

For Immediate Release:

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Jesse White Announces Winners of “Letters About Literature in Illinois” Contest
Winners from Champaign, Savoy and Tinley Park

Secretary of State and State Librarian Jesse White announced that students from Champaign, Savoy and Tinley Park are the Illinois winners of 2020 “Letters About Literature in Illinois” contest. The reading and writing contest for students is sponsored by the Secretary of State’s office, the Illinois State Library and the Illinois Center for the Book.

“The competition brought in 4,299 entries from across the state,” said White. “Reading gives a child a greater chance to succeed. The young writers who entered this competition demonstrated how literature impacts many lives.”

The 2020 “Letters About Literature in Illinois” winners are:

- Level I, Grades 4-6: **Lena Miller** of Savoy wrote to author Jewell Parker Rhodes about her book, “Towers Falling.” Lena is a student at Campus Middle School for Girls in Urbana. Her letter was submitted by her teacher, the late Elaine Giermak.
- Level II, Grades 7-8: **Leyla Cohen** of Champaign wrote to author John Green about his book, “Turtles All the Way Down.” Leyla also attends Campus Middle School for Girls. Her letter was submitted by her teacher, Elizabeth Hogan.
- Level III, Grades 9-12: **Kayla Jastrzebski** of Tinley Park wrote to Ashley Herring Blake about her book, “Girl Made of Stars.” Kayla attends Tinley Park High School. Her letter was submitted by her teacher, Kathleen O’Connor.

To participate in the competition, students in grades 4-12 had to read a book or poem and then write a personal letter to the author explaining how the book changed their view of the world or themselves. Students could read fiction or non-fiction works from living or deceased authors. Students were encouraged to select books that would resonate with them.

Each winner will receive a \$200 check from the Illinois Center for the Book and a plaque signed by Secretary White. To thank the winners’ teachers for their support of Letters About Literature, each school will receive a \$100 check from the Illinois Center for the Book to purchase books for their school library.

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

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