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**CHINUA ACHEBE’S BODY OF WORKS**

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Eleven years since his passing in 2013, the world still celebrates the literary and advocatory legacies of the great Nigerian writer and critical thinker, Chinua Achebe. Born in Ogidi, Nigeria in 1930, Achebe grew up in a traditional Igbo family, surrounded by the rich cultural heritage that would later influence his writing.

Achebe was in his medicine scholarship class at the University College, Ibadan, critiquing literary works, and because he didn’t like the representation of Africans in these books written by members of the Western world, he decided he was going to become a writer. He subsequently left medicine for English, history and theology, but this would mean losing his bursary with the university, a sacrifice he wasn’t even sure at the time was worth the risk.

He graduated English with a second-class honor—pained, of course that he didn’t hit a first-class—and was then thinking what to do with his life as a career person. He briefly took on a teaching job where he supplied his students with papers and journals for criticisms before he got a position at the Nigeria Broadcasting Service (NBS). It was in this position that he would compile the manuscripts that became *Things Fall Apart* and had it prepared for submission at Heinemann. After several hesitations, the work was published, and would become the first of its kind, an all-critique favorite. *The Observer* described the book as “an excellent novel,” and Donald MacRae, an educational adviser, called it the best book he had read since the war.

This seminal work not only challenged Western stereotypes about African cultures but also launched the African Writers Series, a publishing initiative that would go on to showcase the talents of numerous African authors, including Ngugi wa Thiong’o and Flora Nwapa. As renowned literary critic, Kwame Anthony Appiah, noted, “Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* is a masterpiece of modern African literature… a novel that has reshaped the way we think about Africa and its place in the world.”

In his essay “The Novelist as Teacher,” Achebe had said, “I would be quite satisfied if my novels… did more than teach my readers that their past—with all its imperfections—was not one long night of savagery from which the first Europeans acting on God’s behalf delivered them.”

Throughout his illustrious career, Achebe was a vocal advocate for African literature and a fierce critic of colonialism and its legacy. His other novels, including “No Longer at Ease” (1960), “Arrow of God” (1964), “A Man of the People,” (1966), and “Anthills of the Savannah” (1987), all continue to be celebrated for their masterful storytelling execution, nuanced characterization and commitment to the examination of the human condition. He, through his life time, had also written an innumerable number of essays, in most of which he contends with the demeaning Eurocentric viewpoint of Africa as a primitive, inferior continent. His subjects also include the preservation of the African heritage. He has also written memoirs, editorials and forwards for other publications.

Achebe’s contributions to literature have been recognized with numerous awards and honors, including the Nigerian National Merit Award, the Commonwealth Poetry Prize, and a Man Booker International Prize nomination. In 2007, he won the Man Booker International Prize. He was also appointed a Commander of the Order of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and received over 30 honorary doctorates from universities worldwide. The West believes him to be the Father of African Literature, although before his death, he’d continually rebuffed the description. It is therefore easy to reach Toni Morrison’s conclusion that “African literature is incomplete and unthinkable without the works of Chinua Achebe.”

We have compiled a list of all books, from literary fiction to poetry collections, essays and memoirs by the great Chinua Achebe.

**Novels**

*Things Fall Apart*, 1957

Set in pre-colonial Nigeria, the first novel by Chinua Achebe chronicles the life of Okonkwo, a proud Igbo warrior, as he navigates the shifting dynamics of his community. The novel depicts the tragic fall of Okonkwo and the Igbo culture.

***From Publisher:***

“A true classic of world literature . . . A masterpiece that has inspired generations of writers in Nigeria, across Africa, and around the world.” —Barack Obama

“African literature is incomplete and unthinkable without the works of Chinua Achebe.” —Toni Morrison

Nominated as one of America’s best-loved novels by PBS’s The Great American Read

Things Fall Apart is the first of three novels in Chinua Achebe’s critically acclaimed African Trilogy. It is a classic narrative about Africa’s cataclysmic encounter with Europe as it establishes a colonial presence on the continent. Told through the fictional experiences of Okonkwo, a wealthy and fearless Igbo warrior of Umuofia in the late 1800s, Things Fall Apart explores one man’s futile resistance to the devaluing of his Igbo traditions by British political and religious forces and his despair as his community capitulates to the powerful new order.

