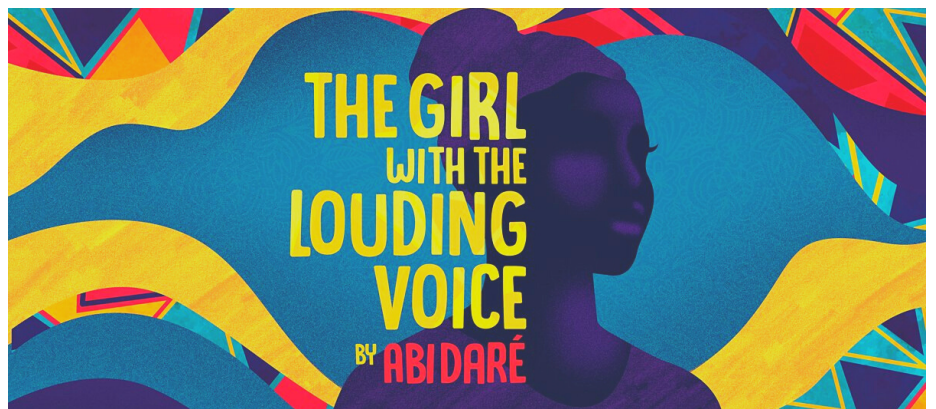
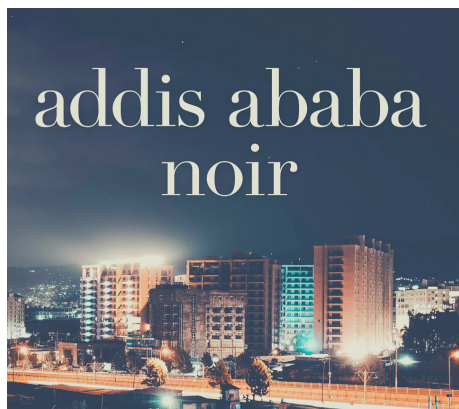
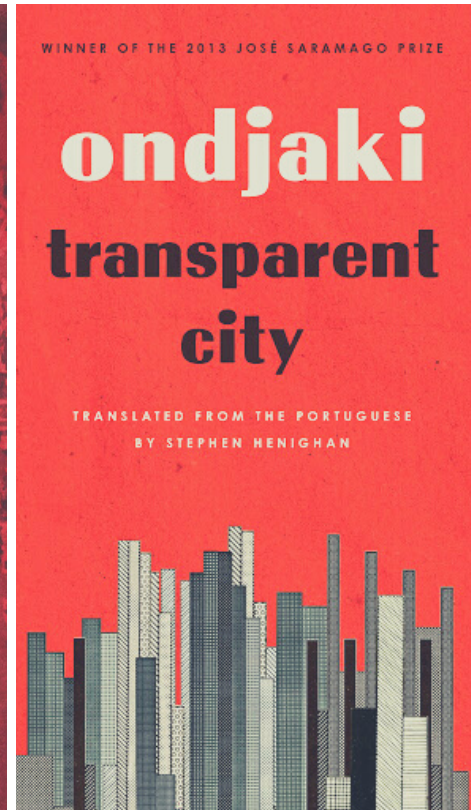


Curated by Dr. Ainehi Egoro-Glines and Vincent Ogoti, M.A.

AFRICAN BOOKS LIST

Fiction - Poetry - Essay - Memoirs - Comics



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INTRODUCTION

by Ainehi Edoro-Glines

Thanks to the African Studies Program for the invitation to curate a collection of African books for Wisconsin readers.

African literature has never been more vibrant. It has had an expanded global influence in the last 20 years. Writers are exploring storytelling in all its diversity and representing the continent's cultures and experiences. There is a rise in creative non-fiction and exciting genres like science fiction, crime thriller, comic, YA, and children's books. While the 150+ books listed in this collection are by no means exhaustive, they capture this wealth of creative expression.

Several lists make up this collection. There is a very long fiction list and a few short lists covering poetry and non fiction. The lists are organized in two ways. The first set of lists are chronological for readers who want their exploration to be guided by time. These lists begin in 2020 and move back in time all the way to the classics. For readers who want to be guided by interests, some of books have been sorted into genres and themes.

