Young readers in grades 4 – 10 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 the Nebraska Center for the Book and Nebraska Library Commission, and locally supported by Houchen Bindery Ltd.

LAL awards prizes on both the state and national levels. The Nebraska Center for the Book has a 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 2013. Nebraska winners will receive state 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 one National Winner per competition level (Level I for grades 4-6, Level II for grades 7-8, and Level III for grades 9-10) to receive a $1,000 cash award. The judges will also select one second place winner on each competition level to receive a $150 cash award, to be announced in May 2013.

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. 11, 2013. State winners will be notified in March 2013 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, 402-471-3434 or 800-307-2665.