

LETTERS ABOUT LITERATURE

May 2014



**West Virginia Center for the Book
at the
West Virginia Library Commission
1900 Kanawha Boulevard, East
Culture center
Charleston, West Virginia 25305
(304)-558-3978
www.librarycommission.wv.gov**

ABOUT 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 that 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.

Is there a favorite book or poem that changed your life? Why not write to that author and tell him or her just how important it was? **Letters About Literature**, sponsored by the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress, encourages students to write to authors. Winners receive national recognition. If you are in grades 4-12, you are eligible to enter the **Letters About Literature** reading and writing contest.

Select a fiction or nonfiction book 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 these questions when writing your letter: What did the book show you about your world that you never noticed before? What did you realize about yourself as a result of reading this book? Why was this work meaningful to you? How do you know the author's work influenced you? Write a persuasive letter stating your opinion and supporting that opinion with specific details. 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!

STATE AND NATIONAL AWARDS

Letters About Literature awards prizes on both the state and national levels. The first step in competing is to submit a letter to the National Judges at the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C.

This year the letters submitted from West Virginia went through two rounds of national judging before being sent to the Center for the Book in Charleston. Out of 776 letters, we only received 164 here in Charleston! So every letter we received deserves recognition for this achievement alone.

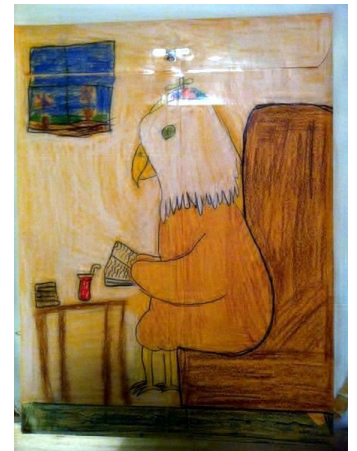
Each participating state center has its own panel of judges who select the top letter-writers in the state. Our West Virginia judges chose three winners from each competition level; the Top Honors participant receives a check for \$100 and goes on to the final round of national judging, and the two Honors participants each receive a check for \$50. These cash prizes are generously supplied by the West Virginia Humanities Council. A panel of national judges for the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress will select one National Winner per competition level to receive a \$1,000 cash award. These judges will also select one National Honor winner per competition level to receive a \$200 cash award.

We try, as always, to advance the very best but we also include some letters that simply express honest emotion, or "heart". Keep in mind that this program is intended to motivate and reward reluctant readers and struggling writers as well as those who are enthusiastic readers and polished writers. When submitting letters to the national judges, or reprinting them in this anthology, we are allowed to make minimal edits, such as correcting spelling or punctuation. However, we are not allowed to rewrite passages or correct obvious stumbling or struggling use of language.



The response to this project is so great that the West Virginia Center for the Book is able to publish only the essays receiving Top Honors, Honors, and Honorable Mention Awards. The order of appearance does not reflect students' scoring. Names are withheld by request, or in the event that documentation permitting the release of a student's name is unavailable.

(Some participants submit their letters in envelopes they decorate. These are two envelopes from the Library of Congress.)



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Honors:

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STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
1900 KANAWHA BOULEVARD, EAST
CHARLESTON, WV 25305
(304) 558-2000

EARL RAY TOMBLIN
GOVERNOR

GREETINGS FROM GOVERNOR TOMBLIN

As Governor, I welcome you to the West Virginia Culture Center for the 2014 Letters About Literature award ceremony.

This contest is the perfect chance to celebrate the Mountain State's most gifted young writers. I applaud the hard work, determination and tenacity, which bring these extraordinary kids here today.

The written word opens up a whole new world for the youth of today. Books give us the freedom to travel, experience and imagine without limitation. As keys to exotic lands and amazing personalities, books transport us to fascinating places and introduce us to remarkable characters, which we enjoy and from which we can learn.

Let me commend the Library Commission and the West Virginia Center for the Book for making this special competition a reality. It's a wonderful opportunity for Mountain State students, and I'm proud of every participant.

Let me shout out big congratulations to this year's finalists and winners! I have no doubt you will continue to be successful.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Earl Ray Tomblin".

Earl Ray Tomblin
Governor



Dear Letters About Literature writers,

Congratulations to all of you. Your teachers, parents and the people of West Virginia are proud of you.

Each of you wrote a letter demonstrating how much literature impacts the lives of everyone. Sharing our stories is important. Stories influence the personality and lifestyle of both readers and writers. By participating in Letters About Literature, you have influenced others.

Today we congratulate you on your excellent letters to your favorite authors. Your letters clearly illustrate the theme of the Letters About Literature project – Books Change Lives. The impact literature has on your lives will extend far beyond today's ceremony.

Books will always be there for you as friends and companions – all you will have to do is reach for them. And libraries and librarians will always be ready to help you find the best book for you at the moment you find yourself in. Read, write, and watch the fun begin.

This anthology contains the letters of those receiving Top Honors, Honors, and Honorable Mention awards. Each of those letters has been through national screening and state level judging. I wish it was possible to print the letters of all 164 students whose letters were chosen for state level judging. I wish it was possible to print the letters of all 776 West Virginia students who accepted the challenge of Letters About Literature and wrote from the heart.

That not being possible, each of you who wrote a letter has the admiration of a grateful librarian. Thank you for reading. Thank you for sharing how a book changed you or changed how you look at the world. Please keep reading. Please keep writing. The world will be better for your efforts.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Karen Goff".

Karen Goff, Secretary of the West Virginia Library Commission
Coordinator of the West Virginia Center for the Book at the West Virginia Library Commission

FEATURED SPEAKER



Colleen Anderson owns Mother Wit Writing and Design, a creative studio in Charleston. She writes poems, essays, fiction, nonfiction, and songs. In 2012, her first children's book, Missing: Mrs. Cornblossom, won a Moonbeam Children's Book Award. See more of Colleen's work by visiting www.colleenanderson.com.

Colleen says about herself:

I was born in Bay City, Michigan, and attended Immanuel Lutheran Elementary School and Bay City Central High School. After two years at Western Michigan University Honors College, I left school temporarily to serve with VISTA (Volunteers In Service To America) in Cabin Creek, West Virginia. There I helped start Cabin Creek Quilts, a cooperative of 150 low-income quilters. Following 15 months of volunteer service and a year of work as an editor, I returned to college, this time at West Virginia University. I received my B.A. in English from WVU in 1975 and a Master's degree in Humanities from Marshall University in 2000.

I have been self-employed as a writer and designer since 1975, and formed Mother Wit Writing and Design in 1983. My creative studio has earned numerous honors, including West Virginia Communicators' Best of Show award and several First Place awards from the National Federation of Press Women.

My stories and poems have been published by the PEN Syndicated Fiction Project, *Redbook*, *Embers*, *Kestrel*, *Arts & Letters*, *Passager*, *Carolina Quarterly*, *The Sun*, and many other periodicals. My songs have been featured on Public Radio International's "Mountain Stage" and "The Folk Sampler," and I have produced two albums of original songs, *Fabulous Realities* (1991) and *Going Over Home* (2001). My writing has earned two Individual Artist Fellowships from the West Virginia Commission on the Arts. I live and work in Charleston, West Virginia.

JUDGES

Belinda Anderson

Author
Asbury, WV

Eva McGuire

Director, Craft Memorial Library
Bluefield, WV

Cheryl Harshman

Director,
Paul N. Elbin Library
West Liberty University
West Liberty, WV

June Robinson

Program Director, WVPASS
WV Dept. of Education and the Arts
Charleston, WV

Jay Cole

Chief of Staff
Office of the President
West Virginia University
Morgantown, WV

T.W. McNemar

Author
Stonewood, WV

A NOTE FROM OUR JUDGE, MR. JAY COLE

Serving as a judge for the Letters About Literature competition is a joy. I know that by reading these letters, I will be moved and amused, inspired and provoked, delighted and depressed, awestruck and heartbroken by their honesty, creativity, and depth. Reading has been an absolutely essential part of my life, from solving mysteries with the Hardy Boys to getting lost in a dark wood with Dante. As I get older, I am greatly consoled to know that young people, awash in a sea of blogs, posts, and tweets, still take time to read books, poems, and stories—and, as these letters reveal, that they still draw comfort and lessons from them. May it be ever thus.

Signed,

Level Three Judge

Jay Cole

Chief of Staff

Office of the President

West Virginia University

A NOTE FROM OUR JUDGE, MS. BELINDA ANDERSON

Here's a "novel" approach to encouraging youth to persevere through challenges, to be more appreciative, to resist being bullies or judgmental.

Hand a kid a book.

This year's Letters About Literature entries illustrate how a book can change the way young people think, for the better. One student wrote to author Laura Tarshis, "I have said hurtful things about people who cannot help their circumstances ... Since reading, 'I Survived the Battle of Gettysburg' I want to raise awareness about bullying and inequality."

Even books that seem to be pure entertainment can impart values. "Your book, *Casper Friends Forever* made me see that you shouldn't judge people," another student wrote. "It taught me that no matter how people look, their clothes, their family, or where they come from, you should be their friend."

Green Eggs and Ham taught that same lesson to another young writer: "The lesson is not to judge anything just by how it looks. If you judge a person by his or her appearance you might miss out on meeting a good person or making a new friend. ... If you don't try a sport because it looks too hard and complicated you might be missing out on something."

Parents who wish their children were more appreciative might slip them a copy of *The Cay*. "I learned to always be thankful for what you have, because it can be gone the next day," wrote one entrant.

Many of the letter writers related how a book had taught them to persevere. "It changed my life because it told me not to quit," said a reader of *The Blind Side*. "It taught me not to be afraid and to face my fears," another said of *Always*. "*Hatchet* inspired me to never give up," was another comment. *Dork Diaries* inspired a reader to write, "I learned to always try."

Even very young readers can find inspiration in a book. One fourth-grader was only five years old when she went to her first foster home. "I thought I didn't have love anymore," she wrote. Then she found *The Kissing Hand* on a shelf. "It has helped me through difficult times when my life has fallen apart."

These letters reveal children who intend to be kinder and who are more determined to surmount life's challenges.

We have books to thank for that.

Signed,

Level One Judge

Belinda Anderson

Belinda Anderson is the author of the middle-grade novel, *Jackson vs. Witchy Wanda: Making Kid Soup*, published by Mountain State Press. She has been designated as a Master Artist working with emerging writers through the West Virginia Division of Culture and History, and also with the Monroe Arts Alliance. She also makes presentations through the Carnegie Creative Classrooms program.

LEVEL ONE

Top Honors

Heavenly Adkins—

George C. Weimer Elementary

The Kissing Hand by Audrey Penn

Dear Audrey Penn,

My life is different than others. I don't have a family, no life either. But when I read your book, *The Kissing Hand*, I discovered that I have my own little world. I was five years old when I went to my first foster home. I thought I didn't have love anymore. Like Chester the Raccoon, I didn't want to leave my mom, but I knew it was the best thing for me, even if it seemed "strange and scary at first." I can still remember my mom crying. That day I didn't know that love could hurt like it did. On that very last day with my mom, my heart tore apart.

The next day, I was sent to my first foster home, and I saw your book, *The Kissing Hand* on the bookshelf. On the first page, I read 'To Stefanie Rebecca Koren and children who love to be loved.' I felt like your book was made for me. Missing people hurts a lot. I just had to read the first page and I couldn't stop.

I think I can relate to Chester the Raccoon because when I got to the foster home, I thought the other kids would be mean and hurt me. But then his mother kissed his hand and he wasn't scared anymore. At first I called my grandmother crying, and she told me that she was with me at all times and that her love was with me too. This helped me get through the situation that was difficult.

The most memorable thing was when I open your book for the first time and noticed your dedication page. What caught my eyes was "children everywhere who love to be loved." I cannot explain how much I needed that. At the end of the story Chester kissed his mother's hand and said 'I love you'. The mother felt loved too. I never knew what love was about until I read your book. Your book speaks out to me! It speaks to my heart!

Now, I am eleven years old, and I am in fourth grade. Even though your book is for little kids, I still carry my feelings that your book gave to me always. My life is a lot better now. I live with my grandmother and I get the things that I need like clothes, food, and a roof over my head. I have a grandmother's love that is filling in the holes of my heart. Thank you for writing your book. It has helped me through difficult times when my life has fallen apart.

Sincerely,
Heavenly Adkins

Honors

Jasmyne Weis—Mullens Middle School

I Survived the Battle of Gettysburg by Laura Tarshis

Dear Laura Tarshis,

Life is not fair. If something is fair it is when everyone is treated equally and kindly. I am a Pittsburgh Steelers fan. When the game starts the teams decide who gets the ball first by flipping a coin. This is fair. Sometimes referees do not call fair calls because they like one team or coach more than another. This is not fair. Life is not fair and needs to be fairer.

Your book *I survived the Battle of Gettysburg* made me realize how unfair life really is. When the boy in the story gets beaten, has to work in the cotton fields for long hours, and gets sold as if he were property because he is not white made me realize what the true meaning of freedom and fairness really is. It reminded me of times at my school or on the playground when kids were picked on because of things they can't help. Kids being separated or left feeling unwanted or understood because they are different or poor or not athletic is not fair. I have a basketball goal, gloves, bats, and parents who played sports so I have all of these advantages. Others however are not as fortunate and may not be as good in sports. This doesn't mean they should be treated anymore different than me or others.

