


CHINUA

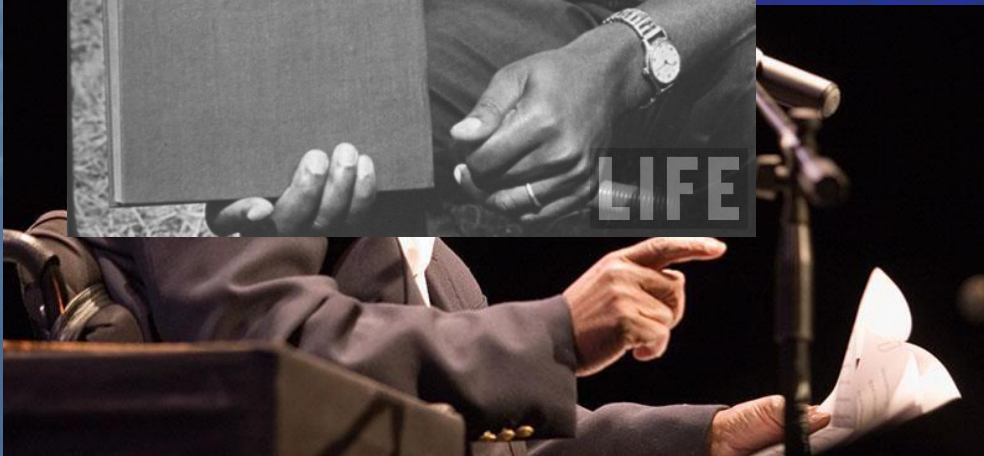
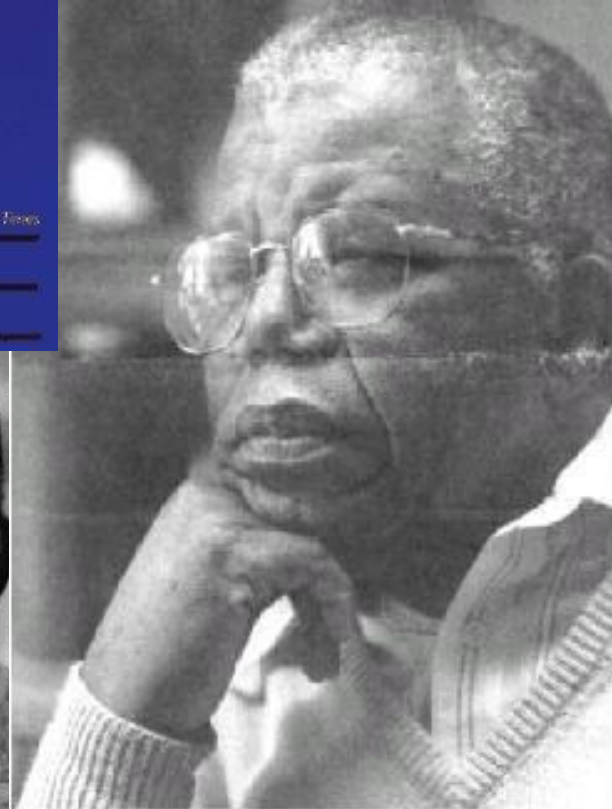
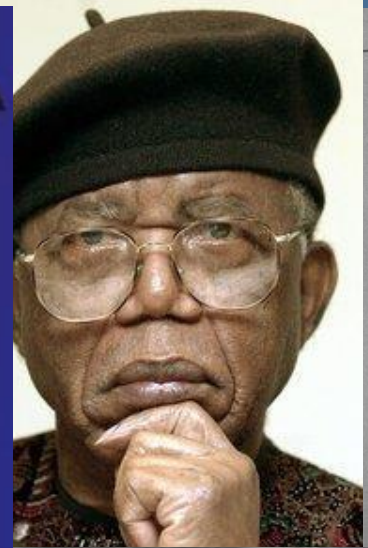
By the author of *Things Fall Apart*



A MAN
OF THE
PEOPLE

"Much of Chinua Achebe's considerable power...
is achieved through his fine satiric sense of the comic." —*New York Times*

ACHEBE



Albert Chinualumoga Achebe

- Prominent Igbo (Ibo) writer, famous for his novels describing the effects of Western customs and values on traditional African society.
- Achebe's satire and his keen ear for spoken language have made him one of the most highly esteemed African writers in English.

Albert Chinualumoga Achebe

- Born November 16, 1930 in Ogidi, Nigeria
- Son of Isaiah and Janet Achebe
 - Teachers in missionary school
 - Devout evangelical Protestants
 - instilled in him many of the values of their traditional Igbo culture





Ogidi

Albert Chinualumoga Achebe

- Schooling:
 - Government College in Umuahia (1944)
 - University College of Ibadan,
 - studied English, history and theology
 - Graduated with a BA, 1953
- Rejected his British name and took his indigenous name Chinua.

