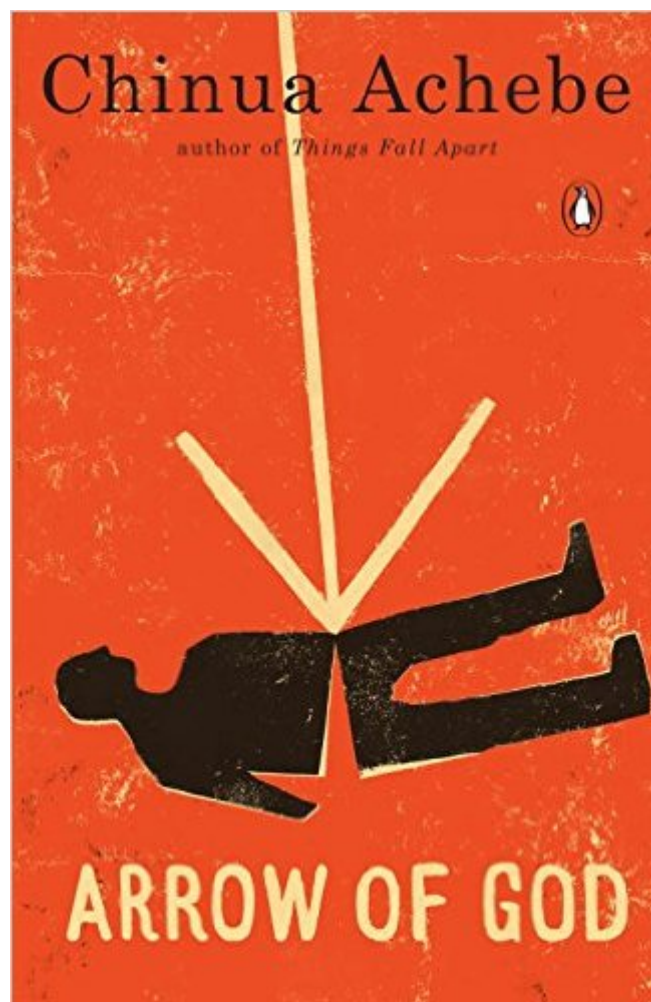


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# Arrow Of God



## Synopsis

The second novel in Chinua Achebe's masterful African trilogy, following *Things Fall Apart* and preceding *No Longer at Ease* — Regarded by Chinua Achebe as his greatest achievement, *Arrow of God* is a tale of the generation that came after Okonkwo as they took up their own struggle between continuity and change. Ezeulu, the headstrong chief priest of the god Ulu, is worshipped by the six villages of Umuaro. But his authority is increasingly under threat — from rivals within his tribe, from functionaries of the colonial government, and even from his own family members. Yet he believes himself to be untouchable: surely he is an arrow in the bow of his God? Armed with this belief, he is prepared to lead his people, even if it is towards their own destruction. But his people will not be dominated so easily. — Spare and powerful, *Arrow of God* is an unforgettable portrayal of the loss of faith, and the downfall of a man in a society forever altered by colonialism.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Being Igbo, and having read almost all that Chinua Achebe has written, I can say that this is one of the best literary works I have ever come across. I read *Arrow of God* for the first time when I was about fourteen and even at that age, it made a great impression on me. I have read it repeatedly over the years, and with each read, the raw reality of this book thinly veiled by what another reviewer referred to as "polite prose" completely immersed me in Ezeulu's society, generation and struggle. This was a wonderful story written by one of the greatest story-tellers ever. I recommend this book and all of Chinua Achebe's work to any and everyone.

I know that many people have read *Things Fall Apart*, but that is not his greatest novel. I was not forced to read any of his books. I was just curious. It exposed me to some of the greatest literature I could ever have known. *Arrow of God* is by far my favorite Achebe book. So if you think *Things Fall Apart* is good, *Arrow of God* is so much deeper. You get to know the characters so much better. You feel like you are part of the scene. It is more personal. You see more into different people's lives. I read a lot of books. This one is one of my favorite.

"*Arrow of God*" is another excellent novel by the world renowned Chinua Achebe. I have read this novel perhaps five times, having first read it decades ago. I still get thrilled and marvel at the ability of Chinua Achebe to tell a good story that keeps the reader wanting to read more. I have also read "*Things Fall Apart*" and "*Man of the People*", which are all excellent reading for those interested in African literature. The story is set in a traditional Igbo village in Western Nigeria where the author traces how the age old traditions that had stood the test of time were systematically eroded by colonial rule. An important lesson we learn is that we need to change with the times and be adaptive to the constant changes, otherwise we perish. This is a well written book by a remarkable author that is very interesting to read as well as enlightening.

In response to our young friend who was so insidiously "forced" to read Mr. Achebe's works in a 10th-grade English class, I can say this: Since most products of American high schools are so terribly unaccustomed to thought, I'm afraid you really don't know (yet) what you're missing. My first experience with Mr. Achebe was "*Things Fall Apart*." My response, at age 15, was not much different than yours. However, the characters somehow stayed with me. Don't ask me why--perhaps I always wanted to know what happened to Okonkwo (I never finished it the first time). Ten years later, when I found the book in a Burlington, VT second-hand bookstore, I decided to try it again. Within weeks, I had read and re-read the simple, "polite" prose with great curiosity and awareness. Achebe doesn't fill his stories up with muck like so much MTV-style Hollywood mung. He asks something of his audience; writing about the bitter, yet ultimately unavoidable end to a cultural identity with which most anybody can sympathize. All the while, he refrains from employing flowery rhetoric and ambiguity, instead choosing honesty and simplicity. The message of his writings about the Ibo is, if anything, that nothing lasts forever. Thankfully, this means the MTV generation won't always need to be lead by the hand with flashy prose and speed-of-light transitions. Here's to the thinkers!!

Like Chinua Achebe's first novel (*Things Fall Apart*), *Arrow of God* takes us back to the traditional village culture of the Igbo nation in Western Nigeria, tracing its destruction under British colonial rule. Once again, too, the story centers on a tribal elder who embodies the old ways so profoundly that he will be destroyed along with them. Achebe uses fiction to do what ethnology can never accomplish: to take us "inside" an indigenous culture, letting us see and feel how its customs and beliefs support the rhythms of daily living. With an extraordinary blend of sympathy and detachment, he captures the human tragedy in the destruction of a way of life.

This is a complex book with several levels of meaning. On the surface, it seems to be a story of a traditional Nigerian priest dealing with the introduction of Christianity to his community and the tragic consequences. This is a story most of us are familiar with. On another level, the priest is Everyman, struggling to know what God wants of him. This book should be on the reading list of every college philosophy and religion class. It raises many questions about who decides what entity to worship, what our relationship is with God, how we view other religions. Then on another level, one suspects that the Nigerian author Chinua Achebe, who won a Nobel Prize for Literature, is having a good time messing with our minds! It helps to read the Book of Ezekiel while reading *Arrow of God*. Only someone like Achebe, who was brought up a Christian amidst traditional Nigerian gods, standing with one foot in Africa and one in the West, could paint the big picture for us. *Arrow of God* is like American Jazz--it weaves many themes together. Of course American Jazz is based on traditional African music.

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