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Chinua Achebe

Chinua Achebe speaking at PEN World Voices in 2006

Born [November 16, 1930](#) (age 77)
Nneobi, [Nigeria](#)

Nationality [Nigerian](#)

Writing period 1958-present

Notable work(s) "The African Trilogy" - [Things Fall Apart](#), [No Longer at Ease](#), [Arrow of God](#)

Chinua Achebe (pronounced /ˈtʃɪnwɑː ɑːˈtʃeɪbɪz/^[1]), born **Albert Chinualumogu Achebe** on [November 16, 1930](#), is a [Nigerian](#)^[2] [novelist](#), [poet](#) and [critic](#). He is best known for his first novel, *Things Fall Apart* (1958), which is the most widely-read book in modern [African literature](#).^[3]

Raised by Christian parents in the [Igbo](#) village of [Ogidi](#) in south [Nigeria](#), Achebe excelled at school and won a scholarship for undergraduate studies. He became fascinated with world religions and traditional African cultures, and began writing stories as a university student. After graduation, he worked for the Nigerian Broadcasting Service and soon moved to the metropolis of [Lagos](#). He gained worldwide attention for *Things Fall Apart* in the late 1950s; his later novels include *No Longer at Ease* (1960), *Arrow of God* (1964), *A Man of the People* (1966), and *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987). Achebe wrote his novels in [English](#) and has defended the use of English, a language of colonizers, in African literature. In 1975, his lecture *An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's "Heart of Darkness"* became the focus of controversy, for its criticism of [Joseph Conrad](#) as "a thoroughgoing racist".

When the region of [Biafra](#) broke away from Nigeria in 1967, Achebe became a devoted supporter of [Biafran independence](#) and served as ambassador for the people of the new nation. The war ravaged the populace, and as starvation and violence took its toll, he appealed to the people of Europe and the Americas for aid. When the Nigerian government retook the region in 1970, he involved himself in political parties but soon resigned due to frustration over the corruption and elitism he witnessed. He lived in the United States for several years in the 1970s, and returned in 1990 after a car accident left him partially disabled.

Achebe's novels focus on the traditions of Igbo society, the effect of Christian influences, and the clash of values during and after the colonial era. His style relies heavily on the Igbo oral tradition, and combines straightforward narration with representations of folk stories, proverbs, and [oratory](#). He has also published a number of short stories, children's books, and essay collections. He is currently the Charles P. Stevenson Professor of Languages and Literature at [Bard College](#) in Annandale-on-Hudson, [New York](#).

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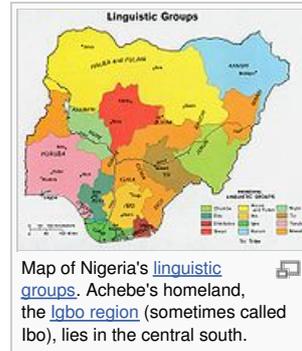
Biography

Achebe's parents, Isaiah Okafo Achebe and Janet Anaenechi Iloegbunam, were converts to the [Protestant Church Mission Society \(CMS\)](#) in [Nigeria](#).^[4] The elder Achebe stopped practising the religion of his ancestors, but he respected its traditions and sometimes incorporated elements of its rituals into his Christian practice. Chinua's unabbreviated name, Chinualumogu ("May God fight on my behalf"^[5]), was a prayer for divine protection and stability.^[5] The Achebe family had five other surviving children, named in a similar fusion of traditional words relating to their new religion: Frank Okwuofu, John Chukwuemeka Ifeanyichukwu, Zinobia Uzoma, Augustine Nduka, and Grace Nwanneka.^[5]

Early life

Chinua was born Albert Chinualumogu Achebe in the [Igbo](#) village of Nneobi, on [November 16, 1930](#).^[5] His parents stood at a crossroads of traditional culture and Christian influence; this made a significant impact on the children, especially Chinualumogu. After the youngest daughter was born, the family moved to Isaiah Achebe's ancestral village of [Ogidi](#), in what is now the Nigerian state of [Anambra](#).^[2]

Storytelling was a mainstay of the Igbo tradition and an integral part of the community. Chinua's mother and sister Zinobia Uzoma told him many stories as a child, which he repeatedly requested. His education was furthered by the collages his father hung on the walls of their home, as well as almanacs and numerous books – including a prose adaptation of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (c. 1590) and an Igbo version of *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678).^{[6][7]} Chinua also eagerly anticipated traditional village events, like the frequent [masquerade ceremonies](#), which he recreated later in his novels and stories.^[8]



EDUCATION

In 1936 Achebe entered St Philips' Central School. Despite his protests, he spent a week in the religious class for young children, but was quickly moved to a higher class when the school's [chaplain](#) took note of his intelligence.^[9] One teacher described him as the student with the best handwriting in class, and the best reading skills.^[10] He also attended [Sunday school](#) every week and the special evangelical services held monthly, often carrying his father's bag. A controversy erupted at one such session, when [apostates](#) from the new church challenged the catechist about the [tenets](#) of Christianity. Achebe later included a scene from this incident in *Things Fall Apart*.^{[11][12]}

At the age of twelve, Achebe moved away from his family to the village of [Nekede](#), four kilometres from [Owerri](#). He enrolled as a student at the Central School, where his older brother John taught.^[13] In Nekede, Achebe gained an appreciation for Mbari, a traditional art form which seeks to invoke the gods' protection through symbolic sacrifices in the form of sculpture and collage.^[14] When the time came to change to secondary school, in 1944, Achebe sat entrance examinations for and was accepted at both the prestigious Dennis Memorial Grammar School in [Onitsha](#) and the even more prestigious Government College in [Umuahia](#).^[15]

Modelled on the British public school, and funded by the colonial administration, Government College had been established in 1929 to educate Nigeria's future elite.^[15] It had rigorous academic standards and was vigorously egalitarian, accepting boys purely on the basis of ability.^[15] The language of the school was English, not only to develop proficiency but also to provide a common tongue for pupils from different Nigerian language groups.^[16] Achebe described this later as being ordered to "put away their different mother tongues and communicate in the language of their colonisers".^[17] The rule was strictly enforced and Achebe recalls that his first punishment was for asking another boy to pass the soap in Igbo.^[16]

Once there, Achebe was double-promoted in his first year, completing the first two years' studies in one, and spending only four years in secondary school, instead of the standard five.^[18] Achebe was unsuited to the school's sports regimen and belonged instead to a group of six exceedingly studious pupils. So intense were their study habits that the headmaster banned the reading of [textbooks](#) from five to six o'clock in the afternoon (though other activities and other books were allowed).^[19]