With more than 20 million copies sold and translated into fifty-seven languages, Things Fall Apart provides one of the most illuminating and permanent monuments to African experience. Achebe does not only capture life in a pre-colonial African village, he conveys the tragedy of the loss of that world while broadening our understanding of our contemporary realities.

([Source](https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/565351/things-fall-apart-by-chinua-achebe/)).

*No Longer At Ease*, 1960

A sequel to *Things Fall Apart,* the novel tells the story Obi Okonkwo, son of Okonkwo, returns to Nigeria after studying in England for four years, to the conflict between his culture and Western lifestyle, and how he ends up taking a bribe. The novel begins with a trial against Obi that takes place a while after his return, and works its way backward to explain how Obi has come to be charged with accepting a bribe.

***From Publisher:***

“A magical writer—one of the greatest of the twentieth century.” —Margaret Atwood

“African literature is incomplete and unthinkable without the works of Chinua Achebe.” —Toni Morrison

A classic story of moral struggle in an age of turbulent social change and the final book in Chinua Achebe’s The African Trilogy

When Obi Okonkwo, grandson of Okonkwo, the main character in Things Fall Apart returns to Nigeria from England in the 1950s, his foreign education separates him from his African roots. No Longer at Ease, the third and concluding novel in Chinua Achebe’s The African Trilogy, depicts the uncertainties that beset the nation of Nigeria, as independence from colonial rule loomed near. In Obi Okonkwo’s experiences, the ambiguities, pitfalls, and temptations of a rapidly evolving society are revealed. He is part of a ruling Nigerian elite whose corruption he finds repugnant. His fate, however, overtakes him as he finds himself trapped between the expectation of his family, his village—both representations of the traditional world of his ancestors—and the colonial world. A story of a man lost in cultural limbo, and a nation entering a new age of disillusionment, No Longer at Ease is a powerful metaphor for his generation of young Nigerians.

([Source](https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/409/no-longer-at-ease-by-chinua-achebe/)).

*Arrow of God*, 1964

Published in 1964, the idea for *Arrow of God* came in 1959, when Achebe had first read about the imprisonment of a Chief Priest by a District Officer. His knowledge of a collection of Igbo objects excavated from the area by archaeologist Thurstan Shaw, his bewilderment by the cultural sophistication of these artefacts, further helped Achebe expand on this idea. *Arrow of God* follows Ezeulu, the revered chief priest of Ulu, as he confronts the erosion of traditional authority and the imposition of British rule.

***From Publisher:***

“My favorite novel.” —Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

“A magical writer—one of the greatest of the twentieth century.” —Margaret Atwood

“African literature is incomplete and unthinkable without the works of Chinua Achebe.” —Toni Morrison

The second novel in Chinua Achebe’s masterful African trilogy, following Things Fall Apart and preceding No Longer at Ease

When Things Fall Apart ends, colonial rule has been introduced to Umuofia, and the character of the nation, its values, freedoms, religious and socio-political foundations have substantially and irrevocably been altered. Arrow of God, the second novel in Chinua Achebe’s The African Trilogy, moves the historical narrative forward. This time, the action revolves around Ezeulu, the headstrong chief priest of the god Ulu, which is worshipped by the six villages of Umuaro. The novel is a meditation on the nature, uses, and responsibility of power and leadership. Ezeulu finds that his authority is increasingly under threat from rivals within his nation and functionaries of the newly established British colonial government. Yet he sees himself as untouchable. He is forced, with tragic consequences, to reconcile conflicting impulses in his own nature—a need to serve the protecting deity of his Umuaro people; a desire to retain control over their religious observances; and a need to gain increased personal power by pushing his authority to the limits. He ultimately fails as he leads his people to their own destruction, and consequently, his personal tragedy arises. Arrow of God is an unforgettable portrayal of the loss of faith, and the downfall of a man in a society forever altered by colonialism.

