



Jesse White

SECRETARY OF STATE

NEWS

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Jesse White Honors Winners of “Letters About Literature” Contest

Springfield—Secretary of State and State Librarian Jesse White hosted a ceremony in Springfield today for students from Lincolnshire, Naperville and Bloomington who were named the Illinois winners of the 2011 “Letters About Literature” contest. Letters About Literature is a national reading and writing promotion for students sponsored by the Illinois Center for the Book in cooperation with the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress and in partnership with Target.

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

This year's winners are:

- Level I, Grades 4 – 6--**Conrad Oberhaus** of **Lincolnshire**, who wrote to author Daniel Defoe about his book, *Robinson Crusoe*. Conrad is in the 5th grade at Daniel J. Wright Jr. High School in Lincolnshire. *Conrad was also selected as a National Honor award winner, one of 12 such winners out of over 69,000 entries nationwide.*
- Level II – Grades 7-8--**Naasir Haleem** of **Naperville** wrote to author Mark Pftzter about his book, *Within Reach*. Naasir is in the 7th grade at Jefferson Jr. High School in Naperville.
- Level III, Grades 9-12-- **Stacie Cler** of **Bloomington** wrote to author Helen Siiteri about her book, *The Adventures of Nicholas*. Stacie is a Senior at Central Catholic High School in Bloomington. (Read the winning essays at <http://illinoiscenterforthebook.org/projects/projectse.html>.)

“These three talented young readers were among 6,700 Illinois students who took part in this year's contest,” said Secretary White. “For the fourth year in a row Illinois had more entries than any state in the nation. I am extremely proud of all of the students who took part, because they are developing a lifelong love of reading and learning.”

Letters About Literature awards prizes on both the state and national levels. Each of the three state winners received a \$50 Target gift card, a \$200 U.S. Savings Bond from the Illinois Center for the Book and a plaque and personalized Illinois Blue Book from Secretary White.

As a National Honor winner in his age group Conrad also received a \$100 Target gift card, and a \$1,000 Letters About Literature Reading Promotion Grant in his name was given by Target to Daniel J. Wright Jr. High School Library. The library will also receive a \$100 check from the Illinois Center for the Book to honor Conrad's national recognition.

The Center for the Book was established in 1977 as a public-private partnership to use the resources of the Library of Congress to stimulate public interest in books and reading. The Illinois Center for the Book was established in 1985 as an affiliate of the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress. The Illinois Center for the Book works to nurture and connect readers and writers, and honor Illinois' rich literary heritage.

Target sponsors Letters About Literature as part of its national reading initiative, “Ready. Sit. Read!,” which is aimed at fostering a love of reading among children at an early age. Since opening its first store in 1962, Target has partnered with nonprofit organizations, guests and team members to help meet community needs.

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