Achebe started to explore the school's "wonderful library".^[20] There he discovered [Booker T. Washington's *Up From Slavery*](#) (1901), the autobiography of an American former slave; Achebe "found it sad, but it showed him another dimension of reality".^[19] He also read classic novels, such as *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), *David Copperfield* (1850), and *Treasure Island* (1883) together with tales of colonial derring-do such as [H. Rider Haggard's *Allan Quatermain*](#) (1887) and [John Buchan's *Prester John*](#) (1910). Achebe later recalled that, as a reader, he "took sides with the white characters against the savages"^[20] and even developed a dislike for Africans. "The white man was good and reasonable and intelligent and courageous. The savages arrayed against him were sinister and stupid or, at the most, cunning. I hated their guts."^[20]



UNIVERSITY

In 1948, in preparation for independence, Nigeria's first university opened.^[21] Known as University College, (now the [University of Ibadan](#)), it was an associate college of the [University of London](#). Achebe obtained such high marks in the entrance examination that he was admitted as a Major Scholar in the university's first intake and given a bursary to study [medicine](#).^[21] After a year of gruelling work, however,

he decided science was not for him and he changed to [English](#), history, and [theology](#).^[22] Because he switched his field, however, he lost his scholarship and had to pay tuition fees. He received a government [bursary](#), and his family also donated money – his older brother Augustine even gave up money for a trip home from his job as a civil servant so Chinua could continue his studies.^[23] From its inception, the university had a strong English faculty and it includes many famous writers amongst its alumni. These include Nobel Laureate [Wole Soyinka](#), novelist [Elechi Amadi](#), poet and playwright [John Pepper Clark](#), and poet [Christopher Okigbo](#).^[24] In 1950 Achebe wrote a piece for the *University Herald* entitled "Polar Undergraduate", his debut as an author. It used irony and humour to celebrate the intellectual vigour of his classmates.^[25] He followed this with other essays and letters about philosophy and freedom in academia, some of which were published in another campus magazine, *The Bug*.^[26] He served as the *Herald's* editor during the 1951–2 school year.^[27]

While at the university, Achebe wrote his first short story, "In a Village Church", which combines details of life in rural Nigeria with Christian institutions and icons, a style which appears in many of his later works.^[28] Other short stories he wrote during his time at Ibadan (including "The Old Order in Conflict with the New" and "Dead Men's Path") examine conflicts between tradition and [modernity](#), with an eye toward dialogue and understanding on both sides.^[29] When a professor named Geoffrey Parrinder arrived at the university to teach [comparative religion](#), Achebe began to explore the fields of Christian history and African traditional religions.^[30]

It was during his studies at Ibadan that Achebe began to become critical of European literature about Africa. He read Irish novelist [Joyce Cary's](#) 1939 book *Mister Johnson*, about a cheerful Nigerian man who (among other things) works for an abusive British store owner. Achebe recognised his dislike for the African protagonist as a sign of the author's cultural ignorance. One of his classmates announced to the professor that the only enjoyable moment in the book is when Johnson is shot.^[31]

After the final examinations at Ibadan in 1953, Achebe was awarded a second-class degree. Rattled by not receiving the highest result possible, he was uncertain how to proceed after graduation. He returned to his hometown of Ogidi to sort through his options.^[32]

Teaching and producing

While he meditated on his possible career paths, Achebe was visited by a friend from the university, who convinced him to apply for an English teaching position at the Merchants of Light school at [Oba](#). It was a ramshackle institution with a crumbling infrastructure and a meagre library; the school was built on what the residents called "bad bush" – a section of land thought to be tainted by unfriendly spirits.^[33] Later, in *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe describes a similar area called the "evil forest", where the Christian missionaries are given a place to build their church.^[34]

As a teacher he urged his students to read extensively and be original in their work.^[35] The students did not have access to the newspapers he had read as a student, so Achebe made his own available in the classroom. He taught in Oba for four months, but when an opportunity arose in 1954 to work for the Nigerian Broadcasting Service (NBS), he left the school and moved to [Lagos](#).^[36] The NBS, a radio network started in 1933 by the [colonial government](#),^[37] assigned Achebe to the Talks Department, preparing scripts for oral delivery. This helped him master the subtle nuances between written and spoken language, a skill that helped him later to write realistic dialogue.^[38]



The city of Lagos also made a significant impression on him. A huge [conurbation](#), the city teemed with recent migrants from the rural villages. Achebe revelled in the social and political activity around him and later drew upon his experiences when describing the city in his 1960 novel *No Longer At Ease*.^[39]

While in Lagos, Achebe started work on a novel. This was challenging, since very little African fiction had been written in English, although [Amos Tutuola's](#) *Palm-Wine Drinkard* (1952) and [Cyprian Ekwensi's](#) *People of the City* (1954) were notable exceptions. While appreciating Ekwensi's work, Achebe worked hard to develop his own style, even as he pioneered the creation of the Nigerian novel itself.^[40] A visit to Nigeria by [Queen Elizabeth II](#) in 1956 brought issues of colonialism and politics to the surface, and was a significant moment for Achebe.^[41]

Also in 1956, Achebe was selected for training in London at the Staff School run by the [British Broadcasting Corporation](#) (BBC). His first trip outside Nigeria was an opportunity to advance his technical production skills, and to solicit feedback on his novel (which was later split into two books). In London he met a novelist named Gilbert Phelps, to whom he offered the manuscript. Phelps responded with great enthusiasm, asking Achebe if he could show it to his editor and publishers. Achebe declined, insisting that it needed more work.^[42]

Things Fall Apart

Main article: [Things Fall Apart](#)

Back in Nigeria, Achebe set to work revising and editing his novel (now titled *Things Fall Apart*, after a line in the poem "[The Second Coming](#)" by [William Butler Yeats](#)). He cut away the second and third sections of the book, leaving only the story of a yam farmer named Okonkwo. He added sections, improved various chapters, and restructured the prose. By 1957 he had sculpted it to his liking, and took advantage of an advertisement offering a typing service. He sent his only copy of his handwritten manuscript (along with the £22 fee) to the London company. After he waited several months without receiving any communication from the typing service, Achebe began to worry. His boss at the NBS, Angela Beattie, was going to London for her annual leave; he asked her to visit the company. She did, and angrily demanded to know why it was lying ignored in the corner of the office. The company

quickly sent a typed copy to Achebe. Beattie's intervention was crucial for his ability to continue as a writer. Had the novel been lost, he later said, "I would have been so discouraged that I would probably have given up altogether."^[43]



