, was very helpful and in a way had the same story I did. Your book showed me to stay strong; turn away, but never forget; and that it is okay to let out your pain. Have *you* ever had anyone in your family die?

Sincerely,
India Chahar

Honors
Kaitlyn Steidley – Princeton Middle School
***Eight Keys* by Suzanne LaFleur**

Dear Suzanne LaFleur,

Your book, Eight Keys, helped me realize a few things about myself and the world. I learned that I can choose who I want to be, and who my friends are. I can be an independent girl that stands up for herself, and I can hang out with whoever I want to whether they embarrass me, or if they are the least popular person. Other people shouldn't influence my decisions.

Now I understand the world, too. I know why some people can be so rude and mean. If someone is being mean, it most likely means one of these two things.

- 1.) Their life at home can be really brutal. They can have a family that is hard on them, so they take out their anger on others.
- 2.) Somebody at school, work, or elsewhere, can be bullying them, and the victim of the bully does the same thing to someone else without realizing it.

I should not be embarrassed to talk in front of others just because I think people will make fun of me or think I am dumb. Others should not influence what I do. I should make my own decisions and my own mistakes.

That's some things I learned from reading your book, Eight Keys.

Sincerely,
Kaitlyn Steidley

Honorable Mention
Adele Gulley – Hurricane Middle School
***Charlotte's Web* by E.B. White**

Dear E.B. White,

Your book, Charlotte's Web, has made me see the world differently. It has made me feel many things are possible. With the spider making her webs it has made me realize that if I work hard and put in effort then you can do anything. Working hard can get you many good places in life. I have learned in my experience.

The book has also made me have a wild imagination. When all the animals are talking it makes me think what are all the people, plants, and animals thinking as we react in the world? It helped me see things normal then put them into the unordinary.

Charlotte's Web has made me think more of people. It has made me think of people's personality and character. From the way people talk to the way they act. I've noticed people's moods too. When someone is experiencing something it helps me know if someone is happy, sad, excited, or maybe tired.

Your story has had many effects on me. It has made my life viewed differently. With more personality and imagination. Your book has inspired me and changed my way of thinking about everyday things and rare.

Sincerely,
Adele Gulley

Honorable Mention
Autumn Gouveia – Weirton Heights Elementary School
***Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing* by Judy Blume**

Dear Judy Blume,

In your Fudge books, Fudge does silly, silly things. After reading Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing, I began to see that the things my four year old brother does are completely normal. Also, I can understand my little brother better. Some of the things that Fudge does were not so crazy to me. So then I saw he was not as weird as I thought he was.

Your book also changed me because I know how Peter feels when he moved. I have moved plenty of times. I also know how he feels when he has to make new friends. When I moved I had to make new friends, and it happened like this. When I first arrived at my mom's friend's house (that is where we lived when we moved here) I met her oldest daughter Lilli. She is now my best friend. Right now she is twelve, but when I moved here she was nine. I am two years younger than her so I was seven. We played on her Nintendo D.S.I. That is like a small video game. We made funny videos, took funny pictures, and became friends. It is almost like how Peter made friends.

Your book also made me change my attitude towards my brothers. We used to fight constantly. Now we play with each other all the time. We play funny games. We even made up one. It is where you have to get a purse or jump rope and pretend it is a lasso. Then you lasso each other. You also run around outside saying, "Mutt!"

you lasso each other. You also run around outside saying, "Mutt!"

As you can see, your book changed my brother and me. Now we are playing fun games and having fun together. Thank you for your help.

Your friend,
Autumn Gouveia

Honorable Mention

Bryce Mutterback – Princeton Middle School
***Gathering Blue* by Lois Lowry**

Dear Lois Lowry,

Your novel, *Gathering Blue*, taught me a lot about friendship. It also showed me how life has changed from living in villages to living in cities. Your book just grasped me in a way that I can't even explain. It was just so adventurous in a way, but it also touched my heart. Your book, in my opinion, should be a worldwide winner.

It taught me friendship and in a lot of ways that truly screamed friendship. For example, in fourth grade I had this friend that I thought would be my best friend for a long while, but then he turned against me. He started calling me names and would sometimes hurt me. Another time, we were playing flag tag and he grabbed my flag after the music stopped. I tried to tell him that was against the rules, but he just slapped me and called me a dummy. Another time, I had a friend that was the best. Then I started to act mean to him. Now I feel terrible because he moved to North Carolina and now I can't apologize to him. Friendship was a big part of your book and should be the main thing being taught.

Your book showed what life is like in villages compared to big cities like New York. I thought that village life would not have big court-house events like the song they sing once a year. Whenever I have gone to a small town village, I have not seen any of that stuff. I also wanted to see what kind of life was there. Your book changes my whole experience about villages.

In conclusion, your book taught me many things. It also showed me many differences. It taught me about friendship. It showed me how the big cities of today are different than the small villages of then. All in all, your book taught me and showed me so many different things.

Sincerely,
Bryce Mutterback

Honorable Mention

Name Withheld – Paden City Elementary
***Jeremy Lin: Rising Star* by James Buckley Jr.**

Dear James Buckley Jr.,

Thank you for writing *Jeremy Lin: Rising Star*. It inspired me so much. It inspired me to play basketball. It's my favorite book ever. It inspired me the most when he never stopped trying. It inspired me to never stop getting better. It also inspired me when he practiced every day. At first I was going to quit. I am glad I didn't now.
Letters About Literature 2013

Now in the games I am the starting point guard. If I wouldn't have read your book then I would've quit. It was fun to read your book.

Yours truly

Honorable Mention

Name Withheld – Crum Middle School
***The Cay* by Theodore Taylor**

Dear Theodore Taylor,

I don't think anyone else understands your book like I do! *The Cay* is such a good book. I LOVE IT! To me, it is like a piece of art. My class and I read it at the beginning of the school year. I was amazed of how spectacular it was when I finally closed your book, I cried. I saw how my reading teacher used your book to teach about racism, and how bad it was. We also learned from your book, people of different backgrounds are no different than me.

I concentrated on how Phillip was trying to ignore Timothy, because of his skin color and his mother's fear of people of different races. I think that was wrong, because in the end if it wasn't Timothy, Phillip would have never known how to survive. I learned a life lesson from your book, because my sister and I argue all the time. In the end it turns out she was just trying to help me. Then, I finally realized what life would be like without her, so we don't fight as much as we used to now. I found out the book and I have something in common too! Phillip is blind and my sister has diabetes, but in the book Phillip's blindness does not stop him from doing anything he wants to on the cay, and in real life my sister Whitney's disease does not stop her from doing anything!

Two years ago, my sister Whitney was diagnosed with a disease she will never be able to get rid of, and she will always need her family with her. On the island Phillip only had Timothy to guide him and he died so he was left with no one for 2 – 3 days. Timothy was always watching him every second of the day. He had to find his way around the island until someone came and found him! So we have two things in common it looks like. Without Timothy, Phillip wouldn't have survived, and without my sisters family she could not survive.

You must be wondering, how I consider my sister's illness the same as Phillip, because your book was more on the subject of Timothy and how he and Phillip got along to survive. I feel today our country is still fighting each other for the same reason. This is an illness to our way of life. If our country doesn't heal then diseases never will either. All of this fighting because of skin color and illness of different sorts makes me sad, because I want my sister to get better. I want her around when I get older.

As you can see Mr. Taylor, your book *The Cay* has touched my life in so many different ways. It has shown me how bad racism was in America and other parts in the world during the Civil War. In this story it was not Phillip that thought the skin color was so bad it was his mother that taught him to be that way! He was not born to hate people with different skin his mother was the one that raised him. Just think if you were that color would you think of yourself that way? I truly believe this book is a must read for all pre-teen students entering middle school, for the reason that it helped me learn

people with different skin his mother was the one that raised him. Just think if you were that color would you think of yourself that way? I truly believe this book is a must read for all pre-teen students entering middle school, for the reason that it helped me learn many different life lessons! Yea it may not be your reading level, but for everyone in middle school it is a great book. When I folded these pages back together from the first chapter I already wanted to read more. This is my second story I have written and typed about your book The Cay! The book had made me stop and think about many things going on in my life, and given me an insight to helping myself deal with the problems and becoming a better person.

Sincerely your writer

Honorable Mention

Name Withheld – Hamilton Middle School

***Moonlight on the Magic Flute* by Mary Pope Osborne**

Dear Mary Pope Osborne,

I have read every one of the Magic Tree House Books, and they have taught me things academically. Your books have also taught me that I do have a huge imagination and, also, know how to use the imagination I never knew I had! The book I chose to write you about is, Moonlight on the Magic Flute, because it is my favorite out of all the Magic Tree House book series.

My imagination has gone from nebulous to very never-ending. I remember turning the crisp pages of a brand-new, never been open, Magic Tree House book. I, also, remember getting so excited whenever I would see one of these superb books in a store that I hadn't read yet. However, I would be more excited if I were allowed to bring the book home and read it multiple times. My favorite part of all of the books is whenever Jack and Annie always start the adventure by running through the thick, leafy woods. If the magic tree house were there, they would climb up the ladder and greet their two magical friends, Teddy and Kathleen, who would give them the note from the magical and enchanted Merlin, to tell them their next mission.

I still, to this day, reread those magical and superb books so I can widen my imagination, be reminded of some of the information that might slip my mind, and also to tell others how amazing these books are. I do not know how many times I have read these amazing books, and I have even told others to read them, especially Moonlight on the Magic Flute.

I love reading these books because every time I read these books, it feels like the first time I read it. Also, at times, I get lost in the story. I will feel like I am running from twisters and hear the roaring of the twister getting closer and closer from Twisters on Tuesday, or I feel like I am playing the magical flute for bears, jaguars, and hyenas and just listening to the beautiful music that is coming from it from Moonlight and the Magic Flute. Another reason I love reading these books is because Jack and Annie treated me like their friend, they understood me, they taught me different

things, and introduced me to people like Teddy and Kathleen, who treat me like Jack and Annie do.

I would get so interested in the book and be waiting for the note from the magical and enchanted man that trusted Jack and Annie, Merlin. I just could not wait to find out what tools of wisdom and other tools that would help them on their adventure. When I was younger, I would invite my friends over, and we would "reenact" Jack and Annie's adventures, but we reenacted their adventure Moonlight on the Magic Flute the most. We would do it like a play and memorize the "lines" from the book, make the scenes "backdrop", and then we reenacted it.

Magic Tree House books are amazing and have taught me that I do have a giant imagination. Furthermore, they have taught me numerous facts on several different subjects that have helped me as I have continued my education in school. Moonlight on the Magic Flute has made me realize that the world needs to use its imagination more. I honestly realized in addition that I do have a giant imagination that was ready to burst out of me, this surprised me because whenever I would play pretend, before I read this series, sometimes it was hard for me to realize that things that were happening while playing were not real, but pretend. Now, I can imagine anything and everything. Moonlight on the Magic Flute and all the Magic Tree House books are very meaningful to me. If it weren't for these books, my imagination might not have been fulfilled to its full extent, and if I had not read this series, Moonlight on the Magic Flute, especially, I might not have found my true, inner, self.

Honorable Mention

Sydney Daniels – Hurricane Middle School

***Number the Stars* by Lois Lowry**

Dear Lois Lowry,

I was surprised to know about how harmful and daunting this world used to be. **You**, are an inspiration by showing me that just because I am a kid, that doesn't mean I can't fight back. You have showed the world that you should live each day like it's your last and fight for yourself, don't ever give up. Our world used to be as dreary as black clouds on a dark day. Number the Stars is an inspiration to me. You have stimulated others to transform our world and to stand up. You have helped kids to move on and forget the past and to live for the future. You showed that even though the world may be bloodcurdling we can live through it.

Your book Number the Stars searched throughout peoples' feeling to find the right spot to touch their hearts and make them feel what you felt. This was a heart-felt book in showing how much you have changed the world by telling young readers that it is possible achievable to stand up. Even though some people all over the world have different nationalities than you and I, really, the only thing that matters is how you are on the inside not the out. Being an illumination, such as you, has helped to make little children believe in themselves and make changes to the horrifying things brought into their lives.

You, Lois Lowry, have made me feel that it's not good to take

dren believe in themselves and make changes to the horrifying things brought into their lives.

