

**For Immediate Release:**  
May 15, 2015

**For More Information Contact:**  
Rachel Farrer: 312-814-2599

**Jesse White Announces Winners of “Letters About Literature” Contest**  
*One Illinois Winner Also Claims National Honors*

Secretary of State and State Librarian Jesse White has announced that students from Gillespie, Wilmette and Oak Park are the winners of the 2015 “Letters About Literature” contest. The national reading and writing contest for students in Illinois is sponsored by the Illinois State Library and the Illinois Center for the Book. Additionally, Aidan Kingwell from Oak Park was a national “Letters About Literature” winner. White honored the winners on Wednesday at a ceremony in his Springfield office.

“For the eighth year in a row, I am proud to announce that Illinois had more entries than any state,” said White. “The young writers we honored today have demonstrated, through their writing skills, how literature impacts so many lives.”

To participate in the competition, students in grades 4-12 must read a book or poem and then write a personal letter to the author explaining how the book changed their views of the world and/or themselves. Students may select authors, living or deceased, from fiction, nonfiction, contemporary or classic. The Illinois Center for the Book appointed judges to select the top essayists on three competition levels.

This year's Illinois winners are:

- Level I, Grades 4-6: **Cameron Hailstone** of Gillespie wrote to authors Scott Lamb and Tim Ellsworth about their book, “Pujols: More Than the Game.” Cameron is a student at Gillespie Middle School, and his letter was submitted by teacher Kim Henderson.
- Level II, Grades 7-8: **Claudia Levens** of Wilmette wrote to author J.K. Rowling about her Harry Potter book series. Claudia attends Wilmette Junior High School, and her letter was submitted by teacher Erin Schwarz.
- Level III, Grades 9-12: **Aidan Kingwell** of Oak Park wrote to Mary Oliver about her poem, “When Death Comes.” Aidan attends Fenwick High School in Oak Park, and her letter was submitted by teacher Mary Marcotte. In addition, Kingwell was the first place national winner in Grades 9-12 and received \$1,000 from the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress.

Each winner received a \$200 check from the Illinois Center for the Book, a plaque signed by Secretary White, a tour of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum in Springfield and a complimentary lunch at the Illinois State Library. Teachers received a \$100 check from the Illinois Center for the Book to purchase books for their school library, a certificate signed by Secretary White, a tour of the Lincoln Presidential Museum and a complimentary lunch at the State Library.

Read the winning essays at <http://illinoiscenterforthebook.org/projects/projectse.html>.

###