A spiral stack of the 1994 Anchor Books edition of *Things Fall Apart*

In 1958 Achebe sent his novel to the agent recommended by Gilbert Phelps in London. It was sent to several publishing houses; some rejected it immediately, claiming that fiction from African writers had no market potential.^[44] Finally it reached the office of [Heinemann](#), where executives hesitated until an educational adviser, Donald MacRae – just back in England after a trip through west Africa – read the book and forced the company's hand with his succinct report: "This is the best novel I have read since the war".^[45]

Heinemann published 2,000 hardcover copies of *Things Fall Apart* on [17 June 1958](#). According to Alan Hill, employed by the publisher at the time, the company did not "touch a word

of it" in preparation for release.^[46] The book was received well by the British press, and received positive reviews from critic [Walter Allen](#) and novelist [Angus Wilson](#). Three days after publication, the *Times Literary Supplement* wrote that the book "genuinely succeeds in presenting tribal life from the inside". *The Observer* called it "an excellent novel", and the literary magazine *Time and Tide* said that "Mr. Achebe's style is a model for aspirants".^[47]

Initial reception in Nigeria was mixed. When Hill tried to promote the book in West Africa, he was met with scepticism and ridicule. The faculty at the University of Ibadan was amused at the thought of a worthwhile novel being written by an alumnus.^[48] Others were more supportive; one review in the magazine *Black Orpheus* said: "The book as a whole creates for the reader such a vivid picture of Ibo life that the plot and characters are little more than symbols representing a way of life lost irrevocably within living memory."^[49]

In the book Okonkwo struggles with the legacy of his father – a shiftless debtor fond of playing the flute – as well as the complications and contradictions that arise when white missionaries arrive in his village of Umuofia.^[50] Exploring the terrain of cultural conflict, particularly the encounter between Igbo tradition and Christian doctrine, Achebe returns to the themes of his earlier stories, which grew from his own background.

Things Fall Apart has become one of the most important books in [African literature](#).^[51] Selling over 8 million copies around the world, it has been translated into 50 languages, making Achebe the most translated African writer of all time.^{[52][53]}

Marriage and family

In the same year *Things Fall Apart* was published, Achebe was promoted at the NBS and put in charge of the network's eastern region coverage. He moved to [Enugu](#) and began to work on his administrative duties. There he met a woman named Christie Okoli, who had grown up in the area and joined the NBS staff when he arrived. They first conversed when she brought to his attention a pay discrepancy; a friend of hers found that, although they had been hired simultaneously, Christie had been rated lower and offered a lower wage. Sent to the hospital for an appendectomy soon afterwards, she was pleasantly surprised when Achebe visited her with gifts and magazines.^[54]

Achebe and Okoli grew closer in the following years, and on [September 10, 1961](#) were married in the Chapel of Resurrection on the campus of the University of Ibadan.^[55] Christie Achebe has described their marriage as one of trust and mutual understanding; some tension arose early in their union, due to conflicts about attention and communication. However, as their relationship matured, husband and wife made efforts to adapt to one another.^[56]

Their first child, a daughter named Chinelo, was born on [July 11, 1962](#). They had a son, Ikechukwu, on [December 3, 1964](#), and another boy named Chidi on [May 24, 1967](#). When the children began attending school in Lagos, their parents became worried about the world view – especially with regard to race – expressed at the school, especially through the mostly white teachers and books that presented a prejudiced view of African life.^[57] In 1966, Achebe published his first children's book, *Chike and the River*, to address some of these concerns.^[58] After the [Biafran War](#), the Achebes had another daughter on [March 7, 1970](#), named Nwando.^[59]

No Longer at Ease and fellowship travels

In 1960, while they were still dating, Achebe dedicated to Christie Okoli his second novel *No Longer at Ease*, about a civil servant who is embroiled in the corruption of Lagos. The protagonist is Obi, grandson of *Things Fall Apart's* main character, Okonkwo.^[60] Drawing on his time in the city, Achebe writes about Obi's experiences in Lagos to reflect the challenges facing a new generation on the threshold of Nigerian independence. Obi is trapped between the expectations of his family, its clan, his home village, and larger society. He is crushed by these forces (like his grandfather before him) and finds himself imprisoned for bribery. Having shown his acumen for portraying traditional Igbo culture, Achebe demonstrated in his second novel an ability to depict modern Nigerian life.^[61] Later that year, Achebe was awarded a [Rockefeller Fellowship](#) for six months of travel, which he called "the first important perk of my writing career".^[62] Achebe set out for a tour of [East Africa](#). One month after Nigeria achieved its independence, he travelled to [Kenya](#), where he was required to complete an immigration form by checking a box indicating his ethnicity: European, [Asiatic](#), [Arab](#), or Other. Shocked and dismayed at being forced into an "Other" identity, he found the situation "almost funny" and took an extra form as a souvenir.^[63] Continuing to [Tanganyika](#) and [Zanzibar](#) (now united in [Tanzania](#)), he was frustrated by the [paternalistic](#) attitude he observed among non-African hotel clerks and social elites.^[64]

Achebe also found in his travels that [Swahili](#) was gaining prominence as a major African language.

Radio programs were broadcast in Swahili, and its use was widespread in the countries he visited. Nevertheless, he also found an "apathy" among the people toward literature written in Swahili.^[65] He met the poet [Sheikh Shaaban Robert](#), who complained of the difficulty he had faced in trying to publish his Swahili-language work.^[66]



A map of areas using the Swahili language

In [Northern Rhodesia](#) (now called [Zambia](#)), Achebe found himself sitting in a whites-only section of a bus to [Victoria Falls](#). Interrogated by the ticket taker as to why he was sitting in the front, he replied, "if you must know I come from Nigeria, and there we sit where we like in the bus."^[67] Upon reaching the waterfall he was cheered by the black travellers from the bus, but he was saddened by the irony that they felt unable to stand up to the policy of [segregation](#).^[68]

Two years later, Achebe again left Nigeria, this time as part of a Fellowship for Creative Artists awarded by [UNESCO](#). He travelled to the [United States](#) and [Brazil](#). He met with a number of writers from the US, including novelists [Ralph Ellison](#) and [Arthur Miller](#).^[69] In Brazil, he met with several other authors, with whom he discussed the complications of writing in [Portuguese](#). Achebe worried that the vibrant literature of the nation would be lost if left untranslated into a more widely-spoken language.^[70]

