

Letters About Literature

A Program of Massachusetts Center for the Book



READ. BE INSPIRED. WRITE BACK.

Massachusetts Center for the Book invites Commonwealth students in Grades 4 through 12 to write a letter to an author about a work that has made an impact on them. The books may have helped students understand something about themselves or the world around them.



The Process

Students select a work of fiction, nonfiction, poetry, or drama (full-length books, short stories, poems, essays, speeches, and plays are eligible, no song lyrics) that has had an impact on their thinking. Students write a personal letter to the author (a contemporary or classic writer) of the selected work, explaining how reading the book has affected them. They may have a personal connection to the themes of the book or they may have found a welcome insight into (or diversion from) the issues of the day.

No matter the approach, students are reminded that the purpose of their letter is not to flatter the author or gush about the author's talent. Nor is it to summarize the work and analyze its style. Rather, a student's letter should communicate a personal reaction to/connection with the work, to create a conversation with an author about the personal impact of reading it.

Entries should fall in the 200- to 750-word range. (These are suggested minimums and maximums for successful letters.) They may follow the friendly- or business-letter format.

Note to teachers/librarians: Please have students writing from your institution use the street address of your school/library as their return address. We shall seek home addresses from the parents/guardians of any writers who progress in the program.

Eligibility and Submissions

- Letters About Literature in Massachusetts is open to residents of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. (Students who attend school in Massachusetts are considered residents for this program.)
- Students must be in Grades 4 through 12 (or their homeschool equivalents) during the 2023-24 school year.
- Entries will be accepted electronically (see entry form for instructions) beginning October 2, 2023. Submissions close on January 18, 2024.
- Submissions will be read and evaluated in three (3) levels:
Level 1 for Grades 4-6 Level 2 for Grades 7 & 8 Level 3 for Grades 9-12
- The judges will award 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place and name up to seven additional Honorable Mention writers in each level.

The entry form, along with all submission instructions, will be available in early October 2023 at: <https://www.massbook.org/letters-about-literature>