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Jesse White Announces Winners of “Letters About Literature” Contest
Winners from Chicago, Hoffman Estates and Petersburg

Secretary of State and State Librarian Jesse White announced that students from Chicago, Hoffman Estates and Petersburg are the Illinois winners of the 2018 “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 Illinois letters have been submitted to the Library of Congress for entry into the national contest. White honored the winners on Monday at a ceremony at the State Library.

“For the eleventh year in a row, I am proud to announce that Illinois had more entries in the national contest than any other state with nearly 7,000 letters,” said White. “The young writers we honored today have demonstrated, through their writing, 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: **Akosua Haynes** of Chicago wrote to author Margot Lee Shetterly about her book, “Hidden Figures.” Akosua is a student at St. Thomas the Apostle School in Chicago and submitted the letter herself.
- Level II, Grades 7-8: **Rylee Johnson** of Hoffman Estates wrote to author Gabrielle Zevin about her book “Elsewhere.” Rylee attends Eisenhower Junior High in Hoffman Estates, and her letter was submitted by her teacher Tracy Otto.
- Level III, Grades 9-12: **Sakura Fagan** of Petersburg wrote to Dorthea Goldenberg and Bette Killion about their adaptation of the “The Velveteen Rabbit.” Sakura attends PORTA High School in Petersburg, and her letter was submitted by her teacher Pat Woods.

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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