([Source](https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/398/arrow-of-god-by-chinua-achebe/)).

*A Man of the People,* 1966

This was the novel that drew the attention of the Nigerian Armed Forces, who suspected that Achebe had foreknowledge of the coup that soon led to the War. Set in newly independent Nigeria, the novel follows Odili Samalu’s transformation from optimism to disillusionment as he confronts the corrupt regime of Chief Nanga, a cunning and manipulative politician.

***From the Publisher:***

From the renowned author of The African Trilogy, a political satire about an unnamed African country navigating a path between violence and corruption

As Minister for Culture, former school teacher M. A. Nanga is a man of the people, as cynical as he is charming, and a roguish opportunist. When Odili, an idealistic young teacher, visits his former instructor at the ministry, the division between them is vast. But in the eat-and-let-eat atmosphere, Odili’s idealism soon collides with his lusts—and the two men’s personal and political tauntings threaten to send their country into chaos. When Odili launches a vicious campaign against his former mentor for the same seat in an election, their mutual animosity drives the country to revolution.

Published, prophetically, just days before Nigeria’s first attempted coup in 1966, A Man of the People is an essential part of Achebe’s body of work.

([Source](https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/407/a-man-of-the-people-by-chinua-achebe/)).

*Anthills of the Savanah,* 1987

A Booker Prize finalist, *Anthills of the Savanah* tells the story of a military coup in the fictional West African nation of Kangan. The *Financial Times* hailed the book as a “powerful fusion of myth, legend and modern styles.” It explores the complexities of power through the intertwined lives of three friends: Sam, an idealistic journalist, Chris a disillusioned government official, and Ikem, a passionate poet.

***From Publisher:***

A searing satire of political corruption and social injustice from the celebrated author of Things Fall Apart

“Achebe has written a story that sidesteps both ideologies of the African experience and political agendas, in order to lead us to a deeply human universal wisdom.” —Washington Post Book World

In the fictional West African nation of Kangan, newly independent of British rule, the hopes and dreams of democracy have been quashed by a fierce military dictatorship. Chris Oriko is a member of the president’s cabinet for life, and one of the leader’s oldest friends. When the president is charged with censoring the opportunistic editor of the state-run newspaper–another childhood friend–Chris’s loyalty and ideology are put to the test. The fate of Kangan hangs in the balance as tensions rise and a devious plot is set in motion to silence a firebrand critic.

From Chinua Achebe, the legendary author of Things Fall Apart, Anthills of the Savannah is “A vision of social change that strikes us with the force of prophecy.” (USA Today)

([Source](https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/565345/anthills-of-the-savannah-by-chinua-achebe/)).

**Essays**

**Single Essays**

“An Argument Against the Existence of Faculties,” 1951

This essay criticizes the snobbishness of university authorities and Western values. Written during his time at Ibadan, the essay also sarcastically argues that intending students should be allowed the liberty to pursue any degree they want, irrespective of the discipline—applied mathematics, gynecology or religious studies.

“Mr. Okafor Versus Arts Students,” 1952

Chinua Achebe’s Mr. Okafor in University College, Ibadan, was quite dismissive toward arts education. Achebe uses this essay therefore to advocate for the importance of arts education in Nigerian culture, his main argument being that arts education fosters cultural awareness and national identity, as well as proffering creative problem-solving techniques.

“The Role of the Writer in a New Nation,” 1964

Achebe believes that writers play a crucial role in shaping national identity and consciousness, and through this essay, he echoes that thought. He stresses the importance of preserving cultural heritage in the face of colonialism and modernization as well.

