



Jesse White

SECRETARY OF STATE

NEWS

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Secretary of State Jesse White Invites Young Readers to Enter Letters About Literature Writing Contest

SPRINGFIELD — Secretary of State and State Librarian Jesse White is urging students in grades 4 through 12 to enter the annual Letters about Literature contest sponsored by the Illinois Center for the Book, the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress, the Weekly Reader Corporation and Target Stores.

To enter, young readers write a personal letter to an author, explaining how his or her work changed their view of the world or themselves. Young readers can select authors from any genre-fiction or nonfiction, contemporary or classic. The Illinois Center for the Book will select the top essayists in the state on each of the three competition levels: Level I for children in grades 4 through 6; Level II for grades 7 and 8, and Level III, grades 9 - 12.

"Last year nearly 5,000 Illinois students entered the Letters About Literature contest, more than any other state," said White. "It is wonderful to see so many young people participating, and I hope their involvement leads to a lifelong love of reading. I encourage all Illinois students to take part in this innovative reading initiative."

State winners advance to national competition. First place Illinois winners in each level receive \$100, a plaque and a \$50 TargetGift Card. Winners and their parents will have the opportunity to meet Secretary White, who serves as honorary chairman of the Illinois Center for the Book.

Six national winners will each receive an expenses-paid trip to Washington D.C. to read their letters during the National Book Festival in the fall of 2004. In addition, they will receive a \$500 TargetGift card redeemable at any Target Store or target.com. Target Stores is the presenting sponsor of Letters About Literature.

White said the deadline for entries is December 6, 2003. To obtain the required entry coupon, call the Illinois Center for the Book at 217-785-6925 or visit the Center for the Book Web site at loc.gov/letters. Teachers, librarians, or parents interested in obtaining copies of the contest guidelines and the 16-page teaching supplement to guide students through the reading-writing process should also visit the Center for the Book Web site.

Target Stores, along with its parent company Target Corporation, gives back more than \$2 million a week to local communities through grants and special programs. Since opening its first store in 1962, Target has partnered with nonprofit organizations, guests and team members to help meet community needs.