

Rooted Everyday

Press Release

Moroccan School Girls Win First Environment-Themed Short Story Prize

10 July 2019

For Immediate Release

The Rooted Everyday Mediterranean Short Story Prize celebrates and protects the rich culture and biodiversity found in Mediterranean ecoregions.



School pupils within the Rooted Everyday campaign eco-regions of Lemnos in Greece, High Atlas mountains in Morocco, Montados in Portugal and Shouf mountains in Lebanon were invited to submit stories with an environmental theme to raise awareness of the importance of biodiversity and preserving cultural heritage in the Mediterranean.

Alongside the adult competition, children and young people could enter into either a 500 word prize for 8 to 13 year olds, or the 1000 word prize for 14 to 18 year olds.

There were two main winners who showed exceptional storytelling skills and inspired the judges. The winners were presented with certificates in a ceremony and received books, a dictionary, an encyclopedia about animals, plants and nature and they also received a package of school materials.

The Judge, Moroccan poet and author Brahim Elboukhari explained the judging process: "It has been a great pleasure to be part of the competition and enjoy reading so many amazing short stories from the participants. I have read all the stories more than three times each and it has been difficult for me to choose the best one from each category because the stories carried a similar amount of talent and skill. So, I had to reread each story considering the writing skills and short story techniques, plot, characterization, setting, and dialogue, style and language to make a fair judgement"

Kaoutar Lakhr from Lycée Ibn Sina in Biougra (Agadir), won with her story *The Garbage Monster*.

The garbage monster tells the story of two young girls who time-travelled to the future and found planet Earth deserted and in a terrible state: a sea full of oil and garbage everywhere. While they look around at the state of the Earth they meet a monster who is made of all kinds of garbage. He is very angry with humans and the girls quickly learn why...

Winner Kaoutar Lakhr said "I've won first place for the Rooted Everyday story competition, I am so happy! I read a lot of stories and watch a lot of movies for children because they use a lot of imagination. For this story, I drew inspiration from them. I have been reading a lot of children's books. If you read my story you'll see it is aimed at children. I tried to be as original as possible and use a clear language suited for children."

Judge Brahim Elboukhari said: "Reading Kaoutar's short story takes us into great dialogue, the whole story is knitted around dialogue which makes it stand out among the others. I also enjoyed the imagination of the writer, especially through the use of remote control to bring into existence the garbage monster. The story is different and innovative; it's a way to make people see what they can make out of garbage."

The Missing Message by **Faiza Lhbabi** from Sebou Middle School in Fes was also a winner.

The Missing Message is a story about a group of animal friends living in a beautiful forest. However, the forest trees are losing their green colour and the river that was once flowing through the forest has completely dried up. The animals are worried they'll die of thirst. One morning, they all gather to discuss how they are going to survive and if people will be able to help them...

Faiza Lhbabi told us: "I am really happy to win the #MedStoryPrize. I wrote every single word with love and hope that readers will love it. Being a countryside girl, I am also aware of

the environmental problems that affect our daily life, and I believe that collaboration and solidarity among countries and people are a suitable solution to these issues.”

Judge Brahim Elboukhari said “Although the story takes us to the animal world, it’s really immersed in our world and what makes the story more powerful is the ending. It is a confirmation of what goes on in our real situation that there is a missing link between human beings and nature. The animals are sending messages to humans, but the messages never arrive, this is a wake-up call to all of us to stand up for nature.”

There were also two runners up in the competition Oumaima Aarab and Salma Alouah.

Rooted Everyday is a new environmental campaign launched by a consortium of conservation organisations to raise awareness and celebrate lesser-known Mediterranean heritage and natural resources, whilst highlighting the threat of extinction to both nature and indigenous culture in the campaigns ecoregions.

WWF, Global Diversity Foundation, MedINA, DiversEarth and Society for the Protection of Nature in Lebanon have united their local biodiversity projects through this bold, new campaign funded by the MAVA Foundation.

[Visit the Rooted Everyday website](#) to learn more about Rooted Everyday conservation projects, and [sign up](#) to receive updates on upcoming events and campaigns.

Notes to Editors:

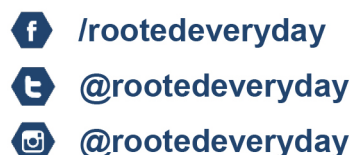
Judges Biographies:

Brahim Elboukhari is a Moroccan poet, author and a teacher of English. His works include *The Soft Wind of Summer: a collection of poems*; *The dark days of our village: The story of a land*; *Fragments of Moroccan society* and; *Representation and Resistance: A Post-Colonial Study to Bowles’ Sheltering Sky*.

Brahim grew up in the small village of Merzouga where storytelling is a powerful tool used to sensitize the whole community to take positive action for conservation, the environment, endangered species, and traditions. He graduated in 2006 with a BA in English Language and Literature. In 2008, he received his MA in Humanities and Area Studies: Colonial and Post-Colonial Discourse. In 2009, he graduated from the Ecole Normal Supérieur in Rabat as a teacher of English as a foreign language. Brahim believes in the Arabic saying that *‘the poet is the product of their environment.’*

More information: <https://www.rootedeveryday.org>

[Link to information about Lemnos, Greece](#)



[Link to Information about Shouf, Lebanon](#)

[Link to information about the High Atlas, Morocco](#)

[Link to information about Dehesas \(Spain\) and Montados \(Portugal\)](#)

Twitter @RootedEveryday **Facebook** /RootedEveryday **Instagram** @RootedEveryday

About the campaign:

The Rooted Everyday campaign is run by a core team of environmentalists who are working with projects, eco-regions and partners from across the Mediterranean.

Our mission is to reverse the loss of biodiversity which is caused when people stop cultural practices that have existed for generations. By working with Mediterranean critical eco-regions and partners we aim to show the value traditional ways of life can have in protecting our environment. By supporting Rooted Everyday projects and campaigns you're standing up for conservation and Mediterranean heritage.

The Rooted Everyday eco-regions are in [Lemnos in Greece](#) led by the Mediterranean Institute for Nature and Anthropos (MedINA), the [High Atlas mountains in Morocco](#) led by the Global Diversity Foundation (GDF), the [Shouf Biosphere Reserve in Lebanon](#) led by the Society for the Protection of Nature Lebanon (SPNL), and the [Dehesas and Montados in Spain and Portugal](#) led by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and Trashumancia y Naturaleza. [DiversEarth](#) is also part of the core team. Other campaign partners working across the Mediterranean are [IUCN](#), [Yolda Initiative](#) in Turkey and [GOB Menorca](#).

The projects and campaign are funded by the [MAVA Foundation](#) for Nature. The campaign and communications are created with Wordsby Communications.

ENDS.