I know this book and your words have helped me because the more I thought about the boy in this book and some of the kids at school, I myself felt guilty. I have said hurtful things about people who cannot help their circumstances. I didn't beat anyone or make them work for me. I didn't sale them as property, but I did treat them unfairly. Since reading *I survived the Battle of Gettysburg* I want to raise awareness about bullying and inequality. I want to raise awareness and with your penned words, you have helped me realize this.

Sincerely,
Jasmyne Weis

Honors

Tyler Chapman—Shady Spring Elementary School

Miss Fox's Class Goes Green by Anne Kennedy

Dear Anne Kennedy,

Your book *Miss Fox's Class Goes Green* inspired me because I didn't know what my world would look like if we didn't recycle. This year I'm on the Green Team. The Green Team consists of kids in the 5th grade that recycle for the school's glass, paper, and plastic. When our teacher Mrs. Collins asked who would like to be on the Green Team my hand went up like a rocket! After school was out I went home and I said, "Mom we need to recycle so the world's people can go outside, and enjoy the fresh air, the birds chirping, the sunshine, and the children playing outside." I would hate to see the air fogging up from pollution,

we probably couldn't even breathe. I would also hate to see kids sitting inside, rather than playing outside and helping out the environment. So school has passed for a while and my friends and I was like you see that trash in our neighborhood, we need to pick it up and recycle it. My friends came over to my house and helped me recycle around the neighborhood. I just wanted you to know that this book changed my habits due to learning about recycling.

Your Friend,
Tyler Chapman

Honorable Mention
Lindsay MacDuff—Hurricane Middle School
***The Cay* by Theodore Taylor**

Dear Theodore Taylor,
The Cay inspired me to do good things to good people. It told me inside that I can do anything because God is always watching on me and steers me in the right direction not the bad. When Timothy had died and Phillip was depressed and sad because he just started to get to know him and then he died and it was just horrible. I have been in Phillip's shoes before because I never got to meet my great grandmother because she had died two years before I was born. I wish I had got to know her because I hear all these wonderful stories about her yet I didn't get to meet her and I'm really devastated over the death of my great grandmother that I truly know nothing about.

Phillip is me in this story. When I read the part where Phillip judged Timothy on his color not his personality it struck me because I have judged people on their hair, face, teeth, and the way they dress. I finally realized that I shouldn't judge a book by its cover because words hurt. I have been judged many times on my looks. I just let it blow off my shoulders because they don't know me and my personality yet I'm one of the judging people too. Two wrongs never make a right and I've read that quote to myself many times. When I hear that one of my friends get judged I go up to the person and say nice, quiet, and brief no two wrongs make a right. This book inspired me to do good things, not bad.

Sincerely,
Lindsay MacDuff

Honorable Mention
Morgan Boyles—Fairmont Catholic Grade School
***The Boy Project* by Kami Kinard**

Dear Kami Kinard,
I love your book *The Boy Project*. It's both funny and dramatic. Especially the boys' bathroom scene! I also like the ending. I never thought she would date someone like him.

But not only did I like your book, it sort of changed me. It changed my perspective of boys. If you get too into boys, it can get you in trouble, like detention. It can get you made fun of, it can do so many things to ruin your life. It can make your best friend's heart break, and all those things would be all your fault. And when you do get into a relationship you spend all your free time with him. Sometimes you make time by skipping sports, skipping school, not doing homework, etc. And when you think that's bad, just think: his family could be a gang of psycho killers and thieves who would kill you in an instant! No, I'm kidding about that part. But seriously, letter time.

So why does she go hunting for boys anyway? I mean, the only thing you do with him is hang out in the bleachers of the football

stadium (well, at this age) and talk about stuff you both like. Trust me. And half the time they want to talk about sports or cars or stupid things like that. I've had a few guys in my life. I just pretend to follow along and put some "yeah's" and some "okay's" in the talking to make it sound like I'm listening while I stare into space. And they fall for it, too. Boys aren't exactly the smartest little creatures in the world. You don't think boys are little, huh? Go talk to my friend, Uzair.

So there's just one more thing. Why would a bunch of seventh graders be playing spin the bottle?! Aren't seventh graders too young to be kissing in a closet? Then again, it's a book. What does the real world have to do with anything?

Remember the whole "one more thing" thing? Yeah, I lied. I just need to ask a few more questions. Numero uno: why would Maybelline (forgot her real name) have a giant diaper on her? How would she even get giant diaper?! Is there a store across the street labeled "Giant Diapers Sold Here" or something?

Second: who goes into a boys' restroom?! It's probably nasty and smelly and gross! I mean, boys go in there. BOYS! Eeeew... not to be rude or sexist, I just find guys kind of gross. The way they randomly make fart noises with their mouths in class, how they always flirt in the most disturbing ways, and how they find those weird, cussing and inappropriate people on YouTube funny. Just. Ew.

Well, I hoped you enjoyed me going on and on about your book. But this is how I imagine your reaction:

Me: [finally ends blabbering]

You: wow that was long. Too long. Way too long.

Me: it could have been longer...

You: yeah. If it were the HUNGER GAMES!!!

Me: oh, stop whining.

You: I'm not whining, I'm complaining. This is whining: OOOH IT WAS SOOOO LOOONG AND NOT TO MENTTON YOUR DREEE-AAADFUUUUL BLAAAAABERING...

Me: wow, you had to do that.

You: yes I did.

Me: WHAT YOU GOT A PROBLEM?!

You: yeah. With your attitude.

Me: alright... COME AT ME!!!

[Indispicable from here)

CrITicAl ScrIPt eRRoR,

Hope you had a laugh!

Your fan,
Morgan Boyles

Honorable Mention
Zachary Morphew—Fairmont Catholic Grade School
***The Chronicles of Narnia* by C.S. Lewis**

Dear CS Lewis,
My mom had been addicted to your books long before I was even alive. She read them in her free time in high school when she had free time mostly because there was not much else to do. Quickly she started to read those before she went to bed in her house at night and woke up early in the morning to read them as well. I stumbled across these books early in my childhood when mom told me to pick something for her to read to me at night. The book looked interesting and little did I actually know that this was *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*.

Two years later they were showing the movie on the Disney Channel and I had forgotten about the book. Mom decided to watch the movie because she thought I would like to see it, and I did. I loved the movie from the beginning to the end. After that I read the book

now that I was capable to read it. I was surprised to see that the book was even better than the movie and that opened up a possibility to me. I did not know what writing was until then. I thought books just appeared, but thanks to that book I had had just a little bit of a start. Fast forward two years again. I was now in the third grade reading "The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe" for the second time in my life. Our teacher "Mrs. Boyers" was watching me read over my shoulder along with everyone else in the class. We had been assigned to read the book and after every one in the class was done we would have a party themed after it. I couldn't wait until the day came, I read the book moderately faster than the other kids in my class even though many of them were very fast. It had only taken me five days to read it. I was so into the book at the time that I read the second one, and then the third, and then the fourth, until I got to the end of the series. Now the series had done three things for me. It had made me read more than I had ever read in my life, it had inspired me to be a writer, and it had also made my faith stronger. Thank you for all your wonderful Narnia series that I wish could never end, thank you very much.

One of your fans,
Zachary Morphew

Honorable Mention
Jacey Beeler—George C. Weimer Elementary School
***Always* by Alison McGhee**

Dear Alison McGhee,
I have read a lot of life changing books, but your book, *Always*, changed my life big time. It is like a little piece of the bible and a book for the angels all in one. While I read it made me feel as safe as a child being held by her mom. Because of your book now I believe there are angels all around me.

Your book made me feel safe. It taught me to not be afraid and to face my fears. Your book taught me to do what is best and to help one another. There are many challenges in life and your book taught me to be aware and to face them.

Your book made me feel protected. In the story, the dog said he would protect the kid. That made me wonder, am I protected? It also had me wondering am I safe? After I thought about it, I realized that I was safe because I have a shelter over my head and good parents that take care of me. Your book helped me to appreciate my parents.

Also, your book helped me to believe there are angels all around me. The tiny pup is like an angel guardian. He fights back everything that tries to harm. I realized that my parents are like angels who protect me at all times. They don't let us walk home from school, and they hold our hands when we are walking in a crowded mall. My parents are there to protect me.

Your book is life changing because it made me feel safe. Like the pup that protects his family, my parents are the angels in my life who protect me and keep me safe. Your book helped me learn there is more to life than what you think. This book taught me to believe you are safe with your family.

Love,
Jacey Beeler

Honorable Mention
Zara Zervos—Glen Dale Elementary School
***Frindle* by Andrew Clements**

Dear Andrew Clements,
As a fifth grade student, I have had many wonderful teachers throughout my school years. For as long as I can remember, I have always loved books. When I was in pre-school, my teacher further developed this passion by writing out the stories I told her, so I could author my own books. My second grade teacher introduced me to rich vocabulary and elements of writing through a book series. I still keep up-to-date with the newest releases from that series. It was not until I read your book, *Frindle*, that I realized just how special the bond between a student and teacher really is, and how much the book affected me.

I had a teacher who was similar to your demanding Mrs. Granger, in many ways. Like Mrs. Granger, during times I had questions, my teacher, Mrs. Henline, did not simply provide me with an answer. Instead, she directed me to self-learning by encouraging me to do things on my own, discovering the answer, and then sharing what I had learned with my classmates. At the time, I'm sure I was frustrated or pouty as any child would be. Now, I understand and appreciate the value of the lesson learned. As a learner, I am much more self-reliant and confident in my own abilities, thanks to lessons learned in books such as yours, and subsequently, Mrs. Henline.

Though no longer my teacher, I know that Mrs. Henline remains a support system in my life. She has sent me notes of encouragement and pride when I have succeeded in activities both academic and extracurricular and has understood my disappointment when the outcome isn't what I had hoped for. Like Nick, I hope to have a lasting relationship with my teacher, and that one day I may demonstrate my appreciation by honoring her in some way.

Someday I too, hope to become a classroom teacher. I will take these lessons I have learned through *Frindle* as well as my own experiences as a student. My goal as a teacher would be to instill the love of learning in my students as well as self-reliance and desire. I can only imagine the feeling of accomplishment achieved through mutual respect between a teacher and their pupil, and can only dream of one day earning that reward. This invaluable satisfaction is the most enduring message which I have gained as a result of reading *Frindle*.

Sincerely,
Zara Zervos

Honorable Mention
Payton Lewis—Hurricane Middle School
***Mick Harte Was Here* by Barbara Park**

Dear Barbara Park,
I read your book *Mick Harte Was Here*. After reading it I discovered one specific thing about myself, and how that changed my perspective on life. I realized this especially when I went through the same situation Phoebe went through throughout the book. All I can say about this work is that it changed my life.

In the first chapters of the book you told me about how Mick and Phoebe's relationship as brother and sister was different from others. They were in a fight like most brothers and sisters. You told me how Mick wanted Phoebe to take his bike, but she refused to because of the fight. I understood why Phoebe would do that, but I didn't understand why you would take that day, and time for Mick Harte to die. I literally remember myself thinking about it over and

over again. I had the words burned into my head exactly the way they were described and written. The feeling of knowing what guilt had sneaked into Phoebe's life made me so angry, so infuriated, and so broken. I had to put it in a distant corner of my mind just to stop feeling that way.

Once I had started reading again I found that I could not put it down. I couldn't understand why, for I had been furious before. Then I got to a page I can still remember to this day and I'm sure forever when Phoebe was walking through the crowd and a boy shouted, "Hey!, that's the sister of the dead boy!" Those may not be the exact words, but I remember how disrespected and hurt Phoebe felt, so much that I felt that same emotion. When I also read the part Phoebe admitted to her dad that it was her fault I felt just like her. It felt like I was in the car. I felt absolutely connected.

Later on after finishing your book, I myself had a loved one pass away. Then it hit me that me and Phoebe were connected. I felt crushed and guilty just like her. I ended up blaming myself for everything just as Phoebe did. I felt like I was walking through it alone, but then I thought about your book even more. I thought about how one part of my life drifted away. I realized how dark the world could really be. But I referred back to Phoebe and how she made it through. Eventually I made it through too. But now it pains me to see others feel the same guilt me and Phoebe were connected with. Now I can help them thanks to you Ms. Park. I realized I am more delicate, yet stronger than I thought. I loved this book.

Sincerely,
Payton Lewis

Honorable Mention
Matthew Bliven—Hurricane Middle School
Warriors: The Darkest Hour by Erin Hunter

Dear Erin Hunter,
Your book *Warriors: The Darkest Hour* showed me several things about my world that I never noticed before. When Bloodclan invaded the forest, it was a dangerous time for the clans. Even though they were enemies, they united and overcame the Bloodclan invasion. What I noticed about my world is that even though kids don't like and argue with each other, if a bully comes along, they can work together to stop him. It takes teamwork to overcome a problem.

After the war ended, many cats died because of wounds. I learned that times are tough, but life must go on. You can't keep failing tests because your thoughts are on a dead person—you have to focus on improving things in the present.

Always listen to others' opinions. Firestar had some tough choices at times, so he asked other wise cats like Whitestorm for advice. You should always think before you take action, and Firestar was doing a good job of that.

The cats of all clans are always determined and they usually succeed in what they do. I learned that determination is the engine driving the car up the road of success. If you are determined, you can accomplish whatever you set your mind to.

The most important life lesson I learned from your book is to always be prepared. Things happen in life—things like the recent chemical spill in Charleston, WV—that you have to be prepared for. If you're not, bad things could happen. If the clans didn't

know how to fight, Bloodclan would have killed them all. But thanks to their battle skills, the clans lived on. Your book showed me some important things, Erin Hunter. It was very interesting, too!