While most decades are accounted for on these lists, the majority of the books are from the last 20 years, with an emphasis on the last 3 years. This is deliberate. We want to celebrate the new voices capturing the beauty and complexities of the contemporary African experience.



African literature is the most expanding literature in the world. There are those who go so far as to say that the future is African literature.

- Ben Okri, *Brittle Paper*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST BY CHRONOLOGY

FICTION	1 - 21
MEMOIRS AND BIOGRAPHY	22 - 24
ESSAY	25 - 26
POETRY	27 - 28
CHILDREN'S BOOKS	29 - 30

LIST BY GENRE + SUBJECT MATTER

LGBTQ	32 - 33
COMICS	34 - 35
YA/MIDDLE GRADE	36
FANTASY/SPECULATIVE/MYTHOLOGY	37 - 40
SCIENCE FICTION	41 - 42
HISTORICAL FICTION	43 - 45
TRILOGY	46 - 48
SHORT STORY COLLECTION	49 - 50

FICTION

*This list covers the last one hundred years of modern African fiction. It is organized in reverse chronological order: begins with Yaa Gyasi's *Transcendent Kingdom* and ends with Thomas Mofolo's *Chaka* published in 1923. Though the list is by no means exhaustive, it gives readers a taste of the rich variety of storytelling in the African narrative tradition. There are disproportionately more books from the last three years: a deliberate decision meant to introduce readers to new writing. The list contains novels, novellas, comic books, and short story collections. There is a separate list for children's books. See content page.*

1. *Transcendent Kingdom* (2020) by Yaa Gyasi

Yaa Gyasi's second novel is an intimate, heart-rending story about a Ghanaian family in Alabama. Haunted by tragic experiences from childhood, Gifty, a Stanford post-grad of neuroscience, seeks to unravel the mystery of her family's misfortune.

2. *A Broken People's Playlist* (2020) by Chimeka Garricks

Chimeka Garrick's music-inspired collection is an opera of life in Port Harcourt, one of Nigeria's most beloved cities. All twelve stories, woven around music references, capture the varied lives of average Nigerians experiencing love, heartbreak, and self-discovery.

3. *A Girl Is A Body of Water* (2020) by Jennifer Nansubuga Makumbi

In Nattetta, a small Ugandan village, a girl named Kirabo battles a secret and ancient power awakening inside her. Makumbi departs from her debut novel in this inspiring story exploring myths of origin centered on women's lives.

4. *Raybearer* (2020) by Jordan Ifueko

Ifueko draws from African oral stories to build a stunning fantasy world. Evoking Adeyemi's *Children of Blood and Bone*, the novel features a female character bent on finding her place in the world on her own terms.

5. The Waiting by Martin Egblewogbe (2020) by Martin Egblewogbe

Renown master of the short story, Martin Egblewogbe, stuns yet again in this collection of dark, absurdist tales set in the city of Accra. Get ready for a disembodied penis, a lusting pastor, and everything in-between.

6. The Missing American (2020) by Kwei Quartey

After 5 books, Quartey retires the Inspector Darko series and introduces a new private investigator named Emma Djan. In the first book of the new series, she is hot on the trails of email scammers and fetish priests.

7. The Perfect Nine: The Epic of Gĩkũyũ and Mũmbi (2020) by Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o

The Perfect Nine is Ngũgĩ's feminist spin on a Gikuyu origin story. In the original epic, Gĩkũyũ and Mũmbi pray for nine suitors to marry their nine daughters. In Ngũgĩ's retelling, 9 daughters decide who is worthy among 99 suitors.

8. The Infinite (2020) by Patience Agbabi

Patience Agbabi creates a finely constructed sci-fi world around Leaplings--- children who can leap through time. A beautifully imagined world peppered with Nigerian cultural references, this book about a time-traveling black girl is an inspiring read.

9. The Girl with the Louding Voice (2020) by Abi Daré

A tear-jerker-that-will-leave-you-unbelievably-inspired, Abi Daré's debut is about Adunni, a girl from a rural Nigerian town, who surmounts ordeals to fulfill her dreams of living a better life, all the while refusing to stifle her "lounding voice."

10. At Night All Blood is Black (2020) by David Diop

This dark, twisted war story is about Senegalese men who fought in the first world war. At the heart of the story is an enigmatic character entangled in a web of revenge killing and rumors of black magic.

