

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](http://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](http://www.lettersaboutliterature.org) or e-mail us at [programdirector@lettersaboutliterature.org](mailto: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: \_\_\_\_\_