Sincerely,
Matthew Bliven

Honorable Mention
Abby Woodyard—South Charleston Middle School
Tuck Everlasting by Natalie Babbitt

Natalie Babbitt :
Your book *Tuck Everlasting* related to a huge decision I had to make just like Winnie. I didn't have a great childhood. My mother was divorced when I was very young, and my dad was a horrible person. He drank and stole money from his mom. I would come down to play with him, but all he did was sleep in his bed. I lived with my mom and grandma who were both very mature, as am I. So later on in my life, she got re-married to a man whom I now call my dad. Winnie had to choose from immortality or living her life. I had to choose between my biological father and Shane, the man I now call my dad. The situation went to court, and finally I got my name changed!

Your book reminded me that you will have many tough choices to make, but you need to pick what is best for you in the long run. I felt like we had a connection as two girls with a huge decision to make.

Sincerely,
Abby Woodyard

Honorable Mention
Name Withheld—South Middle School
Green Eggs and Ham by Dr. Seuss

Dear Dr. Seuss,
Your book, *Green Eggs and Ham*, taught me a really good lesson. The lesson is not to judge anything just by how it looks. You should always try new things and not judge by their appearance. Just because something isn't normal doesn't mean that you won't like it. Green eggs and ham might look different but I bet they taste good.

If you judge a person by his or her appearance you might miss out on meeting a good person or making a new friend. Also, if you judge a meal by its appearance then you might miss out on having a good meal. If you judge animals by their appearance then you might miss out on having a good time with animals. If you don't try a game because it looks boring you might be missing out on a fun game. If you don't try a sport because it looks too hard and complicated you might be missing out on something.

Thank you Doctor Seuss for helping me understand that just because something looks different doesn't mean it is different!

Sincerely,
Name Withheld

LEVEL TWO

Top Honors

Henry Ace Lipscomb—Princeton Middle School
***The Hiding Place* by Corrie Ten Boom**

Dear Corrie Ten Boom,
Hello, my name is Ace Lipscomb and I am writing to you about your book *The Hiding Place*. Your autobiography has had a monumental change in my life. I cannot begin to explain how many opinions you have shifted, or thoughts you have provoked on many different people and situations. I gained many life lessons from your book! I have picked a few that has influenced and impacted my life the most, they are as follows: carrying the right amount of knowledge, dealing with death, forgiveness, making the best of the situation, keeping hope, not lying, and doing what you can to the best of your ability. I can apply all of these things to my life, and each virtue affects my life in a separate, each important, way.

The first thing I would like to discuss is the concept of carrying knowledge. This is the most recent lesson that has affected my life. I recently graduated into middle school and there are several people that talk about things that they have no idea about. Such things include sex. I never really joined in on these conversations simply because I thought that it was weird. After I read your book, I was more than satisfied with the reason Casper gave me: The knowledge is simply too heavy.

The second thing your book taught me is how to deal with death. Very recently a close member of my family passed away. I knew that she had died but none of it actually seemed real. After reading your novel I learned to accept the fact that I would never see her again. But just as your book stated, God gave me the strength just in time. And what a wonderful relief it was.

Another two valuable lessons I learned from your novel are to forgive, and to make the best of every situation. Forgiveness has always been a little bit hard for me. I never really could find myself to forgive another human being for his/her own wrong doing. Isn't it their fault? Your book taught me otherwise. Humans are only human. Your autobiography also made me recall how many times I was forgiven. After reading your book I let all of my ancient grudges go. Like forgiveness, making the best of the situation does not come all that easy to me. I am a pessimist by nature but your novel has taught me that you will be much more satisfied if you focus on what you have or what you can do rather than what you cannot. Once again your book has completely shifted my mindset.

Two more concepts your book has taught me are keeping hope and not lying. Contrary to the prior lessons these two, I have never really had trouble with. As for keeping hope I feel like I am not easily discouraged. Although as I read your book I pictured myself in your position, and I always felt hopeless. As I read on you taught me to never lose hope. I will never forget that either. The concept of being truthful has always been on the upmost im-

portance of my life, but just as many other things you changed my perspective. I have always thought that you can make small lies

for a good cause. Your autobiography said something else. For example, in your novel when the boys were hiding under the coffee table and Nollie told the German officer where they were, I thought that was absurd! Everything turned out perfectly fine though.

The last concept I am going to mention is to do what you can, to the best of your ability. I learned this mostly from your mother. I was truly inspired by how much happiness she gave people. Even after she had a stroke, she gave just as much love as before. Now I strive to do as much as she did.

In conclusion, there is no way that I can truly conclude all the informative concepts your book has given to me. I have learned to carry the right amount of knowledge, how to deal with death, to forgive, and to do what you can, to the best of your ability.

Sincerely,
Henry Ace Lipscomb

Honors

Brandon Lester—Pike View Middle School
***Night* by Elie Wiesel**

Dear Mr. Wiesel,
I live on a farm in southern West Virginia. In our area boys my age hunt, fish, and play sports. That is all we talk about. It is a fairly peaceful area with lots of mountains, valleys, and creeks. It is not crowded, and there are few crimes. I guess in many ways it is the perfect life for a boy my age. My world has been much like a "snow globe", safe and sound from the bad of the outside world. It isn't that it has been perfect or pain free. I guess if I am honest, in some ways I have felt as if my family has been dealt a bad hand. My dad had cancer, and my baby sister died at birth, so I never got to know her. In the last four years we have had close friends and family die, and tons of illnesses to deal with. It seems my second home is a hospital, doctor's office, or funeral home. In addition to all of this, we have had what I thought was more than our fair share of financial hardship. I have compared myself to others that have had more and felt envious. It is funny the things we look at when we are determining how well we are or are not doing. That all changed when I read your book, *Night*, and my "globe" cracked. No, I think it would be more accurate to say that it shattered, because a crack wouldn't have hurt so much. I thought I knew what pain and suffering was, but now I know that I really do not.

When I selected your book I thought it sounded interesting. I had always wanted to learn more about the Holocaust and world War II. Really it was just supposed to be another reading project, something I had to do to get a good grade. It turned out that it wasn't. It has become something much more. The first night I

began reading, the more pages I turned the more it hurt. Night after night I kept reading, and soon I couldn't sleep. The images of small children's bodies burning, people waiting day after day to find out if they would be executed, people starving, a small boy with a violin, all of these images filled my head. Then the questions began racing through my mind. How could this have happened? What kinds of people treat other people like that? Who shoots babies for sport? How could this have been happening and the governments of the world doing nothing to stop it for so long? Are people suffering like this in the world today? I had questions that needed answers.

Where I live a boy or a man is considered a "sissy" if he cries. You can cry at funerals, but nowhere else, but while reading the book the tears came, and I could not stop crying. I didn't want to cry, but the reality of what happened hurt too much. I kept telling myself I needed to be a man, but how do you look through someone else's eyes and see so much horror, pain, and suffering and not cry? There are numerous tragedies occurring every day in the world. There are people out there selling little girls as prostitutes. Shouldn't someone hurt enough to cry for them? Maybe if we allow ourselves to feel the pain of others we would do more to stop the terrible things that are going on in the world.

Then there are the vivid images of starving Jews in my mind that make me realize there are people who are still starving in the world, and now when I sit down to eat I appreciate my food more. When I get on the bus, I think of what it must have been like to have been a child during the Holocaust that was taken from their home and parents to a place they didn't want to go. I am thankful that my bus ride will only take me to school, and then return me home. I wonder how many children in the world today are being taken from their homes and sold as slaves. At school I think how lucky I am that I can receive an education. I go to church on Sunday and think of how blessed I am that I can worship God, when there are so many people who have died for doing the same thing. I go to bed at night and thank God that I have been so blessed. I want to live my life doing things that make a difference in the world.

Nighttime makes me think of you and wonder if you ever found your faith in God again. It troubled me to know that a person could see so much horror, live through so many hardships, and be beaten down so badly that you could lose your faith. I ask myself how I would have felt had I been through what you had. Would I have lost my faith as well? Who would I have seen in the mirror? it scares me to think about it. I'm thankful I read your book. I don't want to be blind to the needs of others. If I choose not to see, then I am no different than those in the world that knew the horrible things that were happening in the concentration camps and turned their heads and let it happen. I feel reading your book has made me a better person. Please know that you are in my prayers.

With much gratitude,
Brandon Lester

Honors
Kennah Salmons—Crum Middle School
***The Freedom Writers Diary* by Erin Gruwell**

Dear Erin Gruwell,
Your book, *The Freedom Writers Diary*, is morally inspiring. The sentiment applied to the diary entries is extravagantly powerful. It takes my roaming mind beyond this earth. It feels as if it allows my mind to scramble to destinations far away. Your book has helped me overcome so many hindrances throughout my life. Honestly, when I saw your book, I didn't think it was much more than just another book about racism and teenager's hardships. After about ten pages, I realized my assumption was erroneous. I am so grateful that I decided to read your phenomenal book. While my nose was buried into your book, it felt like I had a safe place to go to whenever I needed it. Knowing that these excruciating things the students are talking about are true is so very heart-breaking and implausible. Erin Gruwell, you are very strong not only to confront a class of "unreachable, at risk" students, but to transform them to a much better person. You accomplished all of these magnificent things at such an adolescent age. You have truly inspired me! This is my way of saying thank you.

First of all, your book spoke to me in a way nothing else in this world can. The time you intercepted a note with ugly racial caricature and angrily declared that that was precisely the sort of thing that led to the Holocaust, it really woke me up. You taught me that racism is real, and it damages our world more and more each and every day. Throughout your book, I learnt to always have hope, and miraculous things will happen. When my father was diagnosed with two types of cancer in January of 2012, it felt like your book was there to comfort me when nothing else could I had hope, even through the hardest of times, and now my beloved father is cancer-free! Not only did you transform your students into great people but you and your class facilitated me to become stronger and set higher goals. I don't think I could ever thank you enough for always being there for me when I felt alone. Erin Gruwell, I'd like to say thanks once more.

Next, your superior book opened my eye to visualize all of the wonderful opportunities in life. If it wasn't for your fantastic book, I'm not sure if I'd be the person I am today. Never in a million years will you know how much your book has changed me. I can only imagine how strong and courageous you are, Mrs. Gruwell. The risks you took with your students were unbelievable. You took on a great amount of responsibility when you agreed to take the job. Also, your book inspired me to become a teacher when I grow to be an adult. With the assistance of your book, I have realized that I want to make a difference in children's lives, just like you! "I am willing to step forward, unafraid of who or what lies ahead. After all, history tells me that I am not alone," a quote from diary 75. Out of all the words and quotes inside of your book, this really stuck out to me. It's amazing that your students could express so much emotion just through writing diary entries. I could connect to so many of your students. As I flipped the pages, tears streamed down my face. Although you're probably already aware of this, you students are quite talented.

The predictions I made while reading your book were so clear it seemed like a prophecy. Your book came along at just the right

time. The world seemed so cold at that point. For the time that I was consuming your book, everything felt warm, comforting, and strangely peaceful. Throughout all of the hardships, I could not only turn to your book, but more importantly, your students. Racism, hatred, abuse - they live amongst us without our knowledge. Your book helped me to realize this. Before reading your book, I didn't pay any attention to racism because it didn't affect me or my loved ones. Now, I realize how excruciating this can be. My life has evolved in ways I thought were impossible after reading your book. The multiple emotions and the passion applied to this is absolutely incredible. I honestly don't know how you accomplished it, Mrs. Gruwell.

To sum it all up, your book is truly flawless. Very few books can speak to me the way yours did. I honestly don't know how, but your book found a way to speak to my soul. I really don't know what else to say besides thank you for spending countless hours just to make a difference in children's lives. Most people agree that this is more of an adult book, but I highly disagree. I believe that it is a book for all ages. The morals in the book overwhelmed me in several ways. You are definitely my role model, Mrs. Gruwell. Your students' experiences will forever hold a spot inside my soul. Somehow, your children have found a large place to rest inside of my unfurnished mind. After being touched by your book, I have gained a new outlook on life. I now look at it with a completely new perspective. The lessons you taught me definitely made me realize how blessed I truly am. For that, I am eternally grateful.

Forever a fan,
Kennah Salmons

Honorable Mention

Name Withheld—Harpers Ferry Middle School
***Ryan and Jimmy and the Well in Africa that Brought Them Together* by Herb Shoveller**

Dear Herb Shoveller,
My name is [name withheld] and I am a twelve year old boy who has never really known what is like to be in great need of something. Sure, there are things in my life I would like to have, but the things that are necessary in life - food, shelter and water - I could never imagine not having. I was born into a great family where both my parents really wanted a child. They have worked tirelessly to make sure I have all the essentials in life and a ton of others things I just want. I guess, compared to some, I have a pretty blessed life. Your book *Ryan and Jimmy And the Well in Africa That Brought Them Together* made me even more aware of just how blessed I am.

I read the book at age 8. It was given to me shortly after I found out about the plight of kids in Africa who are born into conditions that lead to death. I cannot imagine having to walk hours a day with a 5 gallon container of water on my head just to carry back contaminated drinking water. I was moved to tears to find that in a remote tribe in Africa, the parents are aware that it is the diseased water that is killing their children. A pregnant mom has to carry a child knowing that she will need to make a decision at

birth as to how to allow her child to die - a slow and brutally painful death from cholera and malaria or a quicker death by not providing the child nourishment at all. I knew then that if Ryan could do something, I certainly could too. I mean, we all should do what we can to make the world a better place for those who need a hand up, instead of a hand out.

