

**New Mexico “Letters About Literature” Champions Announced**  
***Galen Yane, Rowaina Alaini, and Emily Freeman move on to national competition***

**Santa Fe, N.M.** – The New Mexico State Library has announced the state level champions of the 2019 Letters About Literature competition. This annual writing contest for young readers in grades 4 through 12 is made possible by a generous grant from the Dollar General Literacy Foundation and is administered nationally by the Library of Congress Center for the Book.

Letters About Literature encourages young readers in grades 4 -12 to read a book and write a personal letter to the author explaining how the book changed or shaped their perspective on themselves or the world. The New Mexico State Library manages the state level program and submits a champion to the national competition for each of the three levels.

**Galen Yane**, a fifth grade student at Cien Aguas International School in Albuquerque, is the Level 1 champion. Galen wrote his letter to Gordon Korman about his book, *Schooled*.

**Rowaina Alaini**, an eighth grade student at Desert Ridge Middle School in Albuquerque, is the Level 2 champion. Her letter is addressed to *Enchanted Air* author, Margarita Engle.

**Emily Freeman**, a tenth grade student at East Mountain High School in Sandia Park, is the Level 3 champion. Emily wrote her letter to Ned Vizzini about his book, *It's Kind of a Funny Story*.

Three hundred and ninety-three New Mexico students entered the 2019 contest. Of those 393 entries, 135 writers advanced to round two and 68 writers advanced to round three. In Level 1, there were 138 entries with 23 letters advancing to round three state judging. In Level 2, there were 160 entries with 22 letters advancing to round three. In Level 3, there were 95 entries with 23 letters moving on to the final round of judging. All of the writers who advanced to round two will receive an award certificate in the mail. Champions will receive a \$150 cash prize.

From the 68 New Mexico state finalists who advanced to round three of the competition, the state judges selected three champions, three second place writers, three third place writers, and six honorable mention letters. Champions, second and third place winners, and honorable mention recipients will be honored at the State Capitol on May 3 at 1:30 PM. State Librarian, Eli Guinnee, will congratulate the students and the state champions will read their letters aloud.

The final judging panel was comprised of government officials, librarians, authors, and book professionals from across the state including Department of Cultural Affairs New Mexico State Librarian, Eli Guinnee; Norice Lee, Associate Library Director, Burrell College of Osteopathic Medicine, Health Sciences Library, Las Cruces ; retired State Librarian, Ben Wakashige; Anne Price, Youth Services Manager, Octavia Fellin Public Library, Gallup; Malcolm Alonzo, Library Services Supervisor, The Public Library of Albuquerque and Bernalillo, Westgate Branch; Deanne Dekle, Youth Services & Outreach Consultant, New Mexico State Library; Susan Beck, Professor and Head of Access Services, New Mexico State University Library; Stephanie Wilson, Law Librarian Senior, Supreme Court Law Library, Santa Fe; and Thomas D. Claggett, Author, Santa Fe.

The three New Mexico champions' letters now advance to the national competition and will be sent to the Library of Congress for the national judging round, where they will be competing for a \$1000 cash award. The results of the national contest will be released in May.

To read the three winning letters or learn more about the Letters About Literature competition please visit the New Mexico State Library website - <http://www.nmstatelibrary.org/>