



News Release

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Michigan's Letters about Literature Winners, Finalists Announced

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LANSING – Twelve students who wrote to living or dead authors about the impact of their books are winners and finalists of Michigan's 2017 Letters about Literature contest, the Library of Michigan (LM) announced today.

"As readers, we often identify with characters that reflect our own thoughts and feelings, our own struggles," said LM's Letters about Literature Coordinator Cathy Lancaster. "By writing directly to the author, students can closely examine how the story and its characters impacted them personally and what they take away perhaps will change their lives, as well as those around them."

Letters about Literature is an annual contest sponsored by the National Center for the Book at the Library of Congress, with support from Dollar General Literacy Foundation.

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.

Letters about Literature State Winners are:

- State Level I winner (grades 4-6) – Claire Juip of Grosse Pointe, who wrote to author Raquel J. Palacio about her book, *Wonder*.

In her letter, Claire tells how the book "taught me it was OK to feel the way I was feeling and that helped me go through my life in a positive way when I found out I had a chromosomal disorder like Auggie."

- State Level II winner (grades 7-8) – Maria Cheriyan of Farmington Hills, who wrote to author Ruta Sepetys about *Salt to the Sea*.

Maria said, “Your book has inspired me to volunteer with a refugee resettlement agency, and do my part to remember and write the unwritten stories of the people who have taken refuge in my state.”

- State Level III winner (grades 9-12) –Kathryn Marentette of Middleville, who wrote to author Leo Tolstoy about his novel, *War and Peace*.

She tells Tolstoy, “From the beginning, the seemingly endless chapters had become a desperately needed source of comfort. I clung to the characters and their hardships, because I saw myself in their shoes, but at the end of the journey that was reading such a beautiful monstrosity of a novel, I had grown just as much as your characters.”

State Finalists are:

- Corinne Jordan of Bloomfield Hills – Level I
- Campbell Marchal of Grosse Pointe – Level I
- Elyza Rodgers of Fenton – Level I
- Sydney Chrome of Mason – Level II
- Gwen Esenbeis of Williamston – Level II
- Jesse Zhang of Saginaw – Level II
- Jessica Faser of Ann Arbor – Level III
- Nayiri Sagherian of Southfield – Level III
- Michelle Wang of Novi – Level III

To read the winners’ complete letters, visit www.michigan.gov/youthlibraryservices.

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, a program of LM and member affiliates.

Funding comes solely from grants and membership dues.

For more information about the Michigan Center for the Book and its programs, visit 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.