



LOW HANGING FRUIT

Letters About Literature Writing Contest — Why Teachers Should Care

By Pam Bradshaw

The short answer: Letters About Literature (LAL) dovetails with Idaho Core Standards!

The long answer: Thousands of teachers have found LAL a valuable classroom project. Each year the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress receives hundreds of letters from teachers testifying how the program's theme and guidelines dovetail with state standards for Language Arts. This link to the [Teacher's Guide](#) contains lots of useful suggestions and examples. The guide is newly revised and comprehensive; it includes information on how the contest meets several sets of standards, including Common Core State Standards.

The Idaho Commission for Libraries, in conjunction with the Library of Congress Center for the Book, began supporting the writing contest in 2013. The contest challenges readers in grades 4-12 to write a personal letter to an author explaining how that author's work changed the reader's view of the world.

Prizes are awarded in three categories on the state and national level. Go to [Letters About Literature](#) on the Library of Congress website to read some of the past winners' letters—don't forget to check out the envelope art! Then read the [Rules and Guidelines](#) to find out how students or entire classes can enter.

Look at the Envelope Art!

By encouraging personal reader response and reflexive writing, LAL encourages meaningful reading and helps to create successful writers. The Commission staff love awarding prizes to Idaho's newest writers.

Visit <http://libraries.idaho.gov/lal> for more information about Letters About Literature.

Contest Entry Deadlines

- Level 3 (Grades 9-12)
December 15, 2014
- Level 2 (Grades 7-8)
January 15, 2015
- Level 1 (Grades 4-6)
January 15, 2015

LINKS TO MORE LEARNING



Emily Post's Writing Personal Letters

Emily Post, the first name in manners and etiquette, takes new letter writers through a step-by-step guide to writing an appropriate personal letter. [Emilypost.com](http://emilypost.com)

Online Writing Lab

Purdue University's Online Writing Lab has direction for many types of letter writing, including personal correspondence. <http://owl.english.purdue.edu>

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS



Finding Read Alikes

NoveList is Idaho's go-to place for reader's advisory. Whether it's find the next best read after the thrill of a popular trilogy or just finding *any* book that might engage that student in reading at all.

NoveList creates recommendations based on subjects, genres, appeal terms along with expert evaluations and recommendations. The appeal terms consider storyline, pace, tone, writing style, and more to expand beyond just the subject. Those characteristics are what draw readers to one dystopian adventure, but not to another.

To find read alike in NoveList, start by searching for a preferred title. Then, select the specific facets that appeal the most to the reader, and search for other titles with those same facets. It's a great tool for finding something new to appeal to hard-to-please readers.

DIGITAL TOOLS



Novelist Plus

Find fiction and non-fiction reading recommendations for all ages. Search by book title, author, genre, or key plot points. Includes information for book discussions and common core lessons. [Access now.](#)

Literary Reference Center

Provides information on thousands of authors and their works across literary disciplines and timeframes. [Access now.](#)

