

**West Virginia Center for the Book**

*Letters About Literature 2007*

West Virginia Center for the Book  
West Virginia Library Commission  
Cultural Center  
1900 Kanawha Boulevard, East  
Charleston, WV 25305  
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## Special Notice

*The response to this project is so great that the West Virginia Center for the Book will publish only the essays receiving Top Honors, Honors, and Honorable Mention Awards. The letters appearing in this publication depict the students' writing as it was submitted for judging. All attempts were made to keep the grammar and spelling true to the students' submissions, with the exception of necessary corrections to titles and authors. 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. Copyright (c) The Center for the Book in the Library of Congress. Letters published here are used by permission.*

**LAL 2007**

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## Level One

### Top Honors

Molly Lovern-Brushfork E.S.

The Devil's Arithmetic by Jane Yolen

Dear Jane Yolen,

Last year in fourth grade, I was given the opportunity to participate in my school's Social Studies Fair. There lying on the table was my inspiration, your book, The Devil's Arithmetic. With this tidbit of a concept, I went to my parents and my Jewish teacher, Ms. Platnick. We all agreed the Holocaust was a great idea for my project.

Ms. Platnick promised to find me a great interview. The interviewee was Mr. Daniel Kerreth, a Holocaust survivor. By telling me his life story, he taught me not to be fanatical or indifferent. Meeting him made me a different person.

In addition, in order to obtain a fuller understanding of the Holocaust, I interviewed my great uncle, a veteran of World War II. Before I spoke with him, I was very nervous. Soon after I pulled out a pencil, I became right at home with him. I realized all my life I had missed out on a great person who was only seven digits away. Thank you Jane Yolen, for giving me a relationship with my great uncle.

The Holocaust was horrible, but yet terribly interesting. With every scrap of knowledge I obtained I thrived for more.

To follow up the interviews, I searched the internet and visited the National Holocaust Memorial Museum. Both were very graphic, yet very informative and life changing.

The Devil's Arithmetic made me believe the Holocaust wasn't just statistics and dates. The Holocaust was a period of time where passion was replaced with genocide. Your book pushed me to do things I wouldn't have ever done. Thank you for changing my life, Jane Yolen.

Sincerely,  
Molly Lovern

### Honors

Ebhann Campbell

Martin the Warrior by Brian Jacques

Dear Brian Jacques,

Your books ROCK!! Not any old boring grey rocks but Rosey's Jolly Raspberry Jelly Rock Cakes. That's how good they are!!! Let me explain.

My name is Ebhann and I live in West Virginia although I was born in Belfast. My adventure started when I was seven. I got Redwall out of the library and ever since you have been my FAVORITE author.

After reading Martin the Warrior and getting to know the marvelous mole Grumm, I am inspired to be a chef. Grumm's remarkable ability to make soup from nothing has taught me that even though I am only ten years old I can make any tasty dish with few ingredients and heaps of imagination. And I learned that even a simple thing like beans on toast can be a feast.

My favorite thing to cook is soup! ZOOP!!!, as Grumm would say, Gurtt good zoop! Just thinking about soup makes me want to gallop down to the kitchen and wave my ladle about.

One of the most important lessons I have learned from Grumm is not to stir my soup too fast. I might get splashed with boiling broth or break apart all the tender vegetables.

I mostly cook for my Mom, Dad, brother, two sisters and soon my little baby sister. My whole family is in love with the hot, chunky, nourishing Leek Potato Soup that I create! I serve my soup with mountains of freshly baked crusty bread. It smells delicious and tastes souperific!!!!

When I cook now I imagine I am Grumm. I am incredibly experimentive. I tried cherry jam in Rosey's Jolly Raspberry Jelly Rock Cakes. They were delectable. Strawcolate Milk is a blend of milk, chocolate syrup strawberry sauce. It is best served at birthday parties with the cake. I have so many ideas it would take four seasons to tell you all of them.

I am going to prepare a Christmas Banquet with all sorts of recipes from your cookbook and my own inventions. When every one finishes gorging themselves with chocolate cake, mounds of whipped cream and cherries, sliced strawberries and sugar-sprinkled damson tarts they can roll on the floor while I juggle and sing for their entertainment. What fun!!!

My biggest dream would be for you to come over and enjoy this feast with me.

Take care,  
Ebhann Campbell

### Honors

Hanna Davis-Spring Mills M.S.

Blubber by Judy Blume

Dear Ms. Blume,

Fat. Whenever someone would say "fat," I thought they were talking about me. If I asked them they would say I'm skinny. I didn't know what teasing really was until I read Blubber in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade.

The book showed me that I should be proud of who I am and not think about what other people say. Also, I learned to stand up for what's right and not hide in the shadows. The book taught me that if I don't like what my friends are saying about me, I should get some new friends. (As it turns out, my friends weren't really talking about me at all.) I have a friend who is like Lina. People tease her because she is a little overweight. I stood up for her and said teasing is wrong and now she is not teased anymore.

I hope more people will read Blubber and understand that teasing is wrong, tears apart friendships, and hurts people's feelings. People should not judge themselves by their bad qualities like I did. I am sure Blubber has helped many people.

Sincerely,  
Hanna Davis

### Honors

Liesl Faye Hake

Spider Sparrow by Dick King-Smith

Dear Mr. King-Smith,

A few minutes from my house lives a family with a boy who has a bad case of Downs Syndrome. It is awkward not being able to understand him. How can I respond to him and his actions?

Another family in my church just adopted a boy with many physical and emotional needs. He is mostly blind and must wear thick glasses which magnify his eyes so he looks like a little bug. He is nineteen months old and has just learned to sit up. How can they be so happy with a nineteen-month-old just sitting up?



But both these families pour out waterfalls of love upon these children. Why? Your book Spider Sparrow helped me understand why.

As I grew to know Spider more, I began to ask myself, what makes it not seem so awkward between Tom and Kathy, and Spider? Then it came to me. It was their abundant love for Spider, they responded with love. I also began to enjoy his unique personality, and his fun way of talking. I would smile as I read “Good un” or “Hotter.” Spider is a special character. Maybe he has a lopsided smile, but that doesn’t make him a horrible burden that you wish was a “normal” child. It makes him all the more lovable.

Thank you for weaving this enlightening character into the pages of your book. He helped me to understand why those two families love their boys so much.

Sincerely,  
Liesl Faye Hake

### **Honors**

Lydia LeMaster-Mercer School  
Up Molasses Mountain by Julie Baker

Dear Ms. Baker,

Your book Up Molasses Mountain changed me for the better. I realize just how ungrateful I am. I also realize I form a negative opinion about people by their appearance much like people judged Clarence in your novel.

I have been regarded as a ‘spoiled rotten brat’. I know I am. I am the only child in my family, the only grandchild, and the only niece. It is like being a celebrity. After I read your book, I realized just how selfish and ungrateful I have been. I realize that I rarely say thank you. I now have made a goal for myself to be more thankful.

When my cat died, we got a new cat. However, I do not remember saying thank you. If Clarence got a new monkey, he would be thankful and would say thank you. My goal to be more appreciative was not working, so I became frustrated and angry. I knew this was not good. But I could not help myself. Knowing that this goal was very important, I continued to work on it. I am improving. Now, I almost always remember to say thank you. A thank you is given when I receive something or when someone does something for me.

When I judge someone, I usually base that on the way the person looks. This makes me relate to the character Johnny. I do not want to relate to him because he always made fun of Clarence. However, I know I am very similar to him. Although, I might not say the bad things, I think bad thoughts. I do not want to be like Johnny at all. Now, I also am working on a goal not to judge people by the way they look. It is a hard goal but I am trying my best.

Overall, I enjoyed reading your novel. Up Molasses Mountain helped me to see my faults. It really touched me, made me sad, and made me think. Thank you very much for writing this story. It really helped me realize how unappreciative I am and how much I judge people by their appearance. Most importantly, it helped me set a goal to change myself.

Respectfully yours,  
Lydia LeMaster

### **Honorable Mention**

Adam Bowles-Princeton M.S.  
Naruto by Masashi Kishimoto

Dear Masashi Kishimoto,

Your manga series, Naruto, has truly inspired me. Whenever I read Naruto, I feel the characters’ emotions and find out more about myself. Some of the lessons I learned were that you should never be afraid to stand up for yourself, you should always do the right thing, and that ramen noodles are good for your soul.

First off, Naruto taught me that you should never be afraid to stand up for what’s right. When Naruto stood up to Orochimaru in order to protect his friends, I realized that you should never back down or lose faith just because the future looks bleak. This experience made me stronger.

Next, I learned that you should always do the right thing, no matter what. I was surprised when Ino gathered up the courage to save Sakura even though they were bitter rivals. Ino knew she didn’t have a chance against Dosu, but her past memories of her and Sakura brought out the best in her. I was inspired.

Most importantly, I learned that the food of choice for all true heroes is ramen! Whenever Naruto is stressed out or nervous, he heads over to the ramen bar. After a hot bowl of ramen, Naruto feels ready to go! I love all kinds of ramen, just like Naruto.

In other words, Naruto has taught me about standing up for myself, doing what is right, and ramen noodles. Whether it’s a big battle or an evening at the ramen bar, I love Naruto because it is both inspiring and funny.

Sincerely,  
Adam Bowles

### **Honorable Mention**

Sydney Erin England-Mullens G.S.  
The Hair Book by Dr. Suess

Dear Dr. Suess

I read your books at home and in school. The way your books rhyme it makes me want to rhyme, too. My favorite book you wrote is The Hair Book. The Hair Book is funny and it made me laugh out loud. It completely turned me inside out, if you know what I mean. Your book made me to feel my self I am free I am really free. I can do anything I want to do, when I want to do it. The Hair Book makes me feel glad and happy inside. Your books make my life better. Without your books I don’t know where I’d be.

Yours Truly,  
Sydney Erin England

### **Honorable Mention**

Grace Kesler  
Pinocchio’s Quest by Robert Rogland

Dear Mr. Robert Rogland,

I think we all live in a world where it seems so hard to know what is right or wrong. You would think we would automatically know the difference. Sometimes we do, sometimes we don’t, and sometimes we just think we do. Sadly enough, the sometimes we do, sometimes turn out to be a time we don’t. It gets confusing.

