



Letters About Literature

writing a winning letter

What is Letters About Literature?

- Letters About Literature is a reading and writing contest for students in grades 4-12.
- Students are asked to read a book, poem or speech and write to the author (living or dead) about how the book affected them personally.
- Letters are judged on state and national levels. Tens of thousands of students from across the country enter Letters About Literature each year.



Writing prompt

- Select a book that you have read and about which you have strong feelings.
- Imagine sitting down with the author of this work and sharing your personal thoughts. Your letter should be personal and sincere, more like a private conversation rather than book report or a fan letter.
- Share specific details both about the book and about your reaction to the book.



Getting Started

- How did the book make you feel?
- What emotions?
- How do you identify with a character or situation in the book?
- How is a character's outlook on a situation different from your own?
- What did the book teach you about your own world?



The letter

- Treat as a private conversation with the author
- Not a fan letter
- Not a book report
- Make it sincere and personal
- Give specific details about your reactions to the book
- Weave detail from the book into your own life



What we look for

Scoring Summary

Criteria, Rounds 1 & 2	Weak (0)	Average (.5)	Above Average (1)
Format & Audience Value = 1	Not in letter format. Writes about rather than to the author, recalling details or reviewing the book	Letter format used. Acknowledges the author through references to characters and conflicts and/or writing style evident in author's work	Letter format used. Engages the author with interesting, personal details that relate to the author's work.
Purpose— Reflection Value = 1	Uses only simple, obvious statements; generalizes rather than personalizes. No supportive details provided to explain reflection.	Expresses an insightful reflection (observation, interpretation, or anecdote), supported by concrete details	Implicitly reveals feelings and thoughts through presentation of the experience; reflection is fully developed with vivid details relative to both author's work and the reader's world
Writer's Voice & Use of Language Value = 1	Writing is flat, factual without voice; does not attempt to elaborate ideas or elaborates only through repetition of the initial statement.	Personality evident through word choice and phrasing; specific, concrete details make the reflection clear to the reader.	Distinct, creative voice; writing strategy enhances reflection; uses sensory details as well as figurative language to describe reflection.
Grammatical Conventions Value = 1	Multiple errors resulting in muddled meaning	Minor errors but meaning is still clear	No significant errors; message is clearly expressed

Submitting Letters

- Submissions are due by December 9.
- Mail to:

Letters About Literature
C/O Ally Mellon
Mississippi Library Commission
3881 Eastwood Drive
Jackson, MS 39211



Additional information

- Check out past winners and read their letters:
<http://read.gov/letters/contests/winners/2017/index.html>
- Teaching guide: <http://read.gov/documents/LAL-Teaching-Guide-REVISED.pdf>
- General information: <http://read.gov/letters>

Questions?

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