

39th Scripps National Spelling Bee

The **39th Scripps National Spelling Bee** was held in Washington, D.C. in June 1966, sponsored by the E.W. Scripps Company.

13-year-old Robert A. Wake of Houston, Texas won by spelling "ratoon", a word which he had "never heard of".^[1] Second place went to Beth Sherrill, 14, of Lucy, Tennessee, who incorrectly spelled "sachem", followed in third place by Sonya Gilliam, 13, of Lubbock, Texas, who could not spell "muumuu".^[1]

There were 71 contestants this year. The top three cash prizes were \$1000, \$500, and \$250.^[2]

In the fourth round, Rosalie Elliot, 11, of Central, South Carolina spelled "avowal" with such an accent that the judges weren't sure whether she used an "a" or "e" as the second to last letter. When the judges eventually asked her, she admitted she had spelled it wrong, getting a standing ovation for her honesty. This has become an often repeated anecdote.^{[3][4]}

References

- ↑ (10 June 1966). *Speller Shoots to Victory With 'Ratoon'* (<https://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=888&dat=19660610&id=YuxRAAAIBAJ&sjid=AXQDAAAIBAJ&pg=7208,5239709&hl=en>), *St Petersburg Times*
- ↑ (10 June 1966). *Houston Boy Proves to Sachem of Young Spellers* (<https://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1499&dat=19660610&id=zUQaAAAIBAJ&sjid=zScEAAAIBAJ&pg=5631,5510283&hl=en>), *Milwaukee Journal* (Associated Press)
- ↑ "Spelling Bee | Chicken Soup for the Soul" (<http://www.chickensoup.com/book-story/35583/spelling-bee>). *chickensoup.com*. Retrieved 2015-06-11.
- ↑ (9 June 1966). *Honesty of Young Speaker Brings Her Standing Ovation* (<https://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=861&dat=19660609&id=YLZdAAAIBAJ&sjid=710NAAAIBAJ&pg=5681,1076528&hl=en>), *Victoria Advocate* (Associated Press)

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The Mayflower Hotel, site of the 39th National Spelling Bee

Date	June 1966
Location	The Mayflower Hotel in Washington, D.C.
Winner	Robert A. Wake
Age	13
Residence	Houston, Texas
Sponsor	<i>Houston Chronicle</i>
Sponsor location	Houston, Texas
Winning word	ratoon
No. of contestants	71
Pronouncer	Richard R. Baker
Preceded by	38th Scripps National Spelling Bee
Followed by	40th Scripps National Spelling Bee

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