11. The Death of Viveki Oji (2020) by Akwaeke Emezi

Nigerian novelist Akwaeke Emezi makes history with *The Death of Viveki Oji*, which explores trans experience in the Nigerian context. Like their debut novel *Freshwater*, this novel leads us right into the heart of a character who pays the ultimate price for daring to be different.

12. His Only Wife (2020) by Peace Adzo Medie

This debut novel is about love in Accra. Afi imagines her life changing for the better with her move to Accra and her marriage to Elikem, only to get caught up in an inconvenient love triangle.

13. Of Passion and Ink: New Voices from Cameroon (2020) edited by Dzekashu MacViban

Dzekashu MacViban of Bakwa Books is a champion of Cameroonian indie publishing. With this collection, which he edits, he reawakens the Cameroonian short story tradition. The collection features new voices and covers everything from romance to speculative fiction.

14. Little Family (2020) by Ishmael Beah

Ishmael Beah has long captivated readers with stories about Sierra Leon. In his new novel, a group of friends live in an abandoned airplane, making a living and sharing a bond that is far thicker than blood.

15. The Deep Blue Withing (2020) by Ayesha Harruna Attah

Hassana and Husseina are twin sisters. An encounter with slave raiders pull them continents apart, but their love for travel bring them back together. Set in 19th century Accra, this YA historical fiction is a beautiful sibling story.

16. Nairobi Noir (2020) edited by Peter Kimani

Nairobi Noir takes readers into the enigmas that haunt Kenya's most populous city through the deft storytelling of a stellar cast of writers, which includes Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, Stanley Gazemba, Makena Onjerika, and Troy Onyango.

17. Addis Ababa Noir (2020) edited by Maaza Mengiste

Edited by Booker Prize shortlisted novelist Maaza Mengiste, *Addis Ababa Noir* rounds up a brilliant cast of Ethiopian writers to ponder the dark underbelly of one of Africa's oldest cities through page-turning crime stories guaranteed to keep your pulse thumping.

18. A Family Affair (2020) by Sue Nyathi

Sue Nyathi's latest offering is a family drama featuring a patriarch, his wife, and their three daughters. Set in the city of Bulawayo, the story revolves around the gradual unraveling of the family's seemingly perfect life.

19. Joburg Noir (2020) edited by by Niq Mhlongo

Joburg Noir is an anthology of twenty stories exploring the myths, fears, legends, and fantasies that have made South Africa's Johannesburg one of the most storied cities in contemporary African fiction.

20. Ikenga (2020) Nnedi Okorafor

Nnedi Okorafor dips into Igbo mythology to build a dazzling fantasy world for readers between ages 8 to 12. Following a personal tragedy, a boy named Nnamdi must confront powers that seek to destroy his hometown Kalaria.

21. Ogadinma Or, Everything Will Be All Right (2020) Ukamaka Olisakwe

Ukamaka Olisakwe's second novel tells the story of Ogadinma, a woman who undergoes the most harrowing experiences in a world ruled by patriarchal values but fights unrelentingly for dignity and the right to happiness.

22. Straight from the Horse's Mouth (2020) by Meryem Alaoui (trans.) Emma Ramadan

Meryem Alaoui's debut is finally available to English readers. Set in Casablanca, it chronicles the life a prostitute named Jmai---a perceptive, alluring character who charms with her fascinating takes on the world around her.

23. Exhale: Queer African Erotic Fiction (2020) edited by HOLAAfrica!

HOLAAfrica!, a platform known for advocating sex positivity partners with South Africa's Blackbird Books in this "delightfully risqué" collection of stories exploring queer African life.

24. Incomplete Solutions (2019) by Wole Talabi

One of Nigeria's foremost sci-fi writer, Wole Talabi takes the reader on a journey that spans African cities and distant planets. *Incomplete Solution* is a collection of stories exploring technology, the future, and the African experience.

25. An Orchestra of Minorities (2019) by Chigozie Obioma

Chigozie Obioma tops the breakout success of his debut novel *The Fisherman* with this novel about a poultry farmer who falls in love with a woman he saves from jumping off a bridge. The ensuing love story spirals into a set of messy life decisions that take the characters on a breathtaking odyssey.

