

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 State Center for the Book Affiliates.

participation guidelines

READ. BE INSPIRED. WRITE BACK.

Author Roald Dahl once said that writing a book was like taking a journey. You knew where you wanted to go but you didn't always know who you might meet or what you might experience along the way. Reading a book is also a journey. Where has a book taken **you**?

Have you wandered with J. D. Salinger through lonely streets in New York City? Did you travel back in time with Stephen Crane to crouch on a Civil War battlefield and understand, perhaps for the first time, fear? Maybe you stopped in the woods on a snowy evening with Robert Frost. Maybe your favorite voyage was to a fantastic place that exists only between the pages of a book – Hogwarts, Middle Earth or a future society where books are burned at 451 degrees Fahrenheit!

LAL welcomes entries from **all** readers – reluctant as well as enthusiastic book travelers! How can you enter? Select a book that took you on a surprising or inspiring journey. It might be a recent journey or one you remember from your childhood. Then write a personal letter to the author, explaining how his or her work somehow changed your view of the world or yourself.

Do not summarize the book's plot. After all, the author wrote the book and already knows what happened. What the author doesn't know is how the book affected **you**. 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! The how-to-enter tips on the next page will help you write and prepare your letter for submission.

COMPETITION LEVELS

Level I – Grades 4-6

Level II – Grades 7 and 8

Level III – Grades 9-12

STATE AWARDS

Judges for each participating State Center for the Book will select the top letters on each competition level to receive recognition. First-place winners will receive a cash award and a \$50 Target GiftCard. The first-place winners in each state will then advance for national judging.

NATIONAL AWARDS

The Center for the Book in the Library of Congress will select two letters on each competition level as national winners. Target will send these six national winners and their (2) parents/guardians to Washington, DC, to attend the National Book Festival in fall 2007 where they will read their letters during the Letters About Literature national awards presentation. Each national winner will also receive a \$500 Target GiftCard.

DEADLINE

Submit your letters by **December 8, 2006**. Each State Center for the Book will notify state winners in mid-March 2007 and national winners in mid-May 2007.

CONTACT INFORMATION

To receive via e-mail **free** teaching materials, including lesson plans, blackline masters, assessment sheets and sample letters, contact the LAL national program director at: lettersaboutlit@epix.net. You can also find additional information at the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress website: loc.gov/letters.

LAL supports national standards for teaching language arts & reading as recommended by the National Council of Teachers of English and the International Reading Association.

HOW-TO-ENTER GUIDELINES

Step 1: Prewriting Discussion

First, REFLECT! 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.

Second, CONNECT! Consider one or more of these questions when writing your letter: Did the characters, conflict or setting mirror your life in some way? 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**?

Third, EXPRESS YOURSELF! A letter is less formal than an essay or research paper. Write honestly, using your natural voice. Two good tips: (1) Do not summarize the plot or analyze the work's literary merits. Letters are conversational, friendly. (2) Correspond, don't compliment! Your entry should not be a fan letter meant to flatter the author.

Step 2: Writing the Letter

Recommended length

Level I: 100-400 words
Level II: 300-600 words
Level III: 500-800 words

Step 3: Preparing Your Letter for Submission

Return Address Print your name and complete address (either home or school) in the upper-right corner of the first page of your letter. Letters without a return address **will be disqualified**.

Letter Format Type or print your letter. Please use ink and write neatly. If the judges cannot read your handwriting, they will disqualify your entry.

Entry Coupon Each letter **must** be accompanied by an entry coupon. (See coupon below.) Staple the coupon to the last page of your letter. Do not use paper clips as they become separated during handling. If you should win a state or a national prize, you will be contacted by your State Center for the Book using the information on your entry coupon. Please be sure this information is both complete and legible!

Mailing Envelope Judges prefer entries in a flat 9x11" envelope. **Important! Indicate the competition level—either I, II, or III—on your envelope.** Use correct postage or your letter will be returned unopened!

Note: All letters become the property of the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress. Please make a copy of your letter for your files as no letters will be returned.

Submission Deadline

Mail all entries **postmarked** by December 8, 2006, to:

LAL 2007
Competition Level (Indicate I, II, or III)
Post Office Box 609
Dallas, PA 18612

TEACHERS/LIBRARIANS: Please note!

- 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.
- Mail class sets in one flat envelope rather than individual envelopes. Use one envelope for each level.
- We regret that we cannot contact every participant who enters. However, an accurate E-MAIL ADDRESS will help us keep in contact with you. Please refer to the Lettersaboutliterature.org website or your State Center for the Book web page (see page 1) for program updates throughout the year!
- Although we cannot acknowledge receipt of letters, we LOVE your cover letters. This will ensure that you are put on the LAL mailing list for next year.

Letters About Literature 2007 Entry Coupon

- **PLEASE PRINT.** Often our failure to contact you is due to incomplete or illegible information on the entry coupon!
- **STAPLE COUPON TO THE BACK OF EACH LETTER.** Use one coupon per reader, rather than one coupon for the entire class.

Name: _____ Age: _____ Home Phone (Optional): (____) _____

Grade (Circle one grade only): Level I: 4 5 6 Level II: 7 8 Level III: 9 10 11 12

Book/Story Title: _____ Author: _____

Home Address: Street _____ City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Parental Signature (If submitting as an individual entry): _____

IMPORTANT! If submitting through a school or library, please complete the additional information below:

School/Library: _____

Street _____ City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

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

Teacher/Librarian Contact: _____ E-mail: _____