

Local Letters for Global Change: Developing Local Solutions for Systemic Issues

Thank you for being part of Local Letters, the Pulitzer Center's annual student writing contest! This graphic organizer is designed to help you write a powerful letter that highlights the importance of an issue that matters to you, and argues for a compelling solution.

This graphic organizer will guide you through the following steps:

1. Reflect on a few essential questions that help us understand why this project matters
2. Choose a focus issue and a Pulitzer Center news story that your letter will cite
3. Explore that news story and take notes that will help you write your letter
4. Brainstorm/research potential solutions related to the issue you've chosen
5. Write and revise your letter!

Letters written following these directions can be submitted through this entry form on [this page](#) for the chance to win cash prizes and publication.

Contest Deadline: November 1, 2026. Questions? Email us at education@pulitzercenter.org.

Step 1: Reflect on These Essential Questions

1. What is a <i>global issue</i> ? Write the definition in your own words. (Here are some examples of global issues.)	
2. What is a global issue that you feel strongly about? How does it impact people?	
3. What questions do you have about this issue? What would you like to learn more about?	
4. How do you think journalism about this issue could be helpful to people? How could it help you?	
5. Do you have any ideas about things that could be done to help with this issue? What actions would help, and who would need to take those actions?	

Step 2: Analyze a Model Letter

1. Choose one of the following letters, written by a 2025 winner of the Local Letters for Global Change contest. When making your selection, please consider the topic and whether it feels safe for you to explore at this time; some letters contain difficult content.

- A. [Letter on sudden cuts to USAID and SNAP benefits](#) by Rebecca Li, 11th grade, Connecticut
- B. [Letter on extreme heat and the cost of electricity](#) by Priya Kangbai, 7th grade, New York
- C. [Letter on renters' rights and affordable housing](#) by Yaxin Zhang, 12th grade, Massachusetts
- D. [Letter on the environmental impacts of AI data centers](#) by Ria Goel, 12th grade, Virginia
- E. [Letter on chronic hepatitis B prevention](#) by Louisa Gellhorn, 5th grade, Pennsylvania

2. Read and analyze the letter. Use the graphic organizer below to track your analysis.

1. List three things you think the writer of this letter does well.	1. _____ _____ _____ 2. _____ _____ _____ 3. _____ _____ _____
2. Imagine you are peer reviewing this letter for a classmate. What is one way in which you think they could strengthen their letter?	
3. What does the writer do to convince the reader that this issue is important?	

4. How does the writer use evidence to strengthen their arguments? What sources do they cite?	
5. Do you find the solution presented by the writer compelling? Why or why not?	

Step 3: Choose a Focus Issue and a Story for Your Letter

Stories on the Pulitzer Center website are organized into five big issue categories: *Global Health*, *Climate and Environment*, *Human Rights*, *Information and Artificial Intelligence*, and *Peace and Conflict*.

1. Consider: What issues impact you and your community? What issues do you find interesting and want to learn more about? What issues do you want other people to pay attention to and take action on?

2. Visit www.pulitzercenter.org/localletters and click on the Suggested Stories tab. Choose an issue that interests you, and take some time to explore the headlines and first few paragraphs of several different stories. You may want to explore a few different issues before you decide on a story.

Note: These issues overlap! For example, you might find a story about environmental racism under Climate and Environment, Human Rights, *and* Global Health.

3. Choose a news story that moves you. (That means a story that you care about. It's much easier to make others care about an issue if you feel strongly about it yourself!) **You will be writing your letter in response to this story.**

Step 4: Explore Your Chosen News Story

Read, watch, and/or listen to the story you chose. While you read/watch/listen, use the graphic organizer below to track important information presented in the story. You will be able to refer back to your notes in this organizer to help you write your letter.

Global issue you selected	
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Title of the Pulitzer Center news story	
Journalists(s) who reported your story	
Publication / News outlet (in addition to the Pulitzer Center)	
Who is being affected by the issue, and how?	
Who or what does the story identify as being responsible for this issue? What are they doing to cause or worsen the problem?	
Does the story share any potential solutions to the issue(s)? If so, describe them.	
What numbers, facts, or quotes stand out to you? Note these down.	

Step 5: Brainstorm Your Solution

Plan out your letter using the following graphic organizer. It contains guiding questions, and also tips from the contest judges at the Pulitzer Center.

How are you connected to the global issue you are writing about?

You will likely respond to a news story reported from a city, state, and/or country different from your own. In your letter, share details of the news story you read, and explain how the underlying issues are connected to your own community. Are you or other members of your local community affected by the same issue? Do the actions of your community have an effect on the people and places you read about? Identify the big, systemic issue(s) in the news story, and make it clear how they connect to you locally and/or personally.

What solutions to this problem already exist?

Other people are probably working on this issue in your local community and around the world. You don't have to reinvent the wheel! Consider advocating for a solution that has been effective before or is already in progress. You could explain how a solution implemented elsewhere could work locally, or how the work of people/organizations active in your community could be supported. Do some research, and cite your sources.

What solution(s) do you favor, and why?

What are some potential downsides or unintended consequences of your solution?

Do some brainstorming and/or research to explore barriers to implementing your solution, as well as why some people may disagree with your solution. Approach this process with an open mind. You may learn something that changes your proposed solution, or the way you frame it in your letter.

Who has the power to effect the change I want to see?

Your letter will be most effective if it makes it into the hands of a person who has power to implement the solution you're suggesting. Use this space to brainstorm different decisionmakers who you could write to, and why. For example, if you're writing about local education issues, you might write to a member of your school board. If you want to see state-level legislation passed, your state senator or governor might be the right choice.

Decisionmaker name and position: _____

What power do they hold in relation to this issue? _____

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What power do they hold in relation to this issue? _____

Salutation (Dear ____,) - include the name of the decisionmaker

Paragraph I: Short summary of a global issue

- What issue do you want the decisionmaker to address?
- Why is this issue important globally? (Remember to cite evidence from the Pulitzer Center-supported story! You can use additional sources to find evidence, too.)

Paragraph II: Why is this issue important to your local community, and/or to you personally?

Paragraph III: Proposed action

- Why are you writing to this person? What power and/or responsibility do they have?
- What do you want them to do? Offer a solution, and cite evidence that your solution will be effective.

Closing and signature

The Pulitzer Center wants to read your letter! Remember to enter Local Letters for Global Change by November 1, 2026 using the entry form on [this page](#) for the chance to win cash prizes and publication. Please also consider sending your letter directly to the decisionmaker you chose. Your words hold power.