26. Out of Darkness, Shining Light (2019) by Patina Gappa

Zimbabwean novelist Patina Gappa's fourth book narrates the captivating experiences of the men and women who carried explorer and missionary Dr. Livingstone's body, papers, and maps, fifteen hundred miles across the continent so that his remains could be returned home to England. The novel is one of NPR's Best Books of 2019 and the 2020 Chautauqua Prize winner.

27. David Mogo, Godhunter (2019) by Suyi Davies Okungbowa

Writers like Suyi Davies Okungbowa are boldly experimenting with storytelling, and the results are often stunning. David Mogo God Hunter is a delightful, fast-paced story set in a fantastical world built around Yoruba deities.

28. Better Never Than Late (2019) Chika Unigwe

Better Never Than Late is a collection of stories loosely connected by Prosperous Agu, a couple whose home in Belgium is a gathering place for African visitors in their wanderings through Europe. Chika Unigwe captures the complexes of desire, loss, and longing that define the life of the immigrant.

29. Bird Summons (2019) Leila Aboulela

Leila Aboulela takes a break from short stories to write this gorgeous novel about three friends who encounter a mythical creature. Magic and folklore provide the narrative raw materials for a novel that explores questions of faith, femininity, and love through powerful representations of women's lives.

30. Do You Dream of Terra-Two? (2019) Temi Oh

In mainstream sci-fi, outer space is for superheroes and villains. Temi Oh subverts this tradition with a story about the emotional costs of space travel. 10 astronauts—6 are teenagers—set out on a mission to Earth's twin planet but fall into hard times as they deal with the personal toll of a 23-year journey.

31. On Ajayi Crowther Street (2019) Elnathan John

With his first comic book, Elnathan John channels the absurd and delightful quirks of life in Africa's most chaotic cities. He transports the reader to Ajayi Crowther Street, a typical Lagos neighborhood where gossip, lies, secrets, big and little drama move life in unpredictable flows.

32. A Small Silence (2018) Jumoke Verissimo

Poet turned fiction writer, Jumoke Verissimo brings readers a gorgeously unusual story. *A Small Silence* tells the story of Prof. who never turns on the light in his dusty Lagos apartment where he holds a nightly meeting with a female visitor he can't see and who can't see him.

33. Let's Tell This Story Properly (2019) Jennifer Makumbi

After her critically acclaimed debut novel, Jennifer Makumbi had fans waiting impatiently for her next offering. *Let's Tell This Story Properly* (published in the UK as *Manchester Happened*) is a brilliant short story collection centered on the lives of Ugandans in Britain.

34. Don't Whisper Too Much (2019) by Frieda Ekoto

Frieda Ekoto's fiction opens up new grounds in African queer writing. She was one of the first to write fiction with humanizing representations of the lives of francophone African women loving women. This translation of two of her novellas is a gift to Anglophone readers.

35. Shadow King (2019) by Maaza Mengiste

Set in the late 1930s during the Italian-Ethiopian War, *Shadow King* tells the story of Hirut, a peasant girl who inspires a band of women to stir a world dominated by men. The novel was shortlisted for the 2020 Booker Prize.

36. Triangulum (2019) by Masande Ntshanga

Masande Ntshanga's *Triangulum* is a suspenseful dose of futuristic, apocalyptic, and philosophical goodness. Set in 2040, the story is centered on a manuscript that foretells the end of the world. A retired professor and science fiction writer is called upon to look into these claims.

37. La Bastarda (2019) by Trifonia Melibea Obono

La Bastarda is the first novel by an Equatorial Guinean woman to be translated into English. Obono narrates the story of an orphaned teen Okomo as she comes to terms with her sexuality. She finds herself falling in love with a close companion and rebelling against the rigid norms of Fang culture.

38. A Particular Kind of Black Man (2019) by Tope Folarin

In his debut, Nigerian-American novelist Tope Folarin captures the experiences of a black family and their struggle against racism in the US. The story is a beautiful and poignant exploration of the meaning of memory, manhood, home, and identity as seen through the eyes of a first-generation Nigerian-American.

39. Girl, Woman, Other (2019) by Bernadine Evaristo

A history-making book, *Girl, Woman, Other* won Bernadine Evaristo the coveted Booker Prize, making her the first black woman to do so. Dripping with poetry and experimental flair, the novel presents a series of portraits that reflect the textured lives of black women in Britain.