I started baking brownies and sharing the stories I knew about African children. I gave up my Christmas and birthday presents, knowing that kids needed clean drinking water more than I needed another toy. I trick-or-treated for funds to build more water wells and found a clever way to get my foot in the door. I told people that if they could give me a minute of their time, I would share with them how they could help me save lives. It all just snowballed from there. To date, I have raised over \$37,000 for water wells in South Africa and I know this is my life's mission. Much in the same way Ryan has a heart for this, I feel the same burden.

More recently, I have become frustrated by the fact that some people just don't care about water wells. Giving your book more thought, I gained a greater insight into my own calling in life. Not everyone is born with the same burdens and not everyone is born with the same talents. I guess that is what makes life more interesting. I have started sharing what I call the "One LiFE" movement. I spell life as "LiFE". My message, in empowering other youth, is to set a goal to change one life a day. I spell it that way to remind others that when we remove ourselves from the thought process the "I" - we then have time to focus on "I" another. You would be surprised what a different world you live in when your focus is on helping others. If I could have only one dream come true in life, it would be for the world to keep changing for the better.

Thank you for sharing Ryan and Jimmy's personal story and triumph in *Ryan and Jimmy And the Well in Africa That Brought Them Together*. Not only were you successful in sharing their story, your words inspired me to use my actions to write my own and to leave a positive mark on this world.

With great admiration and a heart full of thanks,
Name Withheld

Honorable Mention

Erin Evans—Crum Middle School
***The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins**

Dear Suzanne Collins.
I know you don't "know" me., and that really bugs me, because I know just by reading the first page of *The Hunger Games* that you are down to Earth and very smart. But, I personally to want thank you for putting a book on the shelf that has a strong independent woman that takes care of her family. My family is put in that position daily. I am the youngest of three. My oldest sister is Jeanette, then my middle brother, Morgan, and then of course there's me, Erin. My sister Jeanette helps my mom a lot by cooking, cleaning, and other stuff when she can't get off of work in time. You touched her heart more than I ever could and if I could shake your hand right now, I would.

To start off, I'd like to say I liked how you made "Katniss Everdeen" the star of the book. For one reason my sister Jeanette helps me and my family so much, just like Katniss. She cooks like Katniss hunts. She cleans, helps with younger siblings. I love how you made a connection between Katniss and Prim it's like they are inseparable.

To go on, Jeanette was depressed a few months back over staying home a lot I guess, not seeing her friends as much as she wanted I'm not quite positive. But around those months I read *The Hunger Games* which was recommended by my friend Jason. And I just knew as soon as Katniss volunteered for Prim that this was a book that fit my family PERFECT. I literally burst out crying just knowing that this book was going to help my sister.

While still in the progress of reading. I knew it was still going to take me a while to finish because of school work etc. So I scraped up some money out from under the couch, under my mattress. in my room, just enough to buy my sister her own book. And I did just that and more. I bought her the whole series. I wrapped them in gift wrap and presented them to her myself. She opened them and I saw tears trickling down the side of her flawless cheek bones. I stood there crying, just with the thought of how I just made her day. I told her I loved her and she replied with the usual "I love you too" and I went out of the room.

The next day she had already read the first book. I was completely shocked. I knew she was smart but I had no idea she could read a book that size that fast. After she read the first book of the series she couldn't stop. But from then on my beautiful sister was back to her usual self. The happiest person I know, Suzanne. You don't understand how much I would love to hug you. I am so thankful for you, and like I said I've never met you, and you have no idea what I look like, but I'm glad you are on Earth as I am typing this. Jeanette and I have had the closest bond ever since she read your book. We can't be separated. I would do anything for her, and I know she would do the same for me. I can assure you that our bond is as close or closer to Prim and Katniss'. Jeanette and I have argued so much it isn't funny, but we always come back together.

In conclusion, I loved how much description you put into every thought, battle, and tear. It has been the same for me. As I was turning pages I could just picture being beside Katniss the whole time. I can't even begin to describe how descriptive you were, it was as if you had personally been voted in The seventy-fourth annual Hunger Games, and knew about everything the government could possibly do at any moment. But again thank you.

Sincerely,
Erin Evans

Honorable Mention

Victoria Harper—Crum Middle School
***Great Expectations* by Charles Dickens**

Dear Charles Dickens.

What I learned from your book *Great Expectations* will never be forgotten. There people are out there with the same mindset as me: you've shown me this over the past few books. Although your books have many different ways of striking our common human hearts, this book hit home with me. Showing me that we can prevail although we all have our hardships. I have my own, but we will not get into that now. I greatly enjoyed turning the crisp new pages to revile all of the wonders that awaited me.

Take Joe as an example he, having a unpleasant home life, is able to see through the bad in people to what they really are. Human. He himself was able to overlook what the obvious impacted and I found myself haunted by the thought of there ever being a person who could see through my icy cold barrier. I have created a safe-zone to some perspective, a place where everything is nothing but unordinary. A place where my heart isn't frozen, but warm and free. Your book was something of a disturbance to this you see. But you indeed, I will admit over time, became my safe haven again. Although for me Joe was an important character but Pip would be the one I have most everything in common with. We both share the spirit of adventure and we have consciousness of what's right and what's wrong.

When your book was first introduced to me I was with my grandparents. Although I know they only want the best for me, I wish they would stop trying to change me. As they continuously lecture me on being a "proper lady". I found myself with my headphones in trying to drown out the noise of their nagging. As I looked through the titles I found your book. I saw the cover and it intrigued me. I looked up and saw the title, and muttered "Oh, wow. How ironic." Loud enough to be heard low enough not to be noticed. I thought your book was going to be melancholy, until I began the first chapter. If I hadn't read the first few pages, I would have never have found what I have today. Hope in the nature of humans.

I read and I pondered questions that eluded me to the greatest point of confusion. I felt as if I was a part of the book; night after night I dreamt that I was right there next to Pip. Images running through my head, I felt everything anyone and everyone in your book did. I felt every grain of dirt, tasting every drop of water, hearing every sound and feeling every touch. In my mind I was a part of the book. As I watched the days pass and the lectures grow stronger, I thought I could escape reality with your book. You are an artist, you paint with words and I paint with colors. I feel that everyone has a hidden pair of wings on their back, all it takes for an artist to see them is to let their own wings show. Then and only then will the wings of a human be known. Artists have wings that are not hidden, but covered up. Others refuse to see ours until we show them how amazing it is to fly above reality, into your own universe. For you your wings have spread into the frozen heart of a little artist trying to find her way out of darkness. Thank you, for showing me the way.

I also write my own stories, but never will I touch the heart of one like you did. I went through everything with Pip, turning page after page just to find out what's next. I never thought it would End. My parents often complain about me staying in my room too much. I never thought this would become even truer. Though it did, after I opened your book. The only time when I would come out was to take a bath or get a pop. They had to bring food to me which I would nibble on if the urge had come. I felt my heart stop when they threatened to take your book away if I did not become social again. I felt no need to have to stop and watch the People play in their own pity. Human nature had almost all but left me. I find it confusing why we feel happy for no reason at all. Can I ask you, what do you think the answer is to my question? Why do we feel we must smile at a flower or cry when we fall? I thought that I was the only one who wanted to go past the limit that was set for us. I want to fly not fall. I think I owe you a great deal of gratitude.

Either being told what to do or how to be, your book helped me realize who I really am. I'm not the princess stuck in a castle waiting on prince charming like everyone wants me to be. I'm just a normal girl who happens to like the weird; trying to live up to everyone's *Great Expectations*.

A Book Lover for Life,
Victoria P. Harper

Honorable Mention

Lea Blackburn—Crum Middle School

***There's No Room for You, Maddie Morrison*
by Dale Baumwell**

Dear Dale Baumwell,
Your book, *There's No Room for You, Maddie Morrison*, really gave me my peace of mind back. I can picture myself as Maddie; she tries to fit in with the popular kids, but then learns she doesn't need popularity. This book has so much feeling poured into it; I cried when Maddie cried and I smiled whenever Maddie smiled. Sometimes I can imagine Maddie and I side by side. Dale Baumwell, your beautiful piece of art can help anyone trying to fit in with others. This teaches people that unique is way better than fitting in.

When I was in about third grade people made fun of my short stature. I wanted to be like everybody else. Every day it was some other harsh word like elf, midget, dwarf, troll, or short stack. I went home each afternoon from school, and cried myself to sleep. I then tried to buy friendship, like how Maddie bought Stephanie that lip gloss. Instead, I went to Wal-Mart, and bought my class Easter egg shaped sugar cookies. They took the bait, but their mouths let the hook go. Meaning they took my snack, but left me without anything.

One day, my mother was at the local store buying some late decorations for my brother's birthday party and saw a book. It was placed on a shelf in the back next to the pots and pans. She brought it to me the same day. Every day after supper she read it; I honestly thought this book was based off my experiences. When my mom told me her own story of being bullied about her height;

I was surprised but didn't listen to her advice though. Just like Maddie! As soon as the final page closed, I realized how Maddie's life changed after she came back to her time period. I didn't want my life to change just because I was too big of a coward to stand up for myself!

The next day, the names started, but your book told me not to listen. I knew I was perfect the way I was. To this very day people still call me names, but not as bad. It turns out my size helps me achieve lots of things like being a flyer in cheerleading; an awesome hide-and-go-seek-player, and I can scare people very easily. I know deep in my heart God made me this size for a purpose. I don't know what it is yet, but I will find out later on down the road. This is just going to be a phase to see if I am strong enough to handle it. All a part of God's plan!

I would like to give you a huge gracious, "Thank you." Your book honestly changed my life. If I didn't have this book; I would basically be a mat for people to step on. People are always going to have something against me, but your book, *There's No Room for You, Maddie Morrison*, can lift up that pain any time. Your book speaks to me. I can see myself as Maddie (if you ever think of putting it on film). Dale Baumwell, please keep writing more spiritual books for others, like me. Again, I owe you a huge, "Thank You", from my heart.

An interested reader,
Lea Blackburn

Honorable Mention

Tyler Stamper—Crum Middle School

***Bridge to Terabithia* by Katherine Paterson**

Dear Katherine Paterson,
Your book *Bridge to Terabithia* altered my life majorly. The book to me was better than the movie. The movie was good and all, but the book was ten times better. The book to me should have got a ten star rating because I realized that using your imagination isn't that bad. My brother loves to imagine he is a ruler of a kingdom. I told him to stop being a baby, and that it was a waste of time to pretend. After reading your book, I suddenly realized that I was wrong.

It began in fifth grade, my little brother was four years old, and I was ten. My teacher had just assigned your book to the class. As usual after the day was over I arrived at my house. My little brother asked me to play "defend the fortresses". I was too busy reading. I reached the third chapter, and he asked again. I screamed at the top of my lungs it's a waste of time! He began to bawl. I felt really bad so I went and read some of the book to him. Around the fifth chapter, my little brother asked me if Terabithia was real. I said I don't know.

A few days later, our cousin Brandon died. The sad part is that we had just reached the chapter where Leslie dies. My cousin was twenty-eight when he died. He always pretended with Elijah, my little brother. He was just like Leslie. He was lovable and courageous.

Later, Elijah said "do you want to play with me"? I would have felt really bad if I had said no. So instead I agreed, and he was really cheerful. We played defend the fortress! We had to defend a castle from goblins. Elijah had a pile of covers to jump on. We had to jump on the covers because when we got bombed it made us go four feet to another side of the room.

After reading your book I told Elijah that your imagination is really powerful, and can play mind tricks on you. I said don't think about stuff that is scary and the scary things won't pop up in your mind. He came up and hugged me. He said I love you. It melted my heart because he had never told me he loved me before. I was so glad that he didn't hate me.

In conclusion, I learned from your book you should enjoy being a kid for as long as you can. Your book affected my life majorly. Now when my little brother wants to pretend, I never say no. Thank you for opening my heart.

Your reader,
Tyler Stamper

Honorable Mention
Name Withheld—Princeton Middle School
***Asylum* by Madeleine Roux**

Dear Madeleine Roux,
Your book, *Asylum*, made me feel like I was in the book. This book hit home because it made me feel grateful, took me to a whole new world, and it also opened my eyes to my surroundings. There are many parts in your book that affected me, but I only chose the three I connected to most to write about.

First of all, *Asylum* made me feel grateful because Dan did not seem to be mentally stable, and that made me think about how lucky I am to have the mental health I have. This novel changed my outlook on mentality and stability and how serious it could be if your health gets too bad. I also related to this book because there are a couple of people in my family that are somewhat "crazy."

Next, this book took me to a whole new world. The story was so descriptive and realistic that I could imagine myself exploring the asylum with Abby, Dan, and Jordan! I am a visual learner, so it is easy for me to imagine this. With my visual skills, I can see what is going on in my head without a movie playing, pictures being shown, or someone presenting the idea or concept to me. It was nice being able to picture everything so well. I do not think I have ever read a book that was so explanatory like yours.

Finally, your novel helped me to open my eyes to my surroundings. There is a killer after Dan, even after one or two perfect days. That showed me that anything could happen, and it truly helped me to notice more of the things around me. What I am trying to say is that since I knew Dan had voices in his head, saw people dead, and had someone after him, it made me realize that you have to watch out because you do not know who is around the corner or what will happen.

All in all, the book you have written, *Asylum*, had a great story inside. It helped me feel more grateful, go to a new world, and it opened my eyes to my surroundings. This book has taken me on a huge journey that I never thought I would go on before.

