



# *News Release*

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## **Michigan Youth Write about Literature Changing Their Lives!**

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**LANSING** - The winning Letters about Literature students for Michigan have been announced last week by the Michigan Center for the Book. Letters about Literature is an annual contest sponsored by the National Center for the Book at the Library of Congress.

In the program, young readers write letters to authors, living or dead, describing how the authors' work changed their lives. Students participate through classroom activities or by writing to an author on their own. The Library of Congress is the national sponsor for Letters about Literature program.

"Through this program, we get a chance to see how our students learn about others and understand their own experiences through reading," said State Superintendent Mike Flanagan. "They write letters that show how they understand and internalize the issues in the books they read."

Letters about Literature Coordinator Karren Reish said, "Literature and books are not just assignments, but a lens for our children to understand their lives and the lives of people around them. The program is a great way to encourage students to cultivate these deep reading skills that are key to academic and lifelong success and to help schools and libraries provide these opportunities."

Letters about Literature Winners:

- **State Level I winner (grades 4-6) – Kathleen Carroll of Grosse Pointe Farms** (\$250 Letters about Literature Reading Promotion Grant to Brownell Middle School), who wrote to author Joan Bauer about the book *Almost Home*. In her letter, Kathleen spoke about how the author brought homeless to life for her and the book character "showed me that a girl in her situation is the same as a girl like me, and that even if you can't control the things that the world gives you, you can control how you respond."

- **State Level II winner (grades 7-8) – Austin Langlinais of Mattawan** (\$250 Letters about Literature Reading Promotion Grant to the Mattawan Middle School Media Center), who wrote to author Harper Lee about the book *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Austin wrote about how the book made him determined to help others and he has begun volunteering at local shelters in his community. He says “it may have been the most life changing experience ever.”
- **State Level III winner (grades 9-10) – Ana Mohr of Traverse City** (\$250 Letters About Literature Reading Promotion Grant to Traverse City Central High School) who wrote to author Shannon Hale about the book *Forest Born*. Ana’s letter spoke of how she learned to deal with rejection and to reach out to others like the book character. “Rin’s tale has given me the courage to share my own story... I am finding my voice.”

#### State Finalists

Bryce Smith of St. Johns – Level I  
 Noah Bien of West Bloomfield – Level I  
 Ryan Frank of West Bloomfield – Level I  
 Sydney Misak of Kalamazoo – Level II  
 Logan Forshee of Kalamazoo – Level II  
 Anna Cool of Schoolcraft – Level II  
 Cara Ferguson of Traverse City – Level III  
 Noah DeLaRosa of Allegan – Level III  
 Mansoor Mubeen of Bloomfield Hills – Level III

#### Teacher of the Year

Mary Jo Cobb of Mattawan Middle School is the 2013 Michigan Letters about Literature Teacher of the Year.

You can read the winners’ complete letters at [www.michigan.gov/youthlibraryservices](http://www.michigan.gov/youthlibraryservices).

State winners receive a \$50 Schuler Books & Music gift card and \$250 Reading promotion grant for the library of their choice. State finalists receive a \$20 gift card to Schuler Books & Music. Gifts cards and grants are courtesy the Library of Congress and the Michigan Center for the Book.

The Michigan Center for the Book (MCFB) organizes Letters about Literature at the state level. A program of the Library of Michigan and the center’s affiliates, MCFB encourages and produces local and statewide programs and resources that promote books, reading, authors and libraries. Funding comes solely through grants and membership dues. For more information about the Michigan Center for the Book and its programs, visit [www.michigan.gov/mcfb](http://www.michigan.gov/mcfb).

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The Library of Michigan – Michigan’s official state library agency for more than 175 years – is part of the Michigan Department of Education. To learn more, visit [www.michigan.gov/libraryofmichigan](http://www.michigan.gov/libraryofmichigan).