40. Children of Blood and Bones (2018) by Tomi Adeyemi

Children of Blood and Bone is the first book in the Orisha Legacy trilogy. Drawing from Yoruba mythology, Adeyemi tells the story of a girl who, at the risk of losing everything, goes on a near impossible odyssey to save the world and magic.

41. Return to the Enchanted Island (2019) by Johary Ravaloson

Madagascar-born novelist Johary Ravaloson reimagines a Malagasy myth in this coming-of-age tale about a young anti-hero and his struggle to fulfill the demands of a cultural legacy. *Return to the Enchanted Island* is his first novel to be translated into English. It won the Prix du roman de l'Océan Indien.

42. Speak No Evil (2018) Uzodinma Iweala

In his second novel, the bestselling author of *Beast of No Nation* leaves the war zone and the figure of the child soldier for a different kind of drama --- the kind that takes place in the household. The novel captures the intrigue and betrayals that trail a conservative Nigerian father's discovery that his son Niru is queer.

43. When Trouble Sleeps (2018) Leye Adenle

In this sequel to Adenle's crime fiction favorite, *Easy Motion Tourist*, Amaka Mbadiwe, is still the champion and protector of sex-workers, still has zero tolerance for powerful men who hurt women, and works just as hard to make the city of Lagos safe for vulnerable members of the society.

44. This Mournable body (2018) Tsitsi Dangaremba

This Booker Prize shortlisted novel is the third book in the Tambudzai Trilogy. Alone and close to being destitute, Tambudzai leaves the city for her parent's homestead. But, there are no guaranties that she will find the good life that has always eluded her.

45. Shuri #1 (2018) Nnedi Okorafor and Leonardo Romero

If there is any author who can turn the enviable life of T'Challa's technophile sister Shuri into a wildly successful spinoff, it is Nnedi Okorafor. Enter Shuri's world of gadgets, gizmos, and black girl magic.

46. My Sister, the Serial Killer (2018) Oyinkan Braithwaite

Nigerian novelist Oyinkan Braithwaite's debut novel is a dark, hair-raising but funny story about two sisters, one a serial killer, the other an accomplice. In this narrative, the quote “a true sister will stand by your side” is pushed to its darkest extreme. The novel was nominated for the 2019 Booker Prize.

47. Silence is My Mother Tongue (2018) Sulaiman Addonia

This mesmerizing story is set in an East African refugee camp. A young woman named Saba finds that, against the chaos of war and the fragility of refugee life, she must hold on to the things that matter. It's impossible not to fall in love with Saba. She brings a ton of emotional texture to the story.

48. House of Stone (2018) by Novuyo Tshuma

The disappearance of a teenage boy sparks this epic tale about a couple's search for their son and the uncertain alliances they must court to get to the root of their loss. 400 pages of lightening wit, swirling with memorable characters.

49. Lagos Noir (2018) edited by Chris Abani

The first of Akashic Books' African city crime series, this collection is as delightful as it is ground breaking. Famed Nigerian novelist Chris Abani invites 13 writers to portray Lagos from every possible perspective. Each writer brings out the dark, whimsical, and endearing side of Africa's most enigmatic city.

50. Malika: The Queen Warrior (2018) Roye Okupe et al

Roye Okupe recreates 15th century West Africa in the second installment of the Malika series. Malika is a warrior queen and all round amazing leader. But her work as an empire builder is far from being over. As the Kingdom of Azzaz comes under new threats, she renews her resolve to protect her people.

51. La Guardia #1 (2018) Nnedi Okorafor

A pregnant sci-fi heroine, a sentient plant, and a New York City swarming with shape-shifting alien immigrants. Nigerian-American sci-fi writer Okorafor is undoubtably gifted in imagining future worlds built on black life. The La Guardia series went on to win the Hugo Award for best graphic novel or comic.

52. Kugali Comics: An African Anthology (2018) Kugali Media

Kugali Media's Raki Edition is a great resource for comic book lovers. It showcases stunning work by African artists and writers. The multi-genre collection features historical narratives, but also contemporary and futuristic pieces.

53. Intruders (2018) Mohale Mashigo

Mohale Mashigo, also known as Black Porcelain, burst into the African literary limelights with her unforgettable novel, titled Yearning. With her first short story collection, she mobilizes all her speculative fiction chops to dissect the feeling and experience of finding power in being different.