College of Ibadan



Chinua Achebe

- Traveled in Africa and America and worked for a short time as a teacher
- Joined the Nigerian Broadcasting Company in Lagos, 1954
- Director of External Services in charge of the Voice of Nigeria, 1960s
- Married Christie Chinwe Okoli in 1961
 - Four children

Achebe's Works

- **THINGS FALL APART, 1958**
- **NO LONGER AT EASE, 1960**
- **THE SACRIFICIAL EGG AND OTHER STORIES, 1962**
- **ARROW OF GOD, 1964**
- **A MAN OF THE PEOPLE, 1966**
- **CHIKE AND THE RIVER, 1966**
- **BEWARE, SOUL BROTHER, 1971**
- **GIRLS AT WAR, 1972**
- **HOW THE LEOPARD GOT HIS CLAWS, 1972**
- **CHRISTMAS IN BIAFRA AND OTHER POEMS, 1973**
- **MORNING YET ON CREATION DAY, 1975**
- **THE DRUM, 1977**
- **THE FLUTE, 1977**
- **LITERATURE AND SOCIETY, 1980**
- **THE TROUBLE WITH NIGERIA, 1983**
- **THE WORLD OF OGBANJE, 1986**
- **ANTHILLS OF THE SAVANNA, 1987**
- **THE UNIVERSITY AND THE LEADERSHIP FACTOR IN NIGERIAN POLITICS, 1988**
- **HOPES AND IMPEDIMENTS, 1989**
- **NIGERIAN TOPICS, 1989**
- **ed.: THE HEINEMANN BOOK OF CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN SHORT STORIES, 1992**
- **HOME AND EXILE, 2000**

Achebe's Literary Language

- Standard English blended with...
 - pidgin
 - Igbo (Ibo)
 - vocabulary
 - proverbs
 - images
 - speech patterns

G. D. Killam on Achebe

- All of Achebe's writings display three concerns:
 - the legacy of **colonialism** at both the individual and societal levels
 - the fact of English as a language of national and international exchange
 - the obligations and responsibilities of the writer both to the society in which he lives and to his art

Chinua Achebe

- *Things Fall Apart*
 - Achebe's response to inaccurate portrayals of African civilization by British writers
 - Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*
 - Reiterates how colonization by European missionaries changed Igbo society after Nigeria was claimed

- Uses language, which he sees as a writer's best resource, to expose and combat the propaganda generated by African politicians to manipulate their own people.
- Faced with his people's growing inferiority complex and his leader's disregard for the truth, the African writer cannot turn his back on his culture.

- *"A writer has a responsibility to try and stop [these damaging trends] because unless our culture begins to take itself seriously it will never...get off the ground."*
- He states his mission in his essay "The Novelist as Teacher":
 - *"Here is an adequate revolution for me to espouse -- to help my society regain belief in itself and to put away the complexes of the years of denigration and self-abasement. And it is essentially a question of education, in the best sense of that word. Here, I think, my aims and the deepest aspirations of society meet."*

Things Fall Apart

- Setting: Nigeria toward the end of the 19th century, just before the arrival of the white man.
- Shows us what life was like in Nigeria in a specific historical period
- Centers on tribe known as the Ibo (Igbo)

Things Fall Apart

- Style
 - Simple sentences
 - Much like its telling by a member of the Ibo tribe.
 - Imagery
 - "He grew rapidly like a yam tendril in the rainy season."
 - Proverbs
 - "A toad does not run in the daytime for nothing."
 - Folk tales
 - The Mosquito and the Ear (Ch. 9)

Things Fall Apart

- Religious beliefs:
 - Supreme deity (*Chukwu*)
 - Most powerful
 - Controls fertility and creation
 - Personal gods (*chi*)
 - Believed to be in control of the person's destiny
 - Ancestors (*egwugwu*)
 - Greatly respected and worshipped
 - Constant interaction between the worlds of the living and the dead

Chinua Achebe

- Wrote two sequels to *Things Fall Apart* which feature descendants of Okonkwo
 - *No Longer at Ease* (1960)
 - Shows how postcolonial Nigeria became corrupted by an alien government imposed upon them.
 - *The Arrow of God* (1964)
 - Further exploration of the failure of the British to understand traditional beliefs and values

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Chinua Achebe

- Exiled from his homeland because of his writings
- Returned for brief visit in 1998
- Started teaching in New York
 - Univ. of Mass., Amherst, Univ. of Conn., Dartmouth Univ., Bard Univ.
 - An automobile accident in 1990 left Achebe confined to a wheelchair .