Sincerely,
Name Withheld

Honorable Mention
Name Withheld—Spencer Middle
***The Last Song* by Nicholas Sparks**

Dear Nicholas Sparks,
Today I am writing to you about one one of your books. Although I have read nearly all of them, and may I add I love them all, one book in particular really touched me. The book I am referring to is *The Last Song*. This book made me realize a lot about myself and really made me think.

I'm going to start out my letter by saying that the book made me have a completely different perspective. It showed me that we, as people, make generalizations. We don't consider things; we make quick decisions and move on. It's human nature. We have attitudes and personalities that make us think we know what's best. We think we know everything there is to know. The book showed me things are not always what they seem. We make these quick judgments and decisions when, in reality, we have no idea. A whole new situation may be right around the corner and we didn't even see it coming.

While reading your book, I realized many things about myself. I realized that I fit into the group of people. I make quick judgments. I don't think twice about little decisions that could potentially be life changing. Ronnie is an example. She assumed things about her dad. She fits into the group of people as well. Especially as teenagers, we tend to think we know it all. Ronnie didn't want to go see her dad over the summer. She thought she knew what was best for her: to stay home where she could hang out with her friends. She did not want to make the trip down to North Carolina, let alone stay there for the summer. She hadn't seen her dad for so long, why should she see him now?

Reading through your book, I began to put myself in Ronnie's position. I haven't seen my dad in four years. I guess I could be in Jonah's position, but as much as I hate to admit it, I would've reacted much more like Ronnie. It wouldn't be my first choice to pack my bags and go. I couldn't imagine leaving my mom, friends, and home for the summer. If I were to be put in this situation, I wouldn't have wanted to go either.

When Ronnie got to North Carolina with her father, I continued to put myself in her place. I can't say I would've made the same choices as she. In fact, my choices would've been the complete opposite in some situations. I would've avoided the people she got mixed in with, just as she avoided the girls from the volleyball game. (Not that I would choose to hang out with them either.) However, I continued to place myself in Ronnie's position. Ronnie didn't know about her father's condition. I feel that, if she did, she would've acted much differently towards him. She wasn't always the nicest person to him. She avoided spending time with him. She was rude. Things he did annoyed her. She took advantage of the things he did for her, and nothing was ever good

enough. He wasn't ever mean to her; he never even raised his voice, but still she wasn't grateful.

I was mad at Ronnie for acting this way. I knew, however, I wouldn't have acted much better. I'd be mad at both my mom and dad for making me be there. I know that this is wrong and I hope to never act like this again or act this way, if Ronnie's situation ever came up to me.

Your book made me think about my attitude. I realized that I'm not always the nicest person, I can be rude and think nothing of it, just like Ronnie. Because of your book, I strive to be a better person. I try to think more about what I do and say. I realize now that you never know what might happen.

When I realized that Ronnie and Jonah's dad had cancer, it made me sad. This event in the book made me realize how quickly things can change. It showed me that you should never take the simple things in life for granted, because it could all be gone in a matter of weeks, days, or even seconds. Your entire world could be turned upside down before you even know what's happening. This has made me more cautious to not do anything I might later regret.

At the beginning of the story, Ronnie didn't want to go see her dad. Jonah wanted to go, but still he barely knew him. By the end of the book, they had both gotten very close to their father. Neither of them wanted to leave his side. This made me realize you should never shut people out. They can mean so little to you, and you may think they'll never have an impact on your life, but they'll be so important to you in later times.

One of my favorite parts of the book was when Ronnie decided to stay with her dad. To me, this showed a lot. It showed how Ronnie really did love her father. It was heartwarming. I especially was touched when she decided to finish the song for him, since playing the piano was so special to their relationship. It showed how she was reminiscing on her past and happier times with him. This part of your book was very bittersweet.

Whenever Ronnie and Jonah's dad passed away, I started to cry. This was a very emotional part. It made me think about sad times in my life. It also made me think about how I would feel if I were to lose one of my parents.

The situation with Ronnie and Will made me think about true love. It made me ask myself the question: What is love? It made me think about how someone can be there for you when you really need them. Without Will, I feel that Ronnie would've gotten herself into more trouble. Will was also there for Jonah. He was really nice to him, and he didn't have to be. It made me think about positive things in the midst of all the negative things.

Your book taught me some very valuable lessons that I will treasure for the rest of my life. First: to never miss the chance to tell someone how much you love them. Never miss the chance to tell them how much they mean to you. You don't know when, or if you will ever get a chance to do this again.

The book also taught me to always have hope. The sun will always come up tomorrow. This is an old saying, most people are probably tired of hearing it, but it is so true. Ronnie and Jonah were devastated, but they made it through the hard times. I feel like this is something we all need to remember in tough times. Whenever I am going through a rough time, I think of Ronnie and Jonah and how they were brave enough to make it through, so I can too.

To sum up my letter, I must say that your book changed my point of view. I don't know whether it would have had the same effect on me if my parents were not divorced. That gave me a special

connection with Ronnie and Jonah. However I do still think that this book has something in it for everyone.

Your book taught me to never take things for granted. Never judge, or assume, chances are you aren't fully aware of the whole story. I should live every day like it's my last. I feel that because of your book, I am a better person.

Thank you, Nicholas Sparks, for writing this book. Without reading your book, I would not be the person I am today. Before finishing this letter, I have to say that I love all of your work. Thank you again.

Sincerely yours,

Name Withheld

Honorable Mention

Carrie Yarber—Summersville Middle School

***Flipped* by Wendelin Van Draanen**

Dear Wendelin Van Draanen,

I remember the first time that I laid eyes on your book, *Flipped*. I wasn't too sure what to think of the upside-down chicken on the cover. My brother had tried to get me to read the book earlier because he too loved the book immensely and he felt that I would appreciate it.

After a while of my brother trying to get me to read it, I finally gave in and told him to download it into my Kindle. I sat down in my floor with my back against my bed and I read. I read. All I did for about seven hours straight was read your book! (And eat fruit salad.) Your book interested and purely captivated me in ways I didn't even know possible.

This book has taught me to think of things in a new light. It has taught me that -like Julie in the Sycamore tree- what might be an eyesore to me may be the most beautiful thing in the entire world to someone else. I have really benefited from this, seeing as sometimes I am the kind of person that thinks I am right, no matter what anyone else says. Your book has changed that characteristic of my personality and I thank you for that.

Flipped has taught me to try hard in everything that I do and to stand up for what I believe in, even if I am standing alone. When I read the part about Julie sitting atop the tall tree near her bus stop, I felt as though I was right there with her! I was hanging on every word, and begging the men to not cut down the tree. Your words made me feel like I was growing up with Julie and Bryce in their suburban neighborhood experiencing their ups and downs right along with them, through when they first met, to when Bryce finally made a last resort attempt at winning Julie's friendship by planting the new tree in her yard.

The impact *Flipped* has made on my life is wonderful. I am glad that I had your book to teach me these life lessons. Now, I am a much mentally stronger person, more confident and aware of others and their emotions. Your book has changed me for the better, and I thank you.

Your reader,

Carrie Yarber

LEVEL THREE

Top Honors

Cedar Sands—Magnolia High School
***The Hobbit* by J.R.R. Tolkien**

Dear J.R.R. Tolkien,
"It was a hobbit-hole, and that means comfort." It was in that phrase that you made it clear that hobbits always strive for comfort. They always dot their "i's" and cross their "t's", and never stick a toe or a hair across the line that would mean trouble. As I was reading your book, I would have liked to think that I would be along side the dwarfs and Gandolf who came barging through the door, who ate and laughed together at dinner, who sang about their lost homeland with thoughts of adventure to reclaim it, not Bilbo Baggins who thought adventures were nasty because they made you late for dinner, who worried about his food while the hungry dwarfs were devouring it, who squeaked in terror at the very mention of him being included in something that would make him step out of his hobbit-hole. Yet, if truth be told, I was right along side Bilbo with the bulging stomach and the hair on my feet combed to perfection.

After I turned the last page and set your book down, I realization hit me like a bowling ball. All my life, I was living like a hobbit. I was not going out of my hobbit-hole, much less the Shire. I was not going out there exploring Middle Earth and all its wonders because of one little thing, worry. You might not think worry is a problem, and you are right. It is more than that. Worry is a disease of the mind that slowly consumes your free will and slowly makes you its slave. Is it a little over exaggerated? It's right on the mark. Worry prevented me from talking with other people freely (what if I said something wrong?), from wearing the clothes I wanted to wear (what if I looked weird in them?), and from playing volleyball (what would the coach do if I mess up?). Worry messed up my life so much that I stopped talking when I didn't need to, and I even quit the volleyball team because my worrying had prevented me from playing my best. Your book made me realize that I was worrying so much that it was interfering with my everyday life, and I needed to do something about it.

At the beginning, you made Bilbo refuse to go until the very last minute where he sprinted to get to the meeting place in time. When I remembered that part after I finished reading that book, it inspired me to step out of my comfort zone, to let the worry be shoved into the back of my mind to wink out of existence. At first, I started small. I would force myself to speak my opinion to others and would be more loose in front of people. I even participated in a school competition between grades that we had to do in front of the whole school. Was I nervous? You bet. But, I made it through without any nervous break downs. Looking back on it, I'm glad I did it because it is helping me step towards the worry free life I yearn for.

In your book, you wrote about how hobbits are creatures of comfort and habit. When I read your book, I took your civilization of hobbits as a metaphor for real life. It made me realize that we are all

in our own way living in the Shire in our own little holes. Your book, for me, holds meaning into our society and how we function, even if you planned it that way or not. There is always some

thing holding us back from exploring the Middle Earth out there, and unless you fight through the walls holding you back, you'll never get out. Take it from someone who knows. Because of worry, I wasn't living. I was just going through the motions. But now, I am now like your Bilbo Baggins, going on adventures and not letting worry or anything hold me back in the Shire.

Your Thankful Reader,
Cedar Sands

Honors

Steele Fitzwater—Greenbrier West High School
***The Inner Voice* by Renee Fleming**

Dear Renee Fleming,
On days like today, with brisk winds of late autumn causing a decided chill in the air, I find it more and more exhilarating to make the journey to my favorite practice spot. This room, little more than a nook in the back corner of my grandparent's home, is my haven, my escape. As I enter, I find myself switching on a lamp, as the single window which normally provides ample natural sunshine is dampened by the steel gray clouds which invade the sky. Here I am, in this tiny, cramped room, with a mirror on the door and an old, slightly out of tune piano pressed against the left wall, ready to begin my practice for the day. As I sit down, I begin my usual warm-up, singing chromatic melismata on alternating vowels, attempting to free tension in my jaw and tongue. As I enter the upper passaggio of my voice, I stop vocalizing, and unwrap a single peppermint candy, which I place on my tongue as I begin to sing again. This, a simple technique which is utmost effective, is one of the many pieces of information I learned from your book, *The Inner Voice*.

When I first began singing and delving into the world of opera, I felt like there was a never ending flood of information which my mind would never be able to comprehend. Between the different composers, singers, languages... I was simply overwhelmed. Early into this journey, I was fortunate enough to discover your singing, and in the process, this book. After my first read through of your work, I felt even more overwhelmed - how was I ever supposed to reach the level of training and knowledge needed? I don't come from a particularly musical family, I have no background in opera or classical music, so how am I, a kid from rural west Virginia, supposed to make it in an operatic career? After a bit of soul searching, I realized that I do have something that others don't - passion. I want to be in this business more than anything, as I have fallen in love with music, and I constantly remind myself just how lucky I am. I have the chance to paint emotions and love through sound, and how dare I try to snuff out this love of music from my life. With this newfound spark to succeed, I read your book again...

And again. And again. Finally, after the fifth time through, I began finding clarity in your words. In my mind, I was the only person who started this journey with no prior knowledge, no musical roots, but how wrong I was. In your writing, I learned that my journey, like many others, will not be easy, but that no opera singer has made their Metropolitan debut overnight. Reading *The Inner Voice*, I learned that you have went through some of the same trials and tribulations which I have, and many which I am sure I am yet to face. I found solace in your words, putting faith in the fact that if a girl from rural New York can make it in this world, than so can a boy from the hills of West Virginia.

Now, two years later, I find myself even more enthralled by the world of opera. This art has no limitations, no ending to the magic which it can create. when I look back on these years, I am astonished at what I have learned, and I can only imagine what I will learn in the future. This path, one which I am proud to be on, is never-ending. Now, in my senior year of high school, I find myself in the doorway to a new path - college.

My college search, one which has been long and tedious, is starting to wind down now, as application deadlines are fast approaching. I have been fortunate enough to venture to four schools, and to work with teachers and faculty at these institutions, but again, I find myself lost in my own world. What if I choose the wrong school? What if I go to a university in which I don't get the education I so desperately want? This entire school year has been motivated by these what-ifs, and I find myself coming back to your book, my constant companion, for the advice I need.

Using your writing, I have decided that no matter where I attend school, I will make the best of it. I will succeed, simply because I have the burning drive to do so. I can push out the fears and doubts about this impending decision, as I know that I have all the support in the world backing me up. Besides, why worry about the future? I have plenty of people to do that for me.

Leaving my practice room for the day, I open the door and am flooded with the aroma of tomato and basil, a sure sign that my grandmother has invaded the kitchen and is preparing a meal that no chef could ever replicate. Leaving my solitary corner of her home, she compliments me on my singing, a statement which I am very accustomed to hearing her say. However, on this day, she also adds something else - she tells me that I make her proud. How beautiful is that? Someone who I dearly love is proud of me, of what I have done, and what I will do. Using my inner voice, I have created something that has no value - music which has touched someone. Leaving her house, I can joyfully remember what I had just done, and can look forward to the months, years, and many curtain calls to come. After all, what is life without finding love in what you do?