Voice of Nigeria and African Writers Series

Once he returned to Nigeria, Achebe was promoted at the NBS to the position of Director of External Broadcasting. One of his first duties was to help create the [Voice of Nigeria](#) network. The station broadcast its first transmission on [New Year's Day](#) 1962, and worked to maintain an objective perspective during the turbulent era immediately following independence.^[71] This objectivity was put to the test when Nigerian Prime Minister [Abubakar Tafawa Balewa](#) declared a state of emergency in the Western Region, responding to a series of conflicts between officials of varying parties. Achebe became saddened by the evidence of corruption and silencing of political opposition.^[72]

Chinua Achebe, right, meeting with [Langston Hughes](#) in 1962

In 1962 he attended a conference of African writers in English at the [Makerere University College](#) in [Kampala, Uganda](#). He met with important literary figures from around the continent and the world, including Ghanaian poet [Kofi Awoonor](#), Nigerian playwright and poet [Wole Soyinka](#), and US poet-author [Langston Hughes](#). Among the topics of discussion was an attempt to determine whether the term [African literature](#) ought to include work from the [diaspora](#), or solely that writing composed by people living within the continent itself. Achebe indicated that it was not "a very significant question",^[73] and that scholars would do well to wait until a body of work were large enough to judge. Writing about the conference in several journals, Achebe hailed it as a milestone for the literature of Africa, and highlighted the importance of community among isolated voices on the continent and beyond.^[74]

While at Makerere, Achebe was asked to read a novel written by a student (James Ngugi, later known as [Ngugi wa Thiong'o](#)) called *Weep Not, Child*. Impressed, he sent it to Alan Hill at Heinemann, which published it two years later to coincide with its paperback line of books from African writers. Hill indicated this was to remedy a situation where British publishers "regarded West Africa only as a place where you sold books." Achebe was chosen to be General Editor of the [African Writers Series](#), which became a significant force in bringing [postcolonial literature](#) from Africa to the rest of the world.^[75]

As these works became more widely available, reviews and essays about African literature – especially from Europe – began to flourish. Bristling against the commentary flooding his home country, Achebe published an essay titled "Where Angels Fear to Tread" in the December 1962 issue of *Nigeria Magazine*. In it, he distinguished between the hostile critic (entirely negative), the amazed critic (entirely positive), and the conscious critic (who seeks a balance). He lashed out at those who critiqued African writers from the outside, saying: "no man can understand another whose language he does not speak (and 'language' here does not mean simply words, but a man's entire world view)."^[76]

Arrow of God

Achebe's third book, *Arrow of God*, was published in 1964. Like its predecessors, it explores the intersections of Igbo tradition and European Christianity. Set in the village of Umuaro at the start of the twentieth century, the novel tells the story of Ezeulu, a Chief Priest of Ulu. Shocked by the power of British intervention in the area, he orders his son to learn the foreigners' secret. As with *Okonkwo* in *Things Fall Apart* and *Obi* in *No Longer at Ease*, Ezeulu is consumed by the resulting tragedy.

The idea for the novel came in 1959, when Achebe heard the story of a Chief Priest being imprisoned by a District Officer.^[77] He drew further inspiration a year later when he viewed a collection of Igbo objects excavated from the area by [archaeologist](#) Thurstan Shaw; Achebe was startled by the cultural sophistication of the artefacts. When an acquaintance showed him a series of papers from colonial officers (not unlike the fictional *Pacification of the Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger* referenced at the end of *Things Fall Apart*), Achebe combined these strands of history and began work on *Arrow of God* in earnest.^[78] Like Achebe's previous works, *Arrow* was roundly praised by critics.^[79] A revised edition was published in 1974 to correct what Achebe called "certain structural weaknesses".^[80]

In a letter to Achebe, the US writer [John Updike](#) expressed his surprised admiration for the sudden downfall of *Arrow of God*'s protagonist. He praised the author's courage to write "an ending few Western novelists would have contrived".^[81] Achebe responded by suggesting that the individualistic hero was rare in African literature, given its roots in communal living and the degree to which characters are "subject to non-human forces in the universe".^[82]

A Man of the People

A Man of the People was published in 1966. A bleak satire set in an unnamed African state which has just attained independence, the novel follows a teacher named Odili Samalu from the village of Anata who opposes a corrupt Minister of Culture named Nanga for his Parliament seat. Upon reading an advance copy of the novel, Achebe's friend [John Pepper Clark](#) declared: "Chinua, I know you are a prophet. Everything in this book has happened except a military coup!"^[83]

Soon afterward, Nigerian Major [Chukwuma Kaduna Nzeogwu](#) seized control of the northern region of the country as part of a larger coup attempt. Commanders in other areas failed, and the plot was answered by a military crackdown. A massacre of three thousand people from the eastern region living in the north occurred soon afterwards, and stories of other attacks on Igbo Nigerians began to filter into Lagos.^[84]

The ending of his novel had brought Achebe to the attention of military personnel, who suspected him of having foreknowledge of the coup. When he received word of the pursuit, he sent his wife (who was pregnant) and children on a squalid boat through a series of unseen creeks to the Igbo stronghold of [Port Harcourt](#). They arrived safely, but Christie suffered a [miscarriage](#) at the journey's end. Chinua rejoined them soon afterwards in Ogidi. These cities were safe from military incursion because they were in the southeast, part of the region which would later [secede](#).^[85]

Once the family had resettled in [Enugu](#), Achebe and his friend [Christopher Okigbo](#) started a publishing house called Citadel Press, to improve the quality and increase the quantity of literature available to younger readers. One of its first submissions was a story called *How the Dog was Domesticated*, which Achebe revised and rewrote, turning it into a complex allegory for the country's political tumult. Its final title was *How the Leopard Got His Claws*.^[86] Years later a Nigerian intelligence officer told Achebe, "of all the things that came out of Biafra, that book was the most important."^[87]

Civil War

In May 1967 the southeastern region of Nigeria broke away to form the Republic of [Biafra](#); in July the Nigerian military attacked to suppress what it considered an unlawful rebellion. Achebe's partner, [Christopher Okigbo](#), who had become a close friend of the family (especially of Achebe's son, young Ikechukwu), volunteered to join the secessionist army while simultaneously working at the press. Achebe's house was bombed one afternoon; Christie had taken the children to visit her sick mother, so the only victims were his books and papers. The Achebe family narrowly escaped disaster several times during the war. Five days later, Christopher Okigbo was killed on the war's front line.^[88] Achebe was shaken considerably by the loss; in 1971 he wrote "Dirge for Okigbo", originally in the [Igbo language](#) but later translated to English.^[89]