I know I live in a more sheltered world than a lot of other children because I am home schooled. I'm not exposed to as many conflicts that would force me to make a right or wrong decision, but as I get older, I know by the things I see on television and hear on the news, those times are coming. Right now I struggle with problems that would hardly seem important, but I know the ways I choose to deal with them are just stepping stones to the way I will make bigger decisions.

That is why I enjoyed your book, Pinocchio's Quest, so much. I felt like, I too, was right there with Pinocchio as he faced trials and made decisions that would ultimately determine whether he lived or died. I also became aware of the trials I will face and the decisions I will make and, like Pinocchio, will need to search for a higher power or guidance for help.

I've learned how people all over the world, all down through history, seem to be drawn to some kind of higher power. For some it was the sun or the moon; others the stars. Some chose Buddha or Allah. I see you chose to symbolize Jesus Christ's Gospel. I felt the hope and relief Pinocchio felt when he realized he was getting help during the hard times in his life. I realized all humans need to feel this way.

Mr. Rogland, whether I choose any of the above and/or rely on my wonderful parents' advice as a guiding factor to help me know the difference between right or wrong, I want you to know how much I appreciate your book and the inspiration it gave me to know I am not alone in my journey.

Sincerely,  
Grace Kesler

**Honorable Mention**  
Mattie Kliethermes-Fairmont Catholic School  
Getting Near to Baby by Audrey Couloumbis

Dear Audrey Couloumbis,

Your book Getting Near to Baby changed a few important things in my life. Your story made me feel a lot closer to my mother, both physically and emotionally. The mother had a tragic loss when her baby died. The effect was that she was taken away from her two other daughters because she was so depressed when the baby died. I would be really upset if my mom was taken away from me.

Another reason why your book changed my life was because it made me feel the tragic loss of my close relatives. When I was really little my Grandmother died. I was really upset. Your book brought back that memory. It's not a bad thing; it actually made me feel happy.

This book makes me feel closer to my two sisters also. My sisters are my best friends and I love them very much. I would hate to see them go, or pass away. They help me get through life without any problems. But, one day when they get older I may have to take care of them instead of them taking care of me. Even though there was not a father character in your book, it still makes me feel closer to my father just as the same way as my mother. I appreciate my father and all the things he does for our family. There is always a chance that something could happen to him also.

Although your book was sad, I am glad I read it, because it changed my life.

Sincerely,  
Mattie Kliethermes

**Honorable Mention**  
Madison Moyer-Fairmont Catholic School  
The Tiger Rising by Kate DiCamillo

Dear Kate DiCamillo,

I was three when it all happened. First my dear sweet, old grandpa died and left my mom and grandma in tears. Then came the worst thing that happened in my life, you wouldn't believe how much it affected me. My mommy and daddy got divorced. It may not seem as horrible to you, but it is as horrible as ever to me and probably any other kid who is having their parents divorced. Then my mommy got a BIG ,MUSCULAR, SCARY, boyfriend, but I had gotten to know him and he is really nice. My daddy then got a girlfriend and are now happily and lovely engaged now have a little brother and sister. They are cute and nice, but I am afraid to express my feelings. It seemed like a wonderful happy family with lovely children and a perfect house and friends but theirs when it all happened.

My daddy and soon-to- be-step-mom officially, but anyway they were starting to fight like crazy sometimes I didn't feel like going over there because it was making me also crazy. Then we had to read your book for reading class, and it took me one day to read your book, because I was into it so much. I was finally finished with packing up like a suitcase my suitcase was so full I was about ready to scream my feelings out about everything. I finally let it all out and screamed it to because everything was falling at that time. My mom and dad are surprisingly proud that I expressed my feelings. Now I go to a counselor and it is great because I express my feelings in different ways like drawing shaping my life in clay and punching an inflatable dummy this book, The Tiger Rising helped change my life so Thank You.

Sincerely  
Madison Moyer

## Level Two

**Top Honors**  
Mollee Brown-Fairmont Catholic School  
Old Yeller by Fred Gipson

Dear Mr. Gipson,

I live on a large farm on the outskirts of a small city in West Virginia. With a farm, there come many responsibilities. With many responsibilities, adventures often follow. I have several jobs that I do before and after school to care for and maintain the safety for about eighty cows. One of them is to go and check the fields to make sure that there are no coyotes around, because the coyotes sometimes try to attack the calves.

One day, as I was doing my "usual rounds," I heard a loud yelp from a nearby meadow. At the thought of a coyote attack, I began to speed towards the field as fast as I could, my heart all but leaping from my chest. As I rounded a corner—there! A flash of off-white whipped away and I instantly followed, barely noticing the cold air whirling in my face. Finally I caught up to the creature. To my shock there was no coyote. However, a beautiful shepherd mix appeared before my eyes. The dog's cream-colored coat was filthy and matted, and its gorgeous eyes were hidden behind a mass of burrs and deep cuts. I began to try to sneak closer, but she immediately saw me and dashed away. I left the field and returned with a pail full of food, then went away to watch from a distance. She gulping down the food with much eagerness, and I felt so bad for her that a tear formed in my eye.

From then on, we were best friends. I brought her food daily, each time watching from a bit closer than the day before. However, she always would shy away when I reached out a hand. I remember the pain and neglect that shone through her eyes, and I understood that sometimes you are emotionally hurt so much that it cannot be fixed.

One day, as I headed up with her food, she didn't appear in the meadow as usual. Immediately worried, I began to search all the fields. After what seemed like hours, I found her lying near the woods. She had wounds all over her, many of which were teeth marks. It seemed that coyotes had attacked her the previous night. All I could do was leave her there and return to my house. The next day I went up, she was gone.

Why? I thought. She didn't deserve this; she was young yet and had barely had a chance to enjoy life. That's how your book came in to help. Like Old Yeller, this dog was strong and a true fighter. Your book showed me that I shouldn't see her death as a loss, but her visits and trusting attitude as a gain. Therefore, I'd like to thank you ... your book, "Old Yeller," has made a huge difference in my life; she helped me recover from that dog's death more than you can imagine. And the best thing is, even if the book hadn't aided me when I needed it, I loved reading the exciting adventures of a boy and a dog.

Sincerely,  
Mollee Brown

P.S. A few weeks after the dog's disappearance, I read that there was a new animal at the local animal shelter. The notice read: "Newly found dog, shepherd mix, off-white coat, scars, but otherwise healthy, now up for adoption." I don't know whether it was her or not. If it was, I wouldn't be surprised; her spirit was definitely stronger than most wounds. If it wasn't, I'd still be happy—then another mistreated dog is getting another chance at life.

### Honors

Alexandra Flanigan-South M.S.  
Bridge to Terabithia by Katherine Paterson

Dear Katherine Paterson,

Isn't it amazing how some books can enter you? I don't mean just entering your hands, all books do that. Most books also enter your attention. Some books even enter your mind, nullifying all other thought and challenging your logic. But beyond that, even, is that occasional gem of a book, that diamond in the rough, that enters all of you. Your life. Your sense of being.

I suppose that, in a sense, that's why Bridge to Terabithia appealed to me. I've always had intelligence in excess, always been a level beyond the highest of anyone in my classes. But it's only now, after reading your book, that I have wisdom. I realize the value of friends—not just realize them, actually, but appreciate them to their fullest extent. I have realized the difference between being alive and actually *living*. But the most important of these lessons was in coping.

I used to wonder why, in your book, Jesse was so painfully obsessed with running. Thinking simply, I mistook it for just another hobby, another passion. It was much more than that. But only now do I realize that...

One day, my father left for work—but that night, he failed to return. I was 11 years old and terrified. I may have been young, but I wasn't ignorant I knew what might've happened. That was a year and a half ago. By now, I've unearthed all the facts; facts about my father's abusive childhood, one brought on by his wicked adopted parents. Facts that showed recently, thoughts of that past life had been

recurring. The facts about how he'd recently been straying from his job as an attorney, straying instead towards alcohol and gambling. My dad was mentally ill.

Thankfully, he's still around. My parents aren't divorced, but Dad doesn't live with us in the house anymore. He moves around from state to state receiving treatment. I feel as though I hardly know him.

So now I understand. I understand this burning passion Jesse felt to be the best, the drive to win. I understand that it goes beyond being a hobby. It's a distraction—a distraction from his hard, dreary life. I, too, have a coping mechanism—sort of akin to Jesse's own. I don't run, but when I need a distraction, just getting out of the house or singing a tune can make me forget—at least for a little while.

I've learned to accept my situation, and to take it with stride. Like the tragedy Jesse must feel over Leslie's "accident", the cold pain of reality still burns within me, invoking fits of anger. But when this happens, I just retreat to my room—my Terabithia—and all is well again in my world.

Alexandra Flanigan

### Honors

Nicole Marton-Bridgeport M.S.  
Journey to the Center of the Earth by Jules Verne

Dear Mr. Verne,

I have explored the secrets of Hogwarts with Harry Potter. I have fought Cardinal Richelieu with D'Artagnan and The Three Musketeers, and spent thirteen years in the Chateau d'if with Edmond Dantes in The Count of Monte Cristo. I have even traveled around the world in eighty days with Phileas Fogg, but the most thrilling and fantastic journey I have taken was the one with Professor Hardwigg and his nephew, Harry to the center of the earth.

From reading Journey to the Center of the Earth, I noticed certain similarities between myself and some of the characters. For example, Professor Hardwigg was a very determined person. He was willing to do whatever it would take to accomplish his mission to reach the center of the Earth, and he would push others along with him. In the same way, I have to finish what I start. I get myself involved in so many things, but I always do my best on them and find a way to finish them all, even if it means staying up until 11:00 on school nights.

On the other hand, my positive reaction after reading Journey to the Center of the Earth had a lot to do with the differences between my life and the lives of the characters in the story. While my life is fairly routine most of the time, Harry's definitely wasn't. As Professor Hardwigg, Harry, and their guide, Hans traveled lower and lower into the Earth, they encountered more and more surprises. I was a bit disappointed, though, because after working and pushing themselves so hard, the characters never really knew if they had found the center of the Earth. Many times I find myself wondering how they would have reacted if they would've known that they really had reached their destination.