With my greatest thanks and respect,
Steele Fitzwater

Honors
Victoria Altizer—Westside High School
***Gone With The Wind* by Margaret Mitchell**

Dear Margaret Mitchell,
I have read many books in my eighteen years of life, and all have affected and changed me in their own way. Every book is a new friend and an exotic adventure. No book has been a better friend or taken me on farther adventures than *Gone With the Wind*. Almost every character in the book taught me something important about myself that I had not yet discovered. Each character has helped influence me into the young woman I am today. Without their lessons, I am uncertain how I would view the world.

Scarlett O' Hara may not be the most moral person, but she taught a young girl like me some valuable lessons. No matter how disastrous a situation. you can always find a solution. If you want something so terribly that it is agonizingly ripping your insides apart, you have to be willing to pursue with fervent enthusiasm and an unbreakable spirit in order to cross every boundary. Miss O'Hara also showed me that even though I was only a girl, I was an equal to any man. I was not only a woman in a man's world. but a strong willed individual in a tough world with nothing to stop me from achieving my goals; Scarlett taught me ambition and the empowerment of all females.

Melanie Wilkes exemplified to women that one does not have to be cruel to earn a place in society; kindness can actually pay off. In the book, she always treated people better than she treated herself. This is important to remember in a world where you are taught at a young age that one has to push everybody else down to get ahead. Mrs. Wilkes demonstrated that just because you are nice does not mean you are naive or weak. Sometimes the strongest people are not the loudest but the most passionate.

Rhett Butler, like Scarlett, made me realize that it is okay to not fall into the social norms; it is acceptable to be different. I should never allow someone's criticism to bother me. No one has the right to judge me. Rhett Butler awarded me with courage.

Other characters also helped shape me as a person. Ashley Wilkes showed me that I have to be receptive to change or I would be destroyed once the inevitable change occurred. Mammy exhibited that a mother's love was unending. Belle Watling submitted me to see that everyone is a person and I should not judge him or her. especially if I did not know him or her. Carreen O'Hara demonstrated that in a difficult situation, the best thing to do is to full heartedly turn to the Lord.

I have read the book several times. each in a different phase of my life. Each time, I realized something different about love. The first time I read the book, I was eight and I did not understand countless aspects. Whenever I was twelve, it was incomprehensible of why Rhett even married Scarlett with the way she treated him, and because he knew she loved Ashley. At fifteen, I could not understand why Rhett left Scarlett. In my young mind, I thought that if you loved someone, you never left. Now at eighteen years old, it makes heartbreakingly perfect sense.

The love story exemplified that even men are scared to love. Love takes patience, trust, and time; something that they eventually lacked in giving each other. The book taught me something valuable about love: you can only allow someone to hurt you so many times before you comprehend that leaving is the only choice

you have. One person can only suffer so much. It does not matter how much you love someone, you have to love and respect yourself more and recognize that you deserve better. I was in a relationship with a boy where he treated my heart like a toy. Finally, I found the strength to leave. Every time I get the undeniable urge to message the boy, I retrieve my copy of *Gone with the Wind* and read the last chapter. Many nights the old book helped me see that I was doing the right thing in not contacting him, and that this heartbreak would not last.

There are other types of love presented in the book other than a romantic love. The love Melanie felt towards Scarlett gave me the perfect picture of friendship. You always have to be there for your friends, even if it is not the most popular thing to do. A couple of years ago, a boy started a vicious rumor about my best friend, which resulted in most of the school calling her obscene names. I could have abandoned her and missed out being associated with the center of negative attention, but being a true friend, I stayed by her side through it all. During that time, I realized that Melanie was so much more than just sweet and ladylike.

Not only did the novel teach me qualities but also it made me see the world differently. People of all races are still people. We should not be divided into different stereotypes and prejudices, but all exist together for our value as a people. I have never seen people as inferior because of their skin color, but while reading this book, I saw that many people do. It made me become conscious that not everyone in this world had the same views on fairness, so there needed to be advocates for equality.

Another life lesson is that money does not always last forever. Do not depend on your money to take you everywhere in life. Money is a frivolous thing that could be gone in a blink of an eye. Therefore, do not treat someone differently because they are wealthy or poor, but judge by whether they have a good character.

Gone with the Wind instilled in me many cherished principles. Independence, loyalty, honor, and passion are all things that the book taught me in an everlasting way. I will never forget the impact that this book has had on my life. Still to this day, some passages send chills down my spine. *Gone with the Wind* will always hold a special place in my heart.

Thank You,
Victoria Altizer

Honorable Mention
Name Withheld—Greenbrier West High School
Chicken Soup for the Teenage Soul
by Jack Canfield, Mark Victor Hansen, Kimberly Kirberger

Dear Jack Canfield, Mark Victor Hansen, and Kimberly Kirberger, Walking down the hallway isn't an easy thing for me. I'm a big girl and it's very much obvious to everyone around me. I try to put on a tough exterior and show that it doesn't bother me but it does and there are nights that I've cried myself to sleep hearing those voices in my head, "You're so fat why are you here?" "Four eyes four eyes four eyes look its fatty four eyes." The laughs only made it worse I became very self-conscious and quiet. I can only take so much and before long I began to slip into depression more and more.

I turned to books at a young age and they allowed me to slip into a world all my own. I would see the books playing out like a movie in my head. Reading was my escape. When I was in 5th grade my cousin Chelsea gave me a book to read she told me it would help me a lot at first. I was reluctant then I began to read and fell in love. In my experiences I've come to learn that life really isn't all that fair. I was 5 years old when I first began to be made fun of, I was always bigger and at that age I cried myself to sleep every night. It began to get worse as I got older I spent a lot of time trying to avoid people because I didn't want to be made fun. In the third grade my life literally changed forever. I began to develop and I had to get glasses.... That made everything that much harder on me.

I turned to books that year and absolutely fell in love with reading right then. In fifth grade I was given the *Chicken Soup for the Teenage Soul* book by my cousin Chelsea, and when I began reading it everything began to make more sense. Through your book a gateway was opened for me and I began to read the rest of the series, every book I got my hands on I read. I've been through a lot in my life and I'm only 18. I've come to read 1-4 of the series and I've come to learn a lot about life through your books.

Through your books I've been told true stories from real people most my age or younger and for some reason my problems seem to be less important. I wish I could've been there for those people and helped them in their time of need when they needed a friend the most. The books are a safe haven for me and I often reread some of the stories that had an impact on me like "Call Me" the story of a girl who lost her and then gained a friend. I enjoyed the stories in all four of the books they always seemed to make mine seem so much smaller in comparison. Even though I've been through a lot these books have been my saving grace. They've taught me so much about True Friendships, Love and Kindness, Relationships.

I enjoyed the stories and I'm thankful for my cousin allowing me to read her book. I was intrigued by the stories and it was very easy to see that not everyone is the same and everyone has a different opinion of other people. Now I'm glad that I began to read your books and that they've helped me as much as they have and I'm very thankful for the work that you do. You've truly helped change my life by gathering those stories and printing them for young people like me to find and read.

Sincerely,
Name Withheld

Honorable Mention
Name Withheld—Magnolia High School
The Lord of the Rings Trilogy
by John Ronald Reuel Tolkien

To the Professor of Anglo-Saxon at Oxford, Mr. John Tolkien, You do not know who I am. You do not know anything of me. You do not know what I feel, think, or love. Be that as it may, it does not mean that you cannot affect the lives of so many individuals. I am one of those fortunate many. Your works and your characters have altered my very life and thoughts. I, myself will always be doted upon you and your fantasies, for I have never encountered anything parallel to the emotions that your novels have inspired within me.

Unfortunately, I was not able to read your novels before I saw the motion pictures. So, I was bereaved of the feeling that most book

lovers desire, the impression of reaching into the new and unexpected. Nevertheless, that did not expropriate me of the enjoyment of reading it in full context instead of the severely-shortened films. Since then I have read through them six times; each time with much relish, for on every reread I find a detail, a bit of humor, or irony that I failed to recognize in my prior readings. I look forward to taking a perpetual amount of pleasure from them in the near and far future.

I have benefited immensely entertainment wise; however, as I insisted earlier, I have been impacted much deeper than that. To begin with is my overall reading statute at the time I read the novels at age eleven. I loved reading at the time, despite that fact I had not found any novels that could hold my attention and produce flourishing affects within my imagination. The instant I completed reading the ending appendices of your novels I began to inquire on other classical novels. Since then, I have read many of the finest works of the older authors such as: Herman Melville, Miguel de Cervantes, Alexander Dumas, Jules Verne, and your intimate friend Mr. C.S. Lewis. I pored over many other novels, all in search of the same fascinating indefinable emotion that your writing exhilarated within my imagination. I have yet to find one; still, I have loved reading all of them.

Other habits of mine have altered slowly. Prior to reading your novels I slouched slightly and would rarely straighten my back. I would stare earthward when I walked instead of ahead. In kindergarten and first grade, I was avid when it came to writing assignments. Then from second to fourth grade it became just another homework assignment from which I never obtained any sort of satisfaction from. In other words, I delighted in reading books but not in living the books for fear of being viewed as odd by my peers. Within a full year of reading your novels my attitude and physique transformed. I now walked with straight back and eyes up and ahead because I envisioned myself an aristocratic English man. I took joy in writing for I desired to conceive a world of my own where the characters in it could go to and fro with their own goings and comings. I no longer cared for the opinions of my former peers on how or what I wrote. I became reserved and thoughtful spoken, I thought of what I would say before speaking, and I cared for my appearance. It may have been maturity that came much earlier than was conjectured, but I am compelled to believe that you brought on the change that has been one of the main influences in transfiguring my life.

My values for people, religion, conversation, and all of life in general have always been just and reasonable. My parents and close relatives have taught me well in what is wrong and what is right. Nonetheless, I began to falter, to doubt what I had been taught due to the actions of others in, above, and below my grade level. I was in grave need of having my values and morals reinforced, and you were that unforeseen reinforcement that I so precariously necessitated. I was able to survive the initial assault upon my morals only to uncover the next formidable trial. Through many of these afflictions, you have been one of my many lifesavers that I have had to grapple onto.

Through your many published novels, I have established a taste, as it were, for what some of my fellow classmates call "Old English." I love words that no one speaks or rarely speaks. I love the more descriptive and refined English language that was spoken during the Victorian Age. It is because of that love, that desire which you have incited, which has caused me to use it on almost a regular basis. Just recent-

ly, I was told by a friend, "You love those books so much that you even *talk* like them!" I have tried to replicate that type or style of English in fictional stories that I have written whose setting is in a much older time period. Despite my otiose attempts, I have only been able to mimic it; mastering it will take time and learning of which the ending goal still lies a great distance ahead of me. I doubt I can ever describe the importance that your writings have been to me' I have tried to explain the unexplainable, to describe the indescribable.

The knowledge and emotions that I have freely been given by you through your novels and stories has been a well that I will continue to draw from for as long as I live. I have tried to find other fictional wells, but none have been as forthcoming and abundant as the one you have mined through your life and have connected it to the inexhaustible springs of imagination and wisdom. I greatly appreciate your overgenerous amount of time to read this one of many letters. I humbly wish you and your family health, contentment, and the inexplicit joy of living.

Your Humble and Indebted Servant,
Name Withheld
At your service

Honorable Mention
Chelsea McCoy—Capital High School
***The Lost Boy* by Dave Pelzer**

Dear Dave Pelzer,
Your book has made me live and relive my past. Although I try not dwell on my past, I know I am who I am because of it. I have come to welcome all my falls, and I want to share with you a few life stories that have stuck with me through the years. As a result of your book, I now think differently about my experiences.

It is a cool summer night when there is a loud pounding on the front door to my mother's house. When mother opens the door, I see a uniformed man with a flashlight and a cute but mean-looking dog by his side. As my mother and the uniformed man exchange words, I become uncomfortable at the seriousness of the large man's face. She waves her hands allowing him to enter; my stomach drops when I look at my mother's face. I sense she does not like this uniformed man. I am petrified when he starts to rummage through the house. When he finishes, he looks at me. I automatically lower my head, allowing my hair to caress my damaged cheek. Even the smallest touch causes me to flinch. Not too long before the uniformed man came, my mother punished me for an unexplained reason. She beat me with a sword scabbard on my bare back and butt, accidentally hitting the side of my face, causing nasty red and blue welts to form. As I come back to the present the uniformed man starts to question me. I look up at the uniformed man pretending to look dumbfounded by his questions. I know I have to be a good actress for my mother's and my own sake. I do not want my mother to be in trouble. No matter how I feel about her punishments, they have to be for a good reason. She loves me and I love her, too. Although some people do not.

My mind goes back to the one moment I want to forget. No! Please! please don't! Quit! I hate you! I gasp, while both of my brothers wrap duct tape around my hands and feet. I am lying on the bottom bunk praying to God asking, "Why does this happen to me?," I wonder why my mother is never here. I thought she loved me. They tape

my mouth to silence my whimpering. My eyes plead for them to stop. What have I done to cause this? One of them starts to pull down my pajama pants; I wriggle with defiance. No! If only they knew the agony it caused their little sister maybe they would not dare. I finally wrench my hands and feet free from their grasp. I have a burst of adrenaline and race to the restroom where I lock myself in. I slide down the door, wrap my hands around my knees and cry. I cry for joy that I have won! I am stronger this time! You do not over-power me! I cry for dread of the inevitable next time.

