

Reading the World *Now*

Rob Jordens • Jeff Zeter
Series Editor Casey Malarcher



3



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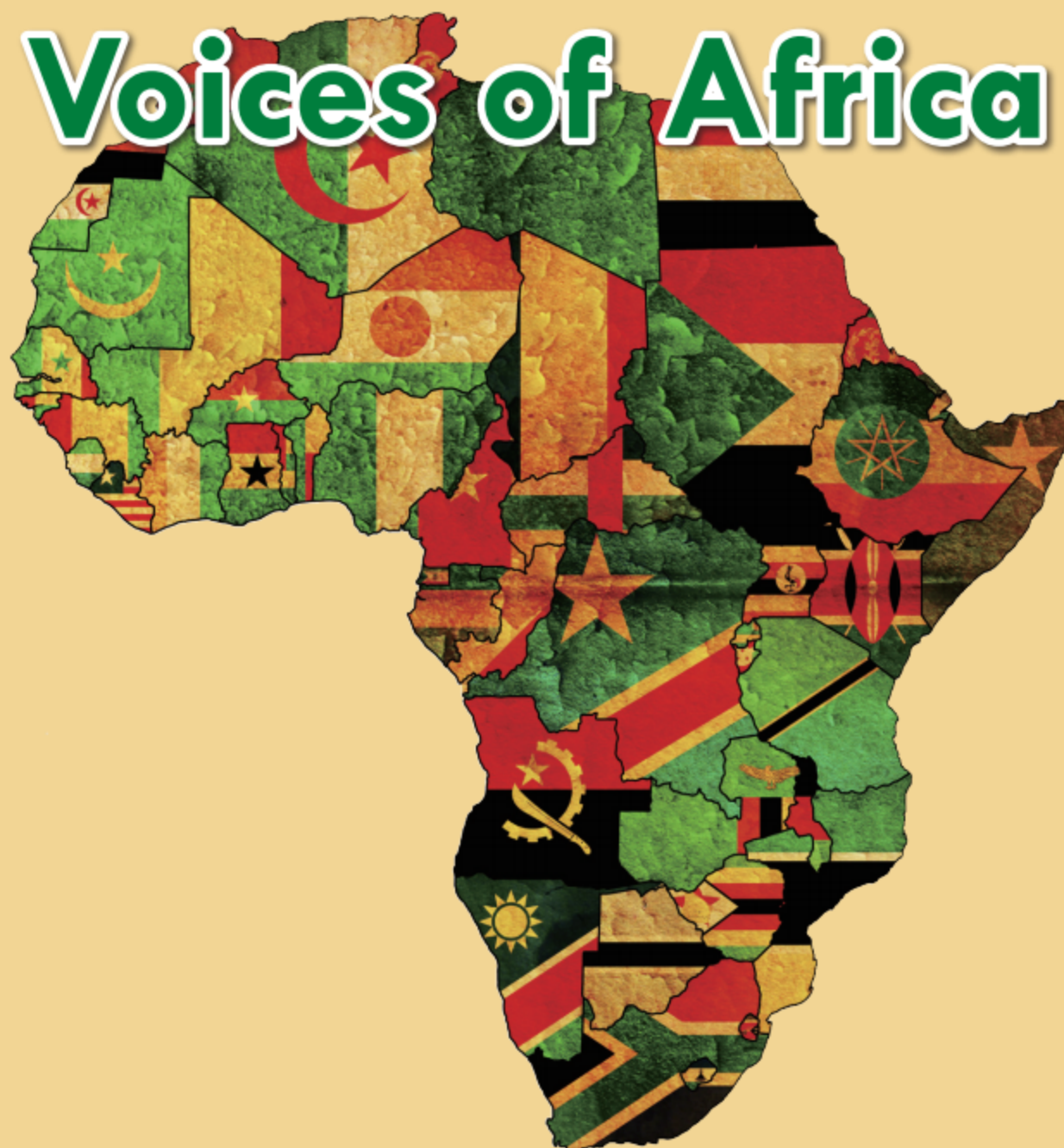
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Scan and find the tracks.

Voices of Africa



Pre-Reading Questions

1. What do you know about famous African authors?
2. What are some examples of political or personal struggles which some writers might face in their work?

Vocabulary Preview

These are the key words from the passage. Check the words you are not familiar with.

- | | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> acclaimed | <input type="checkbox"/> literature | <input type="checkbox"/> faction |
| <input type="checkbox"/> colonialism | <input type="checkbox"/> premier | <input type="checkbox"/> culture |
| <input type="checkbox"/> regime | <input type="checkbox"/> criticism | <input type="checkbox"/> exile |
| <input type="checkbox"/> repercussion | <input type="checkbox"/> persecute | <input type="checkbox"/> distinction |
| <input type="checkbox"/> testament | <input type="checkbox"/> fundamentally | <input type="checkbox"/> conviction |
| <input type="checkbox"/> negotiate | <input type="checkbox"/> academia | <input type="checkbox"/> imprison |
| <input type="checkbox"/> tyrannical | <input type="checkbox"/> threaten | |



Voices of Africa



African authors are arguably not as well known as those from North American and European countries. However, Africa is home to many gifted and acclaimed writers. Among the most important voices from Africa are Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, and Ngugi wa Thiong'o. Many of these authors' works deal with cultural customs and history. Some works express their criticism of colonialism.

Chinua Achebe is a Nigerian novelist and poet. He began publishing his writing in the late 1950s. Over his career, he has written six novels, dozens of essays and commentaries, collections of short stories and poems, and even children's books. The bulk of his work deals with African politics, precolonial African society, and the repercussions of colonialism on Africa, which he views as overwhelmingly negative.

Achebe's most acclaimed novel, *Things Fall Apart*, was surprisingly his first and was published in 1958. Since its first printing, it has sold ten million copies and has been translated into fifty languages, making Achebe the most translated African author of all time! The work is widely read in academia and has been cited by Norway, England, the United States, and Africa as one of the top 100 novels of all time. It tells the story of an African village during the 1800s and focuses on Okonkwo, one of the leaders of the community. The village exists in relative harmony and order, until the appearance of a white man threatens their religion and traditional way of life. The change proves to be too much for Okonkwo, and ends very tragically. The work is representative of Achebe's recurring themes of African politics and the effects of colonialism, which appear frequently in his later

works.

Wole Soyinka, also from Nigeria, is considered the country's premier playwright. Soyinka holds the distinction of being the first African to receive the Nobel Prize in Literature. Although some of Soyinka's work centers on African colonialism like Achebe's, he is also an outspoken critic of modern Nigerian governments and tyrannical regimes worldwide. As a political activist, Soyinka has been persecuted for his beliefs and actions. In 1967, he was imprisoned for nearly two years for trying to negotiate a peace agreement between two warring factions in the Nigerian Civil War. In 1993, when a dictator took control of Nigeria, Soyinka went into voluntary exile and has been living abroad since that time. Soyinka's best-known play is *Death and the King's Horsemen*, which, like *Things Fall Apart*, focuses on the period of British colonial rule and the negative effects resulting from the collision of two fundamentally different cultures.

Ngugi wa Thiong'o was born in Kenya in 1938. When Kenyan rebels fought against the British administration there, in a conflict now known as the Mau Mau Uprising or Mau Mau Rebellion, Thiong'o was also affected. His mother was tortured, and his stepbrother killed in the struggle. Thiong'o's literary career began with his first novel, *Weep Not, Child*. This was followed by *The River Between*, which examines the uneasy coexistence between Christians and non-Christians. The Mau Mau Rebellion serves as a backdrop for the work. Like Soyinka, Thiong'o has also been a victim of political persecution. His 1977 play *I Will Marry When I Want* was highly critical of what has been termed neo-colonialism, the state of oppression and exploitation that has continued in Africa after the official end of colonial rule. Upon the release of the play, his arrest was ordered. He was held for a year in a maximum security prison. After his release, the loss of his job and the harassment of his family led to a relocation to London in 1982 and then to the United States, where he remains in self-imposed exile. Thiong'o briefly returned to Kenya in 2004, effectively ending his exile, but was again victimized when he and his wife were physically assaulted in their apartment.

The works of these authors are rich in historical facts, cultural insight, and political conviction. Their willingness to speak out in spite of personal danger is a testament to their vision, their commitment to raise awareness of cultural ideals, and their desire to bring about social change.

- 3 voice — someone who expresses the opinions of a group of people
- 8 the bulk of — most of
- 43 backdrop — the setting; the background of an event or action



Reading Comprehension

A Mark each statement as true (T), false (F), or inferred (I) according to the passage.

- | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|
| 1. African authors are just as well known as American authors. | T | F | I |
| 2. Chinua Achebe is the most translated African author. | T | F | I |
| 3. Wole Soyinka won a Nobel Prize in Literature. | T | F | I |
| 4. Ngugi wa Thiong'o was born in London, England. | T | F | I |
| 5. All three authors discussed in the passage spoke out despite personal danger. | T | F | I |

B Choose the best answer.

