

Information about the Bessie Head Literature Awards

Last Year's Awards: The winners of the first (2007) Bessie Head Literature Awards were:

NOVEL

Winner: Mr. Khonani Ontebetse, cell 72736254/72735462, email wagaontebetse@yahoo.com

First Runners-Up: Ms. Kelebogile Itshekeng and Mr. Meekaeel Siphambili, cell 71457917, email msiphambili@yahoo.com

Second Runner-Up: Ms. Galeboe Mareledi Kefalotse, cell 72624746, email rexkef@yahoo.com

SHORT STORY

Winner: Ms. Bontekanye Botumile, cell 72441046, land line 680-1229, email bontyb@hotmail.com

First Runner-Up: Ms. Grace Soko, cell 72113417, land line 3975901, email irene@botsnet.bw

Second Runner-Up: Mr. Arnold Boniface Letsholo, cell 72858499, land line 394-7892, email arnoldletsholo@yahoo.co.uk

POETRY

Winner: Mr. Monty Fanikiso Moswela, cell 71786515, work line 241-8383, home 248-9562

First Runner-Up: Ms. Tjawangwa Dema, cell 71822516, office 391-8441, email tizheigh@yahoo.co.uk

Second Runner-Up: Mr. Nicholas Keitshokile, cell 71777444, email iwynn2001@yahoo.co.uk

Prizes were awarded to the winners of each category on 15 July 2007 in Serowe, as part of the celebrations for the anniversary of Bessie Head's seventieth birthday. Pentagon Publishers also inaugurated a new series of Botswana literature in English, the Bessie Head series, at that time. Information about those titles can be obtained from Ray Seeletso or Vusani Mguni at Pentagon (+267) 391-1846. The winning manuscripts will be published as a part of this series. More information about when they will be published can be had from Ray.

The response to this first-time prize was very encouraging, and we encourage all contestants to revise their work and resubmit this year.

This Year's Awards

This year, Pentagon has increased the prize amounts: the winner in the novel category will receive P2,500.00; the short story winner will get P1,500.00, and the poetry winner will get P1,000.00. Details about the contest, including rules and guidelines for entering, can be found on the website at www.bessiehead.org.

The prize is sponsored by Pentagon Publishers and administered by the Bessie Head Heritage Trust. The Trust was established in June of this year to promote the life and work of Bessie Head both here and in Botswana. We believe this competition is important for two reasons: (a) preserving Bessie Head's legacy in Botswana, since she is Botswana's most famous writer, one who has gained broad recognition overseas; and (b) encouraging the development of local literature in various genres. Bessie Head herself was generous with her time when students asked her for assistance and advice, and we believe that this generosity should be reflected in a vigorous effort to promote literature and reading in Botswana.