54. German Calendar, No December (2018) Sylvia Ofili and Birgit Weyhe

This stunning debut is the work of Swedish Nigerian writer Sylvia Ofili. It is a coming of age story about a mixed-race girl and her journey from the Nigerian city of Warri to Lagos to Germany. The Lagos bit of her experience is a wild tale of Nigerian boarding school shenanigans---the punishments, the chores, urban legends.

55. A Spy in Time (2018) Imraan Coovadia

Johannesburg is the center of this post-apocalyptic story where a spy journeys through time to solve a mystery on which the fate of the world depends. Coovadia's blend of espionage and sci-fi creates a mind-bending tale that changes how we imagine Africa as a futuristic space.

56. *She Would be King* (2018) by Wayetu Moore

In her fantasy-infused historical novel, Liberian writer Wayetu Moore retells the dramatic story of Liberia's origin through the lives of three strangers bound by secret powers. In her signature poetic style, she explores the complex ties that bind Africans and the diaspora.

57. *Dance of the Jakaranda* (2017) by Peter Kimani

Peter Kimani is an award-winning Kenyan novelist and journalist. *Dance of the Jakaranda* is set in the shadows of Kenya's independence from Great Britain. The novel reimagines the unique circumstances that brought black, brown, and white men together to lay the railroad that heralded a nation's birth.

58. *After the Flare* (2017) Deji Olukotun

In a post-apocalyptic world where the United States and the rest of world are cut off from civilization, the fate of humanity rests on the only functioning space station in Nigeria. A former NASA employee, an eccentric lunar geologist, and a brilliant scientist from India form an unlikely union in a bid to save the world from impending danger.

59. *The Woman Next Door* (2016) by Yewande Omotoso

The Woman Next Door tells the story of two strong-willed widows living next door to each other in an affluent neighborhood in Cape Town, South Africa. An accident brings these women together despite their enmity. The novel was a Finalist for the International Dublin Literary Award and the Aidoo-Snyder Book Prize.

60. *Rosewater* (2016) by Tade Thompson

Rosewater is the first installment in a trilogy by British born award-winning Nigerian author Tade Thompson. *Rosewater* is a town on edge. A community formed around the edges of a mysterious alien biodome. Its residents comprise the hopeful, the hungry, and the helpless—people eager for a glimpse inside the dome or a taste of its rumored healing powers.

61. *Behold the Dreamers* (2016) by Imbolo Mbue

Mbue's debut novel narrates the experience of an immigrant family from Cameroon and their employer in New York City during the 2008 financial crisis. The novel grapples with a global economic meltdown and how this crisis affects immigrants. The novel won the Pen/Faulkner Award.

62. Homegoing (2016) by Yaa Gyasi

The debut novel by Ghanaian American author Yaa Gyasi follows the parallel paths of two half-sisters and their descendants through eight generations: from the Gold Coast to the plantations of Mississippi, from the American Civil War to Jazz Age Harlem. Yaa Gyasi's extraordinary novel illuminates slavery's troubled legacy both for those who were taken and those who stayed.

63. Small Country (2016) by Gael Faye

Set in Burundi and Rwanda in 1993, *Small Country* is a semi-autobiographical account of Gael Faye's experience growing up in these regions. The novel describes the loss of innocence as seen through the eyes of a child caught in the vortex of history.

64. Season of Crimson Blossoms (2015) by Abubakar Adam Ibrahim

Season of Crimson Blossoms tells the captivating story of an illicit affair between a young street gang leader and an elderly widow. Set in a conservative Muslim community in Nigeria, the story pushes the boundaries on gender expectations. The novel won the NLNG, Nigerian Prize for Literature.

65. Under the Udala Trees (2015) by Chinelo Okparanta

Set in 1960s Nigeria during the Biafra war, this debut novel tells the story of Ijeoma and her experience exploring her sexuality in a homophobic world. It is a moving and triumphant story of a young woman fighting to live a full life in a world that seeks to diminish her experience.

66. Binti (2015) by Nnedi Okorafor

The first book in Okorafor's celebrated sci-fi trilogy, *Binti* is the story of a Himba girl with extraordinary math skills. She is on her way to the prestigious Oomza University when a tragedy suddenly strikes, prompting her to abandon her initial plan and instead try to save humanity. *Binti* is interplanetary space odyssey meet black girl magic. The novella won multiple awards, including the 2016 Hugo Award, 2016 Nebula Award, 2016 British Fantasy Award, and 2017 Nommo Award.