As the war intensified, the Achebe family was forced to leave Enugu for the Biafran capital of [Aba](#). As the turmoil closed in, he continued to write, but most of his creative work during the war took the form of poetry. The shorter format was a consequence of living in a war zone. "I can write poetry," he said, "something short, intense more in keeping with my mood ... All this is creating in the context of our struggle."^[90] Many of these poems were collected in his 1971 book *Beware, Soul Brother*. One of his most famous, "Refugee Mother and Child", spoke to the suffering and loss that surrounded him. Dedicated to the promise of Biafra, he accepted a request to serve as foreign ambassador, refusing an invitation from the Program of African Studies at [Northwestern University](#) in the US. Achebe travelled to many cities in Europe, including London, where he continued his work with the African Writers Series project at Heinemann.^[91]

During the war, relations between writers in Nigeria and Biafra were strained. Achebe and [John Pepper Clark](#) had a tense confrontation in London over their respective support for opposing sides of the conflict. Achebe demanded that the publisher withdraw the dedication of *A Man of the People* he had given to Clark. Years later, their friendship healed and the dedication was restored.^[92] Meanwhile, their contemporary [Wole Soyinka](#) was imprisoned for meeting with Biafran officials, and spent many years in jail. Speaking in 1968, Achebe said: "I find the Nigerian situation untenable. If I had been a Nigerian, I think I would have been in the same situation as Wole Soyinka is – in prison."^[93]

The Nigerian government, under the leadership of General [Yakubu Gowon](#), was backed by the [British government](#); the two nations enjoyed a vigorous trade partnership.^[94] Addressing the causes of the war in 1968, Achebe lashed out at the Nigerian political and military forces that, to his mind, had forced Biafra to secede. He framed the conflict in terms of the country's colonial past. The writer in Nigeria, he said, "found that the independence his country was supposed to have won was totally without content ... The old white master was still in power. He had got himself a bunch of black stooges to do his dirty work for a commission."^[95]

Flag of the [Republic of Biafra](#) 

Conditions in Biafra worsened as the war continued. In September 1968, the city of Aba fell to the Nigerian military and Achebe once again moved his family, this time to [Umuahia](#), where the Biafran government had also relocated.

He was chosen to chair the newly formed National Guidance Committee, charged with the task of drafting principles and ideas for the post-war era.^[96] In 1969, the group completed a document entitled *The Principles of the Biafran Revolution*, later released as *The Ahiara Declaration*.^[97]

In October of the same year, Achebe joined writers Cyprian Ekwensi and [Gabriel Okara](#) for a tour of the United States to raise awareness about the dire situation in Biafra. They visited thirty college campuses and conducted countless interviews. While in the southern US, Achebe learned for the first time of the "Igbo Landing", a true story of a group of Igbo captives who drowned themselves in 1803 – rather than endure the brutality of slavery – after surviving through the [Middle Passage](#).^{[98][99]}

Although the group was well-regarded by students and faculty, Achebe was "shocked" by the [realpolitik](#) attitude toward Africa he saw in the US. At the end of the tour, he said that "world policy is absolutely ruthless and unfeeling".^[100]

The beginning of 1970 saw the end of the state of Biafra. On 12 January, the military surrendered to Nigeria, and Achebe returned with his family to Ogidi, where their home had been destroyed. He took a job at the [University of Nigeria in Nsukka](#) and immersed himself once again in academia. He was unable to accept invitations to other countries, however, because the Nigerian government revoked his passport due to his support for Biafra.^[101]

Postwar academia

After the war, Achebe helped start two magazines: the literary journal *Okike*, a forum for African art, fiction, and poetry; and *Nsukkascopes*, an internal publication of the University (motto: "Devastating, Fearless, Brutal and True").^[102] Achebe and the *Okike* committee later established another cultural magazine, *Uwa Ndi Igbo*, to showcase the indigenous stories and oral traditions of the Igbo community.^[103] In February 1972 he released *Girls at War*, a collection of short stories ranging in time from his undergraduate days to the recent bloodshed. It was the 100th book in Heinemann's African Writers Series.^[104]

The [University of Massachusetts Amherst](#) offered Achebe a professorship later that year, and the family moved to the United States. Their youngest daughter was displeased with her nursery school, and the family soon learned that her frustration involved language. Achebe helped her face the "alien experience" (as he called it) by telling her stories during the car trips to and from school.^[105]

As he presented his lessons to a wide variety of students (he taught only one class, to a large audience), he began to study the perceptions of Africa in [Western](#) scholarship: "Africa is not like anywhere else they know ... there are no real people in the Dark Continent, only *forces* operating; and people don't speak any language you can understand, they just grunt, too busy jumping up and down in a frenzy".^[106]



The [University of Massachusetts Amherst](#) at night

CRITICISM OF CONRAD

Achebe expanded this criticism when he presented a Chancellor's Lecture at Amherst on [18 February 1975](#), titled *An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's "Heart of Darkness"*. Decrying [Joseph Conrad](#) as "a thoroughgoing racist",^[107] Achebe asserts that Conrad's famous novel dehumanises Africans, rendering Africa as "a metaphysical battlefield devoid of all recognizable humanity, into which the wandering European enters at his peril."^[108]

Achebe also discussed a quote from [Albert Schweitzer](#), a 1952 [Nobel Peace Prize](#) laureate: "The African is indeed my brother," he is reported to have said, "but my junior brother."^[109] Some were surprised that Achebe would challenge a man honoured in the West for his "reverence for life",^[110] and recognised as a paragon of Western liberalism.