You, Lois Lowry, have made me feel that it's not good to take things for granted, cause you never know when it'll be your last. If fighting back is what you have to do, then that is what you be obliged to do. You encouraged kids that no matter what, you stick up for what you believe in and not back down. Lois, you have shown others that it's okay to be different, it's almost better. You have made people have a different feeling in themselves making them believe that they can do it.

In all, Lois, you have helped people along and to not feel troubled and concealed because of what their nationalities are. You have showed to never feel scared and to stand up to protect against yourself. To sum up, your book Number the Stars helped others realize to live each day like it is your last. To add to all of this, you have made kids and parents feel more open about their nationalities and not timid to operate like themselves.

Sincerely,
Sydney Daniels

Honorable Mention

Teagan Kuzniar – South Middle School
***Island of the Blue Dolphins* by Scott O'Dell**

Dear Scott O'Dell,

A book that can make you happy, sad, laugh, cry and makes you jump right out of your seat. That's exactly what all of your books give. My favorite book in particular is Island of the Blue Dolphins. It made me think of real life. I already knew that I connected with Karana, but what else was I not picking up? About half of the way through the reading I realized that you and your book made me feel like when you're alone, you're not really alone. To better explain, in your novel, Karana, as you know, gets stuck on an island by herself after her brother is killed. Is she alone? No, she finds an unlikely friend, Rontu, a wolf.

After I finished Island of the Blue Dolphins, a chill went through my bones as I wondered what it would be like to be left on an island, by my own people. After that though, I realized the moral of the story, or at least what I perceived it to be. I thought that the moral of the story was, as I said before, when you're alone, you're not really alone. After this novel I looked at things in a different way. I realized although things may look bad, you can always make it through. Say you were the last person picked on your softball team for a drill, remember the best softball players in the world were probably in your position once. After the teams are picked, you do your best. You persevere, you excel, and you make it through. Next time you do that drill, everyone will want you on their team.

Before I read this book, I felt like I was alone. I felt like no one fully understood me or could relate to me. After I read this book, I felt confident, like I could talk to anyone about anything. I felt like...the real me. Funny, a book can do all of that.

Please keep writing and changing other kids lives, like mine,
Teagan Kuzniar

Level II

Top Honors

McKenzi Olonko – Princeton Middle School
***Witch and Wizard: The Gift* by James Patterson**

Dear James Patterson,

Your book Witch and Wizard: The Gift is a very wonderful book. It made me think about my life and how much I really have. I also realized that the world is a great place and could be full of pain, talent, and fun.

First, I want to say how your book showed me that the world has many little details that we take for granted. I now see that this world contains many things that I never realized I had. I have video games, I can go to school, and I have a house to live in comfort. Taking away that is like a bird without wings. Some people would not know what to do if everything was taken away from them, and that means people would freak out. Many people have talent too, that I never realized. I can play the flute, and many people can't even get a flute much less play one in a band. Some people have things or people blocking their talents. This was an extreme effect of the book on me.

Secondly, your book was important to me because I have talent and I can do much to help the world. Wisty uses her talent to save the world and have fun. At the concert when she plays and sings it encouraged everyone. That was amazing and I'm sure that many more people will fight against the New Order. Life is like that. If you see someone do something that is cool or interesting, you want to do it too. If I was Wisty or Whit then I would fight too. The New Order can happen in this world today, and I think we should stand up for what we believe in.

Lastly, your book was surprising to me because with all the action and then there was a little romance added into the mix. When Baryon came up on the stage, I thought Wisty would give into his love. He later would rather die than hurt Wisty. I started to feel bad for the traitor. In the action parts I wanted to jump right in and help the resistance. I got sucked into your book, and I didn't want to put it down. I also loved how Wisty would start catching fire, and how you described it. The whole book was one great and surprising book.

All in all, I loved your book and look forward to more. With this book I learned and found out about a lot that happens in life. Adding those little twists are what keep people reading too! The way the whole book was set up amazed me; I hope to see more books out like this!

Sincerely,
McKenzi Olonko

Honors

Cassandra Griffin – Spencer Middle School

***Freak the Mighty* by Rodman Philbrick**

Dear Rodman Philbrick,

Your book Freak the Mighty, has touched me in a way that no book has ever touched me before. At first I thought it was going to be your average, everyday book, but it turns out I was wrong. To me, this book taught a very valuable lesson, that everyone should think about. This lesson is taught in a book with a happy, heart-warming story, and a very tragic ending. Every once in a while, when reading this book, I just wanted to cry. The part that made me want to cry was when “Freak” died, and I heard about how much Maxwell cried. It was a real tragedy and I felt that Maxwell was never the same afterwards. And also another big crying moment was when the kids at school kept picking on Maxwell, by saying “Killer Kane, Killer Kane, had a kid who has no brain.”

The lesson that I got from this book is that, even if someone looks mean just because they are really big, doesn't mean that they are. Hey, for all we know, they might be the nicest person in the world. But we never know until we give them a chance. It takes me back to the time I first met my cousin Austin when they moved back from Michigan. I thought he was going to be really mean. But he really wasn't, he was just like Maxwell, and I was one of those kids who always backed away because I was scared. It turns out I had no reason to be scared, just like the kids in Maxwell's school, they had no reason to be scared either but they were anyways. Maybe they don't have any friends, and if not then you can be the one to say, “Hey, there's no reason to be scared of him, he's just really big, and tall, would you like to be treated this way? It probably breaks their heart, you don't know, maybe they get mistreated at home, and need someone to talk to. You may be the person to change their life forever.”

But this time it wasn't a smaller kid changing a bigger kid's life, but it was a bigger person changing a smaller handicapped kid's life. That leads me right back to my point; they might look mean but they could be the nicest person ever. It really touched my heart when somebody able to do things, helps someone who is not able to, to the best of their ability. Thanks to your book, I am no longer scared of people like that. I think of them all, being able to let their good side shine through, they all have one sometimes we just have to give them a chance to prove it. You know what they say, don't judge a book by its cover, well do the same with people, don't judge a person by their outsides or size, just wait and see what their insides have to offer. If you don't then you might just be missing out on a really good friend. Thank you for teaching me this valuable lesson. I probably would still be scared of them, but thanks to you and your book Freak the Mighty, I am not. This book is very important to me, when I am not carrying it with me, then I will be thinking about it. THANK YOU!!!!

Sincerely yours,
Cassandra Griffin

P.S. At first I didn't think that this book was going to be this amazing, but once again I was wrong. This was truly the best book that I have ever laid my hands on.

Honors

Emily Duncan – Hayes Middle School

***Little Brother* by Cory Doctorow**

Dear Mr. Doctorow,

May I call you Cory? Anyway, your book, Little Brother, has taken over my mind, raided my thoughts, and replaced them with the concepts of The Paradox of the False Positive, cryptography, and the Declaration of Independence. However, I have to be honest. In the beginning I was skeptical. The uncertainty of knowing whether I would enjoy the novel or not, drove me to have a thirst for exactly that: certainty. By the eighth chapter, I was hooked, and most defiantly *certain* of my opinions on the novel.

Little Brother taught me that when something as righteous as freedom is threatened, we should stand up for what is just and fight for a cause. This country was desired, founded, and developed for the sole purpose of *FREEDOM*. Religion, speech, RIGHTS! For that reason, no one, not even an elected government official can change that. For changing the meaning of something changes the name previously given to it. No longer would it be the *United States of America*, if there is no UNIFICATION!

As I read Little Brother, I found myself engulfed in the words, like I had never been before. Marcus Yallow's love for his country, or what it used to be, is enough to make a robot cry. I was often so wrapped up in the next rebellious act that I would read through the night until early the next morning. Don't get me wrong, I've always loved to read. Although, staying up until five o'clock in the morning was more than simply the love of reading a well-rounded novel.

This work was very inspirational to me. I kept a journal of things I'd learned throughout Little Brother, such as Alan Turing's inventions, “Yippies”, cryptography and my personal favorite, The Paradox of the False Positive, which I found MORE than interesting. It has inspired me to learn more on these subjects, adding to my journal.

Your work, Cory Doctorow, has changed my view of the world and of myself. I am only a thirteen year old girl; a straight-A student; a lover of literature. I know I will continue to take advantage of my rights and freedoms, just as the rest of the country. However, I have a much better understanding of what it means to have rights; what it means to be free.

“Governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, that whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or abolish it, and to institute new government, laying its foundation on such form, as to them shall seem most likely to affect their safety and happiness.”

Sincerely,
Emily Duncan

Honorable Mention

Name Withheld – Harper’s Ferry Middle School

***Outside Beauty* by Cynthia Kadohata**

Dear Cynthia Kadohata,

I just finished your book called Outside Beauty and I truly loved it. I thought it was an absolute masterpiece and I would recommend it to anyone. The way you made the characters come to life was just mind blowing. I can connect to this book through many ways. One of the ways is through the mother. You see my mother is not exactly mother of the year. In fact she is far from it. When I was five my parents got a divorce, my mother was terminated, and I have not seen her since. I am not allowed to have any contact with her until I am eighteen.

She was terminated because she does drugs, did not come to many of the court hearings, and she is a very irresponsible parent. In fact I don’t think she was ever ready to be a parent. Just like my mother the mother from Outside Beauty, Helen Kimura, is a very irresponsible parent. Helen had good intentions and loved her four daughters like every mother loves their children. But it is still no excuse for going out every night and coming back almost every other week with a different man.

I can also relate to the story through the sisters. For the way they look out for each other is how all families should act towards each other. Now I don’t have a sister but I do have a little brother and I know what it is like to take care of your younger siblings. I don’t have full responsibility or anything like that, but I am the one that usually takes the fall for everything. I also love how Marilyn, Shelby, and Lakey feel like they have to take care of their little sister Maddie. Just like if anything bad ever happened to my little brother I would feel like I would be the one that needs to take care of him. I have also learned to not just look at the outside beauty. I sincerely thank you for writing this book.

Yours truly

Honorable Mention

Name Withheld – Harpers Ferry Middle School

***The Harry Potter Series* by J.K. Rowling**

Dear J.K. Rowling,

Not many books can pull you away from your reality and completely distract you from the world surrounding you, and pull you into a book of wizards, ghouls, and magical tales. When I read the first chapter of the very first book, I could tell I was hooked. I kissed reality goodbye and settled in for my journey through Hogwarts and the magical area. Throughout my reading, my only concerns were the survival of my favorite characters and the taking down of Voldemort – not a single care was to be given about my everyday problems that I usually have to deal with. Even when I wasn’t reading, the only thing I could think about were the books many friendships and love triangles. Your books took me to a world far away from here, and made me believe in a world that I never would have. I’m pretty sure hundreds of thousands of kids also believe like I did, and were also heartbroken on their eleventh birthdays when they didn’t receive their owl – making them lack-

luster muggles.

One thing that I’ve learned from these books was that you never know who loves you. When Snape ended up being a good man in the end, I was honestly taken aback. I guess it shows that even when you’re feeling alone, someone does love you and care for you, even when you’re not aware of it. It is honestly a really good message to get out there, because it inspires so many people. It really helped me in the end because I realized that “hey, get up and stop moping around because somebody does care!” For that I’d like to say thank you.

My favorite character from the series has got to be Dobby, because of his hardworking and funny personality. One thing that inspired me about Dobby was that he was born enslaved as a house elf, but when he was grown up, he was living free without any cares. I think that is really encouraging because, even though slavery is no longer present, people still have bad living situations at home, and eventually they are freed.

It takes a very special book to make you double over laughing one minute, and just sit there and cry for the next ten minutes. It takes some people twenty years to find a book that affects their life so much that you never want to stop reading it, but lucky for me, I found mine at a very young age. *The Harry Potter Series* is probably the one book that everyone can relate to. It doesn’t matter what you do for fun or what sports or bands you like, *Harry Potter* is the rope that binds everyone together because everyone shares a mutual love for it. Thank you for creating such a wonderful series that affected my life in such a wonderful way.

Sincerely

Honorable Mention

Cody Prince – Crum Middle School

***Tears of a Tiger* by Sharon Draper**

Dear Sharon M. Draper,

Lately I have acquired an outlook on the future. In my opinion, I now have a premonition of the future. At least it now seems that way since I read your book Tears of a Tiger. I will explain how this book gave me an outlook on the future in these next four paragraphs.

