

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (1977?) was raised in an Igbo family in Enugu, south-eastern Nigeria. Her parents and grandparents had been significantly affected by the civil war between 1967 and 1970; both her grandfathers died as a consequence. As a young adult, Adichie began studying medicine at the University of Nigeria, where both her parents worked, before relocating to the US to read for degrees at Drexel University, Philadelphia and Connecticut State University. She was awarded master's degrees from John Hopkins University in 2003 and Yale in 2008.

It was during these years that she was forced to confront the realities of race and racism in contemporary America. She has since stated that, for her, 'race is such a strange construct because you have to *learn* what it means to be Black in America', particularly as she was not taught the transatlantic slave trade in Nigerian schools. She subsequently navigated what it meant to be Black and African, but not African-American, in the twenty-first century US. These combined experiences influenced the writing of Adichie's third novel, *Americanah* (2013), which follows the protagonist, Ifemelu, as she migrates from a Lagos under military rule to an US in the wake of 9/11.

Her motivation to write stemmed from reading the novels of Chinua Achebe and seeing herself represented in the lives of his characters. After reading Adichie's first two novels, Achebe announced: 'We do not usually associate wisdom with beginners, but here is a new writer endowed with the gift of ancient storytellers'. Her debut novel, *Purple Hibiscus* (2003), examines the political difficulties in contemporary Nigeria through the viewpoint of one teenaged character, Kambili, who faces violence from her father at home and then witnesses corruption in the wider society beyond the walls of their house. It won the Commonwealth Writers' Prize for Best First Book. Adichie's following novel, *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006), moves across the perspectives of three characters as they respond directly to the horrors of warfare in Biafra during the late 1960s. It was awarded the Orange Prize for Fiction and has been listed as one of the most important novels of the new millennium by multiple sources including BBC News, *New York Times*, and *The Guardian*. It was also adapted to film in 2013.

Her ability to capture the diverse viewpoints of her characters, many of whom are enduring trauma and loss, demonstrates the nuance with which Adichie represents the human condition through prose. In particular, her works give urgent voice to women – and especially Black women – who are violently marginalised and dehumanised in territories on both sides of the Atlantic and further across the globe. In 2014, she published *We Should All Be Feminists*, based on a TED Talk she presented in London the previous year. It has had a significant impact on both literary studies and popular culture; it has been nominated for several accolades and has been quoted and sampled by artists such as Beyoncé. Adichie grapples with how gender is taught to children and how it is a tool of patriarchal control. As she states: 'my own definition of a feminist is a man or a woman who says, yes, there's a problem with gender as it is today and we must fix it, we must do better. All of us, women and men, must do better'.