The lecture caused a storm of controversy, even at the reception immediately following his talk. Many English professors in attendance were upset by his remarks; one elderly professor approached him, said: "How dare you!",^[111] and stormed away. Another suggested that Achebe had "no sense of humour",^[111] but several days later Achebe was approached by a third professor, who told him: "I now realize that I had never really read *Heart of Darkness* although I have taught it for years."^[112] Although the lecture angered many of his colleagues, he was nevertheless presented later in 1975 with an honorary doctorate from the [University of Stirling](#) and the Lotus Prize for Afro-Asian Writers.^[113]

The first comprehensive rebuttal of Achebe's critique was published in 1983 by British critic Cedric Watts. His essay "A Bloody Racist: About Achebe's View of Conrad" defends *Heart of Darkness* as an anti-imperialist novel, suggesting that "part of its greatness lies in the power of its criticisms of racial prejudice."^[114] Palestinian-American theorist [Edward Said](#) agreed in his book *Culture and Imperialism* that Conrad criticised imperialism, but added: "As a creature of his time, Conrad could not grant the natives their freedom, despite his severe critique of the imperialism that enslaved them".^[115]

Achebe's criticism has become a mainstream perspective on Conrad's work. The essay was included in the 1988 [Norton](#) critical edition of Conrad's novel. Editor Robert Kimbrough called it one of "the three most important events in *Heart of Darkness* criticism since the second edition of his book..."^[116] Critic Nicolas Tredell divides Conrad criticism "into two epochal phases: before and after Achebe."^[117] Asked frequently about his essay, Achebe once explained that he never meant for the work to be abandoned: "It's not in my nature to talk about banning books. I am saying, read it – with the kind of understanding and with the knowledge I talk about. And read it beside African works."^[116]

Retirement and politics

When he returned to the University of Nigeria in 1976, he hoped to accomplish three goals: finish the novel he had been writing, renew the native publication of *Okike*, and further his study of Igbo culture. He also showed that he would not restrict his criticism to European targets. In an August 1976 interview, he lashed out at the archetypal Nigerian intellectual, who is divorced from the intellect "but for two things: status and stomach. And if there's any danger that he might suffer official displeasure or lose his job, he would prefer to turn a blind eye to what is happening around him."^[118] In October 1979, Achebe was awarded the first-ever Nigerian National Merit Award.^[119]

[James Baldwin](#) in 1955



In 1980 he met [James Baldwin](#) at a conference held by the African Literature Association in [Gainesville, Florida](#) USA.

The writers – with similar political perspectives, beliefs about language, and faith in the liberating potential of literature – were eager to meet one another. Baldwin said: "It's very important that we should meet each other, finally, if I must say so, after something like 400 years."^[120]

In 1982, Achebe retired from the University of Nigeria. He devoted more time to editing *Okike* and also became active with the left-leaning [People's Redemption Party](#) (PRP). In 1983 he became the party's deputy national vice-president. He published a book called *The Trouble with Nigeria* to coincide with the upcoming elections. On the first page, Achebe says bluntly: "the Nigerian problem is the unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise to the responsibility and to the challenge of personal example which are the hallmarks of true leadership."^[121]

The elections that followed were marked by violence and charges of fraud. Asked whether he thought Nigerian politics had changed since *A Man of the People*, Achebe replied: "I think, if anything, the Nigerian politician has deteriorated."^[122] After the elections, he engaged in a heated argument – which almost became a fistfight – with Bakin Zuwo, the newly-elected governor of [Kano State](#). He left the PRP and afterwards kept his distance from political parties, expressing his sadness at the dishonesty and weakness of the people involved.^[123]

He spent most of the 1980s delivering speeches, attending conferences, and working on his sixth novel. He also continued winning awards and collecting honorary degrees.^[124] In 1986 he was elected president-general of the [Ogidi](#) Town Union; he reluctantly accepted and began a three-year term. In the same year, he stepped down as editor of *Okike*.^[125]

Anthills and paralysis

In 1987 Achebe released his fifth novel, *Anthills of the Savannah*, about a military coup in the fictional West African nation of Kangan. A finalist for the prestigious [Man Booker Prize](#), the novel was hailed in the *Financial Times*: "in a powerful fusion of myth, legend and modern styles, Achebe has written a book which is wise, exciting and essential, a powerful antidote to the cynical commentators from 'overseas' who see nothing ever new out of Africa."^[126] An opinion piece in the magazine *West Africa* said the book deserved to win the Booker Prize, and that Achebe was "a writer who has long deserved the recognition that has already been accorded him by his sales figures."^[126] The prize went instead to [Penelope Lively's](#) novel *Moon Tiger*.

On [March 22, 1990](#), Achebe was riding in a car to Lagos when an axle suddenly collapsed and the car flipped. His son Ikechukwu and the driver suffered minor injuries, but the weight of the vehicle fell on Achebe and his spine was severely damaged. He was flown to the Paddocks Hospital in [Buckinghamshire](#) England, and treated for his injuries. In July doctors announced that although he was recuperating well, he was [paralysed](#) from the waist down and would require the use of a wheelchair for the rest of his life.^[127]



Stone Row at the centre of the [Bard College](#) campus

Soon afterwards, Achebe became the Charles P. Stevenson Professor of Languages and Literature at [Bard College](#) in Annandale-on-Hudson, [New York](#); he has held the position for over fifteen years.^[128]

In October 2005, *Financial Times* reported that Achebe was planning to write a novella for the Canongate Myth Series, a series of short novels in which ancient [myths](#) from myriad cultures are reimagined and rewritten by contemporary authors.^[129] Achebe's novella has not yet been scheduled for publication.

In June 2007, Achebe was awarded the [Man Booker International Prize](#).^[130] The judging panel included US critic [Elaine Showalter](#), who said he "illuminated the path for writers around the world seeking new words and forms for new realities and societies";^[131] and South African writer [Nadine Gordimer](#), who said Achebe has achieved "what one of his characters brilliantly defines as the writer's purpose: 'a new-found utterance' for the capture of life's complexity".^[131]

Style

Oral tradition

The style of Achebe's fiction draws heavily on the oral tradition of the Igbo people.^[132] He weaves folk tales into the fabric of his stories, illuminating community values in both the content and the form of the storytelling. The tale about the Earth and Sky in *Things Fall Apart*, for example, emphasises the interdependency of the masculine and the feminine. Although Nwoye enjoys hearing his mother tell the tale, Okonkwo's dislike for it is evidence of his imbalance.^[133] Later, Nwoye avoids beatings from his father by pretending to dislike such "women's stories".^[134]

Another hallmark of Achebe's style is the use of proverbs, which often illustrate the values of the rural Igbo tradition. He sprinkles them throughout the narratives, repeating points made in conversation. Critic Anjali Gera notes that the use of proverbs in *Arrow of God* "serves to create through an echo effect the judgement of a community upon an individual violation."^[135] The use of such repetition in Achebe's urban novels, *No Longer at Ease* and *A Man of the People*, is less pronounced.^[135]

For Achebe, however, proverbs and folk stories are not the sum total of the oral Igbo tradition. In combining philosophical thought and public performance into the use of oratory ("Okwu Oka" – "speech artistry" – in the Igbo phrase), his characters exhibit what he called "a matter of individual excellence ... part of Igbo culture."^[136] In *Things Fall Apart*, Okonkwo's friend Obierika voices the most impassioned oratory, crystallising the events and their significance for the village. Nwaka in *Arrow of God* also exhibits a mastery of oratory, albeit for malicious ends.^[137]