At specific points in the book, I became so absorbed in the story that I started to think about what I would have done differently as some of the characters. One of these situations was when Professor Hardwigg, Harry, and Hans had reached an underground ocean they called the Central Sea. Personally, if I had been in their shoes, I would not have been able to resist exploring the land around the

sea to discover what other secrets it contained. This did surprise me, when I thought about it, because I'm usually not the type of person that would take that type of risk.

I guess this book made me realize that there is so much mystery still out there in the world just waiting to be explored. I started to think about things that haven't been investigated to their full extent like different dimensions, outer space, and even if there really is a world at the center of the Earth. I don't know if it is going to be me, but someone should explore those possibilities. I just wanted to say that this book really did make me think about the world around me more than I usually would, and it took me to a world completely separated from anything else.

Sincerely,  
Nicole Marton

### Honors

Deirdre Tobin-Fairmont Catholic School  
Anne of Green Gables by Lucy Maud Montgomery

Dear Lucy Maud Montgomery,

When I received your book as a birthday present from my brother six years ago, I thought it would be like all the other books I've read - good but not something I could relate too. Some things are special in life, like a snow day, the smell of freshly baked cookies, and Anne of Green Gables.

Your character Anne is someone I could relate too. She reminded me of myself when we moved to West Virginia from Idaho three years ago. We traveled across the country in a van and a moving truck. We entered West Virginia and I was amazed at how beautiful it was with all of the trees and hills just like Anne was with the lake and the Avenue. I also hoped to find a friend with whom I could share secrets.

I started at my new school and everyone was friendly and welcoming. I was accepted into the group of girls and found a good friend, Danielle. She is to me like Diana was to Anne. We act out plays and stories the same way they acted out Elaine. Danielle and I were friends with other girls, but we were still best friends.

Over the summer, I was selected to join an elite group of students that spent two weeks at West Virginia University. My friend Danielle hadn't gotten into the camp. As Anne and I both prepared to leave, we were both worried at the idea of leaving behind our best friend. When I went shopping for new clothes for the camp, Anne traveled with me. I was packing my stuff into my suitcase, and Anne was there helping me. When I arrived at WVU, I headed to my room and unpacked. While unpacking, I was hit with a sudden pang of homesickness. Yet Anne inspired me to get off my bed and go talk to my new roommate and the people I would spend the next two weeks with. Once I became busy, I forgot about missing home. After the camp was over, I traveled home. Everything — like my flowers, parents, and Danielle — seemed more special than ever.

Anne has become part of my life, encouraging me to use my imagination and look on the bright side. Your book will be part of my life and my bookshelf forever. Soon, I'll introduce Anne to my sister and let Anne work her magic on her.

Sincerely,  
Deirdre Tobin

### Honorable Mention

Hannah Bowles-Glenwood School  
For One More Day by Mitch Albom

Dear Mr. Albom,

You made me realize that a lot of us have the same problems as the character Chick in For One More Day. A lot of people run away from their problems, take things for granted, and let other people influence them. For One More Day made me realize that you should address these problems because they are real and they can happen.

The first lesson your book taught me is not to run away from problems. Running away is a problem itself. When you ignore problems, they add up to more than you would expect. Before you know it, you have so many problems there is no longer a (simple) solution. You should stop and find one answer at a time.

The next thing I learned is never to take things for granted. When you take things for granted, you forget about everything else and see things simply as something that helps you, but nothing more. You do not realize how much that one thing means to you until it is gone. I had a friend who lived really close to me. We talked after school, but we had different friends at school. We never realized how important we were to each other until she moved away.

The last and most important lesson your book teaches me is not to let other people influence my decisions. My parents are divorced, so there are two different opinions on most things. Through the story, I saw Chick have to decide between his mother and his father. I can relate to what Chick goes through because the same thing has happened to me. It is a very hard decision to make, choosing between your mother and father. I now realize that I should not go along with someone else's opinion just to please them.

I have learned that you should face your problems, appreciate what you have, and think for yourself. I hope the lessons I have learned from your novel, For One More Day, will stay with me for a long time.

Sincerely,  
Hannah Bowles

### Honorable Mention

Nicole Godbey-Elkview M.S.  
Charlotte's Web by E.B. White

Dear E.B White,

Your book Charlotte's Web is a special book, and I could not put it down. It was my entire life. When I was a little girl, my dad lived on a farm and we raised horses, goats, cows, and pigs. Like the book I had a pet pig named Precious and she had a litter of eight. The 8<sup>th</sup> one we had a problem getting him out so he was the runt of the litter. My dad was going to kill him but I took him and watched him but I didn't baby him. Fern in the book was a lot like me humble, caring, and thoughtful.

Though many years I could hear my dad saying he's got to go. I never listened till finally one day I lost my pig he was transferred to my grandma's farm I was so sad but I learned to consider that my pig was gone.

One day I got a call saying my pig was going to be sold and killed. Well, I couldn't take that so I tried to talk but no one would listen I was so scared. The next day I went to see my grandma and when I got there she showed me my pig and she said he was leaving tomorrow and I started crying and wishing that this was not going to happen. When the day came that I had to give my pig away I cried for hours and hours but it was for the best.



When I thought nothing else matter, my pig was dead and there was nothing I could do. There was a knock at the door it was my dad with a small package. He opened it and it was Precious looking up at me with tears in her eyes. I started crying my dad asked why and I said just because I said.

Why in god names did God put this pig back in my arms why was this pig born. Fern in the story of course is just like me and I loved reading the book Charlotte's Web because I now know that god will save any animals that had the right to live. Even though I don't act like a tom girl farm chic I will always be one by heart. Everyday I wake up smelling fresh warm clean mountain farm air and then BAM you start getting treated like crap. When life gets tough and you really don't know what to do, I will always know that the farm life is the life for me even though I never get to be on my farm sense my dad had sold the farm so he could become a Auto Guy whatever.

When you have the life of a teen you wish and pray you were older so you wouldn't have to put up with the crap must teens put up with. All my life I just wanted to be treated like a normal person not some girl from the streets and I wish life would be a bit easier then what it has been for the past two years. I'm not saying I have a bad life because I don't, but I would love to be able to live on a farm and just set and feed the cows, goats, pigs, and horses. Just be able to write books and read what matters to me. Being a writer is everything to me showing people you care on what matters and just being able; to live with out the worries of being pregnant but Fern showed me that you don't always have to hide yourself from the world.

Nicole Godbey

#### **Honorable Mention**

Rachel Goforth-Bluefield M.S.

Where the Sidewalk Ends by Shel Silverstein

Dear Shel Silverstein,

Your book of poems Where the Sidewalk Ends is one of my all time favorite books! Some of the poems have inspired me to be more understanding and less judgmental, but also to look at life with a little more humor. This book seems to describe just the right amount of all of our emotions: sadness, joy, happiness, fear, and encouragement.

Among the many poems my favorite is called "Hug-o-War". This poem emphasizes that the game of tug-o-war can sometimes hurt and be cruel. It also shows how people can be self-centered and want their own way, not only in games, but also in everyday life. I don't like the idea of fighting and wish that we could all somehow get along without any conflicts. If everyone would play the game of "Hug-o-War" instead of tug-o-war, then we could all win! I realize that there needs to be good sportsmanship in all areas of our lives, and that not everyone can be the best all the time. There can be ways for us to help and encourage our freinds along the way, however. This is a reflection of the Golden Rule, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you". If only we could all carry out our lives that way!

I realize also that as I was reading this poem that every poem can relate something meaningful about our lives. When I was younger, I didn't particularly enjoy reading poetry. But this book somehow became a way to enjoy looking at life from a humorous standpoint, and not taking everything so seriously. I might have read this book when I was little, but it seems to have grown with me and has become a good friend that I like to be with from time to time. Where the Sidewalk Ends, and especially "Hug-o-War", has taught me that you should live your life to its fullest, with a smile on your face,

even when the world would expect you to frown.

Yours truly,  
Rachel Goforth

#### **Honorable Mention**

Raef Lambertson-South M.S.

When Pigasso Met Mootisse by Nina Laden

Dear Ms. Laden,

I was ten when my best friend and I had a life altering argument. We both said awful things about each other. We never made up our friendship, a decision I still regret today.

I was very hurt by the argument and I still haven't recovered, even after three years. I was in a bad state, so my mom bought me your book to kill time. I read it and your book brought back all the emotions I had felt: frustration, anger, and sorrow. The frustration I felt toward him for being so selfish, the anger because he would not do what I had wanted him to do, and the sorrow that we could not ever see each other again.

Your book was my doorway through the twisted path of my sorrow. I am now a much happier person because of your book. It helped me to learn to forgive. I never made up with that friendship, but your book helped me save hundreds of others. I can now walk down the street a happier and better person, all thanks to your book.

I am not sure if your story helped others, but it sure helped me. The argument was awful and it ripped me to shreds. I felt awful about the things I said. And yet if was able to go back in time and stop that argument, I would not. Because it helped me to know who I am now. The argument was a small bit of good in the long run for me as a person.

I do not think this letter will mean anything to you, but it means something to me. You are the only one I truly feel comfortable talking to about this, and I thank you for writing this book. Something your book taught me was that true friendship never dies, so I am not completely sure the friendship with my friend was ever fully destroyed. Maybe one day my friend and I can be together again.

Sincerely,  
Raef Lambertson

#### **Honorable Mention**

Mary Beth Miller-Princeton M.S.

Where I Want to Be by Adele Griffin

Dear Adele Griffin,

Thank you for writing your book, Where I Want to Be, which inspired me and made me see things in a drastically new, better way. When I finished your book, I was almost in a daze. I comprehended that. It said don't take life for granted. If there's something you don't like about your life, and you have the power to change it, do so.

When I read your book, I learned three very important lessons. First, changes are inevitable. I can either gracefully embrace them, or resist and try to run away from them. If I choose to hide from the problems and changes in my life, I'll miss out on everything good that is still coming my way. My suggestion would be to go with the flow, accept changes as a way of life, and move on with them.

Second, if a change that messes everything up happens, and it will, I need to try to make the best of the situation. So what if something doesn't go my way? I just have to suck it up and move on.

Third, I learned that I need to live life to the fullest and not worry about things to come. I must try to have as much fun as possible and keep my life full of options, both for the present and the future. I never know when some tragic accident might occur, changing my life completely.