"The African Writer and the English Language"

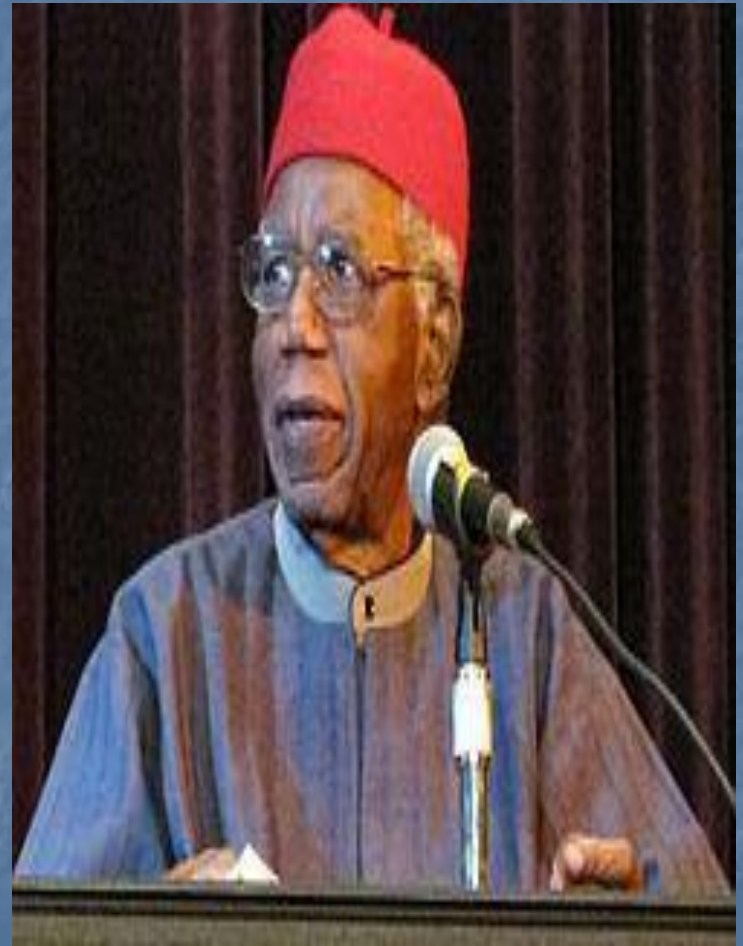
- Major problem – defining African literature
 - "...you cannot cram African literature into a small, neat definition. I do not see African literature as one unit but as a group of associated units – in fact the sum of all the *national* and *ethnic* literatures of Africa" (428).
 - *National* literature: "one that takes the whole nation for its province and has a realized or potential audience throughout its territory...a literature that is written in the *national* language" (428).
 - *Ethnic* literature: "one which is available only to one ethnic group within the nation" (428).
 - eg. The national literature of Nigeria is the literature written in English and the ethnic literature are Hausa, Ibo, Yoruba, Efik, Edo, etc.
 - No defined group should be excluded from "African literature"

"The African Writer and the English Language"

- Why is the national literature of Nigeria and many other African countries is, or will be, written in English?
 - "...these nations were created in the first place by the intervention of the British which, I hasten to add, is not saying that the peoples comprising these nations were invented by the British" (429).
- What impact has colonialism had on Africa?
 - "Colonialism in Africa disrupted many things, but it did create big political units where there were small, scattered ones before" (429).
 - Unified countries of Africa
 - Some ethnic groups were divided into 2 or 3 powers
 - "But on the whole it did bring together many peoples that had hitherto gone their several ways. And it gave them a language with which to talk to one another. If it failed to give them a song, it at least gave them a tongue, for sighing" (429).

The End

- Fondly called the "father of African literature", Achebe died after a short illness on 21 March 2013 in [Boston](#), United States. An unidentified source close to the family said that he was ill for a while and had been hospitalised in the city. [Penguin publishing director Simon Winder said: "...we are all desolate to hear of his death."]



THE SECOND COMING

Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.
Surely some revelation is at hand;
Surely the Second Coming is at hand.
The Second Coming! Hardly are those words out
When a vast image out of *Spiritus Mundi*
Troubles my sight: somewhere in the sands of the desert
A shape with lion body and the head of a man,
A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,
Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it
Reel shadows of the indignant desert birds.
The darkness drops again; but now I know
That twenty centuries of stony sleep
Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle,
And what rough beast, its hour come at last,
Slouches toward Bethlehem to be born?