

Chinua Achebe

(pronounced *Chee-noo-ah Ah-chay-bay*)



(November 16, 1930-)

- Was born in Ogidi, Nigeria, the son of a teacher in a missionary school.
- His parents, though they installed in him many of the values of their traditional Igbo culture, were devout evangelical Protestants and christened him Albert after Prince Albert, husband of Queen Victoria.
- In 1944 Achebe attended University College of Ibadan, where he studied English, history, and theology.
- At the university Achebe rejected his British name and took his native name Chinua (it was a shortened form of his middle name) .
- In 1953 he graduated with a bachelors degree.

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- In the 1950s he worked for the Nigerian Broadcasting Company in Lagos
- 1954 he travelled in Africa and America, and worked for a short time as a teacher.
- In the 1960s he was the director of External Services in charge of the Voice of Nigeria.
- During the Nigerian Civil War (1967-70) Achebe was in the Biafran government service and then taught at US and Nigerian universities.

Literary life

- In 1967 Achebe cofounded a publishing company with a friend who later died in the Nigerian Civil War
- Achebe was appointed research fellow at the University of Nigeria, and after serving as professor of English, he retired in 1981
- From 1971 he has edited *Okike*, the leading journal of Nigerian new writing.
- Professor of English at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst.
- An automobile accident on the Lagos-Ibadan expressway in 1990 left Achebe confined to a wheelchair, permanently.
- He is currently the Charles P. Stevenson Professor of Languages and Literature at Bard College in Annandale-on-Hudson in New York.

Things Fall Apart

- His first and best known novel was published in 1958
- The title is an allusion to William Butler Yeats's poem "The Second Coming" - "Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold."
- The story is set in the 1890s and depicts the life of Okonkwo, an ambitious and powerful leader of an Igbo community, who counts on physical strength and courage. Okonkwo's life is good until he accidentally kills a clansman.
- He is banished from the village for seven years. He is blind to the authority of the British District Commissioner. Because his unwillingness to change sets him apart from the community, he fights alone against colonialism.

Literary Style

- Considered the best Nigerian author; often called the “father of modern African writing”
- His writing blends traditional pidgin, Igbo vocabulary, proverbs, images, and speech patterns with his traditional storytelling skills.
- His novels focus on the traditions of Igbo society, the effect of Christian influences, and the clash of values during and after the colonial era.

“Marriage is a Private Affair”

- Published in 1952
- Nigeria has more than 250 ethnic groups
- All these groups have different languages, customs, religions, and traditions
- While the people are all considered Nigerian, they do not traditionally intermarry.
- In this story, a young Ibo man and an Ibibio woman have moved from their native regions to Lagos, a large and modern city in southwestern Nigeria.

Works Cited

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