First of all, it helps me to know not to do certain things. After considering the events that happened in the book, I know not to make the same mistakes. The incident in the book was caused by drinking irresponsibly; therefore I will not start drinking. I will also tell the people that does drink that it is important to drink responsibly.

Next, the book showed me an example of how I should choose my friends wisely. In this book Tears of a Tiger, a character dies. If he wasn’t with the people that he was with during the accident he would never have died. After reading this, it made me realize that I need to be cautious when I choose my friends.

Now, I am more aware of my surroundings. Everywhere I go I kind of look out. Anything random can happen, and I might not even be expecting it. Bad things happen in places people do not expect, it shows that things pay off just by being aware. So now

even be expecting it. Bad things happen in places people do not expect, it shows that things pay off just by being aware. So now when I do go anywhere I'm automatically watching my surroundings.

Last but not least, the book showed me not to be angry with anyone, or to be angry with myself. The main character in the book was mad at himself through the whole book. In the end of the book, he killed himself. If he would have just forgave himself everything would have worked out. So I know that if I ever get mad at myself, I can forgive myself.

Thank you for helping me with so many things. Your book Tears of a Tiger really helped me. It also helped a number of other people in this universe, and in my school.

Your reader,
Cody Prince

Honorable Mention

Name Withheld – Spencer Middle School
***More Than Anything Else* by Marie Bradby**

Dear Marie Bradby,

I really enjoyed reading your book More Than Anything Else. It was very inspiring to me. It led me to accomplishing one of my goals....Get a girlfriend. The reason I had this goal is because I hadn't had a girlfriend in almost 5 months. I think that if I get a girlfriend I would be happier.

I happen to be African-American. It makes me upset to think that some of my ancestors took that rude punishment....for being who they are. Also to think some of my friends' ancestors were the ones that were so cruel to them. I think it was ridiculous. If I were there I would be very angry with them. I have never read a book like more than anything else. It is somewhat depressing to read. I just read it to get a class project done.

The next thing I knew I was enlightened by what I was reading. Also, I picked it because my teacher read it to my class. If I knew what I was picking I would have picked it sooner. This book taught me so many things about following my dreams. I never thought I would encounter such a book...such a ...story that could change my life forever. It led me to try new things such as wilted lettuce, spaghetti tacos, and also the "RATTLER".

It is this new ride at Camden Park that spins 360 degrees, and simultaneously rocks 45 degrees sideways. Anyhow, if I ever encounter a new challenge I will face it head-on. If I ever encounter a fear I will...you know...get scared and cry. No one has ever inspired me to follow my dreams except Bruce Lee.

I also happen to be a foster kid. We don't get to do as much. We can't ride motorized vehicles; we have to wear a helmet and knee pads. We can't go out of state, and worst of all we can't ride in a plane. I mean, it took 4 months to get an answer, and do you know what that answer was? NO. So overall your book has taught me to follow all of my dreams and make them come true.

My final dream is to dance and sing. I want to be like Michael Jackson. He was an icon of his time, your time, and my time. I

know that if I want to be like him I have to be good. I have never sang in front of anyone, but I sure have danced in front of a lot of people. Those people changed my way view of dancing. They said I danced so good that people were throwing money at me. That was 2 years ago. I look back upon that day to this day. My name is Dayvon Daniels (soon to be Boggs) and your story has officially changed my life forever.

This is the most I have written in a long time so I am glad I have read your book. Thank you Marie Bradby.

Your friend

P.S. Have you ever had a dream that you want to accomplish? If you have please write back to me.

Honorable Mention

Elijah Akers – Winfield Middle School
***The Watsons Go To Birmingham* by Christopher Curtis**

Dear Christopher Curtis,

This book has affected me by teaching me how hard it was to be an African-American in the southern and little bit of the northern states. It taught me that most white people, but not all, but most disliked African-American people during segregation times. This book also taught me African-Americans are the same as me, not different.

I'm connected to the book because like the boy in the story I was made fun of a little in sixth grade for weight, and for silly things like I didn't wear Nike brand clothes or the expensive things. I also connect to the story because when I was the age of the character in the story I would play those games like with my dinosaurs too.

Before I read this book I thought segregation wasn't so bad, but after reading about the bombing it was scary to think someone would do that. I then realized that people are crazy enough to kill someone over their color. I think that is crazy. The book also opened my eyes to see that people don't care, they will harm you because of something as silly as their religion or color.

I realized after reading this book that I was a little like them but never to the extent that someone would kill me over it. This book really opened my eyes before I read this book I thought how peaceful the history of America was, but it was not. Now I know that it was peaceful in some parts, but in most segregation history it was not very good.

Sincerely,
Elijah Akers

Honorable Mention

Name Withheld – Pleasants County Middle School

***Wonderstruck* by Brian Selznick**

Dear Mr. Brian Selznick,

Your book, Wonderstruck, really touched me, seeing how a young, deaf boy with no parents could go so far, alone. The adventure of two handicapped children and their great accomplishments/discoveries were very inspirational to me.

Even though I have no disabilities, this book showed me that I can use my differences as an advantage. My differences could help me make friends or even unfold a mystery that my parents left behind.

Since reading this, I have taken my differences and used them to their best ability. This book has taught me that disabilities and differences are not always what people make them out to be. They are like hands, everyone has them and they have the ability to change the world.

With a new outlook

Honorable Mention

Kayla Jude – Crum Middle School

***Tears of a Tiger* by Sharon Draper**

Dear Sharon Draper,

My teacher Mrs. Evans assigned your book Tears of a Tiger to my class. As I began to read I started falling in love with it. When the car crashes happen, I saw how a thing was starting to connect to my own life. Last year, in the month of May, my dad and his friend were travelling to work. They were travelling to work. There was a dark color van parked sideways on the highway. Then, things got worse from there.

In your book, Andy, Rob, Tyrone was drinking besides B.J. To think Andy was driving the red, old Ford truck. However, in my case no one was drinking and driving, just everyone going to work at the coal mines. It was a dark morning, and the sun begun to rise. It was all pitch black like it was at midnight. But why did you write this wonderful book? Did this happen to you? With the car crash in my life, everything became so life changing for me. In my school we have to take this test called the West Test. Yeah, I did fail some of it because it happened in the middle of it. After, the West Test, my brother John and I had to drop out of school, for the rest of the year to take care of him. While my mom went out looking for work, I had to be the mother of the house. Cook, clean, does the dishes, it was a horrible time for the Jude family.

While my mother had to go and work three jobs just to provide food on the table, were dad has broke his back. In Tears of a Tiger, everyone was sad because of Rob's death. They had the news at the high school, filming the students, teachers, and everyone's actions.

After the accident in your book, and everyone started back to school. The people at the school put things on Andy's locker quoting, "Killer!", but in my life everyone was encouraging us, and helping us in every way. Andy, B.J., Tyrone had a hard time with

everyone making fun of them and blaming them for Rob's death maybe if they had been more supportive, the event would have been drastically different.

My father still comes to my basketball games and it makes me happy to see him in the stand when I play. In your book, Rob's parents are in the stands to cheer their team on every game. It touched the basketball team and coaches. It makes me feel blessed to have my dad around me that will be proud.

In conclusion, your book meant so much to me. So many similar things happened it's like milk and honey. I am so glad that I read Tears of a Tiger. I still have questions to be answered. Did this happen to you? Then why did you write it? But I fell in love with your book, and can't wait to read more of your work.

Your reader

Honorable Mention

Name Withheld – Harpers Ferry Middle School

***The Help* by Kathryn Stockett**

Dear Kathryn Stockett,

Sometimes you read a book about American history and how it was in the "good old days" or so they say. Your book The Help not only proves there was something wrong with the past, but to never let the day ever occur in the future. As I read your book, I started to befriend Skeeter Phelan because she knew it was wrong and wasn't going to conform to her generation. Today she would be known as stubborn, but being stubborn and sticking up for the right things are two completely different things. Your book got that point across. Your character Hilly was rude and prejudiced which made her like some of the people who go to my school. Sometimes I think about how I would have felt if Hilly did that to me.

The reason why the characters you have are important is because I feel like I have known them forever. Skeeter was really easy to connect with because she had the urge to stick for that she knew was wrong but never had a voice to change her society. Having a voice is one thing, but using it is another thing – like when people say they have the right to say whatever they want, but do they really mean that? I don't think they really do because eventually they will hurt their friends and themselves.

I want to thank you for writing this book because it touched me in a way that no book ever has. I appreciated how you told it through Skeeter and the Help's eyes. While reading I learned much more because it has history and the truth in it. I also learned that even though I'm an adolescent and am a different race, I still have the same voice and rights as everyone else. Thank you for what you taught me.

Sincerely

Honorable Mention
Name Withheld – Crum Middle School
***Venola in Love* by Cheryl Ware**

Dear Cheryl Ware,

I absolutely adore the book you wrote *Venola in Love*. I first discovered this book my seventh grade year, when I was searching around our school's library. I was instantly intrigued, and then I checked it out. I immediately fell in love with the book. After reading some chapters I soon realized that Venola and I actually had many things in common with each other. This is my journey throughout my remarkable discovery of the connection this book has with me, and how I soon realized it.

To start with, when I read this outstanding book, I soon came to realize I was near the same age as Venola in the book. Of course, the same issues that were occurring, I swear it's like the book was meant to find me. Although, my crush wasn't my brother's girlfriend's little brother, but I did however have a major crush. His name however will not be revealed! I would try to send him hints and like flirty signals, sort of like Venola did in the book. They did not work, but I never stopped trying to impress him. I also wrote down my deepest darkest secrets, although they weren't in a diary but on my laptop! This is one of the many things me and this book share with each other!

Another thing is, of course you know how Venola has many annoying and idiotic brothers and another sibling on the way. Well so do I, except the new sibling part. Well, actually I only have one brother but his friends are there all the time so I see them as for example: extra brothers! Anyway, Venola's brothers annoy her and aggravate her all the time and I knew exactly how she feels. My brothers are all the time trying to snoop in my business and push my buttons until I almost explode with anger. All through the time period of reading this book, I felt the exact same way that she did with her brothers and the rest of her family. I found it quite funny that this small detail was also one of the very important things that Venola and I share in common.

Also, Venola deals with everyday school drama. I know many people write about this also, but I too have these issues five dreaded days of the week. Although throughout the book despite all the ignorant drama, the bond between her and her friend still remains strong. I share the same bond with my best friends. I know without my friends, I couldn't manage or function even! That is another thing I really enjoyed about this book, it shows that even though you're crushing on a boy, your friends will always be there for you no matter what. I felt that this was another major thing that was included in this book that really connected with me.

Lastly, this excellent book has an amazing life lesson, which not all people are able to see. During Venola's school year many things good and bad happen to her. In the events of which that these things happen Venola still stays strong. However, not by herself of course, with the help of her loving and supportive friends that are always by her side. I know with everything that happens in my everyday life, if I didn't have my friends with me to help me my life would be completely different. That is what I think the life lesson of this book is, whatever life may throw at

you, your friends will always be there to love and support you no matter what.

To sum up my thoughts, I really honestly enjoyed and adored this amazing book. The character Venola and I have many things in common with each other. The first thing was we were around the same age when I read this book. Also, this was always a secret to my peers, but I also had a super crush on a guy that will not be named. Above many other things, I too have aggravating brothers, that I am also the youngest of us all. Other than the likeness of Venola and I, in this book I noticed one important life lesson that nobody else noticed. I feel the life lesson to this book is hidden only for the ones who pay attention. The life lesson I noticed was that even though school is filled with drama and petty things, no matter what your friends and family will always be there for you to cheer you up. Oh another thing I would like to mention that you are a West Virginia author and you even came to visit my school. I thought that was really amazing, because I really admire someone from West Virginia writing a book. Also, I want to be an author when I'm older because I love to read and write. All in all I want to say that this book was amazing and actually helped me through my seventh grade year, so thank you Cheryl Ware.

Your favorite reader

Honorable Mention
Name Withheld – Spencer Middle School
***Freak the Mighty* by Rodman Philbrick**

Dear Rodman Philbrick,

Freak the Mighty was just another book on the shelf in Mr. Roberts's room. Until, one incredibly long, boring day, Mr. Roberts gave us a worksheet which in my opinion was very confusing. Anyways, we finished that and had absolutely nothing else to do. That's when Mr. Roberts suggested that we could read a book and held out five of them. He read them loud, and clear in a very gentle voice. Star he begins. Hatchet, The Hunger Games, Where the Red Fern Grows, and Freak the Mighty.

