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Jesse White Announces Winners of “Letters About Literature” Contest
Winners from Huntley, Hawthorn Woods and Hickory Hills

Secretary of State and State Librarian Jesse White announced that students from Huntley, Hawthorn Woods and Hickory Hills are the winners of the 2019 “Letters About Literature” contest. The reading and writing contest for students is sponsored by the Dollar General Literacy Foundation, the Illinois State Library and the Illinois Center for the Book. Winning letters have been submitted to the Library of Congress for entry into the National Contest. White honored the winners at a ceremony at the State Library.

“With over 28,000 entries from across the country, I am proud to announce that Illinois brought in nearly 17 percent of the overall entries,” 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 a fiction or nonfiction book, poem or play.

This year's Illinois winners are:

- Level I, Grades 4-6: **Ava Smithwick** of Huntley wrote to author Robert Munsch about his book, “Love You Forever.” Ava is a student at Heineman Middle School in Algonquin and her letter was submitted by her teacher and stepmom, Beverly Smith.
- Level II, Grades 7-8: **Sharanya Rao** of Hawthorn Woods wrote to author Ali Benjamin about her book “The Thing About Jellyfish.” Sharanya attends Lake Zurich Middle School North in Hawthorn Woods and her letter was submitted by her teacher Alba Pollak.
- Level III, Grades 9-12: **Amatullah Mir** of Hickory Hills wrote to Sana Amanat and G. Willow Wilson about their “Ms. Marvel” book series. Amatullah attends Aqsa School in Bridgeview and submitted the letter on her own.

Each winner received a \$200 check from the Illinois Center for the Book, a plaque signed by Secretary White, and a tour of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum. Each school received a \$100 check from the Illinois Center for the Book to purchase books for their school library and a tour of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum.

Read the winning essays at http://cyberdriveillinois.com/departments/library/center_for_the_book.

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