- According to paragraph 3, all of the following are true of the novel *Things Fall Apart* EXCEPT
 - It has been translated into 50 languages.
 - It has sold 10 million copies.
 - Okonkwo is one of the leaders in the community.
 - It tells the story of a small British town in the 1800s.
- Which of the following authors went into voluntary exile?
 - Soyinka and Thiong'o
 - Thiong'o and Achebe
 - Achebe and Soyinka
 - Soyinka
- Why did the authors go into voluntary exile?
 - To hide from their personal success as authors
 - To enjoy their personal success as authors
 - Due to harassment and personal danger
 - To experience a much easier lifestyle

C Read the passage again, and then write the main idea of the passage in three to five sentences. Use your own words.

Vocabulary Review

A Choose the correct definition of the word in bold.

1. Wole Soyinka, also from Nigeria, is considered the country's **premier** playwright.
(A) first in rank
(B) honest but shocking
(C) most productive
2. The Mau Mau Rebellion serves as a **backdrop** for the work.
(A) setting
(B) scenery
(C) main point
3. The works of these authors are rich in historical facts, criticism, and political **conviction**.
(A) harsh judgment
(B) serious crime
(C) strong belief

B Choose the best word to fill in the blanks.

1. Books that are based on political views are _____ the most controversial of all genres.
(A) fundamentally (B) arguably (C) acclaimed (D) cultural
2. A(n) _____ tends to stick together during a political uprising.
(A) community (B) academia (C) regime (D) testament
3. When a book gets _____, the author generally has what is called a book signing to promote the book.
(A) persecuted (B) acclaimed (C) published (D) negotiated
4. When discussing a contract, the parties involved usually _____ before coming to an agreement.
(A) negotiate (B) threaten (C) impose (D) persecute
5. The _____ he experienced due to his political views caused him to move across the continent.
(A) harassment (B) faction (C) distinction (D) conviction

Language Form and Meaning

A Choose the correct form of the word to fill in the blanks.

- Many authors strive to write and publish a critically _____ novel or book.
(A) acclaim (B) acclaimed (C) acclamation (D) acclaims
- The dark clouds above _____ their day trip to the beach.
(A) threatening (B) threat (C) threatens (D) threatened
- The lady was _____ simply because of the way she looked.
(A) persecution (B) persecutor (C) persecute (D) persecuted
- The family of the young man was relieved when his attacker was finally _____ for the crime.
(A) imprisoned (B) imprisoning (C) imprison (D) imprisonment
- I couldn't take my parents' _____, so I finally moved out.
(A) critic (B) criticism (C) criticizer (D) criticized

B Underline the correct word or phrase in parentheses.

- This company (has sold / sold) three million copies since November.
- Some of her works (have translated / were translated) by Dr. Williams earlier this year.
- Since 1990, Mel (has seen / saw) every Tom Hanks movie.
- Unfortunately, some religious groups are still (persecuted / have persecuted) for their beliefs.
- Last year, Mary Stevens (has lived / lived) in Tennessee, USA.

Discussion Topics

Discuss these questions with your class.

- What can students learn from reading a novel written by African authors?
- Which authors from your country are known for novels that express their political views?



Scan and find the tracks.

Voices of Asia

Pre-Reading Questions

1. What famous authors do you know from your country? What types of books do they write?
2. What famous author do you know from Asia? What do you know about this author?

Vocabulary Preview

Match the words with their definitions.

- | | | |
|----------------|---|---|
| 1. appeal | • | • a. having a great effect |
| 2. diplomacy | • | • b. the greatest example of skill or excellence |
| 3. endure | • | • c. the skill of handling people in a sensitive way |
| 4. focus | • | • d. a person who studies the nature of thought and reality |
| 5. influential | • | • e. to keep on going despite difficult conditions |
| 6. literary | • | • f. to attract the interest of someone |
| 7. masterpiece | • | • g. having to do with books and writing |
| 8. philosopher | • | • h. to concentrate on a task |
| 9. prophet | • | • i. a person said to speak and guide people for God |
| 10. theme | • | • j. the main idea in a work of art |

Voices of Asia



Asia has long held a sense of the unknown for many in the Western world. From its fashion, food, and language, Asia has fascinated and influenced Western culture. While perhaps not as well known as other aspects of Asian culture, Asian literature is as old as the culture itself. As such, Asia has produced many quality and internationally acclaimed authors.

