



Jesse White

SECRETARY OF STATE

NEWS

Media Advisory:
August 25, 2011

For More Information Contact:
Pat McGuckin: 217-558-4029
Rachel Farrer: 312-814-2599

Jesse White Encourages Students to Enter "Letters About Literature" Contest

SPRINGFIELD – Secretary of State and State Librarian Jesse White is urging students in grades 4-12 to enter the 2012 "Letters About Literature" (LAL) contest, a national reading and writing competition sponsored by the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress and the Illinois Center for the Book in partnership with Target.

"Every year students across the nation read books and write letters to authors describing how a particular book made an impact on their lives," said White. "For the past four years, Illinois has led the nation in entries submitted by students. Our students enjoy this contest, and I hope thousands of Illinois students will once again participate. 'Letters About Literature' demonstrates that books can inspire and touch the lives of our young people."

There are three levels of participation: Level I for grades 4 - 6, Level II for grades 7 & 8 and Level III for grades 9 - 12. LAL awards prizes on both the state and national levels. Each state has its own panel of judges who select the top essayists in the state. State winners receive a \$50 Target gift card, and the opportunity to advance to the National level. At a ceremony hosted by Secretary White, Illinois winners receive their awards and read their entries.

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 gift card, and each winner will secure a \$10,000 LAL Reading Promotion Grant in their name for his or her 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 gift card, and each winner will secure a \$1,000 LAL Reading Promotion Grant in their name for his or her community or school library. The community or school library selected for the National Winners and National Honorable Mention Winners is at the winner's sole discretion.

Entries must be postmarked by **January 6, 2012**. State winners will be announced in May 2012. For more information about the competition, contact Bonnie Matheis at 217-558-2065 or bmatheis@ilsos.net. Information can also be found at <http://illinoiscenterforthebook.org>.

###

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.

Letters About Literature supports national language arts and reading standards.

LAL promotes reader response to literature and as such supports national standards established by both The National Council of Teachers of English and the International Reading Association.

LAL welcome entries from *all students*—reluctant readers and struggling writers as well as enthusiastic and accomplished readers and writers.

| Standard <i>Students will . . .</i> | Letters About Literature <i>Guidelines and teacher resources encourage participants to . . .</i> |
|--|--|
| Read a wide range of print and nonprint texts to build an understanding of texts, themselves, and cultures in the United States and the world. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select a work of literature—novel, nonfiction book, speech, essay, or a poem—as the subject of their letter. • Reflect on ways in which this work of literature has somehow changed or mirrored the reader’s life. |
| Apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate and appreciate texts. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draw on their current or prior experiences in reflecting upon and writing about the work of literature. • Correspond, rather than compliment; synthesize, rather than summarize. |
| Adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language for a variety of audiences and purposes. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write personally and honestly to an author, keeping mind that he/she wrote the work and knows what it is about. • Focus on the LAL theme to explain how the work somehow changed the reader’s perception of the world or self. |
| Employ a wide range of writing strategies. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a strategy for presenting responses (chronological, compare/contrast, classification, etc.), with particular attention to organization and opening and closing paragraphs. |
| Apply knowledge of language structure and conventions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write their letters using supporting details and vivid descriptions to clearly communicate with the audience. • Eliminate irrelevant details that do not contribute to the overall message of the letter. • Revise and proof-read their letters so as to avoid unnecessary repetition and grammatical errors |
| Use a variety of technological and information resources to create and communicate knowledge | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write their ideas using proper letter format. • Present these letters, when possible, in typewritten documents that are clear and easy to read. |
| Participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative and critical members of a literacy communities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Form conclusions about the purpose or value of a written text in relation to their own lives and to share, if desired, those ideas with others. |
| Use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (learning, enjoyment, persuasion, exchange of information) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Express themselves using their own voices rather than imitating or modeling the voices of others. |

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.

Sponsored in cooperation with participating state centers for the book

2012 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 readers rise above difficult situations so that they see the world — or themselves — with new understanding. Has a book touched your life in a personal way? If so, we invite you to enter this year's LAL competition. Have you ever felt the power and lift of literature?

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 when writing your letter:

- 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 answer all of these questions, of course. These are just 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. 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.
- 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 Friday, January 6, 2012, 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 a \$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 their name for his or her 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 their name for his or her 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 2011-2012 school year, 9 years or older as of 9/1/11. Contest Starts 9/1/11 and ends 1/6/12. Void where prohibited. Subject to Official Rules found at <http://www.read.gov/contests>.

SCHOOL & LIBRARY SUBMISSION FORM

How to Submit Your Class Set of Letters

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, including the required entry coupon, 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 or a national prize, the State Center for the Book will contact you using this information, so be sure your coupon is complete and legible!

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 & ADDRESSES. 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 **January 6, 2012**, (and arrive at LAL Central no later than January 17, 2012).

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.

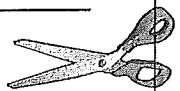
NOTIFICATION & CONTACT. State Centers for the Book will notify state winners within their state on or about 4/26/12. The Center for the Book in the Library of Congress will notify National Winners and National Honorable Mention Winners on or about 4/27/12. For program updates, please refer to the LAL 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.
- Please staple rather than paper clip the entry coupon to the letter. Clips tend to separate during handling.

LAL 2012 Entry Coupon for School & Library Submissions



Name _____ Male Female Age _____ Telephone (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 _____

School/Library: _____

Street _____ City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

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

Teacher/Librarian Contact: _____ E-mail: _____

The following information is option but valuable in helping us contact the winning students.

Child's Home Address & Email (optional) _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____ Contact Email: _____