



LOW HANGING FRUIT

Letters About Literature—2016 Edition

By Jeannie Standal

The thing that sets the Letters About Literature contest apart from other reading and writing programs is the requirement of self-reflection.

To participate in Letters About Literature, a student drafts a letter to the author of a book that changed his/her point of view, opinion, or inspired him/her in some way. In order to recognize how life has changed, a student must take time to think about his/her life, opinions, behavior, etc. Many students write about finding something within themselves they dislike and want to change. Some recognize the strength of a character in a person they know. Still others want to take on the best traits of a character themselves.

Sometimes a letter becomes more important than wanting to improve one's self. Every year there are a few letters written by brave students who need help. Perhaps they've lived through a traumatic experience or have been treated badly. They use this contest as a vehicle to be heard. If nothing else, a child can realize that if an author has written about the student's experience in a book, s/he is certainly not alone. That can make all the difference in the world.

It is wonderful when a teacher uses Letters About Literature as a class project! Most of the letters tell about healthy growing-up experiences, like reading Wonder and realizing all people have feelings, even those that look different; or reading The Fault in Our Stars and being able to deal better with grief. There are always those letters, though, that are told with such sincerity about real feelings and events, that they immediately rise to the top.

In addition to being a high-quality writing unit that aligns with reading and writing standards of the Idaho Core Standards, Letters About Literature comes with some helpful support materials in the [Teaching Guide](#) to make it easy to get started. Entry deadlines are coming up:

Grades 9-12: December 2, 2016

Grades 7-8: January 9, 2017

Grades 4-6: January 9, 2017

Guidelines, rules, and entry coupons are available at [The Library of Congress Center for the Book Website](#). Start your project today!



A Library of Congress National Reading-Writing Promotion Program

LINKS TO MORE LEARNING



Letters About Literature—

Learn more about LAL at <http://www.read.gov/letters/>

Envelope Art—

In addition to entering letters, it has become a tradition to decorate the envelopes, too! Check out some of the fun and amazing art on the LAL website.

Past Winners:

To get a feel for what is expected in a winning letter, read the past state and national winning letters.

An Introduction to Letter Writing for Elementary Students:

From reading rockets.

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS



The [Teacher Guide](#) Makes it Easy:

Letters About Literature has developed a complete Teacher Guide to help ease the burden of starting from scratch. It includes ready-to-use, Idaho Core aligned lessons and procedures for each level, accompanying worksheets, and answer keys. The lessons cover focus, inquiry, application, assessment, and pulling it all together for the letter.

DIGITAL TOOLS



Access these tools at www.lili.org

Writing Skills Tutorial in LearningExpress Library

Found in the Adult Learning Center, learn brainstorming, organization, grammar, and spelling.

Literary Reference Center

Provides information on thousands of authors and their works.

NoveList & NoveList K-8

Identify fiction and non-fiction reads based on interests or previous favorites. Find a lot of information about authors.

