**Contributor: Gail Fincham**

**Entry: Mda, Zakes (1948–)**

Artist, playwright, essayist, poet and novelist, Zakes Mda is one of the foremost writers of postapartheid South Africa. Translated into twenty-one languages and winner of numerous literary awards, he received in June 2012 the degree of Doctor of Literature (honoris causa) from the University of Cape Town, in recognition of the role his theatre and novels play in forging a new South Africa.

Born Zanemvulu Kizito Gatyeni in 1948 in the Eastern Cape, he spent his childhood in Soweto before joining his father in exile in Lesotho. Now Professor of Creative Writing at the University of Ohio, Mda frequently returns to SA to launch his latest writing or work with local communities.

In his plays written between 1979 and 1989, initially performed by the Maratholi Travelling Theatre in Lesotho, Mda, like the Latin Americans Paolo Freire and Augusto Boal, educates ordinary people for participation in democracy. In the nine novels written between 1995 and 2012 he explores identity through hybrid performance-oriented writing. His narratives combine social realism with magic realism, and African orature with Western intertextuality, undermining dualistic thinking between the past and the present, the human and the non-human, the living and the dead, the rural and the urban, and the local and the global.

**References and further reading**

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**List of works**

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*Bits of Debris* (poetry) Thapama Books (1986)

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*And the Girls in the Sunday Dresses* (plays) Wits University Press (1993)

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*Ways of Dying* (novel) Oxford University Press 1995 Picador USA (2004)

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*Black Diamond* (novel) Penguin South Africa (2009)

*Sometimes there is a Void: Memoirs of an Outsider* (memoir/autobiography) Penguin South Africa 2011 Farrar Straus and Giroux (2012)

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*The Sculptors of Mapungubwe* (novel) Vivlia Publishers (2012), Seagull Books (India) (2013)