Your book made me think about my life in a different way, in a new light. I, too, love my grandparents very much and spend as much time at their house as Jane did at her grandparents' house. Your book made me see just how lucky I really am, to be able to see my little sister and everyone else I care about everyday, unlike Jane and Lily. I'm glad I had a chance to read a book that could have such an impact on my way of thinking and on my life. Life is like an hour glass; when everything hits the bottom, eventually someone comes by to turn it all around.

Sincerely,  
Mary Beth Miller

#### **Honorable Mention**

Lydia Pierson-Beverly Hills M.S.  
The Skin I'm In by Sharon G. Flake

Dear Mrs. Sharon G. Flake,

Your book The Skin I'm In made a tremendous impact in my life. I was able to relate to it in many ways. The main character, Maleeka, reminded me a lot of myself. Most of the books that I have read do not have African American girls as their main character. Also, Maleeka attended an almost all white school and had many struggles because of it, just like me. From kindergarten through fifth grade, I attended a school that had about five black students out of around 250. I was always the only black girl in my class. While most of the girls were nice, I never quite felt like I fit in. I always was aware that I was different. Like Maleeka, remarks were sometimes made about my hair—the texture and hairstyles that I wore. Sometimes the color of my skin and the size and shape of my nose were commented on or made fun of. Although I know that most of the comments were not meant to hurt me, they made me notice my differences and made me feel like I wasn't as pretty as some of the other girls.

Teachers were also sometimes insensitive and did not think about the fact that I was the only African American girl in the class when teaching certain subjects. One time one of my teachers taught that slavery was not bad and the slaves were happy to be slaves. This made me feel very badly because I knew that this was not true. On another occasion when learning about Spanish explorers it was mentioned that the explorers owned slaves. We were taught that these explorers were good Christian people who should be celebrated, yet we did not celebrate Martin Luther King Holiday because our Headmaster felt that he was an adulterer and should not be celebrated. In class I never questioned my teachers about these things and did not ask any questions about them because I was young and I also did not want to draw more attention to myself. Your book helped me to realize that I am not the only African American girl who has had these experiences. Maleeka and I have felt the same way about many things. It has also helped me to accept my differences and realize that they are unique and beautiful. Like Maleeka, I have come to accept my differences and realize that they are what make me unique and beautiful.

Sincerely,  
Lydia Pierson

## **Level Three**

### **Top Honors**

Carolyn Garcia  
Last Chance to See by Douglas Adams

Dear Douglas Adams,

Sometimes our most precious possessions are taken away from us even before we knew we had them. I'll never forget the time I first read your work. It was an excerpt from your book Last Chance to See in a magazine I subscribe to. When I read an article, I usually only afford the author's name a passing glance before I move on, if that. However, while reading about your venture with Mark Carwardine to see the kakapo, I became curious. I not only felt myself warming up to the adorable and pathetically maladaptive parrot that you and Mark had trekked all the way to New Zealand to see before it became extinct, I also felt myself warming up to you. *Hmm*, I thought. *This man is funny. Hilarious, actually. Brilliant, too.* I flipped back to the title page of the article and made a mental note to check out the rest of the book you wrote, and maybe see if you had written anything else. I read the rest of the article, still wanting more, and then turned to the miniature author bio at the end. It read, "Renowned for his Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy, Douglas Adams died in 2002..." I was shocked. Reading that excerpt, I had gotten a brief glimpse into the mind of a darkly witty, intelligent, and utterly fascinating person—I had been captivated. Now I had just been introduced to you and already you had been taken away from me.

I devoured your work, beginning with the Guide and continuing through the entire series, not stopping until I had read almost everything you had ever written. You blew my mind as you dragged me through all different aspects of space-time; from Africa to Alpha Centauri, from the 1800's to the 60's to centuries into the future. The more I read, the more I laughed, the more I wondered, and the more I missed you, although I never knew you.

Even with your wonderful British humor, drier than Melba toast, so icy it could freeze a blowtorch, your books often leave me with a lingering sad feeling. Perhaps, Mr. Adams, it is because of your bleak outlook. Although much of your work places emphasis on the amazing complexity of our wondrous universe, there is an undertone of melancholy. You seem to see the universe as a cruel, harsh place, whose hapless inhabitants are constantly battered about by malevolent forces. You don't believe in God. You believe that the cosmos and the fates and most of all, humans and other life forms, are all pitted against the innocent, the good, the unsuspecting.

In Last Chance to See, you wrote that the kakapo, bumbling and incompetent at the game of evolution, the victim of a quickly changing environment, danger rushing at it from all sides, is impossible not to love. "If you look one in its large, round, greeny-brown face," you wrote, "it has a look of serenely innocent incomprehension that makes you want to hug it and tell it everything will be all right, even though you know that it will probably not be." Reading this sentence now, I am filled with a sudden urge to embrace both you and the bird, to hold on to you and keep you here with us, to reassure you both that although the world seems unutterably cruel sometimes, this isn't all there is, and it will get better in the end, I am sure of it.



The kakapo, the Bajii River Dolphin, the Rodrigues fruit bat, all disappearing before our very eyes, and you yourself taken from us so prematurely, before my generation even had a chance to know you, remind me of a poem by Carl Sandburg:

Buffalo Dusk

The buffaloes are gone.

And those who saw the buffaloes are gone.

Those who saw the buffaloes by thousands and how they pawed  
the prairie  
sod into the dust with their hoofs, their great heads down, pawing  
on the great  
pageant of dusk,  
Those who saw the buffaloes are gone.  
And the buffaloes are gone.

Mr. Adams, all of your writing has amazed me, but Last Chance to See has truly inspired me. The world is full of fantastic, wonderful things, many of which are departing before most people are aware they ever existed. Life is a breathless race to discover more and more of these divine gifts, intricate and stunning, strange and fascinating, before all-consuming time or our own indifference wipes them off the face of the earth forever. This is why I want to be a reporter. To do what you did, to travel the globe in search of places, cultures, and species so awesome and so beautiful, to gather all possible knowledge about these amazing things, and fling it far and wide to every corner of every country, so that people can know what I know and become amazed along with me, treasuring the marvels our world possesses and protecting those in danger—it seems to me that there could hardly be a more satisfying job. My overall opinion about life, the universe, and everything differs from yours only in that I believe in a loving and benevolent force, watching over us and making sure that everything turns our right ultimately. Perhaps last chances don't have to be last chances after all. It is my strong hope that someday many eons in the future, long past our own time and the time of our planet, you and I and all the many wonders of our crazy spinning galaxies will finally be united, somewhere at the end of the universe.

Sincerely,  
Carolyn Garcia

**Honors**

Annie Flatley-Wheeling Park H.S.  
Speak by Laurie Halse Anderson

Dear Laurie Halse Anderson,

Your book Speak has affected my life tremendously. In trying to understand the main character, Melinda, I've realized numerous things about myself, my actions, and the actions of people around me. This book has helped me get through a very tough situation in my life, and I'm sure what I've learned from it will help me in many situations to come.

It is amazing how many ways I can identify with Melinda in this book. When reading your book, I felt as though I was her, and I was feeling the same emotions as she was, from her struggles and darkest secret, to what she overcame at the end. It felt good to know my feelings towards things weren't completely strange.

This summer I was faced with a horrible situation like Melinda's. I, also, was raped. I was confused hurt, sad, mad and frustrated just like her. I told my sister what had happened and she recommended that I read this book because she had read it and liked it so much. I don't read very much, but I decided anything would help. So I started reading, and the more I read the more I felt Melinda's pain. But it wasn't a bad thing, I was happy to know that I was probably

not the only one out there going through this, that I wasn't alone, even if she is just a character in a book. After seeing the consequences of her keeping this burden to herself that she was raped, I knew that was not how I wanted my situation to turn out. I realized that I would be better off telling my parents my secret of having been raped than keeping it all inside. It was one of the hardest decisions I've had to make in my life, but it has also been the best decision. Although it was extremely hard letting somebody know about my situation, the book showed me that I needed to "speak" and let somebody know what I was going through. If I hadn't read your book, I would have probably kept it to myself. I didn't want to go through what Melinda had to go through the whole time span of the story. I didn't want to keep it all in, not have any friends, and not like myself. Your character Melinda showed me the courage inside of myself to let it all out and make the best of my difficult situation.

Not only did the book help me with my personal struggle, but many things about the people around me. In your book, many kids ridiculed Melinda because of how she acted. The reason she acted the way she did was all because she was keeping the secret of having been raped all to herself. One never knows what a person has been through in his or her life. People respond differently to things, and no matter what their responses are we should respect that, unlike how everyone in the book didn't respect Melinda. I wish every peer of mine could read your book. It showed me how destructive high school cliques can be, and how that inside, all every teen wants is just to be accepted by others. I want never to fall back into a trap of judging another person in my life.

I just wanted to say thank you for writing this wonderful book, and tell you how your book has tremendously affected my life in a positive way.

Sincerely,  
Annie Flatley

**Honors**

Haley McDonald-Musselman H.S.  
Rainbow Boys by Alex Sanchez

Dear Mr. Alex Sanchez:

I have just finished your first novel Rainbow Boys. My friend suggested I read it because she said it changed the way she viewed people. I received the book and the first thing out of my mouth was, "Another Brokeback". I was wrong.

Rainbow Boys changed my view drastically. The book opened my eyes to how it was to be gay and what they have to go through everyday. I decided I did not want to be a person who thinks its okay to spray paint "gay fag" on a person's locker. I do not want to be a person who thinks it is wrong to feel love for somebody who is the same gender or has the same body parts. I want to and I think your book helped me realize this.

The character Jason mirrors how I feel on the inside. In the book, I felt that Jason wanted to come out and break out from his "jock" identity. He wanted to show who he was and not be afraid of other people. He did not want to feel fear of people's reaction. I also want to break out of my shell like Jason in the book. I want to stand up and sing aloud if I wanted to. I do not want to be afraid of others.

A strength I share with the character is that I am smart like Kyle. I am not as smart as Kyle is, but someday I will get there. A strength I share with Jason is that we both are very optimistic. A strength I have in common with Nelson is that I like change and I can to change easily. A flaw I have in common with Kyle is that I do not



stand up for others or myself when I need to. Another flaw I have is not being able to choose or make up my mind, which I share with Jason.