The vote on which we should read was between the two books, Star and Freak the Mighty. The book cover of your book didn't really catch my attention. I thought it was just like every other book cover. I judged your book by its cover and I'm terribly sorry, because it was a wrong thing to do. What not only caught my but it also caught the rest of my class's attention is what you wrote on the back of your book.

At first, I truly didn't think your book would be as amazing as it is. That's when we got to reading it. It made me feel like I was reading a book about my cousins. I'm clearly aware of your story. I have read it so many times. In your book, there's a kid named Maxwell. Maxwell's dad, known as Killer Kane got put in jail for murdering his wife and the mother of his child. After that Maxwell was a quiet, slow learning child. Now my cousin's life wasn't exactly like that but it is very similar. You see, I have two little cousins. Their mom is named Rosalina and her kids are named Blake and Chandler. Her kids' dad is named Daniel. Daniel was an alcoholic. He would come home drunk every single night.

an alcoholic. He would come home drunk every single night. Mostly every night that Rosalina and Daniel would get into a fight about him being drunk all the time, she would come up to our house. Daniel really just didn't see how much it hurt Rosalina and her two kids.

Blake was the fierce child who didn't want anything to do with Chandler. He had this bond with his dad though. They were very close. Daniel would take him fishing and they'd go bowling or skating, or anywhere else he'd seem to like going. Chandler is a very quiet child with slow learning abilities. In your book, as Freak lives in the world of King Arthur, Chandler lives in the world of the Care Bears, which was very cute considering the fact that he is six. He believes there is good in everyone. He believes anyone and everyone is his best friend, even strangers. He's a caring type. He also did not believe in violence, therefore whenever his dad or his brother would beat or abuse him, he would just sit there not hitting back, crying and taking it. He would just let the tears come out not even caring.

One cold winter night, Daniel came home drunk. You could smell the Alcohol on him as soon as he stepped foot in the door. He went over to his wife who was sewing up Chandler's shirt that his brother ripped because he couldn't have it. Daniel walked over to Rosalina, looked her in the eyes and told her how pathetic and worthless she was and asked where his kids were. She was too afraid to leave him so she let him talk to her the way he did. He carefully leaned over Blake's bed and kissed his forehead. Then he tucked him in and told him he loved him more than anything in the world. As Daniel went to walk out the door, Chandler woke up and asked "can I have a kiss, daddy, do you not love me?" "No", Daniel replied. That broke his little heart into pieces. "But I love you, daddy", Chandler cried. That's when Rosalina heard screaming and ran to the back bedroom. When she got there, she could not believe her eyes. The shock going through her body and tears filling up in her eyes, when she saw Daniel choking Chandler. She screamed, hit him, punched him until he finally let go. That's when Daniel started choking Rosalina. Chandler couldn't do anything because he almost seemed paralyzed. When Blake woke up, he was old enough to know what was going on. He rushed to the phone and called the police. By the time the police got there, it was almost too late but luckily the ambulance was able to save her. The boys stayed with Rosalina's mom and dad. Daniel went to jail and Rosalina spent the night in the hospital. Just like in your book, Daniel got put on parole. She had a restraining order against Daniel. She did not want him near her kids. When she came home that night, Daniel knew it and it would be his chance to take his kids back. That night as Rosalina was asleep, Daniel snuck in her room and put tape around Chandler's mouth and took him, just him, and left. That morning, she woke up realizing her other boy was gone. She called the police and they followed his trail because he was too drunk to notice that he left four wheeler tracks. When they got there, it was almost too late. Chandler was being choked again. The police put him back in handcuffs and took him to prison for more than six years. After that Chandler was so shy and so embarrassed he wouldn't talk to anyone. Finally when this girl moved to his school, she had a disorder and it taught him that it was okay to be different. Blake and Chandler now get along better and Rosalina is doing better and

being careful due to the metal plates in her head. My point is your book made me feel like there's other kids out there that go through this. It made me feel like my family wasn't all that different from others. Now, because of your book, I learned not to judge things by their appearances. I now take up for everyone that gets made fun of. I talk to shy kids and disordered people. I want to be like Freak and make a difference. I have read your book over ten times and every time someone gets made fun of I tell them to read Freak the Mighty. You truly are an inspiration. Thank you so much. You have no idea how much your book means to me.

Sincerely yours

Honorable Mention

Samantha Ravita – Spencer Middle School

***The Allegra Biscotti Collection* by Olivia Bennett**

Dear Olivia Bennett,

Your book The Allegra Biscotti Collection was an amazing book. It may have been "just another book on the shelf" to other people but it was more than a book to me. It wasn't that random book with a cute cover, I mean it was at first, but now it is not. When I read your book it made me smile. When I read it brought back long memories from when I was like Emma. Not only was I hurt, I had no friends. Everybody wanted to side up with people they knew longer. I had just came to the school, I had made more enemies than friends. She was pretty much all I had, other than my family. My mom tried to help, but it was no use. Ever since that girl came up to us my friend and I had lost our friendship. It is actually pretty sad.

See it all started in fifth grade. My friend and I had gone to breakfast one day and we were eating. Some girl comes to us and starts talking to my friend. My friend introduced me and stuff and all the sudden it seemed like I disappeared. Like "boom" gone. I had to sit at the end of the table while everyone else laughed, smiled, and carried on. My Friend had started talking about the good times me and her have had. Then the girl gave me dirty looks and I felt out of this world like nobody knew me. That was just the start. My Friend and I became more and more separated. I was hated on because I was jealous that my best friend was going off with this girl and I was all alone.

Emma and I are/were going through the same things. My friend and I talked about everything with each other. I could tell him anything and he told me everything. So I told him about what was going on and he just said well let's make a plan. We decided to make one of them jealous, and the only person we made jealous was me. They didn't even talk to me anymore; they acted like I was completely invisible. It was the worst and the funny thing is just like Ivana and the bees, the girl had her little group. See I had volleyball, volleyball is my life and is like all I have and when it is over I have nothing, literally nothing. I mean I have a life, but most of it is filled with: volleyball, school, and the thing I don't like are the drama starters that I have to deal with because of my social life.

life.

Your book helped me through a lot more than you could imagine, and it might have happened to you because it's your book, or you could have just thought of it, I don't know because it's your book. You made me really happy at times because the things Emma did. Right now the girl is in my class. Yet we are friends, she is always saying stuff behind my back because I hang out with my friend. You know what I do, I sit there and call her pretty and I tell her that her shirt is beautiful. She never complements me back so I mean that's that I guess. Just like in your book, Emma called all of the "bees" in Ivana and the bees, pretty, like I did to the girl. My friend always wants me to hang out with them, but as Emma and I both know, I will just get pushed back to the edge to be all alone. I now have other friends, but occasionally I hang out with them, but not the girl, defiantly not the girl.

Sincerely yours,
Samantha Ravita

Honorable Mention
Savannah Smith – Bluefield Middle School
Maximum Ride: The Angel Experiment
by James Patterson

Dear James Patterson,

I am 13 years old, in the seventh grade, and I am currently having trouble balancing out my life. I am going through some emotional troubles in my life and a few physical ones, so life is pretty difficult, but I always attempt to try and find time to escape from reality and into one of your books. *Maximum Ride: The Angel Experiment*, is a particular favorite of mine. I know that even though my life is coming through a bumpy patch right now, it is nothing compared to hers.

I never understood why Angel was always so mysterious. She's just a little kid, but she seems like she has life handed to her. In a way, she has it a lot easier than Max, and even me, at her age. I had to worry about living up to my older sister's perfection, and trying to be honest and not get spanked when I was her age. She doesn't have to live up to an image, because she is so perfect. Max had to worry about being put through tests and actually making sure Angel didn't have to relive some of Max's life. Max had to watch out for Angel and herself, so Angel had it pretty good.

When I first read the book, and saw that she got a new power halfway through the book, I won't lie; I threw the book at the wall and walked out of the room. I spent the next hour destroying my room before I came back to read. She had something as amazing as the ability to breathe underwater handed to her, when in the life I lead, I can't get a few dollars without working my legs off. It all seemed so unfair that I began realizing that that's life. I can either get mad at a fictional character or I can move on. The book then, after that realization, smacked the wall again, and my room faced my near-eternal wrath once more.

My granddad is dying. I accepted this as soon as my mom told me, "He's getting worse." I am a girl, so sometimes I can be temperamental, but this time my face was a mask. On the outside I

was emotionless, but I was slowly dying on the inside – alongside my grandfather. Every time mom told me bad news, a little chunk would fade away. Like I said earlier, I read your books to escape reality and try to find solace in the adventures of *Maximum Ride*, *Daniel X*, or *Whit and Wisty Allgood*, but this time I went to the very beginning of my love for your books. I went back to *The Angel Experiment*. I was immersed, missing dinner, ignoring the world around me, in your book. My life and Max's life seemed so similar, because she had lost so much and I am about to lose a man I both love and respect, and my sanity might soon follow.

Your book made me stop letting my emotions take over, so I could think rationally and stop falling into a pit. I thought about Max, how she has all the odds stacked against her, but she is prevailing, Iggy, who lost more than his sight the day of his experiment, and Poor Nudge, who only wants to live life as a normal girl with normal parents. I think, and then, I know. I can be as strong as Max. I can be strong because I need to be, my sister needs me to be, and I *want* to be. I don't want to be weak, broken, on the brink of drugs, violence, and depression just because my life is going through a rough patch. I want to be strong and there for my mom, since it is her Daddy that is going, and I want to be strong for me, so that I know that I can help myself, too. Your book, all your books, are helping me get through this, and for that, I thank you. You have helped me in so many ways, just by writing. So do me a favor and keep writing and helping some more.

Sincerely,
Savannah Smith

Honorable Mention
William Ward – Spencer Middle School
***A Child Called It* by Dave Pelzer**

Dear Dave Pelzer,

I have always thought, when I was playing video games or listening to music and my mom would yell at me that I had to come do this or do that. That I had the worst parents in the world. But, when I read your book *A Child Called It*, it hit me that I did not have the world's worst parents. When I first started to read your book "Good Times", I thought that this wasn't that bad. But when I got to "Bad Boy", and when your mom would smack your head up against the mirror and keep saying you were a bad boy when you had done nothing. That would make me sad but mad at the same time.

When I got to "The Fight for Food", I knew something was going to go wrong from the title of the chapter. When I got to the part where you were living off the food you stole from school. I thought that you might actually make it. But then the kids caught you. The first thing that I thought when that happened is that your mom is never going to feed you again besides school lunch. That was not going to keep you alive for long. But then you get the idea that you were going to steal from the store down the street. I thought that that was too risky. But then I thought that if I were in your position I would do the exact same thing.

While reading your book it changed my actions toward my par-

ents. I started to do more things around the house like, cleaning, yard work, and any other cleaning. I also started to be nicer to my brother. The only way that I would have even found your book was from my awesome reading teacher. Your book also got me into reading again. I had stopped reading for a long time since I haven't found any other books I could get into. Thanks to your book that also stopped.

At times in your story I got real emotional like I was going to cry. In other parts of your story I got angry thinking what kind of lunatic would do this to their child, and when you had done nothing wrong and your mom would hit you that made me really mad. A couple parts in your book I almost threw up, because you had to eat your own puke. When your dad started to not come home and it was just you and your mom I started thinking that she was going to kill you. But you always had some way to stay alive that is what amazed me the most. Also how you would never give up. I still can't see how you stayed alive; it always seemed like any second she was going to kill you.

When I was getting near the end of the book, when your mom started to be nice to you I thought that was weird. Then, I knew what was going on. Your mom was setting you up, making you feel like she loved you. She was just waiting till that woman came and asked you if she abused you. So she forced you to say no making you think that she was going to still love you. But she didn't still love you she yelled at you right after the lady left.

When I got to the end of your book I felt sad for you. When your dad left you with that crazy woman, when you got back to your house and your mom said that she was yours I thought that you were going to be murdered. I thought that your dad should of went to court and tried to get you from that lunatic. But I guess I have to see what happens in your next book.

I can't wait till I get to read your next book.

