



ARTS & CULTURE

Margaret Atwood Honored with Dayton Literary Peace Prize

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Canadian writer Margaret Atwood has won the top honor among the international Dayton Literary Peace Prizes.

Officials announced Monday that Atwood would receive the 2020 Richard C. Holbrooke Distinguished Achievement Award. The award celebrates the power of literature to create peace, social justice and understanding around the world. The award is named for the former American diplomat who led the 1995 peace negotiations in Dayton, Ohio that ended the Bosnian war.

Atwood's work has been in publication since the early 1960s. She produces all kinds of literature, from poetry to imaginary stories, to magazine and news reports, and lately, to social media messages. Much of her writing centers on oppression of women.

Her successful 1985 novel *The Handmaid's Tale* became a popular television series in the United States. It is the story of a future United States where men hold all political power. Women are servants to men. They are not even permitted to read.

The book and its television version led to much political commentary, especially in the U.S. Some readers and watchers found the story had frightening similarities to American political happenings of the last several years. Protesters wearing clothing similar to the handmaids of the book and TV series have appeared at many political demonstrations.

Sharon Rab is the founder and head of the Dayton Literary Peace Prize Foundation. She praised Atwood for popular success with writing that also educates people about social justice and environmental concerns.

“Margaret Atwood continues to remind us that ‘It can’t happen here’ cannot be depended upon,” Rab wrote in an email.

Atwood thinks an American tendency to reject strong rule is the country’s best defense against the kind of oppressive future she imagined in *The Handmaid’s Tale*.

“I would bet on American **orneriness** and refusal to line up,” she told The Associated Press.

Atwood also says she likes the television show.

“It’s well done,” said Atwood. The first season of the show followed the storyline of the book to its end. The next two seasons were new storylines.

In 2019, Atwood released a **sequel** to *The Handmaid’s Tale* called *The Testaments*. She won a Booker Prize for the work. She also won a Booker Prize for her novel *The Blind Assassin*.

Atwood will receive \$10,000 in prize money as part of the Holbrooke lifetime achievement award.

The awards ceremony was planned for October, but will be held in the spring of 2021 because of the coronavirus. Atwood will be joined by the winners for the Dayton prizes in **fiction** and nonfiction. They will be announced next month.

I’m Susan Shand.

The Associated Press reported this story. Susan Shand adapted it for Learning English. Caty Weaver was the editor.

Words In This Story

orneriness – *adj.* being contrary or difficult

sequel – *n.* a book, movie, or TV show that follows the story of a previously released work

fiction – *n.* an imaginary story