The first thing that popped into my brain while reading this was that I accepted Kyle and Jason's relationship. I soon realized that they were in love through out the book. It was a real relationship with both people in love with each other. Before I read this book, I thought only a man and a woman could be in love as Jason and Kyle are in Rainbow Boys. I was wrong to think or assume that a man and another man cannot have feelings for each other.

The second thing that I found in my head was that all teenagers are the same and that we have the same problems. We all fret about what we look like or how our hair looks. It is somewhat silly when you think about it. Tomorrow probably over a third of all teenagers will get up and will worry about their looks. It amazes me that all of us think alike, but still have our own identity.

Rainbow Boys is meaningful to me it changed my view. I went from not accepting certain people to accepting them all. The book transformed me to a completely new person. It showed me my flaws and I hope to fix them. I thank you for writing the book. I have never in my life, read a book that had such an impact as Rainbow Boys and I thank you.

Sincerely,  
Haley McDonald

#### **Honors**

Ashley Yoho  
Anorexic by Eavan Boland

Dear Eavan Boland,

I am writing to you for the impact that you poem "Anorexic" has had on me. When I read it, I cried. I have had my secretive eating disorder for more than four years, and I have been welcoming it as though it were something positive to glorify. I believe that anorexia nervosa does not deserve to be put in a positive light. Anorexia is a disease that haunts me. Unfortunately, I am one of many.

Your poem has made me take a cold, hard look at my life. I have wasted four years of my life with anorexia. My average day would usually consist of fantasizing about an emaciated physique, watching everything I would eat, and exercising to the point of exhaustion. All of the worrying, eventually, takes its toll. When I had a feeling as though I had eaten too much, and I knew my mother would catch me working out in my room late at night, then I would punish myself by self-mutilation. I would bruise my inner thighs, shins, and calves. I would proceed to do so until, simultaneously, I could see the bruises take their painful form upon my body.

My mother's dog is recently recovering from her surgery and illness. The dog looks extremely sick and thin. Sometimes, I try to avoid looking at her because I want her frailty and it makes me feel awkward. She looks like death and I want that. I have always said to myself, "I should look how I feel. I feel like nothing." I would never wish to cause any harm to my family. Unknowingly, I have. When you mentioned "till renounced/milk and honey," it reminded me of my family. They care so much for my well-being and I lie to them for their happiness. From the looks on my mother's face, the pain, the wanting to heal this dying creature, and the sorrow. It pained me so to see my mother this way. I am the dog in my mother's eyes.

I have chosen to stay and fight this battle between my disease and me. I will not die just because I have a callous image of my body.

This disease has made me so selfish. Your poem has completely taken my vision of anorexia nervosa and has shown me what it honestly is. It is dark and sullen. I wish to no longer hurt my family or myself. I have become so daunted from lacerating my body. I choose to live the life given to me.

Lastly, I want to thank you for writing "Anorexia". I thank you because you have portrayed anorexia in its natural light: immaculate torment. "Anorexia" is something I have become. I want a healthier lifestyle. I need to spend the rest of my time on this earth with my family, as much as possible. I do not want this any longer. I have already missed out on so much.

Sincerely,  
Ashley Yoho

#### **Honorable Mention**

Javier Carrera-Magnolia H.S.  
Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone by J.K. Rowling

Dear J. K. Rowling,

I read your book Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone in 2001, and now it is 2006. After I read it, I didn't find a real connection until the beginning of this year, when my dad told me I was going to study one year in America, just as Hagrid told Harry he had been accepted at "Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry."

When I left Monterrey, Mexico to come to the United States, I felt like Harry when he came to the magical world. A lot of things were new: language, money, and customs. I didn't know what to expect or how to act in similar situations at Magnolia High School, similar to Harry at "Hogwarts."

My first day at school I didn't know anyone and didn't understand a lot of things that were happening; I was late for a few classes because I got lost several times and had to be directed to my classrooms, just as Harry and Ron were late for Professor McGonagall's class. I knew very little English just like Harry knew little about magic. However, I have found very good friends who help me in my classes and things I don't understand comparable to Hermione Granger teaching Harry and Ron some spells and helping out with their homework. The classes here (seniors, juniors, sophomores and freshmen) are divided like the Houses in "Hogwarts" (Gryffindor, Slytherin, Hufflepuff and Ravenclaw); almost all extremely dislike the freshmen as the three Houses hate Slytherin.

This was my first year playing football in America; it was a completely different experience than the football we play in Mexico. Harry was introduced to the world of Quidditch, a completely different sport he never imagined. In America we play against different teams, in different towns and states. While in Hogwarts they play Houses vs. Houses, and Mexico Campus vs. Campus. Quidditch is the only sport played at "Hogwarts" and football is the only sport held at the Campus where I study in Mexico. However, at Magnolia High School, you can play in any sport you wish if it is offered.

However, not everything was terrible in becoming a foreign exchange student, I'm learning all about the American history, traditions, culture, and specially their language. I have met a lot of new people; I have traveled to many new places I have only read about. Harry Potter went to places he never even knew existed, like "Hogwarts" and "Platform 9 3/4" in King Cross Station. He learned all about trust, loyalty and companionship.



*When he had been younger, Harry had dreamed and dreamed of some unknown relation coming to take him away, but it had never happened; the Dursleys were his only family. Yet sometimes he thought (or maybe hoped) that strangers in the street seemed to know him. Very strange strangers they were, too. A tiny man in a violet top hat had bowed to him once while out shopping with Aunt Petunia and Dudley. After asking Harry furiously if he knew the man, Aunt Petunia had rushed them out of the shop without buying anything. A wild-looking old woman dressed all in green had waved merrily at him once on a bus. A bald man in a very long purple coat had actually shaken his hand in the street the other day and then walked away without a word. The weirdest thing about all these people was the way they seemed to vanish the second Harry tried to get a closer look.*

This portion of the book reminds me the most of being a foreign exchange student, because a lot of people in this school wave at me and greet me with smiles even though I don't know their names or who they are.

Thank you for this fantastic book, filled with adventure and charm. I think this is your best book of all the Harry Potter series.

Best Wishes,  
Javier Carrera

#### **Honorable Mention**

Amber Eakin-East Fairmont H.S.  
"Shooting an Elephant" by George Orwell

Dear George Orwell,

I realized something just the other day, and I came to this conclusion chiefly because I read "Shooting an Elephant." The nature of human beings is to crave acceptance, and to do exactly what is expected of them to achieve this. I really feel that "Shooting an Elephant" speaks to the reader about human nature and the guilt we feel when we cause suffering.

Although this story is fairly vivid, my mother recently went to India on business for three months and even got to ride an elephant, so this seemed all the more real to me. I can relate; in several other ways as well. After all, who has not felt guilty about something they have done just to fit in?

Making a decision as to whether or not the elephant should die is a decision I am certainly glad I did not have to make, but it made me see something in myself. My choices may not seem like yours at first glance, but I am guilty of the same crime. Everyday that I wake up, I am faced with the decision to stick to the "norm" and do what I have to do to be accepted, or to do what I want and risk appearing "strange." I must admit that I, more often than not, choose the first of the two. Also, I am driven towards this choice in a very similar way to the way you were drawn towards yours—pressure from the people around me. I am almost positive that no one has ever told me that I have to look or behave a certain way if I want to fit in, but I feel that pulling, and I feel that I am somehow obligated to fulfill what is expected of me. In my experiences though, I do not think that I have ever caused quite so much suffering. The elephant died. Slowly died. "Shooting an Elephant" is honestly one of the saddest things I have ever read. The suffering the elephant felt nearly made me cry. Not only was the dragging death sad, but how terrible for those people to be so entertained by the elephant's passing. "It made me vaguely uneasy," as you put it. I cannot help but to be a little disgusted and disappointed in mankind. I am also

ashamed because, placing myself in the same situation, I would probably have done the same thing. And I can most definitely relate to the guilt you felt. As I wrote earlier, who has not felt the guilt that comes with doing something simply to fit in?

I do not have much more time, but before I say goodbye, I have something else to tell you. As an Advanced Placement English student, I read a lot. *A lot*. I love to read, and I try to take a lesson from everything I read, but I will admit that I forget some of the stories that cross my path. "Shooting an Elephant" is one that I will remember. Few other stories have affected me the way that this story did. I appreciate that this story shows a flaw in human nature because most anybody can relate.

Thank you,  
Amber Eakin

#### **Honorable Mention**

Isaac Hake  
Cyrano De Bergerac by Edmond Rostand

Dear Mr. Rostand,

I am not French, nor am I a skilled musician. I am not eloquent in speech, nor am I a superior fencer. I do not possess an impetuous love for danger, nor am I in love with a beautiful cousin. I have never worn a plume, nor am I a person of panache. And yet, for all this, I still see myself in *Cyrano De Bergerac*.

Why? *Cyrano* and I have no talents or interests in common. Why do I see a mirror image of myself in this noble French soldier? I'm sure you know the answer. *Cyrano* represents all of us in this: he is human. He possesses many talents, but at the same time he is flawed. He is ugly.

As I read through the play, I noticed something. *Cyrano* was keenly aware of his imperfections. This awareness was what hindered him from professing his love to Roxane. His defects tortured him and severely detracted from the pleasure he found in living. While an important lesson can be learned from this, I found Roxane's treatment of *Cyrano* throughout the book to be even more interesting.

I have a friend who has Down syndrome. His speech is not clear and he says strange, funny things from time to time. He can't play the games that most boys his age play. He can't participate in the activities of his peers. He is not accepted by potential friends. He is flawed. It's hard for him to carry on a coherent conversation. It is obvious from the moment you meet him that he has not just small, but large imperfections. This causes many people to turn away—to shun him.

Roxane did not fall in love with *Cyrano* for one reason. Like *Cyrano* himself, she was blinded by his imperfections. All she saw in *Cyrano* was his grotesque nose. Her appreciation for *Cyrano*'s amazing talent was smothered and not allowed to bloom because of his evident flaws. Yet at the end of the drama, just as he is about to die, when she knows it was he, not Christian that wrote all the letters, she looks past the obvious flaws and sees his qualities.

My friend has a mental disability. But he also has an amazing wit. He has talents that are not apparent, talents that many people overlook when observing his imperfections.

As I read *Cyrano De Bergerac*, it struck me how often I am hindered by my own awareness of my imperfections and how quickly I write off other people like *Cyrano* because I see a flaw in them.