Sincerely yours,
William Ward

Level III

Top Honors Althea Wheaton – The Linsly School *Looking for Alaska* by John Green

Dear Mr. Green,

I find myself, after reading your book *Looking for Alaska*, thinking a lot about famous last words. What did Mr. Bolivar *really* mean by "a Great Perhaps"? Did Thomas Edison really see something that was "beautiful over there"? Just like Pudge, I find myself wondering where there is, and what my Great Perhaps will be like. I've also envisioned what my parting remarks might be. A long time ago, I imagine I would hope for them to be something along the lines of "I have done all that I was meant to do. Now I am leaving, but who knows, maybe I'll come back as a butterfly and see you again someday." It's rather long, but I love the way it

sounds, and it used to describe me perfectly. But lately I've been favoring something short and simple: "Now, I am free." Needless to say I am sick of this world. I have found myself lost in a labyrinth. Whether it is the same labyrinth as Alaska Young or not, I could not tell you.

Since I was a little girl, I have never been sure of anything. From the simplest things, like what I wanted to be when I was a little girl, to more complex ideas such as why my older sister moved out when she turned fifteen and I was only four. My parents never gave me a straight answer about that for ten years. I loved her and looked up to her more than anyone in the world, but it turned out she never quite felt the same about me. One day, when I was about eleven, I found a box of things my mother had kept from the hospital the day I was born. In it, I found written on a napkin in sloppy 11-year-old handwriting, a letter to my mother saying something about not being the only girl anymore and how she could never love me because I replaced her. At the bottom of the napkin, my sister signed her name and a small face drawn with tears. I remember collapsing to the floor and crying. Finally, I understood why I woke up from a nap to my parents telling me my sister was gone and wasn't coming back. It wasn't because she didn't like her high school or because she wanted to get to know her real father (my father being her stepfather). It was because of me. I scared off the only sister I had. So I started to ride horses, like she had, and I began to sit in her room going through boxes of things she had left behind in her haste. I found an old CD binder. In it was two CD's she had made, and a folded envelope covered in her handwriting. It was dated the year she left. "My daddy hates me. He has a new baby girl now. I want to leave. I don't love her. Why is she here?" filled the page in small pink and green ink. Every inch of the page was covered. There were spots where the ink had run together from her tears. She blamed me for my dad not loving her. So there's my labyrinth. After she left, I didn't see her for another five years, and then another three. She faded out of my life, and I thought I had finally stopped blaming myself for her leaving and finally gotten to the point where I was happy.

It was around fourth grade when I discovered words. The way they fit together so perfectly in a sentence, then sentences forming into paragraphs, and paragraphs forming stories. I wasn't sure of much, but I was sure that I was going to be a writer. Countless books showed me just how great I could be. So I began seeking my great perhaps. The summer after eighth grade, I left for boarding school. It was eight hours away from my small rural town in Kentucky, in a big city with industrialism all along the Ohio River. Going there, I felt exactly the same as Pudge had. I felt like I was finally leaving behind the small minded people who tormented me for being different at home. When I got there, I couldn't wait for my parents to leave so I could make friends and get started on my great new life. Of course, optimism never really works out for me. Like Alaska says, getting out isn't that easy. My vision was similar to Pudge's: some greater place where I would have friends and maybe even be considered cool. Nothing was how I had imagined it. People were so different here. Is this how people really are? Are they really so...confident? So cruel, even to their friends? Once school started, things were even tougher. Coming from a public school on scholarship and financial aid, going to a private school where your roommates think "fifty bucks

is no big deal,” when you’re lucky to get ten. I hated them for being so ignorant and stuck up. How was I supposed to seek my Great Perhaps when I was surrounded by idiots? I realized I was changing. In order to avoid social criticism I blended in with the mass of people, bottling up every emotion I ever had. My escape was my writing or reading books and becoming someone else for a while. I wanted to get lost in someone else’s labyrinth. I put on the same mask as Alaska Young. I pretended to be that happy girl who just wants to have fun and do great things, the one who walks with her head held high. I wasn’t though. Inside, I was dying from the rocks thrown at me by my so called friends who were, in their minds, joking. Even from my own family, I had pressure put upon me. To get into my school in the first place, my grades had to be perfect. In order to stay, they had to be more perfect and now I had to involve myself in activities that filled my schedule to the brim. Stressed was an understatement. A 94 was a terrible grade; a 96 was a “you could have done better”; a 99 became a “why didn’t you know the answer to that *one* question?” People told me I was doing fine in school. My teachers laughed when I said it wasn’t good enough. The Alaska in me pulverized my self-esteem. I didn’t want my father, who I loved to death, to have to pay any extra money for my being not good enough. I was already the reason his daughter moved away, and hated him for the longest time.

Some days it was really hard though. I began thinking of ways to escape the labyrinth I was lost in. Since I was born, I suffered from insomnia, so the writer in me would lay awake and tell stories to myself in my head. I started imagining stories of some greater world that could never exist except in my head. Maybe if I just...but no, I couldn’t do that. But I wanted to. I wanted to escape and somehow reach that better place. Maybe Edison was right, maybe there is something beautiful over there. But how was I supposed to get there!? It started with little things: wanting to quit boarding school and go back home where life was easier and school didn’t fill my every waking hour, leaving me no time to read or write and escape from the storm of emotions brewing inside me. But that wouldn’t do, because then how would I ever reach my Great Perhaps, that nagging what if? Like Alaska, I found that physical pain was easier to deal with than mental or emotional pain. I understood why she drank so much, and it made sense to me when she said: “Y’all smoke to enjoy it. I smoke to die.” Of course, I was never quite that extreme. I wasn’t brave enough. When I couldn’t think something out, I would press my palms on my temples until they hurt. Or when I couldn’t hold back tears when other people were around, I pulled my hair as hard as I could until that was all I could focus on and the tears in my eyes went away. It didn’t always work though. Eventually, my little methods stopped working altogether. The storm got held in even tighter. I couldn’t let my pesky emotions get in the way of somehow reaching that impossible destination I dreamt up in my mind. My outward mask to keep others from seeing the storm became an inward wall. Days got harder, and I would have breakdowns from all the pressure coming from all around me. I would smile all day long until I got to my room where I could cry in silence and solitude. When sophomore year became increasingly time consuming, the storm became a hurricane. On bad days, I went to my room and sat down on my closet floor and turned off the lights. I allotted myself exactly eight seconds to cry and sob, but I wouldn’t dare make a noise. After my eight seconds, I told myself to take a deep breath and stop crying, I had work to do. I told myself crying was weak, and I should be stronger. How could I ever achieve

my Great Perhaps if I kept letting a little stress get to me? It became harder and harder to take that breath and turn on the lights, but I kept doing it. I had to. Sure, I had my Takumi, a best friend who always knew what to say to make me feel better, but she was an eight hour drive away and too busy with her oh-so-amazing new boyfriend to talk to me most nights.

By the time Thanksgiving Break rolled around, I was about done. All I wanted to do when I got home was read and escape even the simple, easy life of Science Hill, Kentucky. I didn’t have the strength for it. The first thing I did when I got home was demand a trip to the library, and my amazing father took me willingly because he knows how much reading lifts my spirits. It was there that I picked up an average looking book with a strange title. Looking for Alaska was printed in white letters on the front. What a strange name for a book. Alaska is huge and on a map; it can’t be that hard to find. Curious as always, I opened the front cover and read the excerpt you titled *The Prank*. It seemed interesting enough, and I certainly liked the writing style, so I checked it out along with a few other books. I sat down to read that night, in calm ecstasy, about to escape into another realm and get away from my life. I was wrong. This book was like nothing I had ever read before. I couldn’t put it down. I stayed up until four in the morning reading that book. Why? It was because I realized that I wasn’t escaping into someone else. I was escaping the mask I had put up and finally finding myself in Alaska, and even Pudge, The Colonel, and Takumi some. Under different circumstances, Alaska Young and I had come to the same conclusion: that this life is too heavy a burden, the labyrinth is forever, and the only way out of it was straight and fast. When I realized what happened to her in the book, I wasn’t sad like I should have been. I felt almost at peace. It felt as if some weight had been lifted, and finally Alaska had escaped her labyrinth. Everything was OK because maybe I could escape too, and I would have been satisfied if the book ended there. But I couldn’t put it down, so I read on. Eventually Pudge, The Colonel, and Takumi’s sorrow sunk in, and I realized just how much she left behind. Her entire life was gone. Her Great Perhaps diminished in one drunken moment when she just wanted out. That terrified me. The fact that I could be so sick and tired of life that it could all just end, and I would have no Great Perhaps. So I have decided, for the sake of what I would leave behind, that I will remain in this labyrinth until I find a better way out. If you think about it, I did, in a way, escape the labyrinth. I don’t feel as lost as I used to. It’s as if, what happened to Alaska narrowed down my choices on which path I’ll be taking next. I may not know the way I want to go, but I certainly know the way I don’t want to go. I’ll always remember you, Alaska Young, and everything you could have been, and for that I am eternally grateful.

Truly and sincerely yours and your word’s,
Althea Wheaton

Honors

Name Withheld – South Charleston High School
***Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone* by J.K. Rowling**

Dear J.K. Rowling,

Who would’ve known magic can be real in your heart and mind? That you could create another world full of it? I’ve never believed in magic; I thought it was childish to think it could possibly be real. I

thought to myself, *No one really believes in this junk, right?* Then I picked up Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone and realized that the characters had a spark about them (literally), an internal magic of their own to dig into. You helped Harry dive into this and explore so he could see it for himself.

This book changed my life, to be quite honest. Actually, books are always more than just pages bound together to me; they are like a dimension to another universe. I realized that Harry Potter was much like me in ways I hadn't thought of before. You created an orphan living with his aunt and uncle. Although my parents are very much alive, I lived with my grandparents for a time. These people made him feel unwanted and worthless; they constantly ragged on him and neglected him. He felt like he had no one to turn to, no one to relate to. I feel the same way all the time, but I am not neglected, and I don't feel even a bit of hatred towards my grandparents. I feel alone in general. This book gave me a place to escape to for a few chapters a night, a place to be happy. I never thought I could find such a dynamic character to relate to.

I realize that you were depressed once, and sometimes I wonder if Harry was as well, living with people who didn't want him. Sometimes I wonder if I am the same way. Your book showed me that things do get better with time. I know a huge, hairy wizard won't be knocking down my door to tell me about my magical blood anytime soon, but I can dream. If I don't face reality and allow things to better and heal, they won't. Ever since my hand brushed over your book in the library, my life has been better; I just didn't think much of it until now.

Going through life, I must accept the past, present and future and move on. Even if the ride's bumpy along the way, I have to keep my head up and be strong. I wish more people will realize this and do the same. Harry Potter did; he set an example for us. He accepted his terrible past, accepted the present of being a famous wizard, accepted his future of ridding Voldemort. He knew that he needed to believe in himself and his abilities to conquer his world's evil. You cannot change your fate or destiny, no matter how much you want to. This isn't a movie or a book; this is life as we know it.

Since Harry has lived with his aunt and uncle, they have blamed him for every "slip up" that occurs in the family. They know he's a wizard though he does not. Harry wanted to believe he is just a normal boy when he can never be so. This shows that we must face whatever obstacles are thrown at us in order to learn. Otherwise, we won't. A change of lifestyles is one obstacle in Harry's life in the book; there are, of course, more things to come. Harry's character shows you that magic can exist in you if you believe in yourself. Nothing is truly impossible, no matter how much we think something is. These are the life lessons your book has offered to me throughout the entire story, and I loved every second of it.

Sincerely

Honors

Name Withheld – South Charleston High School
***The Diary of Anne Frank* by Anne Frank**

Dear Anne Frank,

It's amazing how the simplest things in life can change someone's whole course of thinking. This exact change of nature took place in

me after reading the chronicles of your life The Diary of Anne Frank. As I continuously got lost in the trials of your everyday existence I became uncontrollably intrigued and attached to your strength, vitality, and honesty. I was indescribably drawn to your horrifying ordeal as a dehydrated horse is drawn to a cool, refreshing water source. You have taught me lessons that bring me wisdom and peace. You've taught me to cherish each day you are given, for life is a wondrous gift from God. I also have learned that optimism is at times simply the best medicine to have and that being truly free is but a state of mind.