Achebe frequently includes folk songs and descriptions of dancing in his work. Obi, the protagonist of



A digital representation of the Igbo [udu](#) instrument 

No Longer At Ease is at one point met by women singing a "Song of the Heart", which Achebe gives in both Igbo and English: "Is everyone here? / (Hele ee he ee he)"^[138] In *Things Fall Apart*, ceremonial dancing and the singing of folk songs reflect the realities of Igbo tradition. The elderly Uchendu, attempting to shake Okonkwo out of his self-pity, refers to a song sung after the death of a woman: "For whom is it well, for whom is it well? There is no one for whom it is well."^[139] This song contrasts with the "gay and rollicking tunes of evangelism" sung later by the white missionaries.^[140]

Achebe's short stories are not as widely studied as his novels, and Achebe himself does not consider them a major part of his work. In the preface for *Girls at War and Other Stories*, he writes: "A dozen pieces in twenty years must be accounted a pretty lean harvest by any reckoning."^[141] Like his novels, the short stories are heavily influenced by the oral tradition. And like the folktales they follow, the stories often

have morals emphasising the importance of cultural traditions.^[142]

Use of English

As the [decolonization](#) process unfolded in the 1950s, a debate about choice of language erupted and pursued authors around the world; Achebe was no exception. Indeed, because of his subject matter and insistence on a non-colonial narrative, he found his novels and decisions interrogated with extreme scrutiny – particularly with regard to his use of English. One school of thought, championed by Kenyan writer [Ngugi wa Thiong'o](#), urged the use of indigenous African languages. English and other European languages, he said in 1986, were "part of the neo-colonial structures that repress progressive ideas".^[143]

Achebe chose to write in English. In his essay "The African Writer and the English Language", he discusses how the process of colonialism – for all its ills – provided colonised people from varying linguistic backgrounds "a language with which to talk to one another". As his purpose is to communicate with readers across Nigeria, he uses "the one central language enjoying nationwide currency".^[144] Using English also allowed his books to be read in the colonial ruling nations.^[145]

Still, Achebe recognises the shortcomings of what [Audre Lorde](#) called "the master's tools". In another essay he notes:

For an African writing in English is not without its serious setbacks. He often finds himself describing situations or modes of thought which have no direct equivalent in the English way of life. Caught in that situation he can do one of two things. He can try and contain what he wants to say within the limits of conventional English or he can try to push back those limits to accommodate his ideas ... I submit that those who can do the work of extending the frontiers of English so as to accommodate African thought-patterns must do it through their mastery of English and not out of innocence.^[146]

In another essay, he refers to James Baldwin's struggle to use the English language to accurately represent his experience, and his realization that he needed to take control of the language and expand it.^[147] Nigerian poet and novelist [Gabriel Okara](#) likens the process of language-expansion to the evolution of [jazz](#) music in the United States.^[148]

Achebe's novels laid a formidable groundwork for this process. By altering syntax, usage, and idiom, he transforms the language into a distinctly African style.^[149] In some spots this takes the form of repetition of an Igbo idea in standard English parlance; elsewhere it appears as narrative asides integrated into descriptive sentences.^[150]

Themes

Achebe's novels approach a variety of themes. In his early writing, a depiction of the [Igbo](#) culture itself is paramount. Critic Nahem Yousaf highlights the importance of these depictions: "Around the tragic stories of Okonkwo and Ezeulu, Achebe sets about textualising Igbo cultural identity".^[151] The portrayal of indigenous life is not simply a matter of literary background, he adds: "Achebe seeks to produce the effect of a precolonial reality as an Igbo-centric response to a Eurocentrically constructed imperial 'reality' ".^[152] Certain elements of Achebe's depiction of Igbo life in *Things Fall Apart* match those in [Oluadah Equiano's](#) autobiographical *Narrative*. Responding to charges that Equiano was not actually born in Africa, Achebe wrote in 1975: "Equiano was an Ibo, I believe, from the village of Iseki in the Orlu division of Nigeria".^[153]

Culture and colonialism

A prevalent theme in Achebe's novels is the intersection of African tradition (particularly Igbo varieties) and [modernity](#), especially as embodied by European [colonialism](#). The village of Umuofia in *Things Fall Apart*, for example, is violently shaken with internal divisions when the white Christian missionaries arrive. Nigerian English professor Ernest N. Emenyonu describes the colonial experience in the novel as "the systematic emasculation of the entire culture".^[154] Achebe later embodied this tension between African tradition and Western influence in the figure of Sam Okoli, the president of Kangan in *Anthills of the Savannah*. Distanced from the myths and tales of the community by his Westernised



The colonial impact on the Igbo in Achebe's novels is often effected by individuals from Europe, but institutions and urban offices frequently serve a similar purpose. The character of Obi in *No Longer at Ease* succumbs to colonial-era corruption in the city; the temptations of his position overwhelm his identity and fortitude.^[156] The courts and the position of District Commissioner in *Things Fall Apart* likewise clash with the traditions of the Igbo, and remove their ability to participate in structures of decision-making.^[157]

The standard Achebean ending results in the destruction of an individual and, by *synecdoche*, the downfall of the community. Odili's descent into the luxury of corruption and hedonism in *A Man of the People*, for example, is symbolic of the post-colonial crisis in Nigeria and elsewhere.^[158] Even with the emphasis on colonialism, however, Achebe's *tragic* endings embody the traditional confluence of fate, individual and society, as represented by *Sophocles* and *Shakespeare*.^[159]

Still, Achebe seeks to portray neither moral absolutes nor *afatalistic* inevitability. In 1972, he said: "I never will take the stand that the Old must win or that the New must win. The point is that no single truth satisfied me—and this is well founded in the Ibo world view. No single man can be correct all the time, no single idea can be totally correct."^[160] His perspective is reflected in the words of Ikem, a character in *Anthills of the Savannah*: "whatever you are is never enough; you must find a way to accept something, however small, from the other to make you whole and to save you from the mortal sin of righteousness and extremism."^[161] And in a 1996 interview, Achebe said: "Belief in either radicalism or orthodoxy is too simplified a way of viewing things ... Evil is never all evil; goodness on the other hand is often tainted with selfishness."^[162]

Masculinity and femininity

The *gender roles* of men and women, as well as societies' conceptions of the associated concepts, are frequent themes in Achebe's writing. He has been criticised as a sexist author, in response to what many call the uncritical depiction of traditionally patriarchal Igbo society, where the most masculine men take numerous wives, and women are beaten regularly.^[163] Others suggest that Achebe is merely representing the limited gendered vision of the characters, and they note that in his later works, he tries to demonstrate the inherent dangers of excluding women from society.^[164]

