

# Letters About Literature

## Writing Contest for Young Readers

Sponsored by the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress

### 2014 Entry Guidelines

**Contest theme:** *Write a personal letter to an author whose work (either fiction or nonfiction) changed your view of the world or yourself.*

#### 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 9-12**

**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?
- Why was this work meaningful to you?
- How do you know the author's work influence 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 and the required entry coupon by the postmark deadline:**

**December 10** Deadline for Level 3: grades 9 – 12

**January 10** Deadline for Level 1: grades 4-6, & Level 2: grades 7 & 8

#### 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 National Honor winner** per competition level to receive a **\$200 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 prize, your State Center for the Book (or state sponsor) 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 submitting a letter. Cover letters *do not* take the place of entry coupons. Each student's 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

## DEADLINES.

- Level 3 entries must be postmarked by 12-10-13
- Levels 1 and 2 must be postmarked by 1-10-14

**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.

**RECOMMENDED LENGTH OF LETTERS:** Entries for Level 1 should be no less than 100 words and no more than 500 words. • Entries for Level 2 should be no less than 300 words and no more than 1000 words. • Entries for Level 3 should be no less than 600 words and no more than 1500 words.

**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 4/15/14. The Center for the Book in the Library of Congress will notify National Winners on or about 5/1/14. For program updates, please refer to the contest website, [www.read.gov/letters](http://www.read.gov/letters).

**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.*

## LAL 2014 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: \_\_\_\_\_