Live each day as your last. This is a commonly used expression that you defined many times to me through your actions. As you and your family bravely stood your ground and fought every day for your freedom, you put this very expression to the test. You see it's very easy to "live each day as your last" if you are unrestricted and able to enjoy life's beauty, but somehow you astonishingly achieved this feat while locked up in a crowded annex. Each day you appreciated the time you had to live, no matter how short it may have been. Although you wrote of your crippling fears in your diary "Kitty", you didn't let those fears stop you from enjoying each day that was mercifully given to you. Oh, how ungrateful I feel when I look over my life and think of how many times I've complained about the most ridiculous and trivial things while you were forced to endure such tragedies with a smile on your face! But, I now realize that my being ungrateful was simply a sign of ignorance. I was ignorant to the fact that life and all it holds is the most phenomenal gift given to the world, but once this lesson is learnt it is one that can never be forgotten.

We've all had days in our lives where it just seemed like the whole world was frowning on our shoulders. During these types of days we would be truly content to just sit in bed all day and wallow in our miseries. Just like everyone else, I have felt victim to such horrid moods and as a teenage girl it's usually expected of me. Although you, Anne, were extremely strong beyond belief you still had your days where all you wanted to do was stick your head under your pillow and just melt away. The only difference between you and me was that instead of letting this surge of bad moods overwhelm you, you simply just took it all with a grain of salt and stood to face the day. To be honest, this surprised me. Here I was expecting to hear a sob story about a Holocaust victim, but instead I got a great lesson. Now, whenever I wake up on the wrong side of the bed, I just think about you. I think about you even though you had all odds against you and your family, you still had a positive outlook on life. I admire how even though you stood in the face of evil, you still refused to believe that there were poisonous spirits in the world. Because of the trail blazing example that you've left me, I've now vowed to make a conscious effort to be a ray of sun light to everyone I meet and to never give up on hoping that there is still good in all people, because you've taught me that there is.

There are many people all over the world who are imprisoned. You were one of them. And although you were physically imprisoned, you never let anyone put chains around your mind. I think that it's marvelous how even though you went through such hard times that would completely stifle most individual's creativity, you began to expand your imagination to a larger extent than ever before. Without even being able to look at the beautiful night sky full of stars, you somehow always maintained your originality. This teaches me that if you want to truly have ultimate freedom, it begins and ends with your state of mind. If I feel that I can accomplish anything no matter what my

mind. If I feel that I can accomplish anything no matter what my circumstances may hold, then I have just freed myself from the whips and chains of my own thoughts.

Among all things I must say that I really do respect and appreciate you. Even though you died decades before my time, while I was reading your diary I felt like you were one of my best friends. I was also extremely amused to see that even though our time periods, and technologies are vastly different we still somehow have so much in common. It really is a relief to know that I am not the only girl in the world that has ever gone through the problems that I go through, although it may feel that way at times. The contents of your book spoke deeply to the pre-teen girl in my heart, still trying to find her purpose in this world of ours. You have opened doors and answered questions in my mind that only you could open, and only you could ever answer. Thank you for silently replying to the thoughts that I may have to frightened to ask aloud. Even though it's been years since I read your diary, you have educated me in things that I still continue to use as my own moral system and always will and for this I sincerely thank you immensely.

Sincerely

Honorable Mention
Abby Miller – The Linsly School
***Stargirl* by Jerry Spinelli**

Dear Jerry Spinelli,

As a child, I have grown up imitating my closest friends and following my parent's path hoping to become just like them. As I developed into a teenager, it became uncertain the kind of person I wanted to be. I was afraid of extending beyond my comfort zone. For following others was the only familiar thing to me, and I became afraid of hearing my own opinions that may be different than my peers. I was influenced by my role models, and followed only the most recent trends. I disguised myself into a person that I was not, and eventually, there came a point in my life where I couldn't even recognize myself masked behind the imitations of others. Stargirl helped me discover who I really was and allowed me to discovery real passion which was different than anyone else I knew. Your book showed me that it was okay to be different.

It was my 7th grade year, and I needed a book to read for my school book report. I came across a bright blue book with a star and underneath that, a girl. Because I was in a hurry, I quickly became intrigued by the cover and decided to buy the book. I began to read it on my way home and in three days, I had finished Stargirl. After finishing it, I was overcome with inspiration, and I decided that I wanted to be more like Stargirl. I wanted to make an impression on people's lives. But where do I start?

I first felt a message that Stargirl deeply conveyed throughout your book; don't judge a book by its cover. Upon entering Mica High School, Stargirl is seen as an outcast because of her choice of clothing and her pet rat, Cinnamon. Immediately, the students begin to judge her and label her as "weird". I felt sympathetic towards Stargirl because the people she was surrounded with were blind. They only saw things on the surface, and having never spoken a word to her, formed

stereotypical opinions about her. This made me realize it is impossible to judge someone before knowing who they truly are.

Perhaps the most minor detail in the book was what inspired me the most, Stargirl playing ukulele during lunch and singing Happy Birthday to strangers in her school. Three months after finishing Stargirl, I asked for a ukulele for Christmas. The idea of singing to strangers, for the sheer joy of making them happy, was what I decided I wanted to do. From February to May, I taught myself how to play the ukulele and within four months of practice, I began singing with my ukulele at local coffee shops. Shortly after I made YouTube videos of my performances, I began to get offers to open for bands and eventually, perform my own shows. I went from 15 people in a coffee shop, to performing in a sold out capitol theater of 2,000 and my most recent accomplishment, performing in a wedding in Hawaii. I don't think I would have followed my dreams or even recognized my passion, if it weren't for reading your book Stargirl.

Thank you for allowing me to see beneath the surface and for helping me discover the person I am today. Your writing made me realize that even in today's society there are people that are different and before judging them, I should get to know them because I never know who could inspire me. Thank you for helping me to recognize the good people in the world, especially where I least expected it. Thank you, Jerry Spinelli, for helping me find my passion.

Sincerely,
Abby Miller

Honorable Mention
Amber Morris – Washington High School
***The Last Song* by Nicholas Sparks**

Dear Nicholas Sparks,

Your novel, The Last Song, really helped and inspired me through a tough time in my life. Ronnie's father was sick with cancer and ended up in the hospital. Similar to the novel, my mother got very sick and had a mild heart attack. Since she has diabetes, things got ten times worse for her. She ended up in the hospital. She fell into a coma shortly after being placed into the intensive care unit. My mom was my best friend. Whenever I needed advice or just someone to talk to, she was always there for me. She was probably the strongest figure in my life so going through this process was extremely hard for me.

At the time of this, my dad had to work overtime to help pay off the hospital bills so I had to take care of my little sister, who at the time was an infant. I was only about ten years old at the time so taking care of an infant and juggling school work was a challenge. But with the help of close family friends, it was possible. Having to take care of my little sister and being faced with a huge hardship at the time of such a young age forced me to mature much faster than most children. It taught me the importance in life and that you never really know the good you have until it is taken away from you.

Reading your novel, The Last Song, gave me hope that everything would be alright if you just stayed strong for not only myself but my family. No matter how much pain I felt or how alone I felt, I had to smile to reassure my family that my mom would be okay. And it worked. Thankfully short after that, my mom made a full recovery

worked. Thankfully short after that, my mom made a full recovery and is perfectly fine now.

It's been about five years now and honestly, without reading your novel in the spare time that I had while sitting in the hospital, I don't think that I would have been able to make it through. I most likely would have felt so alone that I would just crumble up and kept everything to myself. So I would like to thank you for writing this novel because without it, I would not be the strong and independent person that I am today.

Sincerely,
Amber Morris

Honorable Mention

Bonnie Walton – Washington High School

***Tricks* by Ellen Hopkins**

Dear Ms. Hopkins,

The society you and I live in is drenched in corruption from head to toe. It appears as though it is now impossible to walk the streets without coming into contact with someone considered “filthy” or “evil”; someone our society deems unworthy of our attention. We are taught from an early age to ignore the problems of these people, claiming that we are not involved and that nothing is able to save them from their sins. In a judgmental world, it is not often that someone comes across a troubled boy or girl, man or woman, and offers an empathetic glance into their life. We have developed stereotypes for the societal outcasts without really thinking about the possibility that, perhaps, they can be helped. It is only after reading your novels that I was able to take a step back from my previous mindset and analyze the ways in which the environment I live in is shady, as well as ways in which I could reverse the social “norms” I was living by.

Through one of your novels, *Tricks*, you conveyed the difficult topic of teen prostitution through a gripping plotline that teenagers could relate to in one form or another. The actions the teens took in your novel were not of a pristine nature, but they felt trapped in a horrible world in which they were forced to sell their bodies, and dignity, in exchange for a means of monetary support for their loved ones, as well as themselves. Although their actions are inexcusable in the eyes of the law, you have provided me with insight of the horrors many citizens face in their daily lives that lead them to believe they have no choice but to engage in heinous acts. The characters in *Tricks* were crying out for help in order to avoid the destructive path they began to take, and I found myself turning page after page, wishing someone would rescue them. I had never before yearned so badly for a group of fictional characters to be cared for. The true sense of compassion I felt for those who were in trouble in a fictional novel has provoked me to exude those same emotions for real citizens who struggle every day.

The characters in *Tricks* highlight the underlying reasons many teenagers force themselves into prostitution by depicting them as necessary providers for their struggling families with no other means of income. Many broken families in our world are defined by inevitable tribulations that goad stress and stretch the incomes of the families, leading many teens to feel responsible to aid their family in any way

they are able to. Although I formerly was ignorant of the severe circumstances many of my peers live under, through reading *Tricks*, for the first time in my life it occurred to me that, although they take harsh actions, many prostitutes do what they feel is necessary with purely selfless motives. I have learned through the novel not to simply look the other way, as many in our society do, and to help those who need it. I am determined that, through my assistance, I will rejuvenate a person's hope and encourage them that it is possible to lead a better life.

Apart from teenaged prostitutes, the families of the societal outcasts are also victims of the teen's actions in many cases. Often times, they need as much help as their loved ones but are unable to receive it from an unforgiving society. They are frequently labeled as horrible influences who have solely caused their loved ones to become involved in a sickening world of sex, drugs, and disease. Although your works are fictional, they address scarily real problems that not only scar the perpetrator of horrible deeds, but tear apart the families that are unable to help or understand the road that has been taken by someone so close to them. The novels also subtly cry out for those who have been standing idly by throughout their lives to take actions that would benefit the life of a person and the world we live in. I am now aware that by taking all persons involved in tragic life choices into account and reaching a hand out to let them know that they have support surrounding them, it is truly possible to bring an end to someone's nightmare and enable them to be successful.

Due to the power of your literature, I have since pledged to halt my malicious and critical nature in order to prevent myself from developing insensitive opinions of people I do not know. I now avidly seek to help those who deserve and need a support system in their lives, focusing not on how large or small the quantity of help may be, but rather the quality of the actions I will take to assist them. By refusing to accept my upbringing in society as an excuse, I have allowed myself to learn about and comprehend the difficulties of others in order to be there for them as they better their lives. I intend to do so for the remainder of my life, as I have come to find it both meaningful and rewarding. Your tragically inspirational novels have tugged at my heartstrings in such a profound way so that I can become a better person and instigate others to follow suit. I would like to thank you for allowing me to understand the capability of myself to change and make change.

Regards,
Bonnie L. Walton

Honorable Mention

Name Withheld – Washington High School

***Black Hawk Down* by Mark Bowden**

Dear Mark Bowden,

I read your book, *Black Hawk Down*, for the first time when I was about 14, and similar to other boys my age who read it, I was extremely interested the entire way through the story. I grew up with a father who worked for the military and was constantly working with Special Forces. I have always had an interest in military history, and the older I get now, the more I feel the call of duty. I have always felt a strong allegiance to our country and have always jumped at every

opportunity to speak with combat veterans. In my eyes, they deserve the utmost respect from me and my fellow countrymen.

I read your book, Black Hawk Down, for a second time recently. I believe that it affected me differently now that I have matured since the last time that I read it, and it had a profound impact on me this time too. The particular part that touched me at a deeper level was at the crash site of Super Six Four, when Gary Gordon and Randy Shughart engaged the Somali militia, a force much larger than the two of them and did everything they could to fight off the enclosing mob. I realized that what those two men did was a tremendous act of valor, bravery, and selflessness. Those men made a decision, and they knew that they would most likely die, but they did it anyway in an effort to save their fellow countryman and a brother in arms, and that is the ultimate sacrifice.