Perhaps one of the most world-renowned Asian authors is Sun Tzu. He was a Chinese military general, strategist, and philosopher. By most accounts, he is credited for writing the book *The Art of War*. Sun Tzu impacted Chinese and Asian history both through his book as well as through the legends of the man. His experiences in battle in the late sixth century led him to write his book. In the years that followed, *The Art of War* was the favorite and most followed book of military leaders looking to understand the way their enemies thought. Over time, his book became one of the seven military classics in China. In modern times, Sun Tzu's book has found popularity among the military as well as political and business leaders. While its title suggests battle strategies, in reality his book discusses the general themes of planning and public leadership, as well as diplomacy and the formation of relationships. His ideas were perfectly followed by General Vo Nguyen Giap, who defeated both French and American forces during the Vietnam War. After their defeat, American military leaders also recognized the value of Sun Tzu's book and began studying it in their own training programs.

If one looks at history as a whole, it could be argued that one of the more famous

Asian authors is British Indian novelist Salman Rushdie. He has earned numerous literary awards as well as honorary degrees and positions from many universities in Europe and the USA. He even was made Sir Salman Rushdie by the Queen of England. As a writer, Rushdie has authored eleven novels which have been translated into forty languages. Regardless of his other countless successes, Rushdie may be most well known to the masses due to his controversial novel, *The Satanic Verses*. After its release in the late 1980s, the leader of Iran issued a death sentence on Rushdie because of his book. Rushdie was charged with writing against Islam, the Prophet, and the Muslim holy book, the Quran. For nine years, the author was forced to go into hiding. Despite this drama, Rushdie continued to write, as he does to this day.

Haruki Murakami is Japan's most famous living author. His works of both fiction and nonfiction have brought him the praise of critics and many awards. His writing often focuses on themes of alienation and being alone, and he is considered an important figure in modern literature. In fact, he has even been praised as being among the world's greatest living novelists. Interestingly, he only began writing fiction when he was twenty-nine, and unlike other Japanese authors he has been heavily influenced by Western culture. His book *Norwegian Wood* sold millions of copies in Japan, making him a literary superstar in his country. A more recent book is *1Q84*, or "1984," a play on George Orwell's fictional masterpiece, with "Q" representing the number 9. It was released in 2009 and sold more than one million copies in its first month. What started only with local success in Japan has traveled across the globe. For a man who admitted himself to be completely uncreative in life, his evolution into a well-respected and internationally successful author has been notable.

Asian authors have had a large amount of global influence with respect to both literature as well as culture. Sun Tzu was instrumental in forming military leadership and modern management principles. Salman Rushdie endured threats to his life to emerge as one of the leading authors of our time, and Haruki Murakami went against traditional Japanese literary trends and proved that regionally based literature could appeal to international readers. Overall, Asia has and will continue to produce a wealth of quality and influential writers.

- ¹⁰ lead — to motivate to do something
- ²⁸ issue — to officially proclaim
- ⁴⁷ evolution — a gradual process of development



Reading Comprehension

A Mark each statement as true (T), false (F), or inferred (I) according to the passage.

- | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|
| 1. Murakami's title <i>1Q84</i> was based on another book. | T | F | I |
| 2. Sun Tzu's book has been popular among businessmen. | T | F | I |
| 3. Rushdie didn't stop writing despite death threats. | T | F | I |
| 4. Many American military leaders wish they had read <i>The Art of War</i> before The Vietnam War. | T | F | I |
| 5. Most Asian fiction focuses on alienation and war. | T | F | I |

B Choose the best answer.

- According to paragraph 4, all of the following are true about Haruki Murakami EXCEPT
 - He is the most famous living author in Japan.
 - His writing has been influenced greatly by Western culture.
 - His most recent book sold only 100,000 copies in its first month.
 - His popularity has grown across the globe.
- What is the main idea of the passage?
 - Rushdie and Murakami are more popular than past authors such as Sun Tzu.
 - Asian authors have created, and continue to create, many excellent and influential books.
 - Sun Tzu is the most popular Asian author.
 - Asian literature spans nearly one thousand years and boasts many authors.
- Why did Salman Rushdie have to go into hiding for nine years?
 - Because he had been writing too much and needed time off
 - Because he criticized his government in one of his books
 - Because his life was threatened by the leader of England
 - Because he wrote a book that was very offensive to some Muslim people

C Complete the table below to summarize information about the three Asian authors discussed in the passage.

Author	Nationality	Book title	Reason for fame
Sun Tzu			
	British-Indian		
		<i>1Q84</i>	