“English and the African Writer,” 1965

This essay tackles the challenges of writing in a language imposed by colonial powers. It is Achebe’s way of telling African writers to adapt English to their own experiences and unique cultural contexts.

“The Black Writer’s Buden,” 1966

In this essay, Achebe urges black writers to counterbalance dominant Western narratives and stereotypes, as well as advocating for authentic representations of black experiences, free from external influences.

“An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad’s Heart of Darkness,” 1975

Achebe challenges Joseph Conrad’s portrayal of Africa and Africans in *Heart of Darkness*, arguing that it perpetuates harmful stereotypes. He contends that Conrad reduces Africans to primitive, savage and inferior beings, his portrayal of Africa as a mysterious, unknowable, and barbaric continent.

“The Education of a British-Protected Child,” 2009

In this autobiographical essay, Achebe reflects on his colonial-era education, highlighting the tensions between Western values and Igbo cultural heritage. He also explores how British colonialism shaped his identity and worldview.

“Africa’s Tarnished Name,” 2018

In this essay, Achebe critiques Western narratives that perpetuate negative stereotypes about Africa. He urges Africans to reclaim their narrative and forge a path toward unity and cultural revitalization.

**Essay Collections**

“Morning Yet on Creation Day,” 1975

Through fourteen essays, lectures and speeches, Achebe reflects on colonialism, cultural heritage and the role of writers in the society.

“The Trouble with Nigeria,” 1983

With this book, Achebe’s solid aim was to challenge every individual Nigerians’ resignation and to encourage them to put aside every old habit that’s stopping the country from modernity and beauty.

“Hopes and Impediments: Selected Essays,” 1988

The essay collection, published in 1988, include essays which caution against generalizing all African people into a monolithic culture, or the use of Africa as a facile metaphor.

**Memoirs**

*Home and Exile*, 2000

Home and Exile is a thought-provoking memoir in which Achebe recounts his experience navigating multiple worlds: his Igbo homeland, colonial Nigeria, and global literary circles. The memoir probes themes of identity, exile, and artistic expression.

***From Publisher:***

“A rare opportunity to glimpse a bit of the man behind the monumental novels.” —Chicago Tribune

Powerful and deeply personal, these three essays by the great Nigerian author articulate his mission to rescue African culture from the narratives written by Europeans. Looking through the prism of his experiences as a student in English schools in Nigeria, he recalls his first encounters with European perspectives on Africa in the works of Joyce Cary and Elspeth Huxley. He examines the impact that his novel Things Fall Apart—as well as fellow Nigerian Amos Tutola’s The Palm-Wine Drinkard and Jomo Kenyatta’s Facing Mt. Kenya, among other works—had on efforts to reclaim Africa’s story. He confronts the persistence of colonial views of Africa. And he argues for the importance of living and writing the African experience: Africa needs stories told by Africans.

([Source](https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/405/home-and-exile-by-chinua-achebe/)).

*There Was a Country: A Personal History of Biafra*, 2012

Chinua Achebe’s memoir “There Was a Country: A Personal History of Biafra” offers a powerful, personal account of Nigeria’s turbulent history, from colonialism to the devasting Biafran war. In the memoir, Achebe also reflects on the complexities of identity, culture and nationhood that shaped Nigeria.

***From Publisher***

From the legendary author of Things Fall Apart—a long-awaited memoir of coming of age in a fragile new nation, and its destruction in a tragic civil war

For more than forty years, Chinua Achebe maintained a considered silence on the events of the Nigerian civil war, also known as the Biafran War, of 1967–1970, addressing them only obliquely through his poetry. Decades in the making, There Was a Country is a towering account of one of modern Africa’s most disastrous events, from a writer whose words and courage left an enduring stamp on world literature. A marriage of history and memoir, vivid firsthand observation and decades of research and reflection, There Was a Country is a work whose wisdom and compassion remind us of Chinua Achebe’s place as one of the great literary and moral voices of our age.

