Letter to a Character

*Running Out of Time*, Margaret Peterson Haddix

*Statement of Purpose.* The Letter to a Character activity is also called “Unset Letters.” The purpose is to help students connect with characters and participate in a sort of role-play that will get them involved in the novel. It encourages interpretive and evaluative thinking in response to the material they are reading. It can also be used to teach audience because the letters are written a specific person, despite the fact that the person is not real. Students have to know a good deal about characters to be able to write interesting and purposeful letters to them.

*Context.* The letters to a character should be written after chapter 21, after Jessie has delivered the news conference and fainted on the steps of the capitol. There are a lot of issues at this point in the novel that could be discussed, and a lot of questions that are raised and students could address in their letters.

**DIRECTIONS.**

Materials: pen and paper!
Time Needed: 30 minutes (students can finish as homework if more time is needed)
1. Introduce the assignment by having students make a list of characters and what they know about them.
2. Then discuss possible questions you could ask certain characters to help give students ideas.
3. Have them compose a letter to a chosen character. Tell them to ask the characters questions and discuss the issues in the novel that involve them.

*After the Strategy.* Have students who wrote a letter to the same person get in a group and discuss their letters. Discussing the issues from the novel aloud and in small groups is helpful for students to make connections.

*Assessment.* The assignment will be graded based mostly on ideas and voice. Of course, mechanics will be taken into consideration, but proof that students really thought about what they wrote is important.