Young readers in grades 4–12 are invited to write a personal letter to an author for Letters about Literature (LAL), a national reading and writing promotion program. The letter can be to any author (living or dead) from any genre–fiction or nonfiction, contemporary or classic–explaining how that author's work changed the student's view of the world.

This reading and writing promotion is sponsored by the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress, in partnership with Target. In Nebraska, Letters about Literature is sponsored by the Nebraska Center for the Book and Nebraska Library Commission.

LAL awards prizes on both the state and national levels. The Nebraska Center for the Book has its own panel of judges who select the top letter writers in the state.

Nebraska winners will be honored in a proclamation-signing ceremony at the state capitol during National Library Week in April 2012.

State winners will receive $50 Target gift cards and additional prizes, and then advance to the national judging.

A panel of national judges for the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress will select six national winners and twelve national honorable mention winners.

The national winners will receive a $500 Target gift card, plus each will secure a $10,000 LAL Reading Promotion Grant in their name for his or her community or school library so that others can experience personal relationships with authors and the stories they tell.

The national honorable mention winners will each receive a $100 Target gift card, plus each will secure a $1,000 LAL Reading Promotion Grant in their name for his or her community or school library. The community or school library selected for the national winners and national honorable mention winners is at the sponsor's sole discretion.

Students compete in three grade levels: Level 1 for grades 4–6; Level 2 for grades 7–8; and Level 3 for grades 9–12.

Teachers, librarians, and parents can download free teaching materials on reader response and reflective writing at www.lettersaboutliterature.org.

Submissions must be postmarked by Jan. 6, 2012. State winners will be notified in March 2012 and national winners by mid-April.

Nebraska-specific information (including letters from Nebraska winners of past contests) is available at http://centerforthebook.nebraska.gov/programs/LAL.html.

For more information contact Mary Jo Ryan, maryjo.ryan@nebraska.gov, 402-471-3434 or 800-307-2665.