

Connections



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LETTERS ABOUT LITERATURE

Letters About Literature is a reading and writing contest for students in grades 4-12. Students are asked to read a book, poem or speech and write to the author, living or dead, about how the book affected them personally. Letters are judged on state and national levels. Tens of thousands of students from across the country enter Letters About Literature each year.

Submit your letter before January 11!

For guidelines, official rules, and additional information, please visit read.gov/letters

THE GIFT OF READING

Mary J. Soucie, State Librarian

It's December, which means it's the most wonderful time of the year! It may also mean that it's the busiest time of the year. It's so easy to lose the wonder of the season with the hustle and bustle of getting ready for the holidays. We run hither and yonder, scooping up the latest gadgets, fuzziest slippers or some other passing fancy to share with our loved ones.

Iceland has a neat Christmas tradition, especially if you're a bookworm, as I hope you are. It is called Jólábókaflóð, pronounced yo-la-bok-a-flot, or Yule Book Flood. The tradition is traced back to WWII when foreign imports were restricted and paper was inexpensive. A small country such as Iceland can't support a year-long publishing field, so the book publishers push out their titles in the final week of the year. People exchange books on Christmas Eve and then spend the night reading. This sounds like a delightful tradition to me! I would like to extend it to New Year's Eve and Day as well. After all, don't they say that whatever you spend New Year's Day doing is what you'll spend the majority of your time on that year, or something like that? I would love to set the expectation that the majority of my year is going to be spent reading.

I love the idea of giving books for the holidays, and it's something I've done for many years with my extended family. I read a story of one woman who decided to combine Jólábókaflóð with Blind Date with a Book and a White Elephant gift. She purchased ten books from the favorites she had read in the previous year, wrapped them and wrote a short description of each book on the front. When it came time to exchange gifts, the books were passed around to the adults who read the descriptions on the books. After everyone had a chance to read the short descriptions, they selected one that interested them and opened the book. If it was one they had read before, they could exchange it with someone else. This sounds like a delightful idea, and I'm going to encourage my family to do this next year.

Take a few minutes out of this busy season to enjoy the gift of reading. Perhaps you'll create your own version of Jólábókaflóð with your family. On behalf of the State Library, I wish you a very Joyous Season's Reading and a Happy New Year.

DIGITAL HORIZONS

In North Dakota we are proud of our roots and where our families came from. In order to showcase this unique heritage, [Digital Horizons](#) was created by several institutions around the state. This archive takes items from the archives at the individual institutions and items from the public to create a comprehensive research database.

The two most popular collections that the State Library contributes to that showcases our unique roots are the North Dakota Memories and the County & Town Histories collections. Both collections are put together from communities around the state.

The Memories collection is primarily photographs and documents that have been digitized at the State Library's ScanDay events. These events are a great way for the State Library to work with the public and preserve history at the grassroots level.

The County & Town Histories collection is comprised of books in the State Library's collection of town/county/township anniversaries and some church anniversaries as well. Digital Horizons is a treasure trove of items that showcase North Dakota roots to everyone who is interested.

If you want to learn more about Digital Horizons or have any questions, please email ndsl-digital@nd.gov.

AGENCY TRAININGS

Have you ever wanted to use the State Library's materials and just didn't know how?

Using an unfamiliar library and its resources can be daunting which causes many to not give it a shot. This is why the State Library offers training to state agencies on specific databases the library subscribes to or a simple how-to when using the library.

The Continuing Education Coordinator will come to your agency to do a training on the library topic of your choice. It is completely free, and the only thing you need to provide is a space to present.

If you have any questions about scheduling a training or about our online offerings, please contact Angie at ndsltrain@nd.gov or 701-328-3495.

INTERLIBRARY LOAN

Libraries cannot own everything, and so [Interlibrary Loan](#) (ILL) exists. ILL asks other libraries to share their items with our patrons when our library doesn't own it. Books, CDs, DVDs, and articles can be shared between libraries, which saves resources at each library.

Generally there isn't a cost to obtain an ILL except the postage to return to the State Library. However, if a fee is required to borrow an item, the State Library will secure permission from the patron before obtaining the item.

STATE DOCUMENTS

The [State Document Depository](#) collects, preserves, and disseminates all North Dakota state government documents produced for public use.

When requesting printing from Central Duplicating, please remember to check the box so the required 8 copies are sent to the State Library.

