

Letters About Literature

Writing Contest for Young Readers

Sponsored by the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress
in cooperation with participating state centers for the book

2013 Entry Guidelines

Take the Letters About Literature writing challenge! Write a personal letter to an author you admire, an author of a book (fiction or nonfiction) that inspired you. Your letter must be personal but persuasive, explaining just **how** the author's work changed your view of yourself or your world.

How to Enter

First: determine your competition level. LAL welcomes entries from all readers — reluctant as well as enthusiastic — on three levels of competition. Entrants must be at least 9 years old and fall into one of the following categories:

Level 1 — Grades 4–6

Level 2 — Grades 7-8

Level 3 — Grades 9-10

Second: Select and reflect! Select a fiction or nonfiction book you have read and about which you have strong feelings. Explore those feelings and why you reacted the way you did during or after reading the author's work. Consider these questions when writing your letter:

- What did the book show you about your world that you never noticed before?
- What did you realize about yourself as a result of reading this book?
- What surprised you about yourself while you were reading this book? Why was this work meaningful to you?

Third: Write a persuasive letter stating your opinion and supporting that opinion with specific details. A letter is less formal than an essay or research paper. Write honestly and in your own voice, as if you were having a conversation with the author. Those are the best letters to read and the most fun to write! Keep in mind these two tips:

- Correspond, don't compliment! Your letter should inform rather than flatter the author. All FAN letters will be eliminated!
- Do not summarize the book's plot! The author wrote the book and knows what happened. What the author doesn't know is how the book affected *you* and why it did so. Only YOU can explain that unique relationship you experienced while reading the book.

Fourth: Submit your letter by Friday, January 11, 2013, using the required entry coupon. (See next page!)

STATE AND NATIONAL AWARDS

LAL awards prizes on both the state and national levels. Each *participating* state center has its own panel of judges who select the top essayists in the state. State Winners will receive a cash award and advance to the national level judging. A panel of national judges for the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress will select **one National Winner** per competition level to receive a **\$1,000 cash award**. The judges will also select **one second place winner on each competition level** to receive a **\$150 cash award**.

How to Submit Your Class Set of Letters

(or individual letter if entering separately from a school or library)

RETURN ADDRESS. The child's name and complete return address (either home or school) must appear in the upper right corner of the first page of the letter, as per letter formatting.

Letters without a return address will be disqualified.

ENTRY COUPON. Each letter must be accompanied by an entry coupon (below). Staple the coupon to the last page of the letter. Should your student win a state, the State Center for the Book will contact you using this information, so be sure your coupon is complete and legible! *Letters without a coupon will be eliminated.*

TEACHER COVER LETTER. Each class set should include a teacher cover letter that provides contact information *plus* a list of the names of each student who has written a letter. Cover letters *do not* take the place of entry coupons. Each individual letter must have its own entry coupon.

MAILING ENVELOPE & ADDRESS. Mail class sets in a flat 8x10" envelope or larger. Indicate the competition level — either 1, 2 or 3 — on the envelope. Include a complete return address on your mailing envelope. Mail to:

Letters About Literature
Competition Level (Indicate level 1, 2 or 3)
P.O. Box 5308
Woodbridge, VA 22194

DEADLINE. Entries must be postmarked by **1-11-2013**, (and arrive at LAL Central no later than 1-23-2013).

ASSESSMENT. Entries will be judged on the following criteria:

- **Content** (addressing the contest theme)
- **Writer's Voice** (writing style and originality of expression)
- **Exposition** (language skills, organization and grammar)

Each criterion will be scored on a scale of zero (0) to five (5), where five (5) is excellent and zero (0) is not fulfilling the judging criteria.

OWNERSHIP. All letters become the property of the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress. Please make copies of your students' entries, as no letters will be returned.

NOTIFICATION & CONTACT. Your State Center for the Book will notify the winners within your state on or about 4/15/13. The Center for the Book in the Library of Congress will notify National Winners on or about 5/1/13. For program updates, please refer to the LAL website, www.lettersaboutliterature.org or e-mail us at programdirector@lettersaboutliterature.org

PERMISSION RELEASE FORM. The participating state centers for the book will not release any child's name nor the content of his/her letter without a permission release form signed by a parent/guardian. Should your student's letter take a state prize, your state center will send you a release form to forward to the child's parent/guardian. This form must be returned to the state center within two weeks upon receipt.

Note for Teachers Submitting Class Sets: Please do not assign the same book to an entire class, as this misses the spirit of the program — identifying a personal relationship with an author and/or book. Likewise, rather than assigning the same opening paragraph or topic sentences, encourage students to express themselves individually. *Your signature on the form below indicates that you have reviewed the submitted letter and acknowledge it to be the student's original work. Remember: Each individual letter must have its own entry coupon.*



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LAL 2013 Entry Coupon – Please print!

Name _____ Male Female Age _____ Grade _____

Book/Story Title _____ Author _____

School/Library: _____

Street _____ City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

School/Library Phone: (_____) _____ School/Library Email: _____

Teacher/Librarian Contact: _____ Email: _____

This additional information is required if you are submitting a letter INDIVIDUALLY rather than through a school or library. Otherwise, this information is optional.

Child's Home Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____ Home Email: _____

Parent's signature (**required**) _____ Home phone: _____