

Letters About Literature

Iowa Judging Assessment Rubric

Exposition

- Is the essay typed & in letter format? Organized and coherent? Does it hook the reader right away?
- Is it a dialogue with the author, not a plot summary or fan letter?
- Is the writer's prose grammatically correct?

Purpose/Content

- Does the letter say how the work changed her/his world view or view of self? How they know this?
- Are there specific, concrete examples, anecdotes, quotes, relevant to their response to the book?

Writer's Voice

- Does the letter express ideas creatively, communicating from a unique, powerful point of view? Use metaphor or imagery to make points?
- Are the words chosen vivid? Appropriate? intended to communicate, not to impress?

Process for Judges:

- Read the letters for content, i.e. the writer's message. This will give an overall sense of the scope of all letters on the competition level. Obviously, not all letters will be of equal quality.
- Reread each letter, keeping the three categories above in mind. Judges need not rank all letters, unless that is helpful to them.
- Select the top 6 – 10 letters that impressed you. Rank them using the point system below:
5 – excellent 4 – very good 3 – satisfactory 2 – weak 1 – poor
- Finally, all judges come together to discuss and select the three winners and three honorable mention winners.