

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 the Maryland Center 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>.

SUBMISSION FORM for AN INDIVIDUAL ENTRY

• *How do I prepare my letter?*

LETTER FORMAT. A letter looks different from a school research paper or creative writing paragraph. Your entry should be in a friendly letter format that includes the following elements: a return address, a date, a salutation (the name of the author to whom you are writing), a body of information, and a closing and signature (your name). Additionally, your letter should be typewritten or hand written in ink.

RETURN ADDRESS. Your name and complete return address must appear in the upper right (or left) corner of the first page of the letter, as per typical letter formatting. Letters without a return address and adequate contact information, 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 your letter. Should your letter 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! Letters without an entry coupon will be disqualified.

• *Where do I mail my letter and when?*

MAILING ENVELOPE & ADDRESSES. Mail your letter 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).

• *How are the entries judged?*

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.

• *How will I know if I win?*

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. REMEMBER! If your entry coupon is missing or incomplete (missing an Email especially), we may not be able to contact you!

• *What happens if my letter wins?*

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

PERMISSION RELEASE FORM. The Center for the Book will not release any child's name nor the content of his/her letter without a signed permission release form. Should your letter take a state and/or national prize, the program director will send you a release form and you will be required to complete and return this permission form with the signature of a parent or guardian within two weeks upon receipt.



LAL 2012 Entry Coupon for Individual Submission

PLEASE PRINT. Then cut and staple your entry coupon to the last page of your letter. Do not use paper clips as they often become separated during judging. An individual entry without a parent/guardian's signature will be eliminated!

Name _____ Home Phone (____) _____

Age: _____ Male Female

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 _____

Parent/Guardian Contact (please print full name): _____

Parental Signature (**required for each individual entry**): _____

Contact Email: _____ Telephone _____