

10 years of the African Literature Group: what we have read

@ the African Studies Center, Boston University

*Annotated by Roberta Logan, facilitator,
with a few updates by Barbara B. Brown*

Americanah, by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie.

****Half Yellow Sun*** by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. Based loosely on political events in nineteen-sixties Nigeria, this novel focuses on two wealthy Igbo sisters who drift apart as the newly independent nation struggles to remain unified.

Purple Hibiscus by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is a complex tale of Kambili, a young girl growing up in Nigeria.

So Long a Letter by Mariama Ba explores the lives of a group of resilient women in newly independent Senegal.

A Long Way Gone by Ishmael Beah is his own journey of transformation from a boy to soldier in modern day Sierra Leone and ultimately to the man he is today.

Yoruba Girl Dancing by Simi Bedford A semiautobiographical first novel about a Nigerian *girl's* adjustment to life at an English boarding school.

We Need New Names by NoViolet Bulawayo. A novel of a child growing up in Mugabe's Zimbabwe slum and then moving to the US. (Winner of the Pen Hemingway Prize.)

Everyday Is For The Thief, by Teju Cole, takes place in 21st century Nigeria and will lead us into a discussion of his adventures in Nigeria, its contradictions, as well as the boundaries of genre.

Nervous Conditions, written by Tsitsi Dangarembga in 1989, is a semi-autobiographical coming of age story about a young woman growing up in colonial Rhodesia in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Ancestor Stones, a novel by Aminatta Forna explores the lives of women in a polygamous family in an unnamed African country. Forna allows each woman to tell her own story within a society in transition over the better part of a century: colonialism, independence and the horrors of civil war.

***The Hired Man** explores the effects of war and the endurance and significance of memory and secrets.

The Island by Athol Fugard, a play by Athol Fugard set in the political prison, Robben Island, during the times of apartheid.

Master Harold and the Boys, a play by Athol Fugard is a play, set in South Africa during the period of Apartheid was first performed in 1982. This eloquent and elegant play depicts both the personal and the political.

***Burger's Daughter**, by Nadine Gordimer, set in apartheid South Africa. The story of a young white woman coming to terms with who she is and who she could become. (Gordimer won the Nobel Literature Prize.)

July's People by Nadine Gordimer explores the question of how life might be after a revolution in South Africa from the vantage point of a white South African family.

***Homegoing**, by Yaa Gyasi is an immensely popular historical fiction that recounts the story of one family's fractured experience from the time of the triangular trade through multiple generations in both Ghana and the US until today. It's both a great read and an exploration.

Zenzele: A Letter for My Daughter by J. Nozipo Maraire is written as a series of letters that share stories and impart wisdom.

Dreams of Trespass by Fatimah Mernissi is a tapestry of stories set in the 1940's depicting life in a harem through the eyes of a young girl growing up in Morocco.

The Heart of Redness, by Zakes Mda. At the center of this novel is an expatriate returning to the New South Africa, Mda explores what happens when he becomes immersed in a community that has to grapple with the sediment of history and present day dilemmas in a time of change.

The Madonna of Excelsior by Zakes Mda who takes a shocking event in small-town apartheid South Africa and offers surprising new ways of seeing and understanding black women's resistance to degradation.

***Mzungu Boy** by Meja Mwangi explores a budding friendship between two boys, just as Kenya's resistance movement is heating up. (A Young Adult winner of multiple prizes.)

Sundiata Translated by D.T. Niane and retold by generations of griots-the guardians of African culture-this oral tradition has been handed down from

thirteenth century and captures all the mystery and majesty of medieval African kingship.

***Dust** by Yvonne Owuor has been described as the symphony of memories, love and grief that chronicles one family and what remains after the death of a son.

***Born a Crime**, by Trevor Noah, the host of TV's *Daily Show* who describes the book as a "compelling, inspiring, and comically sublime story of a young man's coming-of-age" in apartheid South Africa.

Far from Home, by Na'ima B. Robert. A Young Adult novel of two girls in late colonial Zimbabwe, one the daughter of settlers and the other the daughter of a family displaced from their ancestral land.

***Children of the Street** and **Wife of the Gods**, two mysteries set in Ghana by Kwei Quartey.

Woman at Point Zero by Nawal El Saadawi tells the story of an Egyptian woman who descends into prostitution as well as her defiance in the face of disapproval.

The Wedding of Zein, a novella by Tayeb Salih, is a delightful, well-paced quick read about a colorful community and the very lovable man at its center.

God's Bits of Wood, historical fiction by Ousmane Sembene who recounts the story of a railway strike that occurred in 1947 in French West Africa.

Cairo, a City Transformed, by Adhaf Soueif. Through a map of stories, Soueif charts a story of the 2012 "Arab Spring" revolution that is both intimately hers and publicly Egyptian. A reviewer on **Goodreads** wrote, "A really interesting look from an inside perspective at the tumultuous, exultant, grassroots uprising over eighteen days in Cairo."

***Ake: The Years of Childhood** by Wole Soyinka. An autobiographical account about events in his childhood between about 1934 and 1945 in the town of Ake in present-day Nigeria. (Soyinka won the Nobel Literature Prize.)