([Source](https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/311166/there-was-a-country-by-chinua-achebe/)).

**Poetry**

There was a Young Man in Our Hall, 1951-1952

*Beware Soul Brother and Other Poems*, 1972

Published in the aftermath of the Nigerian-Biafran Civil War, Achebe drew inspiration from both his experiences of the war and his stance on the influence of Western culture in Africa for this poetry collection.

Christmas in Biafra and Other Poems, 1973

The mood [of Christmas in Biafra and Other Poems] is as varied as the subject matter. The opening section deals with the years immediately before the Nigerian Civil War, and the second section (from which the book's title is taken), with the war period. Then there are "Poems Not About War"—about you and me, and about gods and the things they do to men. Achebe writes with grace and clarity. The poems, throughout, reflect the attachments of a man whose roots run deep into the Ibo soil. ([Source](https://www.enotes.com/topics/chinua-achebe/criticism/achebe-chinua-vol-26/ifeanyi-menkiti)).

Flying, 1973

*The Old Man and the Census, 1974*

I will not mourn with you your lost populations, the silent columns of your ancient fief erased from the king's book of numbers. ([Source](https://meridian.allenpress.com/her/article-abstract/45/2/224/30998/The-Old-Man-and-the-Census?redirectedFrom=fulltext)).

Don’t Let Him Die: An Anthology of Memorial Poems for Christopher Okigbo, 1978

*Another Africa, 1998*

In Another Africa, renowned photographer Robert Lyons and internationally acclaimed author Chinua Achebe (previous publications include Arrow of God, No Longer at Ease and Things Fall Apart) have joined together to explore the real Africa behind the stereotypes commonly held by Westerners. In a stunning series of photographs and poems, this work peels away myths to explore the complexity, diversity and humanity of a place called Africa. ([Source](https://books.google.com.ng/books/about/Another_Africa.html?id=4BctAQAAIAAJ&redir_esc=y)).

Collected Poems, 2004

**Children’s Books**

*Chike and the River*, 1966

The more Chike saw the ferry-boats the more he wanted to make the trip to Asaba. But where would he get the money? He did not know. Still, he hoped. Chike and the River is a magical tale of boundaries, bravery, and growth, by Chinua Achebe, one of the world’s most beloved and admired storytellers. ([Source](https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/207152/chike-and-the-river-by-chinua-achebe-illustrated-by-edel-rodriguez/)).

*How the Leopard Got His Claws*, 1972

In the beginning, all the animals lived as friends. Their leopard king was strong but gentle and wise. Only Dog had sharp teeth and lived as an outsider before attacking the leopard and taking over as king — until the angry leopard returned to regain his throne by force with his own threatening new claws. In a riveting fable for young readers about the potency and dangers of power taken by force, Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe, author of Things Fall Apart, evokes his frequent themes of liberation and justice. ([Source](https://books.google.com.ng/books/about/How_the_Leopard_Got_His_Claws.html?id=yPKPEAAAQBAJ&redir_esc=y#:~:text=In%20a%20riveting%20fable%20for%20young%20readers%20about,evokes%20his%20frequent%20themes%20of%20liberation%20and%20justice.)).

*The Drum*, 1977

*The Flute*, 1977

Tradition, identity, and the power of music are all explored in the thought-provoking story *The Flute*. The narrative centers on Obi, a young child who is having difficulty connecting with his cultural heritage and figuring out where he fits in the world.

**Short Stories**

In a Village Church, 1951

The Old Order in Conflict with the New, 1952

Dead Men’s Path, 1953

Chike’s School Days, 1960

The Sacrificial Egg and Other Stories, 1962

The Beginning of the End, 1962

The Voter, 1965

Civil Peace, 1971

Sugar Baby, 1972

Girls at War and Other Stories, 1973

Marriage is a Private Affair, 1972

African Short Stories: Twenty Stories from Across the Continent, 1985

The Heinemann Book of Contemporary African Short Stories, 1992