I have come to realize that it doesn't matter how many millions of dollars you make, how many super bowl rings you have, or how many bestselling albums you sell. For all of those things, you will eventually be forgotten. What Gary Gordon and Randy Shughart did was the greatest thing any man could do, they fought for something worth fighting for, and they died for it. That has made a mark on me that I will never forget. They died so that I can live free of religious persecution, racial bigotry, and fear; things that people in Somalia deal with every day.

While other people my age look to singers, actors, and athletes for role models of how to live life to its fullest, I look to these men because they have done something that a very select few group of men would be willing to do and have the skills to do it. I have been touched by what these men did, and your book helped me find the kind of man that I can only hope to be one day.

Sincerely

Honorable Mention
Name Withheld – Wirt County High School
The Holy Bible by God

Dear God,

Throughout history many books have been written. Some to make people laugh, some to tell of romance, some to just explain certain things, but I feel that your book, The Holy Bible is by far the most important to me. It has affected my life in so many ways. I follow your word and try to live the way that you would want me to even though I stray away sometimes. I feel that it has been the most influential to me because it has very good points in it that are actually great to live by, also it has life lessons for people to live by.

In Exodus, chapter 20 is the Ten Commandments, and I try to live my life by following them. They are the right way to live and it actually makes sense. You definitely put those in terms that everyone can understand, even though half of the other book is really hard to comprehend and the names are especially hard to sound out and remember. I feel that your book has really touched my life because I use to be a "wild child" and then after I started going to church and reading my bible, I feel that you are with me throughout all of the decisions that I make throughout my life. You can help me with my troubles and you help me choose wisely what to do about certain decisions. You give

me strength, courage, and you have taught me to be wise. Even though, sometimes things do not work out the way I asked them to or happen the way I think it should, I always trust you when I make my final decisions because I know that you always have my best interest in mind.

Also, you have taught me not to be so self-conceded about my religion, because I know that just because I feel a certain way that does not mean that everyone else has to feel the exact same way that I do. Many people are like that and force their religion on people. I have learned that even the worst of sins that I could have committed can be forgiven as long as I repent and ask for forgiveness. I know I cannot change what I have done in the past, but I can always just repent. Sometimes, it is hard to forgive myself, let alone ask the King of all kings for forgiveness. Most of the time though, I learn to forgive myself and I know that you forgive me too. You died for me and you do not want to see me throw away my life and live the life of a sinner.

Above all other things, it gives me the assurance that I need to know that I do not have to worry about the end of my life. I know that I am going to heaven, and I will not have to worry about what will happen with my soul. So by this, it affects my daily life by not having to have that fear in my everyday life of what is going to happen to me. Also, more importantly I will not have to worry on my deathbed about everything that I have done wrong in my life. It seems so hard to understand that you could have gave people the knowledge to write a book that will help us with every need or trouble that we are going to have in our life. As far as I have gone through, there has not been a time that I needed help with something and I have not prayed or looked it up in The Holy Bible and I have found the answer to what I was looking for. I am just so thankful that you can prepare us for the struggles and give us the answers to those struggles that are going to come throughout our lives.

I am appreciative that I feel like I can call up to you at any time of day and ask you something or just talk about anything, just to have you to listen or to give me advice. It makes all of the difference in the world to me that you care about the human race as much as to give people the knowledge to write a book that is going to help them. Even though it was written in the past, it affects us in the present too, because we still deal with the same issues.

With love

Honorable Mention
Lucas Facemire – Nicholas County High School
Waiting for the Fall by Mike Casazza

Dear Mr. Casazza,

This rollercoaster has come to an end. As we unfasten our seatbelts, we look back at the year of whom some aspired to be the peak of Mountaineer Football. Most children are taught by their parents to root for a certain team. What they are not taught is how to respect the landscape of college football itself, which I suppose is to settle in with maturity. Your book, Waiting for the Fall made me admire not only the Mountaineers, but the highs and lows in the profession of covering college football.

At the age of six, like most mothers, mine expected me to be in bed by

At the age of six, like most mothers, mine expected me to be in bed by nine o'clock, especially on a school night. My father, a hard working West Virginia coal miner was already snoring as he would venture back out at four in the morning to the mine. That early January night, I had other ideas. My sister was in High School at the time, and was often gone on Saturdays to Morgantown to attend games with her friends. I snuck across the hallway as we watched the Sugar Bowl late into the night.

The Sugar Bowl victory is my defining moment of becoming a fan of the Mountaineers. From that point on, I made it my mission to absorb as much knowledge about West Virginia as well as the game itself. Instead of Spongebob, my television time consumed of Sportscenter. I soon discovered that the game itself was not the thing that interested me the most, it was the culture behind it all.

After the horrific Pitt loss in 2007 that would cost the Mountaineers a chance at the national championship, my mind exploded with curiosity as to why the game was so atrocious. The fact that Mike Patrick, a West Virginia native, made the call for ESPN is just absolutely devastating. If I were in the situation, it would be extremely hard for me to speak of the game in a sophisticated manner. I would be emotional and heartbroken.

Another unfortunate event that occurred was the drama between Bill Stewart and Dana Holgorsen. Bill Stewart was always thought of in great manner by many people. The fact that he would backstab Holgorsen is just an example of great passion for a team. I honestly believe that Bill was a good man at heart, but sometimes emotions will get the best of us.

I hope to eventually make a living out of sports coverage. The game itself is often at times not even the greatest part about it. Everyone is entitled to their own opinion, and it is not just a game, it is a culture. From the swamps of Florida, to the mountains of West Virginia, and everywhere in between, college football will forever be changing, but the passion and pageantry will always be what keeps it together.

Sincerely,
Lucas Facemire

Honorable Mention
Name Withheld – South Charleston High School
***The Host* by Stephenie Meyer**

Dear Stephenie Meyer,

I believe that a girl who stays strong in herself and has a reason to fight will never be overpowered. This thought is highly influenced by your book The Host. You truly showed me strength through the story of Melanie and Wanderer. This strength taught me to believe in myself and gave me the power to continue my daily fight of life. This book also taught me to be myself, and not what others want me to be. That is a lesson that I use every day of my life.

At first glance, The Host is about aliens taking over the human race. After farther evaluation, however, it speaks of our society. It shows that individuality is unacceptable to us, and we would do anything to force others into a mold set by the media. Through this, I relate to both Melanie and Wanderer. Melanie is being controlled by an unseen force that is almost too overwhelming to fight, and yet she still struggles to remain herself. I am also being controlled, but not by a

Soul. We are all being controlled by the thoughts that we are not good enough, fed to us by the too perfect models on the covers of magazines. These thoughts can destroy us, unless we have a reason to remain confident in the person that we are. Wanderer also reminds me of myself. She is distrusted and outcast, but does not want to go along with her society. These qualities apply to me as well. I do not follow the idea that everybody should look, act, talk, and think in certain ways. That has gotten me criticized and outcast more times than I can count, but that makes me more certain that I do not want to belong to this society. Through reading this book, I learned to be strong in myself, even as my world is crashing down around me.

In The Host, you made it clear that you have to be confident in who you are to stay that person. This message has inspired not only me, but my friends as well. One of my friends came to me for help because people had started to call her fat, ugly, stupid and other things. Her self-esteem had reached a very low point, and she was too upset to continue. I had just finished reading your book when this happened, so I told her that she needed to stay strong and not be overpowered. I explained how Melanie had to overcome being controlled by somebody else, just as my friend now needed to. I loaned her my copy of your book, and she passed the messages of the story on to others.

I am bullied at school, called terrible names by my brother, and I find myself in a constant battle for my sanity. Ever since reading The Host, I have started thinking of those less as unwinnable wars and more as things I can and must overcome. My inspiration for continuing to fight is the fact that Melanie overcame being controlled to keep those she loved safe. If Melanie had never struggled, things would have turned out much different for Jared and the others. Just as Melanie's struggles changed the fate of those she loved, I believe that my difficulties will put me on the course that fate has planned for me.

Wanderer never expected to have a defiant host or to fall in love with Jared. As these things happened, I learned a lesson that I use almost daily. Unexpected things happen for a reason. I also learned the truth behind one of my favorite remarks made by my grandmother. "Who you are has nothing to do with your character, but your character has everything to do with who you are."

Sincerely

Honorable Mention
Sydney Hale – Magnolia High School
***The Help* by Kathryn Stockett**

Dear Ms. Stockett,

Your work of art, The Help, is one of my favorite books, but the reason this story follows me everywhere is because of the personal experience that is tied to it.

Your main character, Skeeter, is just trying to find her own path in the traditional South. While she wants to go off to New York to become a writer, she notices the unfairness of prejudices that surround her, and tries to live up to her mother's expectations. She faces the cruelty of fake friends and becomes close with "the help", who are mostly unheard of because of the many segregation laws.

I read this book at a prime time in my life. I was, just like Skeeter, going through many problems with close friends and realizing the problems with society. In more than one occasion, tears came to my eyes. I could relate with everything Skeeter thought or said.

In seventh grade, your friends are most of your life. Although I'm still young, I understand that friendship shapes you into who you are today, so when my friends and I became divided and no longer talked, it was devastating. The reason for the fight was just a misunderstanding and change of character that usually happens as a teenager, but never the less, the disagreement lasted for several months.

Many names and terrible things were said. Letting rumours roll of your back and becoming your own person were a part of my life and Skeeter's. This event, like everything else, has made me into the person I am today, and while, although there are many peer-pressures that threaten to deviate me from the path, I continue to try and stay strong. Nothing in life is perfect, not even yourself, and nothing is guaranteed. What is one day may not be the next.

What your book means to me is that life goes on. If a person doesn't show the appreciation and love that you show to them, they probably aren't worth your time. Yes, it is true that some of my past friends are no longer in my life, but I do not regret any decisions I made. Without them, I wouldn't be who I am today. So regret nothing, live life with love, forget the negative, and drink from the half-full glass.

Sincerely,
Sydney Hale

Honorable Mention

Tyler Easley – Bluefield High School

***Slut! Growing Up Female with a Bad Reputation* by Leora Tanenbaum**

Dear Ms. Tanenbaum,

What does it mean to be subjected to such contradictions as those of the double standard between men and women and their sexuality? I ask because I am a male.

Your novel *Slut! Growing Up Female with a Bad Reputation* made me ask the above question because before reading your book I had never even considered it. I had never taken the time to sit back and look at males and females and compare the two, especially never regarding a taboo topic such as sex. Society places women under such strict guidelines when it comes to sex and this intrigues me. How can we ask women to be sexy, dress sexy, and act sexy but not be sexual? We force women to walk a tight line between prude and slut; unfortunately, only a few lucky ladies find the middle ground. As for men, however, we are taught to be in control and release whatever sexual frustration we have whenever we want. We indulge in sexual activities with as many girls as we want if we enjoy it. We are men. It is disgusting for females to do the same if they enjoy it. They are women.

I just hope and pray that I have sons. Before reading your book I wanted two daughters; I wanted a lovely wife and an easy life. Your book opened my eyes to what young men will try to pressure my daughters into doing and what my wife will have already done with

some other guy. Now that I think about it, I'll pressure daughters, I'll have christened another guy's wife, and I will make some father a very stressed man. I am exactly what I am afraid of. Thanks to your book, I will attempt to always be a gentleman and respect all females, and I will do my best to teach my sons the same.

Throughout history, the double standard has plagued civilizations across the world from the practice of Sati in India during the tenth century to the *Scarlet Letter* of Nathaniel Hawthorne in America during the seventeenth century. The double standard between men and women and their sexuality is timeless. Surely, but tragically, as long as we watch movies and listen to music, the double standard will be prevalent. An infinite amount of examples exist in music relating to the mistreatment of women for sex. Lyrics, music videos, and the provocative attire of dancers all fall into this category while male artists just write more degrading verses exploiting women for something they partake in themselves. Movies aren't as bad in my opinion, but they, too, depict women being "slutty" more often than they've ever shown them being self-preserved.

I have decided to take a stand for women and defend their rights. If men and women vote, if men and women fight in the military, if men and women are equals, then men and women should be held to the same accountability concerning their sexuality. My daughters deserve to be treated with respect. You deserve one less womanizer. I deserve a wife worthy of a white wedding dress. Women deserve the same freedom as men.

