

For Immediate Release: Penguin Announces Winners of National Letter-Writing Contest

June 23, 2008 – Cavendish – Penguin Group (Canada) has announced the winners of a national letter-writing contest in celebration of the 100th anniversary of Anne of Green Gables. The announcement was made Friday at the site of L.M. Montgomery's Cavendish home at a ceremony unveiling two commemorative stamps from Canada Post, and a series of commemorative stamps to be issued by the post in Japan.

Winners were announced in four age categories as follows:

Age 10 and under: Rebecca Brooks, Winnipeg, Manitoba

Age 11–14: Traleena Rouleau, Braeside, Ontario

Age 15–17: Hannah Tufts, Elgin, Manitoba

Age 18 and over: Sarah Khan, Mississauga, Ontario, and Bill H. Wiebe, Port Rowan, Ontario (Co-winners)

In the 18 and over category, a national jury chaired by the Right Honourable Adrienne Clarkson unanimously agreed the prize must be shared. The letters of the two co-winners were variously described as “staggering,” “brave,” “powerful,” and “eloquent” in capturing the enduring appeal of Anne.

Jury members included Clarkson (Canada's 26th Governor-General), bestselling author Roy MacGregor, Rogers “Fine Print” host Carolyn Weaver, Scott Anderson, on behalf of Canwest Raise-A-Reader, Robert Waite, on behalf of Canada Post, and Kate Macdonald Butler, on behalf of the heirs of L.M. Montgomery.

Said Clarkson: “I think this proves that the appeal of Anne is not as a children's book but rather as literature which is on a par with Jane Austen. The ability that L.M. Montgomery had to create a microcosm of the manners and behaviour of human beings is remarkable: you have only to read these letters to understand that.”

One of the most stunning categories was the 18 and over age category. There were two extraordinary entries, one by Sarah Khan, a Muslim who comes from Saudi Arabia, and the other from Bill Wiebe, a farmer from Ontario. Sarah found *Anne of Green Gables* in a pile of trash left by American soldiers following the first Gulf War; Bill identifies heavily with Anne, even though Anne is a woman.

“The universality and eternal appeal of Anne could not be more poignantly and brilliantly displayed than in these two submissions.”

Added Robert Waite, Senior Vice-President of Corporate Social Responsibility at Canada Post:

“There were a number of things that surprised and delighted me in the course of judging this contest. First was just how relevant and alive the character of Anne Shirley is to so many Canadians fully a century after the book was first published. The words obviously still speak to the young—and still reverberate with the not so very young. This contest

also reminded me of the power and beauty of an almost-lost art form—letter writing. It was especially pleasing to see those letters that were written in the author’s own hand, as it often added to the emotional power of the correspondence. At Canada Post we have a long-standing commitment to literacy and the promotion Canadian culture and we’re very proud indeed to have been able to play a part in this wonderful contest.”

In her letter to Anne, co-winner Sarah Khan said the following:

“My curiosity was cured before it began. Books and magazines were strictly forbidden from entering the Kingdom. In my ninth year, I met you. After the first Gulf War, the Americans went back to their land, leaving behind garbage that became our treasure. I found your book sitting in a pile of trash in the American compound, and I instantly fell in love with your red braids and big green eyes. I spent the next three days reading it, and getting to know you. Those three days were the defining moment of my life. I found myself in you, through you. I was not alone in being rebellious and curious and free spirited. Anne, you became my soul-mate and to this day I hold your memory dear; you drive and inspire me every single day to be the woman I want to be.”

Each of the five winners will receive a \$2,500 travel voucher to visit Prince Edward Island, courtesy of Tourism PEI, a set of commemorative stamps from Canada Post, a commemorative coin from The Royal Canadian Mint, a collection of the 100th Anniversary books published by Penguin Group (Canada), and a limited edition print of L.M. Montgomery.

In February, Penguin Group (Canada) published *Before Green Gables*, a #1 bestseller and the only prequel officially sanctioned by Montgomery’s Estate, by award-winning Canadian author Budge Wilson, who completed the manuscript on her 80th birthday. The prequel sold in numerous countries including Canada, the US, the UK, and Japan, and marked Penguin Canada’s largest ever foreign rights sale. Also published in February were *Imagining Anne: The Island Scrapbooks of L.M. Montgomery* by Dr. Elizabeth (Betsy) Epperly, world-renowned Montgomery scholar, and a 100th Anniversary Edition of the original *Anne of Green Gables*, with a foreword by members of the family.

Sponsors of the national letter-writing contest included Penguin Group (Canada), Tourism PEI, Canada Post, and Canwest Raise-A-Reader. The winning entries will be posted on 100yearsofanne.com.

Founded in 1974 as a distribution company for Penguin books from all over the world, Penguin Group (Canada) began publishing Canadian and international titles in 1977, and quickly became known as one of Canada's pre-eminent publishers of literary, thought-provoking fiction, and non-fiction. In June 2008, Penguin was voted Publisher of the Year by the Canadian Booksellers’ Association.

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