



The Collector of Treasures and Other Botswana Village Tales (2nd Edition)

By Bessie Head

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A sequence of Botswana village tales about subjects such as the breakdown of family life and the position of women in this society told with all the skill that one has come to expect of Bessie Head.

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Editorial Review

Review

Collector of Treasures explores the lives of Botswana villagers, both before their colonization by the British and after their independence in 1966. Bessie Head tells tales of ancient leaders, of educated women trying to find their way between city and village life, of women who must suffer while men treat the independence of their country as an opportunity to throw away all restrictions, British or tribal. In these stories, it is the women who suffer most - who bear the children after the men have deserted them, who endure the village gossip, who raise the money for their children's school fees as their husbands support other women. But though they suffer, these are women of strength and inner beauty. Johannah, tall and striking, reminds the villagers "the children of a real woman do not get lean or die." Dikeledi, in jail for killing her husband, still "had always found gold amidst the ash, deep loves that had joined her heart to the hearts of others." While men are often the villains of these stories, *Collector of Treasures* also creates a new hero, the kind of man she calls "a poem of tenderness." Bessie Head's love for her characters is rich and glowing, as strong as her anger at those, British or African, who destroy the traditions of empathy, hard-work, and sharing that lie at the heart of this goodness. Her words flow through their "uncertain story of independence" like a great, golden river. -- *For great reviews of books for girls, check out Let's Hear It for the Girls: 375 Great Books for Readers 2-14.* -- *From 500 Great Books by Women; review by Erica Bauermeister*

About the Author

Born in South Africa, Bessie Head, had a traumatic life and she drew heavily upon her experiences for her novels. Her first novel, *When Rain Clouds Gather* grew out of her experience as a refugee, and was followed by *Maru* and *A Question of Power* (1973). In 1977 she published *The Collector of Treasures*, a book of short stories exploring the position of women in Africa.

Bessie Head died in Serowe, Botswana in 1986, aged only 49.

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