In *Things Fall Apart*, Okonkwo's furious manhood overpowers everything feminine in his life, including his own conscience. For example, when he feels bad after killing his adopted son, he asks himself: "When did you become a shivering old woman?"^[165] He views all things feminine as distasteful, in part because they remind him of his father's laziness and cowardice.^[166] The women in the novel, meanwhile, are obedient, quiet, and absent from positions of authority – despite the fact that Igbo women were traditionally involved in village leadership.^[167] Nevertheless, the need for feminine balance is highlighted by Ani, the earth goddess, and the extended discussion of "Nneka" ("Mother is supreme") in chapter fourteen.^[168] Okonkwo's defeat is seen by some as a vindication of the need for a balancing feminine ethos.^{[169][170]} Achebe has expressed frustration at frequently being misunderstood on this point, saying that "I want to sort of scream that *Things Fall Apart* is on the side of women...And that Okonkwo is paying the penalty for his treatment of women; that all his problems, all the things he did wrong, can be seen as offenses against the feminine."^[171]

Achebe's first central female character in a novel is Beatrice Nwanyibuife in *Anthills of the Savannah*. As an independent woman in the city, Beatrice strives for the balance which Okonkwo lacked so severely. She refutes the notion that she needs a man, and slowly learns about Idemili, a goddess balancing the aggression of male power.^[172] Although the final stages of the novel show her functioning in a nurturing mother-type role, Beatrice remains firm in her conviction that women should not be limited to such capacities.^[173]

Legacy

Achebe has been called "the father of modern African writing"^[131] and many books and essays have been written about his work over the past fifty years. In 1992 he became the only living author represented in the *Everyman's Library* collection published by Alfred A. Knopf.^[174] His 60th birthday was celebrated at the *University of Nigeria* by "an international Who's Who in African Literature". One observer noted: "Nothing like it had ever happened before in African literature anywhere on the continent."^[175]

Many writers of succeeding generations view his work as having paved the way for their efforts.^[176] In 1982 he was awarded an honorary degree from the *University of Kent*. At the ceremony, professor Robert Gibson said that the Nigerian author "is now revered as Master by the younger generation of African writers and it is to him they regularly turn for counsel and inspiration."^[177] Even outside of Africa, his impact resonates strongly in literary circles. Novelist *Margaret Atwood* called him "a magical writer – one of the greatest of the twentieth century". Poet *Maya Angelou* lauded *Things Fall Apart* as a book wherein "all readers meet their brothers, sisters, parents and friends and themselves along Nigerian roads".^[178] *Nelson Mandela*, recalling his time as a political prisoner, once referred to Achebe as a writer "in whose company the prison walls fell down."^[179]

Achebe is the recipient of over 30 honorary degrees from universities in England, Scotland, Canada, South Africa, Nigeria and the United States, including *Dartmouth College*, *Harvard*, and *Brown University*.^[180] He has been awarded the Commonwealth Poetry Prize, an Honorary Fellowship of the *American Academy of Arts and Letters*, the Nigerian National Order of Merit (Nigeria's highest honour for academic work), and the *Peace Prize of the German Book Trade*.^[181]

Some scholars have suggested that Achebe has been shunned by intellectual society for criticising

Conrad and traditions of racism in the West.^[182] Despite his scholarly achievements and the global importance of his work, Achebe has never received a [Nobel Prize](#), which some observers view as unjust.^[183] The Nobel Committee has been criticised in the past for overlooking other important writers, such as [Marcel Proust](#), [Jorge Luis Borges](#), [Vladimir Nabokov](#) and [Leo Tolstoy](#).

When [Wole Soyinka](#) won the Nobel Prize in 1986, Achebe joined the rest of Nigeria in celebrating the first African ever to win the prize. He lauded Soyinka's "stupendous display of energy and vitality", and said he was "most eminently deserving of any prize".^[184] In 1988 Achebe was asked by a reporter for *Quality Weekly* how he felt about never winning a Nobel prize; he replied: "My position is that the Nobel Prize is important. But it is a European prize. It's not an African prize ... Literature is not a heavyweight championship. Nigerians may think, you know, this man has been knocked out. It's nothing to do with that."^[185] Achebe's acceptance of the Mann Booker International Prize (Oxford, UK), and the National Art Club's Medal of Honor for Literature (New York, USA) both in 2007; may be perceived as a tempering of his position on the role of international Literary prizes in recent years.

Works

Novels

- [Things Fall Apart](#), (1958)
- [No Longer at Ease](#) (1960)
- *Arrow of God*, (1964)
- *A Man of the People*, (1966)
- [Anthills of the Savannah](#), (1987)

Short Stories

- "Marriage Is A Private Affair", (1952)
- "Dead Men's Path", (1953)
- *The Sacrificial Egg and Other Stories* (1953)
- "[Civil Peace](#)", (1971)
- *Girls at War and Other Stories*, (1973)
- *African Short Stories* (editor, with C.L. Innes), (1985)
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Poetry

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- *Don't let him die: An anthology of memorial poems for Christopher Okigbo*(editor, with Dubem Okafor), (1978)
- *Another Africa*, (1998)
- *Collected Poems*, (2004)
- *Refugee Mother And Child*
- *Vultures*

Essays, Criticism and Political Commentary

- *The Novelist as Teacher*, (1965)
- *An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's "Heart of Darkness"*, (1975)
- *Morning Yet on Creation Day*, (1975)
- *The Trouble With Nigeria*, (1984)
- *Hopes and Impediments*, (1988)
- *Home and Exile*, (2000)

Children's Books

- *Chike and the River*, (1966)
- *How the Leopard Got His Claws* (with John Iroaganachi), (1972)
- *The Flute*, (1975)
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- ⁹. [^] Ezenwa-Ohaeto, p. 11.
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- ¹³. [^] Ezenwa-Ohaeto, p. 18.
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- ²⁰. [^] ^a ^b ^c Quoted in Ezenwa-Ohaeto, pp 26-27.
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Persondata

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- ▶ **Achebe** posits that Joseph Conrad's famous novel of [imperialism](#) harbors subtexts and language of a [racist](#) tone that dismiss and dehumanize his African backdrop and characters.
- ▶ **Achebe** is an Honorary Fellow of the Modern Language Association of America (1975); a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature of London (1981); and a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Letters (1982).

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