

Name _____

Due: By Dec. 12, 2014

Literary Letters—English

You will write a letter to me about the book that you have just finished reading, The Thief and the Beanstalk by P. W. Catanese. You will include your opinions and observations about the book and its characters. The letter will be counted as a major grade, so it is important to show your best work and to have it completely finished by the due date. You will work on the draft and revision at school so that I can observe your progress. Once your work has been revised, you will type your final copy either at school or at home.

An example literary letter is attached for your review. You should include the following items in your one-page or more typed letter:

SUMMARY

1. Include the title, author, main characters, and setting.
2. Include the main events and problem (conflicts). Please do not re-tell the entire book. A few sentences will suffice.

CONNECTION

3. Tell about at least one connection you made while reading your book. Tell me how the characters, events, or setting reminded you of yourself (text to self); or reminded you of something that happened in the world around you (text to world); or reminded you of another book or movie (text to text).

OTHER READING STRATEGIES

4. Discuss your feelings and thoughts as you are reading your book. Choose at least three questions to respond to, each from a different category. Remember, you need specific evidence from the book to support your opinions. Here are the categories and choices:

Clarify/Question

- a. Was there anything that puzzled you or you thought was strange or confusing?
- b. If you could talk to the author, what questions would you ask him/her?
- c. At first I thought....but now I think...

Predict

- d. What do you think will happen later on?
- e. I wonder if

Infer

- f. What did you notice about the characters? What caused them to act as they did, or how did they change?
- g. Who narrates the story? How would the story be different if someone else told the story?
- h. Does the title make sense to you? How does it relate to what happened in the story? How does it add to your understanding of the story?

Visualize

- i. Is there a scene that particularly sticks in your mind? Describe it.

Evaluate

- j. Did something surprise you? Did you find something interesting or boring?
- k. Which characters do you like/dislike? Why?
- l. How did the book begin (description, dialogue, action, etc)? Was that an effective way to pull you into the story? Why do you think the author wrote the book?
- m. Do you like the way the story ended? Why/why/not? Why do you think the author chose to end it this way? Did it end the way you thought it would? If not, how did you think it would end?

Synthesize

- n. What did you learn from being with the characters as they dealt with their conflicts?
- o. What message did you take away from reading the book?

METACOGNITION--(Reader's Notes)

- 5. Finally, close your literary letter with thoughts about your reading process. **Choose one** of the following:
 - a. Did you read this book quickly or slowly? Did you read it all at once or in many shorter sessions? Did you backtrack, or reread, portions? If so, why? Did it grab you and keep your attention, or were there places where your mind wandered?
 - b. Do you ever re-read books? Is this a book you would want to read again? Why/ why not?

E-X-A-M-P-L-E

November 21, 2013
1234 Batcave Dr.
Austin, TX 78746

Dear Mrs. Amazing,

I read the novel Between Shades of Gray by Ruta Sepetys and really enjoyed the book. The novel is a tragedy. The setting is in Lithuania 1941 during World War II. Lina, a fifteen year-old artist, is stripped from her home and is shoved into a dirty, crowded train with mother and younger brother, Jonas. They are prisoners who have been taken away from families and a comfortable life. As she journeys to the Arctic Circle, Lina meets and leaves behind countless characters. She is kept alive by the dream that her father, who is trapped in a prison, will come and save them from the torture that awaits them.

I actually have a few connections to this book. One is that I understand what it is like to have to move and leave behind friends. I too had no power over the choice to move. I left the only home I knew. Also, when I moved, I did not get to see my father for over 6 months. Lina dreamed of seeing her father again. I was lucky. I did get to see mine; she was not reunited with her father at the end of the book. Finally, while reading the novel, the leader, Stalin, sounded like Hitler.

From the very start, I was lured into the story. I had questions that kept me wondering. It seems a bit too gruesome for my taste at times, but it has a wonderful plot and is a well-paced novel. I wonder why did author write the story? What inspired her? Did it have something to do with her heritage? I also wonder if Lina will meet Andris again, maybe in another story. I think that when the war is over, they will all go back to Lithuania, except Lina and Jonas. I believe they will go to Germany to live with Joanna and her parents. They will try to lead as much of a normal life as possible, but will be haunted by the memories of the prison camp.

For the most part, I like how the author set up the story. The narrator of the story is Lina. I think the attitude of the story would change if someone else was telling it, such as one of the prisoner's guards. The title makes sense to me. I think it means something like in the darkness, there is a light and in a gray world, you can find a color. The story was a cliffhanger, and that is the part I didn't like as much. It would have been better if it had a happy ending. I thought it would end with Lina's plan working out. I think the message of the story was to not lose hope. Lina never lost hope. That hope helped her get through all her struggles. If she had lost hope, she probably wouldn't have had the strength to continue.

I read this book quickly and all at once, as I usually do with books. I particularly liked the Edvard Munch quote: "From my rotting body, flowers shall grow and I am in them and that is eternity." I liked it so much I wrote it on my wall! I reread a lot of book and this one is probably one it will reread for a long time.

Sincerely,
Emerson Thoreau

Letter Writing Guide

Friendly Letter Format

	(1) Return Address Line 1 Return Address Line 2 (2) Date (Month Day, Year)
Dear Name of Recipient, (3-Salutation/Greeting)	
Body Paragraph 1	
.....	
Body Paragraph 2	
.....	
Body Paragraph 3	
..... (4-Body)	
	(5) Closing (Sincerely...), (6) Signature
(7) P.S.	

In the friendly letter format, your address, date, the closing, signature, and printed name are all indented to the right half of the page (how far you indent in is up to you as long as the heading and closing is lined up, use your own discretion and make sure it looks presentable). Also the first line of each paragraph is indented.

- 1. Your Address:** (Not needed if the letter is printed on paper with a letterhead already on it.): All that is needed is your street address on the first line and the city, state and zip on the second line.
- 2. Date:** Put the date on which the letter was written in the format Month Day Year i.e. August 30, 1981. Skip a line between the date and the salutation.
- 3. Salutation/Greeting:** Usually starts out with Dear so and so, or Hi so and so. Note: There is a comma after the end of the salutation (you can use an exclamation point also if there is a need for some emphasis).
- 4. Body:** The body is where you write the content of the letter; the paragraphs should be single spaced with a skipped line between each paragraph. Skip 2 lines between the end of the body and the closing.
- 5. Closing:** Let's the reader know that you are finished with your letter; usually ends with Sincerely, Sincerely yours, Thank you, and so on. Note that there is a comma after the end of the closing and only the first word in the closing is capitalized.
- 6. Signature:** Your signature will go in this section, usually signed in black or blue ink with a pen. Skip a line after your signature and the P.S.
- 7. P.S.:** If you want to add anything additional to the letter you write a P.S. (post script) and the message after that. You can also add a P.P.S after that and a P.P.P.S. after that and so on.