For a moment I remember a time when my brothers did not hate me, it is about one o'clock in the morning when I start to tip-toe to my mother's room, hoping she is not awake. Every muscle in my body is shaking. I come to her door; then I peek around the corner to hear her heavy metal music and her soft bear-like snore. Yes! *She is asleep.* I half run, half walk back to my room as silently as I can. When I get around the corner, both of my brothers are looking at me. "She's asleep," I whisper. We have done this so many times before, yet I am never used to it being my turn. They both give me expectant looks. I sigh mentally, understanding what I have to do, even though I know it is wrong. So I gather my courage and climb out my broken window. When my feet hit the grass, I almost squeal at the cold and damp. Before I listen to my screaming conscience, I inch forward. I check the door to the first car I come to; it is unlocked. So, I hop in. I only look for a few things : money primarily, cigarettes, lighters, and anything valuable my brothers can sell. I continue doing this for about an hour. I smile to myself, knowing my brothers will be pleased with my prizes for the night. I can hear the cling- clang noise of silver hitting in my pockets weighing my tiny body down. I have earned about fifty dollars altogether in mostly change. When I get to my window, I hand my brothers the valuables. When I get in my room I do not even care to see what they are doing. I snuggle under my covers and close my heavy eyelids knowing in the morning my hollow stomach will be filled, even if its filled with ill-gotten gains.

When the state took me out of this environment, I called myself a disgrace, a slut and a thief. A disgrace because I seemed to always do something wrong and get beaten by my mother. I was a disgrace to my family and myself. A slut because I thought I let things happen to me that I could have prevented. A thief because I stole people's money for my own benefit. Then I came across your book and I realized I did all this just to survive. Everything I had done was because of my survival instincts. I have let go of regret, and I have forgiven myself as well as the ones who have done me wrong. I have made my choice to be a survivor. Your book has helped me with that. Because of you, I believe in myself.

Sincerely yours,
Chelsea McCoy

Honorable Mention

Weijia Sun—The Linsly School

***A Thousand Splendid Suns* by Khaled Hosseini**

Dear Mr. Hosseini,

There was a long, dark, ugly scar on my heart. For most of my life, I let it settle deeply and tried my best not to reveal it; however, I still could not forget. The blood, the loud slap, the X-ray image of a deformed ear made me tremble as I woke up in midnight. Nonetheless,

your story in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* made a difference. Life went on as usual, but I could feel the scar begin to heal silently in my heart. That was the worst memory in my 16-year-old life. The scene flashes in my head for a thousand more times. It was a rainy afternoon; the small raindrops were like eyes on the window of my house, staring at me. I saw him slap my mom on her face. That sound was so loud that it was as if it torn my heart to pieces. I saw the blood dripping down her mouth, but maybe it was just illusory. The only thing I could remember was that someone took me out of the room and closed the door. I stood in front of the cold heavy door for what felt like a century. I didn't realize the tears had covered my face until my eyesight got more and more obscure. I touched the rough surface of the door and I was so afraid: I was afraid of losing something. At that moment I couldn't believe the man who hurt her gave me birth and raised me for eight years. It was in the yard behind the house that I found her. My mom shrank down into the bench like a poor little creature. Her cheeks were wet with tears but she wasn't crying. She told me not to cry with her shivering lips; she said "I forgive him". I could only nod at that time since her words were beyond my understanding as a child; however, even as I grew up, I still tried to figure out the meaning. Such things happened in my family less than five times, but my mom's ear bone was deformed and can never be recovered because of the slap. It was me who accompanied her to the hospital. When she gave me the X-ray image, I could not have the courage to look at it, as if it could hurt my eyes.

I read *A Thousand Splendid Suns* in 2007, a few years after this experience. Then I read it again times. This book started to smooth the rough surface of my scale. Mariam reminded me of my mother. There are different opinions, but I believe Mariam is the only leading character all the time. She is brave and faithful, yet so weak and helpless as a woman. I can feel the desperation and the forbearance under her skin. As I read, I come to understand the intricacy in a relationship. Love, hate, tolerance, anger and forgiveness are intertwined like an entangled net, just like the feeling my mom had towards my dad.

When I read the chapters of Rasheed beating Mariam and Laila like a beast, I could feel the fear I experienced on that rainy day. I was afraid. Family, is the smallest unit of society. After closing the door to the outside world, how people treat each other there more or less determines what the world looks like. In China, about 30%-40% of married women are subjected to domestic violence. Just like in Afghanistan, most women choose not to speak out and take steps because of the cultural backgrounds and values we have been following for a long time. Some of the women are beaten to physical disability, and I believe many children in those families have the same scar as I do.

One quote in your book had a strong impact on me: "Love is a damaging mistake." I somehow came to understand what my mother said to me that day. We had made so many mistakes. The best way to replace ruins is to grow flowers on it. Love and hope become so precious because of all the miserable moments and sufferings in our life. Your story truly inspired me to look for hope and to have faith in the future. I wasn't that trembling girl who stood in front of the door anymore. Instead of letting the pain hurt me, I knew it's time to let sunshine in my heart. I knew that I have to do something to avoid someone suffering from the tough experience I have been through. In my growth, my parents have high expectations on me. In other words, they have already chosen the ideal career for me in the future. I never tell anybody, but there is a small ambition in my heart; I want to do something for those women and families that suffered from

domestic violence. No system and help can promise to give families happiness, but awareness on society can prevent them from extreme misfortune.

Like the old Afghan verses wrote: *One could not count the moons that shimmer on her roofs. And the thousand splendid suns that hide behind the walls.* Those women in your book shone into my life and truly inspired me. I can feel their strong connection to me and my family. Your book taught me to let go of the past, and to believe in the future. For this, I thank you with all my heart.

Sincerely,
Weijia Sun

Honorable Mention

Name Withheld—The Linsly School

***To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee**

Dear Harper Lee,

I constantly find myself surrounded by the opinions of society and I constantly find myself conforming to them. It's easier for me to just comply with these opinions in order to satisfy my need for acceptance. But I don't want to. I want the courage to isolate myself from these prejudiced, stereotypical opinions, and to gain the confidence to be able to do what is right without being self-conscious of what others think of me. It's easier to adhere to a group opinion than it is to muster up the courage to create one of my own. So how, then, am I supposed to form my own opinions with those of others constantly surrounding me and my own courage and self-confidence failing?

I like to think of my problems as a river that's always in front of me. I can't ignore it, I can't avoid it, and if I try to step in I risk losing control of myself and my surroundings. So I have to build a bridge to get over my obstacle. Building the bridge isn't easy though; it takes dedication, and a strong mind and will to build it. It's easier to just step into the water and be swept away. But then I have little control of where it leads me, and I end up losing my own voice as I drown in the ones that surround me. This became a problem when I realized that opinions that I was complying with, although extremely popular, were also extremely immoral. Countless classmates were being picked on and bullied while I stood by and even laughed; my referring to my mother by her first name because it was "cool." I refused to go against popular opinion, even if I didn't agree with it. I continually found myself unhappy because I was losing my voice; I was no longer guiding myself but rather letting others do it for me.

In the summer going into my ninth grade year, we had to read your book *To Kill a Mockingbird*. As I read, I was captivated by the courageous acts of Atticus defending a black man in a time of such heavy segregation, going against all popular opinions to do what was right. His bravery was incredible and stuck with me. I wanted to be able to stand up for people like he did, and to be an example to those around me. So with Atticus as an inspiration, I began constructing my bridge. The progress was slow, I was still too caught up in what others thought of me, but I was determined to conquer my problem. I was determined to stop allowing myself to conform, and I promised myself that I would always defend what was right, without being burdened by the stringent opinions of those around me.

My new found confidence was liberating. I felt that my confidence not only demanded that people respect me, but that it also helped me respect others who had refused to conform. Your book taught me the importance of standing up for what I believe in. The respect I gained for Atticus left me with a craving to elicit the same respect from my peers, and in turn, to give that respect to all the others who deserved it.

I also strangely found my longing for acceptance placated. I now was part of a new group, one that included those who had also taken the step to detach themselves from the popular opinions of society. So now, instead of always having to fight to hear my own voice in midst of those around me, I was applauded for speaking up. I no longer had to fight the current, I was unreachable by the river below. I was accepted and respected for being my own person, and I was finally in a state where I could be proud of myself.

The novel *To Kill a Mockingbird* helped me understand the importance of sticking up for what I believe in and the rewards that can come out of being a person with original opinions. Armed with inspiration and knowledge from the book, I am continuing the building of my bridge in hopes that someday I can finally pass this barrier once and for all. I am still conscious of the opinions that surround me, but I no longer let them weigh me down. I am safe on top of my bridge. The river below me, although it will always be there, can no longer pull me under. It can no longer influence me. My voice has been restored, and for that I am sincerely grateful.

Sincerely,
Name Withheld

Honorable Mention

Erin Dodd—South Charleston High School

***Looking for Alaska* by John Green**

Dear John Green,

Throughout my life of 14 short years, I have learned that everyone has a unique way of learning and coming upon ideas. For me personally, it tends to be literature. So, when I read your book *Looking For Alaska*, I found not only my new favorite book, but also a new version of myself. The deep unanswerable questions of life have found some answer within the tale of Pudge and his life. After I read your book, I sat for many moments as I let the words sink in and fill me. I've never felt the feeling that I felt in that time before. Your book changed me in many ways, but the most significant are that I was shown the true importance of friends, given a name and map to my life that I never knew was a labyrinth, and it even gave me a handle on death and what comes after. So, I present to you these remarkable things.

Looking for Alaska changed my views on friendship. Most of my life, especially in my younger years, I'd believed that friends were just humans you'd associated yourself with at school so you'd have someone to play with during recess. But before meeting the Colonel and Alaska, Pudge was not living, but existing, as most of us are. After meeting these friends, I saw flickers of life within Pudge that eventually erupted into flame, and he lived. I truly related to Miles Halter, more so than any other character that I have ever encountered. He taught me that though some of us are awkward, introverted, and even antisocial, that we are, by nature, social creatures. So as I read, I saw not Pudge, but myself within him, alone and isolated. Through Miles, I now realize the sheer importance of someone with which to coexist.

Your book also gave a name to something I was unaware of in my life, my labyrinth. I, like Miles, had made home in a dead end and I'd abandoned my feat of navigating my labyrinth. With your book as my Ariadne's thread, I've found my way through. To truly live in the labyrinth, I must wander, collide with others, make friends with some who entwine their journey with mine, and enemies with others. I attempt to take in what is around me in the darkness, knowing that someday, I will be gone from here. These people I have met and the endless walls I've passed are simply part of the world I have found myself in. There is no changing what has been done, so the best strategy is to make the most of my time. When it's over and it's done, I will be glad I chose to spend my time with the company of others and the memories of an adventure.

My time in the labyrinth has been made more bearable with Pudge's essay. In the final pages of your book, his words have moved me in a way I would've thought impossible. "We are matter and matter gets recycled" are his words, but they echoed in my mind long before I read them in Pudge's voice. Now, I'm filled with hope rather than the doubt and fear that resided within me. The words that can be condensed into a single sentence are the ones that are engraved into my mind most deeply, the sum of everyone is always more than the sum of their physical bodies, and matter cannot be created or destroyed. Most people choose to believe that the remaining matter goes to a Great Perhaps, and with your book I've chosen to believe in that place once more.

I do not exaggerate when I say that your work has changed my actions, and my very state of being I must say that I am happier now, just by choosing friends and choosing to accept the fate I've been given. Before this book, I was blissfully asleep and unaware, condemned to the life I'd chosen for myself. *Looking for Alaska* woke me up in every way possible. Different things will change different people; I know of people who have read your book and had not a single extra thought, who assume that the labyrinth is just a labyrinth, and your story just a book. So I thank you, Mr. Green, for showing me that it's all much deeper than it seems. You've helped me find my way in my labyrinth.

My deepest gratitude and thanks,
Erin Dodd

Honorable Mention
Sydney Seo Youn Chung—The Linsly School
***Please Look After Mom* by Kyung-Sook Shin**

Dear Kyung-Sook Shin,
I was going through my parents bookshelf and saw a strange title, *Please Look After Mom*. I took the book out, started reading and I finished it on the spot. Your book really did not let me stop crying. I never pictured my mom as a young girl. To me, my mom was forever a mother of a child. After reading this book, I started thinking of my mom's childhood and her life before giving birth to me. What were her dreams, and what were her thoughts back then?

These days, her life is just all about me. When she was pregnant, she moved to Gangwon-Do, a country area in Korea because she wanted me to spend my babyhood in the nature. She was born in the main city, Seoul, and was raised there. She never lived in the country area

before. I can imagine how hard it would have been for a pregnant woman to move to a new place she never had been at with one person to rely upon, her husband. But she did it for her child. Then she moved back to Seoul when I was going into elementary school for a good education. She sent me to America to study English and to live in a multicultural society even though she was not going to be able to see me often. She knew it was going to be hard for her to send her only child away for 8 months each year. She gave up to live her own life and chose to live a life for me.

As an only child, I thought this was what all parents did for their children. I didn't think it was something special. I regarded it granted. How silly. I did not realize the fact that I was blessed compared to other people. Sometimes, I even thought I was unlucky to have my mom as my mom. I got mad at her with no reason. Whenever my mom told me that she was busy, I thought she did not love me enough to forget about other things and come to me. I was too immature to realize that when she told me that she was busy, it meant she was busy taking care of my other problems. She was always there for me. Hard times came to my life and when I turned around thinking that no one would be there to back me up, she was there. She waited and stood behind me to support me.