Overweight people, people who can't spell, dyslexic individuals, people who are lacking in areas where I am strong; I often see these people and look down on them for reasons that I now realize are inane.

I want to thank you for *Cyrano*. He has led me to an understanding of myself that I would otherwise never have known. You have given me a resolve to seek out the good qualities in the people I meet. I hope it is a determination that will last a lifetime.

Sincerely,  
Isaac Hake

#### **Honorable Mention**

Shayla Hughes-Roane County H.S.  
Speak by Laurie Halse Anderson

Dear Mrs. Anderson,

Hello. My name is Shayla and I'm 16 years old. I wanted to write to you. to thank you for writing Speak. It is a totally amazing work of art and is one of my favorite books.

I first read Speak when I was in the seventh grade and I immediately fell in love. I loved how the book is from Melinda's point-of-view and how you clearly displayed her thoughts and fears. I loved Melinda and her situation and how she just felt like such an outcast.

I see Melinda as someone who stops talking because nobody's listening. A truly horrible thing happened to her, but there isn't anyone who seems to care. I think she wants so badly to admit the truth, but feels as if nobody will listen and take in what she has to say. I sympathize with her because I too, know how this feels.

The feeling that nobody is listening to you is terrible and it throws one down into a pit of unrelenting torment. Day after day I find myself feeling as if hardly anyone is listening to word I say, and it brings me to my knees with grief. I try so hard to get my voice heard, but I just seem to keep getting kicked back down into that pit. I cry and scream and fight with my everything, but I feel as if it doesn't do any good.

Standing amid all of my friends, I try to speak and get nowhere. I'm not one of the popular kids, but I do have a lot of friends and some of them are right there with the "In Crowd". I myself prefer the not-so-happening life of a Plain Jane, although I like to be around people and interact with them. I live in a small town where everybody knows just about everybody else, and there are a group of about 12 other people I've known since kindergarten. There were four girls in our class all throughout elementary school and those other three are still my friends today.

The sad part of that story is how little they seem to listen to me. Everyone else, yes, I could understand when they grow tired and don't pay me any mind. But these girls have been with me for eleven years. They've been my constant companions, yet they seem to care so little for what I have to say. I go to bed so many nights and cry myself to sleep because I feel so lost and alone. I feel like I'm insignificant and unimportant and it tears at me like a knife. I wonder a lot of the time if maybe I should just keep quiet and stay back. However, reading Speak changed that for me.

In a way, I think your book has saved me. You let Melinda find her voice, and you've let me keep mine. So many times I've contemplated just staying silent, but your writing has kept me from doing that. I think about Melinda and how little staying quiet got her, and then I think about what she gained when she spoke up.

So now whenever I start feeling really down and low, and as if nobody listens, I pull Speak off of my bookshelf and read about Melinda. I let myself become immersed in your story and her story and it keeps me grounded. It keeps me sane. You'll never know how grateful I am for this story.

Sincerely yours,  
Shayla Hughes

#### **Honorable Mention**

Meghan Kinty-East Fairmont H.S.  
The Giver by Lois Lowry

Dear Lois Lowry,

Freedom is the ability to choose what to do with our lives, to an extent. Freedom gives the people power to put a government in place, to put it back in its place if it gets out of line, and, if it grows corrupt, to replace it. Freedom is a privilege enjoyed every day by all Americans. It gives us the rights we cling to when things get rough. Freedom limits the government's control on us. Though we may take all this for granted, we need freedom above all else.

Your book, The Giver, taught me to appreciate the freedoms we experience that most take for granted. The restrictive life Jonas lived was inconceivable for the people of today. Having no say in what to wear or what to pursue as a job would make life unlivable. This made me realize that I am not only lucky to have choices, but I am lucky to live in a country that encourages individuality and personal preference. If someone else chose every aspect of my life, I would rather not live at all.

Another important aspect of my life is my ability to express my feelings openly. I am an emotional person, and seeing an environment where emotions did not exist seemed impossible. Even though what we see as negative feelings, such as hate, anger, rage, fear, depression, tiredness, anxiety, etc., were not present, the people missed out on the positive feelings of everyday life. Love, for instance, the greatest of all emotions, was completely non-existent. Missing out on the connections between the ones I love and myself would leave me feeling empty.

Forgiveness also plays a large part in our society. Everyone is forgiven at some point in their life, no matter the size of the offense. Eradicating those who make mistakes, set out to be different, or cause any problems in society whatsoever would result in no population for our world today. It is unfair to have a set of rules for a group of people without having a governing body to determine whether the circumstances were right or wrong. I feel so fortunate to be given the chance to mature and make mistakes in order to grow as a person.

All of these privileges occur every day of my life. However, people often take these situations for granted. I am guilty of doing so on many occasions. But your book brought these facts to my attention and I realized that I could not live without these freedoms. So thank you for writing this book.

Sincerely,  
Meghan Kinty



### Honorable Mention

Sabrina Morris-Musselman H.S.  
"The Raven" by Edgar Allan Poe

Dear Edgar Allen Poe,

The first time I ever had the privilege to read your poem, "The Raven" when I was eight, I was awe inspired that you could write with such intriguing details. I still to this day look over my shoulder at night after I read one of your poems thinking that a skeleton will fall out of my closet if I just opened the door slightly. One of my favorite poems of yours is "Annabel Lee". When you write about such feeling of great depression it proves to me that I am not alone in this dark and cold world. I feel privileged and special that you would be able to share your deepest and inner most feelings to me. I am an average person, one of which you do not know, a person who does not deserve to be enlightened with such a gift. Your words invoke such sorrow, that of which I could scarcely imagine. Every time I read a poem from your book I want to cry because I too have felt the pain that you have.

Because of you Poe, I have begun to write my own poems, poems which are of my most fearful, darkening, and lonely days. I find myself wishing that I could go back to your time and thank you for giving me great understanding and hope in your poems. So many people today do not understand the tragic times that you went through, the lonely days and nights that you spent with no one to hold you from the time that you were a child until the time that you were a grown man. I could not envision being so lonely. When your wife passed away I am absolutely certain that you went through one of the most difficult times of your life.

I did a biography on you once back when I was in seventh grade. I wrote about your tragedies and the many obstacles that you faced throughout your life like the death of your wife or your drinking problem. You see, I too have gone through many obstacles and hardships of my life. I was adopted when I was five years of age and I was about ready to turn six. My grandmother who adopted me said that when she received me I did not have any clean clothes and my shoes had holes in the soles of them. I am fourteen, ready to turn fifteen, and I have been with my grandmother for almost ten years now. I barely knew my parents. As a matter of fact I just learned my mother's middle name last year. That is very pathetic in my perspective, but it is extremely difficult to learn about a person if they never pick up the telephone to call you. In the last ten years my mother has picked up the telephone twice to call me, only to return my calls. In a way I feel that my mother is not really my mother. I cannot even consider her my friend. She is most like an acquaintance to me.

When I came to live with my grandmother, Jean, I showed much anger towards her, but deep down I knew that it was not her fault that my destiny to be with her was upon me so soon. I had no way to release my anger and depression. After all, I was facing the most difficult time in my short life and all I wanted to do was blame someone for what was happening to me. After I read your book, I began to write my own poems to release my inner anger.

Sometimes I still catch myself crying because I cannot be with my father who is in Florida for a reason I wish not to tell; but when I do get angry I just pick up your poem, "The Raven" and read. Your poem has helped me get through the difficult times in the fourteen years I have been on the face of this earth. You went through much more pain that I ever could have. I just want to thank you for being able to share your feelings and help me with my problems through your pain. Once again, **thank you!**

Sincerely,  
Sabrina Morris

### Honorable Mention

Name Witheld-Wheeling Park H.S.  
A Child Called "It" by David Pelzer

Dear David Pelzer,

A Child Called "It" was the most emotional book I have ever read. It brought many feelings to the surface for me. So many words could describe my emotions as I read these pages. It is extremely hard for me to understand the horror you suffered. Initially you, the child, comes off as weak, but in reality you are one of the strongest people I have experienced through literature. The strength described in this book is quite moving.

At first, this book brought sadness. However, when I look I see that several lessons were learned. These are the things we as humans value: love, trust, knowledge, self esteem, and a sense of belonging. How easy it is for us to turn a blind eye to children who are abused or in need. Your book showed how just one person can make a difference. These values are so important to all of us. A Child Called "It" has inspired me to take a closer look at myself and my actions, so that I can perhaps make others feel welcome or "normal", when even they question themselves. In your book, you were taught to love and trust again by your foster family and your social worker. Also, by those who showed love to you, you earned your self esteem back. You have inspired me to act as your social worker did to as many children as I possibly can. By reading your story you have taught me that I can inspire children to be all that they can and want to be.

A Child Called "It" has drastically changed my view on child abuse. I have known that child abuse was a problem in the world and have always felt terrible for those children. From hearing your true story from a child's personal experience made me realize how awful child abuse can. I now know that now only are kids suffering severe physical abuse, but also severe emotional abuse. Also, A Child Called "It", changed my view on in general. I've realized that when children appear to be under privileged and scrungy, it does not necessarily mean that they are poor. They could possibly be in a horrific family who does not care about them or that child may be suffering abuse from their family.

I would like to thank you for giving me the opportunity to share your story which I'm sure at times was even more emotionally difficult to write as it was for me to read. This will not be a story that I will forget in my lifetime. I can only hope that what I have learned will allow me to be a better person and that maybe someday, I can offer someone the strength and love that they are needing in their life.

Sincerely,  
Name Witheld

### Honorable Mention

Name Witheld-Musselman H.S.  
The Notebook by Nicholas Sparks

Dear Nicholas Sparks,

How does one come up with such stories? I am absolutely in love with all of your books. I just finished The Notebook for the third time, and it really turned the way I view the world around. Your book is filled with so many situations that I can relate to my own life which really pulled me into the book deeper and deeper. This tragic tale of forbidden love truly hit home with me and my own situation.

## Closing Remarks

### Coordinator

Karen Goff

West Virginia Center for the Book

Letters About Literature 2007 by various young writers

Dear Letters About Literature Writers,

Welcome to a strange and wonderful group – the clan of the book. I wish I could take credit for the phrase “clan of the book”, but I can’t. I read it in *How Reading Changed My Life* by Anna Quindlen. She describes members of the clan as those who read, not to judge the writing of others, but to take the measure of themselves, those who read because they love it, those who feel about bookstores and libraries the way some people think about jewelry stores and shopping malls.

