For Letter-a-Week Students:

Once you have completed 15 books, you no longer need to write a notecard a day. Shift to a letter a week, due on Fridays. Letters deepen your understanding of a book. Think of it as a way to review both whether the book was worth the time it took to read it as well as if the book had any lasting ideas or conflicts that you are still puzzling over. Letter reviews are not summaries; these are ways of sorting what some of the big ideas in the book were. I should be able to see that you have thought about the book as a whole as well as can use specific elements of the book to support your ideas. It should not read like the book jacket. I should hear your distinct voice.

Format:

Letters may be typed or handwritten. They must be in letter format, including the date, Dear Mrs. Daly, have a body, and a closing (ex, Sincerely, Your name) and build upon the strong foundation you created in your notecards. You are already including the author’s name, title, a claim, evidence, a quote, and a connection. Let’s keep those elements and build upon them.

Mrs. Taylor, your teacher for 8th grade English next year, has made some suggestions:

* Describe what you like or dislike about the book and why.
* Describe and analyze the parts of your book that puzzled you and made you ask questions.
* Describe and analyze what you noticed about the characters, such as what made them act as they did or how they changed. (How and why a character changed is a huge clue as to what the author is trying to say the book means.)
* Write about something in the book that surprised you or that you found interesting.
* Write your predictions and about whether they came true—or not.
* Develop a connection that you made while reading the book. Describe how it reminds you of yourself, of people you know, or of something that happened in your life. It might remind you of other books, especially other characters, events, or settings.
* Notice the author’s craft and style—how the author uses literary techniques like imagery, diction, detail, syntax, tone, symbol, etc. and/or figurative language—and how it impacts the meaning of the book.
* What do you think the book means? You don’t have to approach this question knowing the answer fully. Use the writing of the letter to figure it out. One way to do so is to focus on where a writer repeats something, whether it is a repeated conflict, phrase, object, situation, etc.

**Choose an option or combination of options that works best for you. You do not have to write about all of them**. I should see your thinking, your style, and your opinion through your letters. Please pay attention to clear, grammatically correct writing. Congratulations! You have made it to letters, no small accomplishment.