

The Center for the Book in the Library of Congress in partnership with Target presents

LETTERS ABOUT LITERATURE

Letters About Literature is a national reading and writing promotion program.

A Program of the Massachusetts Center for the Book and its sponsoring partners, Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners & Simmons College Graduate School of Library & Information Science

Participation Guidelines for Readers

Books have wings. You can't see them, but they are there just the same. On books' wings, readers can soar to new places where they meet intriguing characters and experience exciting adventures. But a book's wings can also help a reader rise above difficult situations so that they see the world — or themselves — with new understanding. Have you ever felt the power and lift of literature? Has a book touched your life in a personal way? If so, we invite you to enter this year's LAL competition by writing a letter to that book's author.

How to Enter

First, determine your competition level. Letters About Literature 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, reflect and connect! Select a fiction or nonfiction book, a short story, poem, essay or speech (sorry, no song lyrics) 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 one or more of these questions as you develop your ideas:

- Did the characters, conflict or setting mirror your life in some way? If so, how? If not, why not?
- What strengths or flaws do you share with a character or characters in the book?
- What did the book show you about your world that you never noticed before?
- What surprised you about yourself while you were reading this book?
- Why was this work meaningful to you?

Your letter need not (in fact, should not) try to answer all of these questions, of course. These are starting points to spark ideas.

Third, write a personal, reflective letter (not a fan letter or a book report!) Express yourself! 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. Keep in mind two tips:

- Correspond, don't compliment! Your letter should inform rather than flatter the author.
- 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*.

Our judges do not count words but we do have recommended lengths: Entries for Level 1 should be no less than 100 words and no more than 400 words. • Entries for Level 2 should be no less than 300 words and no more than 600 words. • Entries for Level 3 should be no less than 500 words and no more than 800 words. Please refer to the Contest Entry Guidelines in Rules #4 of the Official rules found at www.lettersaboutliterature.org for complete information on how to prepare your letter.

Fourth, submit your letter by December 10, 2010, using the required entry coupon. (See next page!)

STATE AND NATIONAL AWARDS

LAL awards prizes on both the state and national levels. Each state center has its own panel of judges who select the top essayists in the state. State Winners will receive \$50 Target Gift Cards and additional prizes, and then advance to the National Level Judging.

On each competition level, a panel of national judges for the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress will select **six (6) National Winners** (2 per Level of Competition) and **twelve (12) National Honorable Mention Winners** (4 per Level of Competition). The National Winners will receive a \$500 Target GiftCard, plus each will secure a **\$10,000 LAL Reading Promotion Grant** in his/her name for a community or school library so that others can experience personal relationships with authors and the stories they tell. The National Honorable Mention Winners will each receive a \$100 Target GiftCard, plus each will secure a **\$1,000 LAL Reading Promotion Grant** in his/her name for a community or school library. The community or school library selected for the National Winners and National Honorable Mention Winners is at the Sponsor's sole discretion. Refer to the National Level Judging in the Official Rules for more details.

NO PURCHASE NECESSARY. A Purchase will not enhance your chances of winning. MANY WILL ENTER, FEW WILL WIN. Open to legal residents of the 50 U.S. states, the District of Columbia and the U.S. Virgin Islands enrolled as a student in grades 4-12 during the 2010-2011 school year, 9 years or older as of 9/1/10. Contest Starts 8/1/10 and ends 12/22/10. Void where prohibited. Subject to Official Rules found at <http://www.read.gov/contests>.

How to Submit Your Letter

RETURN ADDRESS. Print your name and complete return address (either home or school) in the upper right corner of the first page of your letter. Letters without a return address and adequate contact information will be disqualified.

ENTRY COUPON. Each letter must be accompanied by an entry coupon (below). Staple the coupon to the last page of your letter. Should you win a state or a national prize, your State Center for the Book will contact you using this information, so be sure your coupon is complete and legible!

MAILING ENVELOPE & ADDRESSES. Entries should be mailed in a flat 8x10" envelope or larger. Please indicate the competition level — either 1, 2 or 3 — on your envelope. Include a complete return address on your mailing envelope.

**Letters About Literature
Competition Level (Indicate level 1, 2 or 3)
P.O. Box 609, Dallas, PA 18612**

DEADLINE: Your Entry must be postmarked by December 10, 2010, (and arrive at LAL Central no later than December 20, 2010).

ASSESSMENT. All entries will be judged on the following criteria:

- **Content** (the writer's achievement in addressing the contest theme).
- **Writer's Voice** (the writer's style and originality of expression).
- **Exposition** (the writer's use of 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 a copy of your entry as no letters will be returned.

NOTIFICATION & CONTACT. State Centers for the Book will notify state winners on or about 3/21/11. The Center for the Book in the Library of Congress will notify National Winners and National Honorable Mention Winners on or about 4/21/11. www.loc.gov/loc/cfbook/letters.html. For program updates, please refer to the LAL website, www.lettersaboutliterature.org or e-mail us at letters@massbook.org.

Notes for Teachers Submitting Class Sets

- When mailing class sets, please include a cover letter that lists the names of each child who has written a letter. Mail class sets in one flat envelope rather than individual envelopes. Use one envelope for each level. Cover letters DO NOT take the place of entry coupons, however. Each letter must also have a complete **entry coupon**.
- 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.
- Visit www.lettersaboutliterature.org for free teaching materials, including lesson plans, assessment checklists, writing samples, plus teaching tips from our many LAL teachers who have participated in the past.



Letters About Literature 2010-2011 Entry Coupon (cut & staple to letter)

PLEASE PRINT. Often our failure to contact you is due to incomplete or illegible information on the entry coupon.

Name _____ Age _____ Home Phone (optional) (_____) _____

Grade (circle one grade only): **Level 1:** 4 5 6 **Level 2:** 7 8 **Level 3:** 9 10 11 12

Book/Story Title _____ Author _____

Home Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Parental Signature (required for individual entries): _____

IMPORTANT! If you are a teacher/librarian submitting a set of letters, complete section below **BEFORE** copying the coupon to distribute to students. In that way, each student letter will have your accurate contact info legibly displayed on its entry coupon.

School/Library: _____

Street _____ City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

School/Library Telephone: (_____) _____ School/Library E-mail: _____

Teacher/Librarian Contact: _____ E-mail: _____