I know you belong to the clan because I have read your letters, letters that thank authors for pushing you to do new and different things, letters that talk about understanding love, and friendship, and courage, and letters that explain how you found your voice. I know you belong to the clan because you write about books that “enter all of you”, books that turn you “inside out”, and books that take you “through the twisted path” of sorrow.

Librarians are often asked “are books obsolete?” Your letters provide the answer. Not only are books not obsolete, they are essential. A study by Scholastic found that children who read do better in all aspects of schooling and beyond. It states, “*As the world becomes more complex, reading is increasingly important for children trying to find their place in it.*”

This year, students in grades 4-12 nationwide wrote more than 56,000 Letters About Literature, including the 785 students from West Virginia. Of the 56,000 letters received, the national screeners at “contest central” eliminated 51,000 during three rounds of reading. Only 5,000 letters nationwide were selected for state level judging.

Being selected is indeed an achievement of which you, your parents and your teachers can be proud. I know that some of you think “Notable Mention” is not a big deal. Please believe me when I say “It IS a big deal”. It is only economics and production capabilities that prevent us from publishing all of your letters.

Each letter that advanced to state level judging was read a minimum of three times by three different panels of judges. Once received by the West Virginia Center for the Book, the letters were read at least three more times. Some of them were read more than that. It is exciting to see what you are reading. I am always relieved to see some familiar titles on the list, titles like *Of Mice and Men*, *The Lovely Bones*, and *Holes*; books that I have read. Then I look at the list again to see what else I should be reading. You all read an amazing variety of books, poems, short stories and speeches.

It is probably not necessary for one member of the clan of the book to urge other members to keep reading, but I can’t help it. Please keep reading. What we read teaches us about the world, about each other, and about ourselves. Without this knowledge, we cannot survive.

Sincerely,

*Karen Goff*

Coordinator

West Virginia Center for the Book

Last year I was in a relationship that meant the world to me. I had never felt that way for someone before. Our relationship was far from perfect though. Similar to Alley’s family, his family didn’t quite adore me either. In fact we weren’t even allowed to see each other, but that didn’t stop us. Just like Alley and Noah, he and I were torn apart due to reasons that didn’t matter to us. I read your book for the first time while I was going through this time of my life. Your book gave me the courage and strength to stand up for what I wanted. I traveled the road to get what I wanted but not alone. Luckily, Noah was by my side the whole way. This strong willed character became my best friend and companion.

Noah was not the only character in this book that impacted my life. Alley’s mother also taught me some valuable lessons in life. She showed me the person I don’t want to be when I am older. By looking at her actions I learned that hatred gets you nowhere in life. She was so bitter because she wasn’t in love like Noah and Alley.

Alley’s mother did help me to understand that not everyone will like you, but you can’t let that hold you back from what you want in life. I took this new knowledge with me and made things right with my boyfriend’s family. No, things were not perfect, but The Notebook helped me to see that nothing in life ever is. You have to work for everything in life. The effort makes the reward so much sweeter.

To be honest with you Nicholas, I am reading your book for a fourth time right now and I am still learning from it. You must be a very experienced man to write such intriguing stories that contain so much useful information. My favorite part about your book is the juicy details, and how they pull me into the book so that I can’t get out. I cannot wait to read another book of yours. I am sure it will have plenty of life lessons for me to take with me. Thank you for being such a talented and educated man. You have no idea how much you have impacted my life in such a positive way. I can only imagine how many others you have touched with your writings. Thank you.

Sincerely,  
Name Withheld



*"I also think of reading as an act of faith,  
a hope I will discover something remarkable  
about ordinary life, about myself.*

*And if the writer and the reader  
discover the same thing,*

*if they have that connection,  
the act of faith has resulted in an act of magic.*

*To me, that's the mystery of both life and fiction  
-the connection between two unique individuals  
who discover in the end that they are more the same  
than they are different."*

*--Amy Tan in The Opposite of Fate*



# JUDGES

**BELINDA ANDERSON**

Author  
Asbury, WV

**JAY COLE**

Director of Educational Policy  
Governor's Office  
Charleston, WV

**EVA M<sup>C</sup>GUIRE**

Director  
Craft Memorial Library  
Bluefield, WV

**PHYLLIS MOORE**

WV Literary Scholar  
Clarksburg, WV

**BOB MORGENSTERN**

Director of Higher Education  
American Federation of Teachers/West Virginia  
Charleston, WV

**CHERYL HARSHMAN**

West Virginia Author  
& Director of Paul Elbin Library  
West Liberty State College  
West Liberty, WV

## *From the Judges...*

**Belinda Anderson – Level I**

The power of books is powerfully reflected in these letters. Some of the writers told of how they'd learned to be less judgmental. In reading about the Holocaust, another writer learned of the dangers of fanaticism and indifference.

Younger writers stated their responses with touching simplicity: "The book helped me cheer up when I was sad." "Your book made me feel to myself I am free. I am really free."

With sincerity, passion and humor, these young writers demonstrate that literature can positively change lives.

**Cheryl Harshman – Level II**

Selected comments from evaluation sheets

"Powerful writing for someone so young."

"More than any other writer, (*name deleted*) was hugged and soothed by literature."

"Nice parallels between her life and that of the book's characters."

"Can't believe how adult and self-assured this writer is."

"I would live to know this writer!"

"... tells a powerful story full of teen angst and worries about teen pregnancy. Her writing is both tender and bittersweet."

**Phyllis Moore – Level III**

This year's letters are well done, heartfelt, and insightful. The range of the books read by the students is staggering and their letters are as varied as the books. As usual, I come away with the names of new-to-me authors and a long list of books to read. In addition, I promise to listen, really listen, to teens.

**Jay Cole– Level III**

Each year, I am inspired by the courage, honesty, and eloquence of these students. I carry that inspiration with me all year long. Thank you very much for allowing me to be a part of this wonderful project!

**Bob Morgenstern– Level II**

Right away I knew I was reading a special letter. The letter was well written, thoughtful and conveyed an exact understanding of the literature. Were I to receive such a letter in response to one of my writings, I would be humbled to know that I had touched a young person in such a meaningful way, and I would be inspired to keep on writing.



## Level One-Notable Mentions

Name Witheld-Bluefield I.S. <u>Charlotte's Web</u> by E.B. White	Harrison, Destiny-South Jefferson E.S. Library <u>Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire</u> by J.K. Rowling	Poore, Savannah-Bluefield I.S. <u>Junie B. Jones</u> by Barbara Park
Assaley, Amanda-St. Joseph G.S. <u>Coming Home</u> by Lauren Brooke	Hurley, Emma-Milton M.S. <u>Holes</u> by Louis Sachar	Sansalone, Ali-Fairmont Catholic School <u>Mama, Do You Love Me?</u> by Barbara Lavallee
Belay, Danite-Bluefield I.S. <u>Junie B. Jones</u> by Barbara Park	Kelley, Anna-Fairmont Catholic School <u>Grandfather Twilight</u> by Barbara Berger	Shay, Auri Anna-Fairmont Catholic School <u>Catering to Nobody</u> by Diane Mott Davidson
Boyles, Catherine-Fairmont Catholic School <u>The Ugly Duckling</u> by Hans Christian Anderson	Lusk, Amy-Mullens G.S. <u>Junie B., First Grader: Jingle Bells, Batman Smells! (P.S. So Does May.)</u> by Barbara Park	Stillwell, Brittany-South Jefferson E.S. Library "Homework, Oh Homework" by Jack Prelutsky
Burks, Nathan-Mercer School <u>Fudge-a-Mania</u> by Judy Blume	Margevich, Loran-Spring Mills M.S. <u>Seabiscuit</u> by Laura Hillenbrand	Zarilla, Olivia-St. Joseph G.S. <u>The Diary of Melanie Martin</u> by Carol Weston
Darnold, Abby <u>Hatchet</u> by Gary Paulsen	Martin, Madison-Maysville Elementary <u>Bridge to Terabithia</u> by Katherine Paterson	
Goheen, Joee-St. Joseph G.S. <u>A Coal Miner's Bride: the Diary of Anetka Saminska</u> by Susan Campbell Bartoletti	Masterson, Jordan-Bluefield I.S. <u>Flea Circus Summer</u> by Cheryl Ware	

