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**HUMANITIES CENTER INVITES STUDENTS TO ENTER
NATIONAL ESSAY CONTEST**

Sept. 15, 2008 – ST. PAUL, Minn. – The Minnesota Humanities Center, along with local co-sponsors the St. Paul Pioneer Press and the Minnesota Council of Teachers of English, invite Minnesota’s fourth through 12th grade students to enter the 2009 Letters About Literature essay contest.

Sponsored nationally by the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress in partnership with Target, the contest asks readers to write a letter to an author describing how his or her work touched their life in a personal way. Authors can be of any genre or time period and can come from any country.

The contest focuses on reader response and reflective writing and has three competition levels: Level 1 for students in grades 4-6; Level 2 for students in grades 7 and 8; and Level 3 for students in grades 9-12. The Humanities Center will choose the top essayists from each of the three competition levels who will receive a \$50 Target GiftCard and advance for judging in the national competition.

National winners will receive a \$500 Target GiftCard and a \$10,000 Letters About Literature Reading Promotion Grant to give to a community or school library. Additionally, 12 national runners-up will receive a \$100 Target Giftcard and a Reading Promotion Grant of \$1,000 for their school or community library. Winners will be instrumental in deciding how the library funds will be spent.

Entries in each state will be assessed on three criteria: content, or the writer’s achievement in addressing the contest theme; exposition, or the writer’s use of language skills; and voice, the writer’s style and originality of expression.

Educators from each state are encouraged to access free teaching materials including lesson plans, blackline masters, writing samples, and assessment checklists through the Letters About Literature program. These resources are available at the Minnesota Humanities Center’s web site.

Last year’s competition attracted more than 1,300 young readers from across the state. Minnesota contestant Anna Priore, a home-schooled student from Kenyon, was among the national runners-up in last year’s contest.

All entries must be received by Dec. 6, 2008. For official guidelines and entry information or educator resources, please visit www.minnesotahumanities.org and click on “Special Projects.”

About Minnesota Humanities Center

Through its emphasis on the humanities, the Minnesota Humanities Center works to build a literate, thoughtful, and engaged society. A Minnesota-based national center and clearing house for the best in the humanities, the Humanities Center: conducts professional development opportunities; creates and disseminates one-of-a-kind educational resources; partners with other organizations to offer humanities programs statewide; and operates a full-service conference facility. For more information, please visit www.minnesotahumanities.org.

