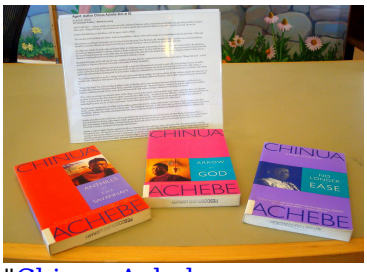
Daniel A. Nkemleke, "Entry on: Arrow of God by Chinua Achebe", peer-reviewed by Divine Che Neba and Elizabeth Hale. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2018). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/35. Entry version as of November 21, 2026.

Chinua Achebe

Arrow of God

United Kingdom (1964)

TAGS: African Mythologies African Traditions



"Chinua Achebe Display" by Pesky Librarians ("Arrow of God", published in 1989 by Anchor Books, is in the middle). Retrieved from flickr.com, licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0 (accessed: 4 July 2022).

General information	
Title of the work	Arrow of God
Country of the First Edition	United Kingdom
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	1964
First Edition Details	Chinua Achebe, *Arrow of God*. London: Heinemann, 1964, 287 pp.
ISBN	100435905309
Genre	Fiction, Novels
Target Audience	Crossover
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This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.

Creators



Chinua Achebe by Dave Pape. Retrieved from Wikipedia Commons, licensed under Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported (accessed: December 8, 2021).

Chinua Achebe , 1930 - 2013
(Author)

Chinua Ache is one of the most popular African writes of fiction. His works are translated into many languages and studied in universities across the world. His first novel, *Things Fall Apart* (1958) has sold more than 12 million copies in recent years, and translated into more than 50 languages. The novel is a household book in every literate community in Africa, and probably beyond. Achebe was born to a peasant family in Igbo land in Nigeria where story telling was the custom. This probably explains why he took on the habit of writing stories, and did so very successfully. He was educated in Ibadan and taught in many universities in the USA in the later part of his life. He won several awards for contribution to the understanding of African culture in his life time. The major themes that cut across his writings are the clash of cultures (African and the West), society, the political situation of Nigeria/Africa etc. Some of his famous novels include: *No Longer at Ease* (1960), *A Man of the People* (1966), *Anthills of the Savanah* (1987). Chinua Achebe also wrote essays such as *Civil Peace* (1971), *Vengeful Creditor* (1972), including his famous children's storybook *Chike and the River* (1966).

Source:

Biography at the biography.com (accessed: July 9, 2018).

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Additional information

Summary

Arrow of God is a classic tragedy which depicts the fall of a tragic hero caused by both his hubris and outside forces beyond his understanding. The title comes from an Igbo proverb in which a person or event is said to represent the Will of God

Ezeulu, the chief priest of the Umuaru clan, wields enormous power over the six federated villages that make up the clan. Part of his role is to store up twelve healthy yams in his barn which he roasts and eats without salt or palm oil immediately he sees a new moon. Until he has eaten the last one, no one can venture to their farm to harvest yams. However, his authority has always been challenged by smaller gods of other villages especially Idemili, who accuses Ezeulu of overstepping his bounds. The greatest threat, however, comes from the arrival of the white missionaries and colonial government. In order to fully understand the source of the white man's strength and to be aware of his activities, Ezeulu sends one of his sons, Oduche, to the missionary school – further deepening the rift between him and his rivals who see this is an act of betrayal and vaulting ambition.

The colonial administration decides to designate a local chief to help administer the six villages. By virtue of his legendary honesty, Ezeulu is chosen by Captain Winterbottom, the head of the colonial administration; but he rejects the position. Enraged and humiliated, Winterbottom orders his detention. Consequently, for the two months he is detained, he is unable to perform the yam ritual. When he is eventually released, the elders plead with him to consume the two remaining yams so that people can go and harvest their yams, but he stubbornly refuses. Ezeulu uses this incident as a means of punishing his people for not rising against the white man on his behalf. The people finish their yam reserves and begin to starve yet Ezeulu refuses to compromise. In the meantime, the missionaries preach against the traditional ritual and present Jesus Christ as the only one who can bless their crops. People are encouraged to harvest their crops. As the people harvest their crops, Ezeulu's favourite son Obika dies unexpectedly. This is too hard for Ezeulu's already fragile mind. He goes mad, marking the defeat of his god and perhaps the triumph of the Christian God.

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Analysis	*Arrow of God* dramatizes what happens when people deviate from their traditional ways of life and embrace a foreign culture. It introduces us to the theme of cultural conflict and its aftermath. Besides the conflict between Western and African traditions, the novel brings into the limelight Umuaru religious ritual practices related to the worship of gods and the practice of agriculture. Ezeulu, as the novel indicates, presides over the feast that paves the way to the harvest period. Similar rituals are recorded in many agricultural societies and thus mentioned in various mythologies worldwide.
Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	African Mythologies African Traditions
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Conflict Religious beliefs Society Values

Further Reading

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