After reading your book, I started realizing the fact that my mom once had her own dreams. I asked her what her dreams were when she was young. She wanted to be a patent agent, and she did study for it while she had me. I never knew that before. Why didn't I ask her that earlier? I was too busy worrying about my own matters, I never realized my mom's dream. She stopped studying for it when I became five because she thought she would not be able to focus on taking care of me if she kept on studying. I asked her if it wasn't hard for her to give up on her dreams. She told me, "I wanted to keep the most valuable thing in my life, and that was you, not my own dreams".

From that moment and on, I became aware about the fact that I wasn't appreciating all the things she was providing for me. I started writing letters to my parents, how thankful I am to have them, and how much I love them. Even though I am fourteen hours away from my parents, I try to call or text them everyday and talk to them. Figuring out how much your parents love you is not easy. Even after figuring that out, you will never be able to succeed to love them back with as much love as you got. But you will at least try, and that would make you and your parents become the happiest people on Earth.

Sincerely,
Sydney "Seo Youn" Chung

LEVEL ONE—NOTABLE MENTIONS

Name Withheld
Davis-Thomas Elementary Middle School
Dork Diaries by Rachel Renee Russell

Tristan Anderson
Davis-Thomas Elementary Middle School
The Blind Side by Michael Lewis

Name Withheld
Davis-Thomas Elementary Middle School
7 X 9 = Trouble by Claudia Mills

Name Withheld
Davis-Thomas Elementary Middle School
Hunger Games by Suzanne Collins

Braedyn Benfield
Shady Spring Elementary
The Bible by God

Emily Bennett
Lost Creek Elementary
How it Changed Me by David Bise

Name Withheld
North Fork Elementary
The Giver by Lois Lowry

Landon Brewer
Lost Creek Elementary
The Magic Tree House Series by Mary Pope Osborne

Riley Butcher
Summersville Middle
City of Bones by Cassandra Clare

Name Withheld
Bluefield Intermediate
Peter Pan by J.M. Barrie

Name Withheld
Rock Branch Elementary
Dork Diaries #4: Tales from a Not-So-Graceful Ice Princess
by Rachel Renee Russell

Nathan Dearborn
Davis-Thomas Elementary Middle School
The Blind Side by Michael Lewis

Brady Ellison
Bluefield Intermediate
A Series of Unfortunate Events by Lemony Snicket

Dakota Gilliam
Hurricane Middle School
The Cay by Theodore Taylor

Cali Harper
North Fork Elementary
The Giver by Lois Lowry

Amber Johns
Shady Spring Elementary
Dork Diaries by Rachel Renee Russell

Isaac Legg
Ansted Elementary
Free At Last by Angela Bull

Sophie Lipscomb
Bluefield Intermediate
Dork Diaries by Rachel Renee Russell

Name Withheld
North Fork Elementary
Liar, Liar by Gary Paulsen

Brady Martin
Hurricane Middle School
Divergent by Veronica Roth

Makayla Mills
Bluefield Intermediate
Love You Forever by Robert Munsch

Allie Minor
Shady Spring Elementary
Casper/Friends Forever by Marie T. Morreale

Charity Mostow
South Charleston Middle
I Walk in Dread by Lisa Rowe Fraustine

Denver Nelson
North Fork Elementary
Hatchet by Gary Paulsen

Name Withheld
Davis-Thomas Elementary Middle School
Vampires Don't Wear Polka Dots
by Debbie Dadey and Marcia Thornton Jones

Adam Plummer
Shady Spring Elementary
The Swiss Family Robinson by Johann Wyss

Ryan Prevatte
Davis-Thomas Elementary Middle School
The Blind Side by Michael Lewis

Kaef Rehman
Shady Spring Elementary
A Most Miserable Christmas by Mick Foley

Hannah Runions
Rock Branch Elementary
Winter of the Red Snow by Kristiana Gregory

Reagan Schultz
Hurricane Middle School
Where the Red Fern Grows by Wilson Rawls

Hunter Shaffer
Mount Nebo Elementary
Lunch Money by Andrew Clements

Jesilynn Smith
Weimer Elementary
Stranded by Jeff Probst and Chris Tebbetts

Name Withheld
Hurricane Middle School
The Cay by Theodore Taylor

Jordan Teter
Davis-Thomas Elementary Middle School
Dork Diaries by Rachel Renee Russell

Joseph Walker
Weimer Elementary
Magic Treehouse: Dragon of the Red Dawn by
Mary Pope Osborne

Tessa Walls
Weimer Elementary
Seekers #2: Great Bear Lake by Erin Hunter

Name Withheld
Spencer Middle
The Percy Jackson and the Olympians Series
by Rick Riordan



LEVEL TWO—NOTABLE MENTIONS

Jennifer Alvis
Spencer Middle School
Butterflies by Susanne Gervay

Alexis Bailey
Spencer Middle School
Firegirl by Tony Abbott

Trevor Barber
Bluefield Middle School
The Contender by Robert Lipsyte

Hannah Batten
Spencer Middle School
The Vow by Kim and Cricket Carpenter

Carli Berkhouse
Spencer Middle School
Walk Two Moons by Sharon Creech

Garret Bolyard
Davis Thomas Elementary Middle School
Diary of a Wimpy Kid by Jeff Kinney

Kirin Bradley
Edison Middle School
The Harry Potter Series by J.K. Rowling

Name Withheld
Crum Middle School
October Sky by Homer Hickam

Caleigh Cuppett
Fairmont Catholic
Mockingbird by Kathryn Erskine

Lydia Demyon
Fairmont Catholic
The Perks of Being a Wallflower by Stephen Chbosky

Holly DePue
Spencer Middle School
The Report Card by Andrew Clements

Victoria Dingess
Crum Middle School
The Twilight Saga by Stephenie Meyer

Sahara Ellis
Shepherdstown Middle School
Bambi: A Life in the Woods by Felix Salten

Ian Fairley
Fairmont Catholic
Killing Lincoln by Bill O'Reilly

Lindsey Fields
Spencer Middle School
Runaway Twin by Peg Kehret

Mariah Finley
Crum Middle School
A Child Called "It" by Dave Pelzer

Ben Fox
Spencer Middle School
Francis Tucket by Gary Paulsen

Amy Frosch
Fairmont Catholic
The Light in the Forest by Conrad Richter

Kat Graves
Huntington Middle School
Mockingjay by Suzanne Collins

Montana Green
Spencer Middle School
Hatchet by Gary Paulsen

Name Withheld
Spencer Middle School
Second Chance Summer by Morgan Matson

Name Withheld
SS Peter and Paul
I Survived the Sinking of the Titanic, 1912
by Lauren Tarshis

Sarah Jude
Crum Middle School
My Side of the Mountain by Jean Craighead George

Name Withheld
SS Peter and Paul
Legend by Marie Lu

Randy Kimble
Harpers Ferry Middle School
The Angel Experiment by James Patterson

Name Withheld
Spencer Middle School
Save the Cupcake by Lisa Papademetriou

Name Withheld
Davis Thomas Elementary Middle School
The Hunger Games by Suzanne Collins

Mary Laswell
Fairmont Catholic
The Lord of the Rings by J.R.R. Tolkien

Rylee Laya
Fairmont Catholic
The Time Keeper by Mitch Albom

Olivia Liston
West Preston Middle School
The Hunger Games by Suzanne Collins

Name Withheld
SS Peter and Paul
Champion by Marie Lu

Name Withheld
Crum Middle School
Journey to the Center of the Earth by Jules Verne

Jacob Mollette
Crum Middle School
Charlotte's Web by E.B. White

Name Withheld
Spencer Middle School
Charlotte's Web by E.B. White

Name Withheld
Crum Middle School
Where the Red Fern Grows by Wilson Rawls

Isaac Putnam
Spencer Middle School
The Door Within by Wayne Thomas Batson

Name Withheld
Fairmont Catholic
God in the Foxhole by Mark W. Sasser

Name Withheld
Spencer Middle School
The Voyage of the Frog by Gary Paulsen

Name Withheld
Harpers Ferry Middle School
Out of My Mind by Sharon Draper

Name Withheld
SS Peter and Paul
The Last Song by Nicholas Sparks

Joseph Secreto
Fairmont Catholic
Diary of a Wimpy Kid #5: The Ugly Truth by Jeff Kinney

Name Withheld
Fairmont Catholic
The Light in the Forest by Conrad Richter

Name Withheld
Spencer Middle School
90 Minutes in Heaven by Don Piper

Name Withheld
Crum Middle School
Uglies by Scott Westerfeld

Name Withheld
Bluefield Middle School
The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy by Douglas Adams

Name Withheld
Spencer Middle School
The Ghost of Graylock by Dan Poblocki

Jordyn Starcher
Spencer Middle School
Someone Like You by Sarah Dessen

Selena Stillions
Harpers Ferry Middle School
The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian
by Sherman Alexie

Elaine Suer
Huntington Middle School
Between Shades of Gray by Ruta Sepetys

Name Withheld
Spencer Middle School
The Maze Runner by James Dashner

Name Withheld
SS Peter and Paul
The Giver and Number the Stars by Lois Lowry

Name Withheld
Harpers Ferry Middle School
The Lost Boy by Dave Pelzer

Name Withheld
Crum Middle School
October Sky by Homer Hickam

Name Withheld
Davis Thomas Elementary Middle School
The Warriors Series by Erin Hunter



LEVEL THREE—NOTABLE MENTIONS

Taylor Boury
The Linsly School
The Glass Castle by Jeanette Walls

Tyler Coleman
Tolsia High
Swallowing Stones by Joyce McDonald

Tracy Cross
Spring Mills High School
The Notebook by Nicholas Sparks

Name Withheld
Greenbrier West High School
Prozac Nation by Elizabeth Wurtzel

Luke Edgerton
The Linsly School
The Glass Castle by Jeanette Walls

Name Withheld
South Charleston High School
Before I Fall by Lauren Oliver

Name Withheld
Wirt County High School
A Day No Pigs Would Die by Robert Newton Peck

Hannah Fuller
The Linsly School
Night by Elie Wiesel

Luke Gollither
Spring Mills High School
Ghost Soldiers by Hampton Sides

Name Withheld
Spring Mills High School
The Rainbow Fish by Marcus Pfister

Madison Helmick
The Linsly School
The Magic of Thinking Big by David J. Schwartz

Janell Hunt
South Charleston High School
Out of Reach by Carrie Arcos

Name Withheld
Spring Mills High School
Evgeniy Onegin by Alexander Pushkin

Swann Jin
The Linsly School
Jacob Have I Loved by Katherine Peterson

Name Withheld
Greenbrier West High School
Thirteen Reasons Why by Jay Asher

Name Withheld
Wirt County High School
Chicken Soup for the Teenage Soul II by Jack Canfield,
Mark Victor Hansen, & Kimberly Kirberger

Rachel Knox
Spring Mills High School
Looking for Alaska by John Green

Benjamin Lanham
Hedgesville High School
East of Eden by John Steinbeck

Name Withheld
Spring Mills High School
Perfume by Patrick Suskind

Name Withheld
The Linsly School
Night by Elie Wiesel

Name Withheld
Wirt County High School
The Travel Team by Mike Lupica

Name Withheld
Spring Mills High School
Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows by J.K. Rowling

Name Withheld
The Linsly School
The Soul of a Horse by Joe Camp

Noelle McKenzie
Spring Mills High School
A Thousand Splendid Suns by Khaled Hosseini

Lexie McMillan
Wirt County High School
The Giver by Lois Lowry

Name Withheld
Wirt County High School
The Perks of Being a Wallflower by Stephen Chbosky

Nick Owens
Spring Mills High School
Goodnight Moon by Frank Asch

Ashley Provost
Spring Mills High School
The First Horse I See by Sally Keehn

Name Withheld
South Charleston High School
Where the Sidewalk Ends by Shel Silverstein

Name Withheld
The Linsly School
40 Chances by Howard G. Buffett

Name Withheld
Spring Mills High School
The Hunger Games Trilogy by Suzanne Collins

Korisha Seman
Spring Mills High School
To My Dearest Family by Unknown Author

Kari Anna Spaulding
Tolsia High
The Fault in Our Stars by John Green

Name Withheld
Capital High School
The Sound of the Trees by Robert Frost

Name Withheld
Wirt County High School
The Junie B. Jones Series by Barbara Park

Catherine Walker
South Charleston High School
The Perks of Being a Wallflower by Stephen Chbosky

Vanessa Wang
The Linsly School
The Blue Stone: A Journey Through Life by Jimmy Liao

Name Withheld
Tolsia High
Selected Poems by Edgar Allan Poe

Name Withheld
Capital High School
Along for the Ride by Sarah Dessen

Write about it...

Autographs...

Attach souvenir program....

Although *Letters About Literature* honors students, we applaud

Parents and Teachers

For the support and encouragement given to these developing writers.

Without your contributions and direction, many of these letter writers would have remained undiscovered.

Thanks to all who participated not only this year, but also in years past.

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is a national reading and writing promotion program of The Center for the Book in the Library of Congress, and supported locally by The West Virginia Center for the Book at the West Virginia Library Commission.

This project is supported, in part, by the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services under the provisions of the Library Services and Technology Act, administered in West Virginia by the State Librarian, and by the West Virginia Humanities Council, a state program of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

