LETTERS ABOUT LITERATURE

CALL FOR STUDENT ENTRIES!

The Neag School of Education, the Connecticut Writing Project, and UConn's Department of English invite students in grades 4 through 12 to enter the 34th annual Letters About Literature writing contest.

Polish up your reflective writing skills and write a letter to an author—living or dead—explaining how his or her work changed your view of yourself or your world.

ENTER ON ONE OF THE THREE COMPETITION LEVELS



Level 1: Grades 4, 5, and 6
Level 2: Grades 7 and 8
Level 3: Grades 9, 10, 11, and 12



2026-27 DEADLINES

Entries accepted online starting **December 1, 2026**

Deadline: **January 30, 2027**

AWARDS

Each state recognizes and awards prizes to winning participants.
The Neag School of Education will announce all Connecticut winners and finalists on its website.

State winners in each competition level will receive a $100 award.
Check s.uconn.edu/LAL for details on state awards and ceremonies.

SUBMITTING YOUR LETTERS

Online Entry: Each letter must be submitted via the Letters About Literature online platform. **One** entry per student.

Students Under 13: Students under the age of 13 (as of December 1, 2026) must obtain and **upload a signed consent form** from their parent/legal guardian to be eligible for entry. Entries by/for students under the age of 13 without a signed, uploaded form will be ineligible and discarded.

Ownership: All letters become the property of the University of Connecticut. Please keep a copy of your entries, as no letters will be returned.

Contact Information: For questions at the state-level, please contact Doug Kaufman at douglas.kaufman@uconn.edu.

Teachers: Teachers may submit class sets online by using one account and completing the online submission form for each entry.

HOW TO ENTER IN 10 EASY STEPS!

1. Select a fiction or nonfiction book, short story, poem, essay, or speech (excluding song lyrics) that you have read and about which you have strong feelings.
2. Imagine sitting down with the author of this work and sharing your personal thoughts. Your letter should be personal and sincere, more like a private conversation rather than a book report or a fan letter.
3. Share specific details both about the work and about your reaction to the work. Write honestly and from your own perspective.
4. Keep in mind that this is a reflective writing contest. Think about what you read and the meaning you gleaned from the author's words.
5. Type your letter, which must use at least 400 words and no more than 800 words.
6. Make sure your letter includes a date, greeting, body, closing, and your name or signature. Please do not include a return address on your letter. Note: All letter elements are included in the total word count.
7. Review the details about online submission and your state-specific deadline on the Letters About Literature website at **s.uconn.edu/LAL**.
8. If you are under the age of 13 (as of December 1, 2026), you must obtain and upload signed consent from your parent/legal guardian to be eligible to enter.
9. Submit your typed letter via the Letters About Literature online submission platform. You can upload your letter as a Word document or you can type your letter directly into the submission form.
10. Remember to complete all required information fields on the entry form before submitting your letter online.

ASSESSMENT

ALL ENTRIES WILL BE JUDGED ON THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA:

Round 1: *Audience.* Is the entry in letter format and does it address the author of the work? Entries that are not in letter format and are written about the author, rather than to the author, will be eliminated.

Purpose. Does the letter address the contest theme of how an author's work changed the read-er's view of self or the world? Is personal reflection evident in the letter? Entries that are book summa-ries or fan letters will be eliminated.

Letters that meet these criteria advance to Round 2.

Round 2: *Grammatical conventions.* Is the letter written in a clear and organized way with specific details to support its main ideas? Single-paragraph letters and those with significant grammatical errors will be eliminated.

Originality. Does the letter express ideas creatively, communicating a unique or powerful point of view? Letters that are formulaic without evidence of a writer's voice will be eliminated. Letters that meet these criteria advance to state-level judging.

Judges: Judges selected by the University of Connecticut choose the top letters in each competition level for their state and coordinate recognition ceremonies and awards.

The University of Connecticut selects a panel of judges to award State Winners and Honorable Mention Winners.

Letters About Literature is a reflective writing competition formerly sponsored by the Library of Congress Center for the Book and presented in association with affiliate State Centers.