I thank you for this insight into the life of females. My mother, sisters, aunts, and nieces thank you, as well.

Sincerely,
Tyler Anthony Easley

Level I - Notable Mentions

Morgan Bailey—Glen Fork Middle School
Hush, Hush Series by Rebecca Fitzpatrick

Hannah Rose - Hurricane Middle School
Out of My Mind by Sharon Draper

Name Withheld—Hurricane Middle School
Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets by J.K. Rowling

Name Withheld—Hurricane Middle School
The Cay by Theodore Taylor

Sarah Fresquez—Hurricane Middle School
Warriors by Erin Hunter

Lauren Duespohl - Hurricane Middle School
A Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens

Name Withheld—Hurricane Middle School
Eragon by Christopher Paolini

Name Withheld—Hurricane Middle School
A Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens

Riley Daugherty—Hurricane Middle School
The Lorax by Dr. Seuss

Hannah Short—Hurricane Middle School
Green Eggs and Ham— Dr. Seuss

Name Withheld—Hurricane Middle School
Ramona's World by Beverly Cleary

Chloe Demuth—Hurricane Middle School
A Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens

Name Withheld—Hurricane Middle School
Warriors: Into the Wild by Erin Hunter

Adam Cook—Hurricane Middle School
Number the Stars by Lois Lowry

Joe Muto—Hurricane Middle School
Where the Red Fern Grows by Wilson Rawls

Jordan Ruby—Hurricane Middle School
The Magic Treehouse Series by Mary Pope Osborne

Timothy Kinder—Bruceton School
War Horse by Michael Morpurgo

Name Withheld—Bruceton School
The works of Shel Silverstein

Makennzee Savage—Bruceton School
Because of Winn-Dixie by Kate DiCamillo

Sierra Blankenship—Chamberlain Elementary School
Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Dog Days by Jeff Kinney

Aaron Kesler—Chamberlain Elementary School
The Lightning Thief—Rick Riordan

Blake Phillips—Chamberlain Elementary School
Wild Life by Cynthia DeFelice

Taylor Smith—Crum Middle School
Heartland: Taking Chances by Lauren Brooke

Name Withheld—Crum Middle School
Number the Stars by Lois Lowry

K.J. Engasser—Johnson Elementary School
The Hunger Games by Suzanne Collins

Alden Smith—Johnson Elementary School
Crookedstar's Promise by Erin Hunter

Name Withheld—Lashmeet-Matoaka Elementary School
The Mystery of the Missing Money by Paul Moxham

Kayla Basso—Midland Elementary School
Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets by J.K. Rowling

Emma Buck—Mount Lookout Elementary School
Bad Kitty Meets the Baby by Nick Bruel

Kayle Marie Crites—Mount Lookout Elementary School
A Perfect Time for Pandas by Mary Pope Osborne

Nachelle Probst—Paden City Elementary School
The Hunger Games by Suzanne Collins

Jacob Bolen—Paden City Elementary School
The City of Ember by Jeanne DuPrau

Elizabeth Lafferty— Paden City Elementary School
Poppy by Avi

Henry Lipscomb—Princeton Middle School
The Golden Compass by Philip Pullman

Name Withheld—South Middle School
Another Earth by Patrick Carman

Elizabeth Sims—South Middle School
Love, Aubrey by Suzanne LaFleur

Destinee Smith—Smithville Elementary
Finding Zasha by Randi Barro

Name Withheld—Spencer Elementary School
Stormbreaker by Anthony Horowitz

Name Withheld—Spencer Middle School
Raising Dragons by Bryan Davis

Name Withheld—Spencer Elementary School
Mercy Watson to the Rescue by Kate DiCamillo

Chloe Sotomayor—Spencer Middle School
The Hunger Games Series by Suzanne Collins

Name Withheld—Bridgeport Middle School
The Batboy by Mike Lupica

Malachi Hinton—Weirton Heights Elementary School
Grandfather's Journey by Allen Say

Elizabeth Mullen—Weirton Heights Elementary School
Middle School: The Worst Years of My Life
by James Patterson and Chris Tebbets

Leah Graham—Weirton Heights Elementary School
Because of Winn-Dixie by Kate DiCamillo

Level II - Notable Mentions

Name Withheld—Harpers Ferry Middle School
Deadline by Chris Crutcher

Name Withheld—Harpers Ferry Middle School
The Girl With the Silver Eyes by Willo Davis Roberts

Tia Ainsworth—Harpers Ferry Middle School
Welcome Home Jellybean by Marlene Shyer

Kristina Mantle—Harpers Ferry Middle School
My Thirteenth Winter: A Memoir by Samantha Abeel

Name Withheld—Harpers Ferry Middle School
Danger on her Doorstep by Rachele McCalla

Name Withheld—Pleasants County Middle School
The Crippled Lamb by Max Lucado

Hannah Knight—Pleasants County Middle School
Heart to Heart by Lurlene McDaniel

Leland Brown—Hayes Middle School
The Extraordinary Adventures of Alfred Kropp by Rick Yancey

Name Withheld—Hayes Middle School
Horton Hears a Who by Dr. Seuss

Name Withheld—Hayes Middle School
The Alchemyst by Michael Scott

Name Withheld—Hayes Middle School
Carter Finally Gets It by Brent Crawford

Tommy Kasey—Hayes Middle School
A Troubled Peace by L.M. Elliott

Name Withheld—Hayes Middle School
West Side Story by Irving Shulman

Name Withheld—Hayes Middle School
Thirteen Reasons Why by Jay Asher

Liz Sowards—Hayes Middle School
The Dying Breath by Alane Ferguson

Name Withheld—Harman School
All Creatures Great and Small by James Herriot

Name Withheld—Crum Middle School
The Hunger Games by Suzanne Collins

Name Withheld—Crum Middle School
Mockingjay by Suzanne Collins

Alexis Salmons—Crum Middle School
Tears of a Tiger by Sharon Draper

Name Withheld—Crum Middle School
Tears of a Tiger by Sharon Draper

Name Withheld—Crum Middle School
The Cat in the Hat by Dr. Seuss

Name Withheld—Crum Middle School
Tears of a Tiger by Sharon Draper

Austin Stacy—Crum Middle School
Maximum Ride by James Patterson

Name Withheld—Crum Middle School
Tears of a Tiger by Sharon Draper

Elizabeth Warner—Bluefield Middle School
Early Sunday Morning by Barry Denenburg

Cassie Denison—Winfield Middle School
Life as We Knew It by Susan Beth Pfeffer

Allison Smith—West Preston Middle School
Rachel's Tears by Beth Nimmo

Kayla Cramer—West Preston Middle School
The Giving Tree by Shel Silverstein

Allison Slider—West Preston Middle School
The Harry Potter Series by J.K. Rowling

Name Withheld—Saints Peter and Paul Catholic School
The Giving Tree by Shel Silverstein

Name Withheld—Saints Peter and Paul Catholic School
A Season of Gifts by Richard Peck

Name Withheld—Spencer Middle School
The Harry Potter Series by J.K. Rowling

Name Withheld—Spencer Middle School
Judy Moody and the Bad Luck Charm by Megan McDonald

Name Withheld—Spencer Middle School
Butterfly Kisses by Bob and Brooke Carlisle

Level III - Notable Mentions

Katie Gedeon—The Linsly School
The Last Lecture by Randy Pausch

Cheyenne Scherich—The Linsly School
The Giving Tree by Shel Silverstein

Name Withheld—The Linsly School
The Glass Castle by Jeanette Walls

Katie Smith—The Linsly School
The Hunger Games by Suzanne Collins

Sung Bok Yoo—The Linsly School
O Pioneers! By Willa Cather

Name Withheld—The Linsly School
Chosen by Ted Dekker

Colin Kelly—The Linsly School
The Old Man and the Sea by Ernest Hemingway

Drew Bastian—The Linsly School
The Invention of Hugo Cabret by Brian Selznick

Carinna Ferguson—The Linsly School
Fahrenheit 451 by Ray Bradbury

Name Withheld—The Linsly School
Night by Elie Wiesel

Derrick Blain—The Linsly School
The Harry Potter Series by J.K. Rowling

Joanna Blake—Magnolia High School
Somebody Everybody Listens To by Suzanne Supplee

Troy Boughner—Magnolia High School
A Series of Unfortunate Events by Lemony Snicket

Davianne Croasmun—Magnolia High School
The Help by Kathryn Stockett

Bri Ritz—Magnolia High School
Hana by Lauren Oliver

Amanda Theodoro—Magnolia High School
A Walk to Remember by Nicholas Sparks

Cedar Sands—Magnolia High School
My Brother Made Me Do It by Peg Kehret

Seth Conley—Nicholas County High School
Killing Lincoln by Bill O'Reilly and Martin Dugard

Brooklyn Butcher—Nicholas County High School
Perfect by Ellen Hopkins

Name Withheld—Nicholas County High School
Thirteen Reasons Why by Jay Asher

William Miller—Nicholas County High School
Shelter by Harlan Coben

Ryan Parker—Nicholas County High School
Running Loose by Chris Crutcher

Gabrielle Pike—Nicholas County High School
I am a Soldier Too: The Jessica Lynch Story by Rick Bragg

Maggie Sebert-Sweeney—Nicholas County High School
Missing May by Cynthia Rylant

Maria Stear—Nicholas County High School
Improving Your Serve by Charles Swindoll

Michael Miller—Scott High School
The Alex Rider Saga by Anthony Horowitz

Jacob Mosteller—Scott High School
The Tell-Tale Heart and Other Writings by Edgar Allen Poe

Meredith Howell—Scott High School
Beastly by Alex Flinn

Lindsey Cook—Scott High School
The Things They Carried by Tim O'Brien

Jay Milam—South Charleston High School
To Kill a Mockingbird by Harper Lee

Rhiannon Schmitt—South Charleston High School
To Kill a Mockingbird by Harper Lee

Name Withheld—South Charleston High School
The Perks of Being a Wallflower by Stephen Chbosky

Name Withheld—St. Albans High School
Scars by Cheryl Rainfield

Name Withheld—St. Albans High School
The Hunger Games by Suzanne Collins

Name Withheld—St. Albans High School
Divergent by Veronica Roth

Name Withheld—St. Albans High School
The Hunger Games by Suzanne Collins

Name Withheld—St. Albans High School
The Secret Garden by Frances Hodgson Burnett

Name Withheld—St. Albans High School
The Hunger Games by Suzanne Collins

Kiana McIntosh—Washington High School
The Chemical Garden Trilogy by Lauren DeStefano

Name Withheld—Washington High School
One Hundred Years of Solitude by Gabriel Garcia Marquez

Name Withheld—Washington High School
Twilight by Stephenie Meyer

Name Withheld—Washington High School
The Giver by Lois Lowry

Jackson Hepner—Washington High School
Things Fall Apart by Chinua Achebe

Name Withheld—Washington High School
Percy Jackson and the Olympians Series by Rick Riordan

Karina Salmeron—Washington High School
Thirteen Reasons Why by Jay Asher

James Brookes—Washington High School
The Perks of Being a Wallflower by Stephen Chbosky

Name Withheld—Washington High School
Charlie and the Chocolate Factory by Roald Dahl

Name Withheld—School not given
The Things They Carried by Tim O'Brien

Name Withheld—Wirt County High School
Abandoned Farmhouse by Ted Kooser

Name Withheld—Wirt County High School
The Time Keeper by Mitch Albom

Name Withheld—Wirt County High School
Tuck Everlasting by Natalie Babbitt

Congratulations!

Write about it...

Autographs...

Attach souvenir program....

Although Letters About Literature honors students, we applaud

Parents and Teachers

For the support and encouragement given to these developing writers. Without your contributions and direction, many of these letter writers would have remained undiscovered.

Thanks to all who participated not only this year, but also in years past.

For future competitions and news regarding the programs and events sponsored by

West Virginia Center for the Book,

Visit our website at

<http://www.librarycommission.wv.gov/programs/wvcftb>

Letters About Literature

Is a national reading and writing promotion program of The Center for the Book in the Library of Congress, and supported locally by The West Virginia Center for the Book.

This project is supported, in part, by the U.S. Museum and Library Services under the provisions of the Library Services and Technology Act, administered in West Virginia by the State Librarian, and by the West Virginia Humanities Council, a state program of the National Endowment for the Humanities.