## Level Two-Notable Mentions

Berkow, Kyle-South M.S. <u>Hoot</u> by Carl Hiaasen	Hess, Lindsey-Sts. Peter & Paul Catholic School <u>The Value of Patience</u> by Spencer Johnson	Peterson, Jared-South M.S. <u>The Rookie: The Incredible True Story of a Man Who Never Gave Up on His Dream</u> by Jim Morris & Joel Engel
Bostic, Brandon-Sts. Peter & Paul Catholic School <u>The Bad Beginning</u> by Lemony Snicket	Honaker, Logan-Sts. Peter & Paul Catholic School <u>First Descend</u> by Kevin Harrison	Powers, Kaitlyn-Glenwood School <u>The Truth About Forever</u> by Sarah Dessen
Name Witheld-Harpers Ferry M.S. <u>Love You Forever</u> by Robert Munsch	Jain, Pranav-Fairmont Catholic School <u>The Red Pony</u> by John Steinbeck	Robinson, Elizabeth-Harpers Ferry M.S. <u>London Bridges</u> by James Patterson
Name Witheld-South M.S. <u>Great Book of Amber</u> by Robert Zelanzky	Name Witheld-Harpers Ferry M.S. <u>Stormbreaker</u> by Anthony Horowitz	Rogerson, Natalee-Moundsville J.H.S. <u>Sort of Forever</u> by Sally Warner
Name Witheld-Princeton M.S. <u>Chasing the Dream: My Lifelong Journey to the World Series</u> by Joe Torre	Kesler, Seth Letter by Grace Kesler	Schessler, Kate-John Adams M.S. <u>I Have Lived 1,000 Years</u> by Livia Bitton-Jackson
Name Witheld-Beverly Hills M.S. <u>Green Eggs and Ham</u> by Dr. Seuss	Klenk, Sarah-Sts. Peter & Paul Catholic School The Clique Series by Lisi Harrison	Smith, Karley-Moundsville J.H.S. <u>Holes</u> by Louis Sachar
Dineen, Shannon <u>Oliver Twist</u> by Charles Dickens	LaValley, Katelyn <u>Little House on the Prairie</u> by Laura Ingalls Wilder	Stinson, Nicholas-Princeton M.S. <u>Old Yeller</u> by Fred Gipson
Donohue, David-Shepherdstown M.S. <u>Gone With the Wind</u> by Margret Mitchell	Lester, Sydney-Milton M.S. <u>Finn</u> by Katherine Jay Bacon	Stout, Shanana-Moundsville J.H.S. Books by Lurlene McDaniel
Downing, Jacob-Fairmont Catholic School <u>Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone</u> by J.K. Rowling	Licata, Danielle-Fairmont Catholic School <u>The Case for Faith</u> by Lee Strobel	Toompas, Kelsey-Philippi M.S. <u>The Magic Tree House series</u> by Mary Pope Osborne
Foss, Alan-Milton M.S. Various titles by Dr. Seuss	Lilly, Kaitlynn-Princeton M.S. <u>The Hiding Place</u> by Corrie ten Boom	Name Witheld-Harpers Ferry M.S. <u>Long Arm Quarterback: A New Football Team Sparks an Old Rivalry</u> by Matt Christopher
Fraleigh, Heidi-Shepherdstown M.S. <u>Eragon</u> by Christopher Paolini	Lively, Ashley-Sts. Peter & Paul Catholic School <u>Night</u> by Elie Weisel	Whipkey, Ciera-Moundsville J.H.S. <u>Holes</u> by Louis Sachar
Garcia, Emily-Fairmont Catholic School <u>The Giver</u> by Lowis Lowry	Lusher, Zack-Milton M.S. The Inheritance Trilogy by Christopher Paolini	Whiting, Madison-Fairmont Catholic School <u>A Girl Named Disaster</u> by Nancy Farmer
Name Witheld-Shepherdstown M.S. <u>Harry Potter series</u> by J.K. Rowling	Madden, Paige-Moundsville J.H.S. <u>Hatchet</u> by Gary Paulsen	Name Witheld-Bridgeport M.S. <u>War of the Worlds</u> by H.G. Wells
Hassan, Caitlin-Bluefield M.S. "If I Can Stop One Heart From Breaking" by Emily Dickinson	Martin, Mynika-Harpers Ferry M.S. <u>Running Out of Time</u> by Margaret Peterson Haddix	Zhang, William-Beverly Hills M.S. <u>White Fang</u> by Jack London
Hayhurst, Audrey-Fairmont Catholic School <u>Taking Liberty: The Story of Oney Judge, George Washington's Runaway Slave</u> by Ann Rinaldi	McInturff, Emily-Bridgeport M.S. <u>A Young Woman's Walk with God: Growing More Like Jesus</u> by Elizabeth George	
	Moles, Kayla-Elkview M.S. <u>Sixteen and Dying</u> by Lurlene McDaniel	

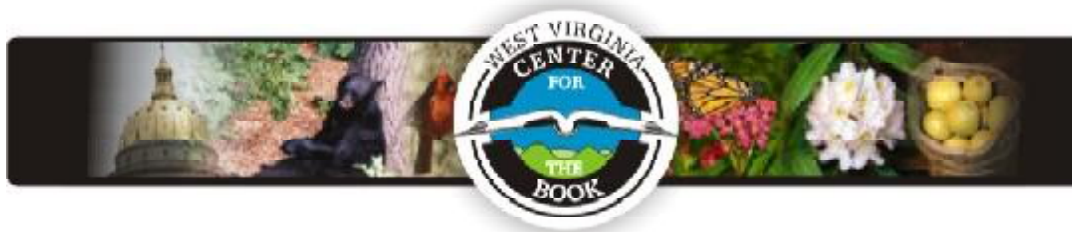


## Level Three-Notable Mentions

Allen, Eric-East Fairmont H.S. <u>Holes</u> by Louis Sachar	Hartley, Hannah-Capital H.S. <u>It's Not About the Bike: My Journey Back to Life</u> by Lance Armstrong	Pritt, Derek-Wheeling Park H.S. <u>To Kill a Mockingbird</u> by Harper Lee
Amos, Marlee-Magnolia H.S. <u>Song and Dance Man</u> by Karen Ackerman	Hoffman, Rachel-Magnolia H.S. Various Titles by Lisa Scottoline	Name Withheld-Capital H.S. <u>One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest</u> by Ken Kesey
Name Withheld-Musselman H.S. <u>We Were the Mulvaney's</u> by Joyce Carol Oates	Name Withheld <u>Hittler: 1936-1945 Nemesis</u> by Ian Kershaw	Name Withheld-East Fairmont H.S. <u>Eldeset</u> by Christopher Paolini
Beasley, Britney-Capital H.S. <u>Jacob Have I Loved</u> by Katherine Paterson	Name Withheld-Magnolia H.S. <u>The Guardian</u> by Nicholas Sparks	Robinson, Andrew-Magnolia H.S. <u>The Giver</u> by Lois Lowry
Blake, Ashleigh-Magnolia H.S. <u>The Pearls of Lutra</u> by Brian Jacques	Lee, Jodie-Capital H.S. <u>The Bad Beginning</u> by Lemony Snickett	Robrecht, Derrick-Wheeling Park H.S. <u>Fast Food Nation</u> by Eric Schlosser
Name Withheld-Roane County H.S. <u>War and Peace</u> by Leo Tolstoy	Name Withheld-Huntington H.S. "The Happiest Day" by Edgar Allan Poe	Sangid, Nicole-Capital H.S. <u>Love You Forever</u> by Robert Munsch
Name Withheld <u>Ender's Game</u> by Orson Scott Card	Macaulay, David-East Fairmont H.S. <u>The Teeth of the Tiger</u> by Tom Clancy	Seavy, Daniel-Magnolia H.S. <u>The Alex Rider series</u> by Anthony Horowitz
Name Withheld-Wheeling Park H.S. <u>Across Five Aprils</u> by Irene Hunt	Main, Casey-Wheeling Park H.S. <u>Of Mice and Men</u> by John Steinbeck	Sharma, Neel-Wheeling Park H.S. <u>1984</u> by George Orwell
Burford, Ben-Capital H.S. <u>Let's Roll: Ordinary People, Extraordinary Courage</u> by Lisa Beamer	McCauley, Kristen-Buckhannon-Upshur H.S. Frankenstein Series by Dean Koontz	Skaff, Paulina-Capital H.S. <u>Diabesity</u> by Francine Kaufman
Campbell, Kendra-East Fairmont H.S. <u>Peter Pan</u> by J.M. Barrie	Meigh, Kevin-Wheeling Park H.S. <u>The Scarlet Letter</u> by Nathaniel Hawthorne	Stewart, Patrick <u>The Divine Comedy</u> by Dante Alighieri
Name Withheld-East Fairmont H.S. The Foundation Series by Isaac Asimov	Menear, Abbi-Parkersburg H.S. <u>Shattering</u> by Gail Giles	Sundin, Preston-Notre Dame H.S. <u>Heart of Darkness</u> by Joseph Conrad
Name Withheld-Buckhannon-Upshur H.S. Incarnations of Immortality Series by Piers Anthony	Miller, Rachele-Magnolia H.S. <u>Protector of the Small</u> by Tamora Pierce	Swanson, Kristi-Musselman H.S. <u>The Outsiders</u> by S.E. Hinton
Chrisman, Heidi-Musselman H.S. <u>The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane</u> by Kate DiCamillo	Murphy, Allysa-Buckhannon-Upshur H.S. "Polaris" by H.P. Lovecraft	Talerico, Kristen-East Fairmont H.S. <u>The Lovely Bones</u> by Alice Sebold
Name Withheld-Buckhannon-Upshur H.S. <u>In Cold Blood</u> by Truman Capote	Napier, Kailee-Magnolia H.S. <u>The Count of Monte Cristo</u> by Alexandre Dumas	Name Withheld-Wheeling Park H.S. <u>The Girl Death Left Behind</u> by Lurlene McDaniel
Cottrell, Morgan-Roane County H.S. <u>Bass Ackwards and Belly Up</u> by Elizabeth Craft and Sarah Fain	Nauman, Elizabeth-Musselman H.S. <u>I Don't Want to Be Crazy</u> by Samantha Schutz	Name Withheld-Musselman H.S. <u>Dark Sky</u> by Carla Neggers
Cousins, Justin-Capital H.S. <u>His Needs, Her Needs</u> by Willard F. Farley	Noë, Kaitlyn <u>The Outsiders</u> by S.E. Hinton	Whiting, Emily-Musselman H.S. <u>Where the Red Fern Grows</u> by Wilson Rawls
Desper, Jeannette-Capital H.S. <u>The Secret Life of Bees</u> by Sue Monk Kidd	Ochoa, Elizabeth-Roane County H.S. <u>Geography Club</u> by Brent Hartinger	Wilkinson, Martina-Capital H.S. <u>Fruits Basket</u> by Natsuki Takaya
Dusing, Ashley-Musselman H.S. <u>Sadie-in-Waiting</u> by Annie Jones	Oningstinghel, Jay-Parkersburg H.S. <u>The Godfather</u> by Mario Puzo	Wilson, Trent-East Fairmont H.S. "Self-Reliance" by Ralph Waldo Emerson
Garbett, Jennifer-Capital H.S. <u>Flowers in the Attic</u> by V.C. Andrews	Perrella, Matthew-East Fairmont H.S. <u>Holes</u> by Louis Sachar	Name Withheld-East Fairmont H.S. "We Shall Overcome" by Lyndon Baines Johnson
Groves, Sarah-Wheeling Park H.S. <u>A Child Called "It"</u> by Dave Pelzer	Pizatella, Matt-East Fairmont H.S. <u>The Godfather</u> by Mario Puzo	Wright, Audrey-Capital H.S. <u>Les Miserables</u> by Victor Hugo
Hake, Luke <u>Learning to See Creatively</u> by Bryan Peterson	Prabhu, Arpan <u>When the Wind Blows</u> by James Patterson	Yett, Lauren-East Fairmont H.S. <u>Twilight</u> by Stephanie Meyer



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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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