NORTH DAKOTA TALKING BOOK LIBRARY

Is poor eyesight spoiling your love of reading or that of someone you know? The North Dakota State Library has a program that can speak to that problem. It's called Talking Books. Through the National Library Service, any North Dakota citizen with a visual or physical impairment or reading disability is eligible for talking books.

There is no charge for this service. All materials, including players, talking books, and accessories, are mailed to the patron at no charge, and individuals return all materials via the US Postal Service's "Free Matter for the Blind and Physically Handicapped" privilege. Other equipment available to patrons are headphones, a high-volume player, remote control, pillow speaker, and a breath switch.

Talking Books allows patrons to receive multiple titles on a cartridge that is created specifically for them. When returned, the cartridge is erased and reused. Patrons have access to over 100,000 books in the collection, with no waiting lists. Plus, they have the option to request all the books in a particular series at once to be on a single cartridge (space permitting).

There are a couple of other ways to receive books as well. Patrons may download digital talking books and magazines from Braille and Audio Reading Download (BARD) on to their machine using their computer. This is a web-based service that provides access to thousands of e-braille and encrypted

talking books, magazines, and music appreciation materials. Another option is the BARD Mobile app, which allows patrons to download braille and audio materials onto their iOS or Android devices. Many of the materials available in hard-copy braille and digital cartridges are also available for download in braille and audio formats.

Qualifying patrons can also receive large print books from the state library. The library has 8,074 large print titles available. Like the cartridges, the library can mail these books via "Free Matter for the Blind and Physically Handicapped" to the patron.

The ND Talking Book Library has approximately 1,577 patrons, ranging in age from 4 to 112 years old. This service has approximately 104,802 titles available for our patrons, fiction and non-fiction, including everything from best sellers and westerns to romance and history. It would take a patron 87 continuous years to read all of the NLS books. It has been said that a non-sighted person reads an average of 7 times more books than a sighted individual. One ND Talking Book Library patron has read 6,100 books!

If you have any questions, please contact the North Dakota State Talking Book Library at 1-800-843-9948 or e-mail tbooks@nd.gov.

For more information, visit the library website at <http://library.nd.gov/talkingbooks.html>.

SCIGAMES: FREE GAMES AND ACTIVITIES

Visit SciGames.org for free games and activities for your phone or tablet.

Space Stage is a "green screen" activity that lets you take selfies and record videos as if from other worlds. Use the companion [literacy activities](#) to engage youth in creating "weather reports" and "commercials" for visiting those other worlds.

(Space Stage is currently only available for some Android devices. Stay tuned for expanded capability!)



“The Way of Kings” by Brandon Sanderson

Reviewed by Trevor Martinson

Let's start by pointing out a few things. The Way of Kings is fantasy. The book is 1,000+ pages, and the audiobook is 45+ hours. This is the first in a projected ten book series. Three have already been published, and each continues to get longer. Still reading?

If you're still here, this book is worth your time. The author, Brandon Sanderson, doesn't disappoint with this initial entry to his Stormlight Archive series. In the book, Sanderson, who commendably keeps things PG-13, introduces us to the world of Roshar, an unforgiving land of rock and storms.

It's been thousands of years since the disappearance of the Heralds and the fall of their orders, the Knights Radiant, whose task was to protect mankind from the Voidbringers. But, their mystical Shardblades and Shardplate remain. These weapons transform men into near-unstoppable warriors.

The story primarily follows four main characters: Szeth, Kaladin, Dalinar, and Shallan. Szeth is a skilled, yet reluctant, assassin who is condemned to do the bidding of his ever-changing masters. When he is sent to murder the king, it sparks a war. Kaladin, who was once on a path to become a surgeon, is now a slave for one of the armies in this war. He struggles with his own misery while also trying to keep his fellow slaves alive. Dalinar leads another one of the armies. A once legendary warrior, he has begun to question his sanity because of overwhelming visions of the Knights Radiant. Across the ocean, Shallan seeks to train under renowned scholar Jasnah, Dalinar's niece, whose research hints at the true causes to the war. However, Shallan is not as innocent as she seems.

The book is a creative page-turner, and it keeps you captivated. The story, during its long run of battles, mystery, and adventure, never gets bogged down. Sanderson, it seems, just has a lot to say, and we ought to listen. The Way of Kings is available from the State Library in multiple formats: as a print book and also as an eBook or eAudio on [RBdigital](#).

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