67. Natives (2015) by Inongo vi Makome

Cameroonian author Inongo vi Makonge explores the dark side of life as an undocumented immigrant in Europe. Two friends hatch a plan to hire one of Barcelona's many illegal African immigrants to meet their sexual needs. Bambara Keita is homeless and seems like a perfect fit. But when the arrangement begins to unravel, Bambara Keita must make a decision that will determine the course of his life.

68. Blackass (2015) by Igoni Barret Igoni

Kafka's *Metamorphosis* gets a Nigerian reboot in this story. Igoni Barrett gives Kafka's classic a stunningly beautiful make over in a tale about an unemployed Nigerian man who wakes up one ordinary morning and finds he is a white man. Furo Wariboko's new life as a white man is a series of adventures played out in the devious streets of Lagos.

69. Moor's Account (2014) by Laila Lalami

Mustafa al-Zamori, also known as Estebanico, is the first black explorer of the Americas. Moroccan novelist Laila Lalami brings him back to life in this powerful fictional memoirs centered on his travels. The novel was longlisted for the Booker prize.

70. Tram 83 (2014) by Fiston Mwanza Mujila

Tram 83 is Congolese writer Fiston Mujila's debut novel. It narrates the experiences of a struggling writer who moves from the backwaters of Congo to a mining city run by a warlord. The novel won the 2015 Etisalat Prize for Debut African Fiction and was nominated for the Man Booker International Prize.

71. All Our Names (2014) Dinaw Mengestu

All Our Names is the third novel by the acclaimed Ethiopian author Dinaw Mengestu, a MacArthur Foundation genius grant recipient. The novel tells a love story about a searing affair between an American woman and an African man in 1970s America.

72. A Killing the Sun (2014) by Dilman Dila

Ugandan writer Dilman Dila is known for his ground breaking writing. With this collection, he offers stories exploring various aspects of Africa's technofutures.

73. The Orchard of Lost Souls (2013) by Nadifa Mohamed

In *The Orchard of Lost Souls*, Somaliland-born author Nadifa Mohamed tells the story of a nation spiraling into civil war, through the eyes of three women.

74. Americanah (2013) by Chimamanda Adichie

Ifemelu, a young Nigerian woman, moves to the United States to attend school. In a series of musings about her experiences, she shows a perspective on American life as seen through the eyes of an African woman. *Americanah* won the 2013 National Book Critics Circle Award.

75. We Need New Names (2013), by NoViolet Bulawayo

A Booker Prize shortlisted novel, *We Need New Names* tells the powerful coming-of-age story of a Zimbabwean girl named Darling and her ragtag band of slum kids. Bulawayo is known for her lyrical prose and humorous style.

76. Baho! (2012) by Roland Rugero

Roland Rugero's second book is set against the backdrop of war-torn Burundi. It tells the story of Nyamugari, a mute adolescent boy falsely accused of rape. Rugero's depiction of rural Burundi is stunningly pastoral.

77. AfroSF: Science Fiction by African Writers (2012) Edited by Ivor Hartmann

This groundbreaking collection is the first of three volumes in an anthology series featuring science fiction by African writers. The collection features writing by both established and upcoming writers. The series is loved by readers and hailed by critics. It has contributed to making African sci-fi an established genre.

78. Transparent City (2012) by Ondjaki

This is Ondjaki's magical realist account of life in Luanda. The story centers on Odonato, a man whose flesh becomes increasingly transparent as he encounters more of the bewildering city in search for his son. The novel won the José Saramago Literary Prize in 2013.

79. Open City (2011) by Teju Cole

Teju Cole's debut novel is the story of a Nigerian psychiatrist who takes long walks through the streets of New York City while musing on history, violence, and philosophy.

80. The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives (2010) by Lola Shoneyin

Under the shadow of a secret they all share about their husband, four wives push the boundaries on gender norms and expectations. Shoneyin's novel is packed full of humor.

81. Zoo City (2010) by Lauren Beukes

Lauren Beukes' third novel is centered on Zinzi December, an ex-drug addict, ex-reporter, and ex-convict who lives in Zoo City, a world where humans share a strange bond with animals.

82. The Hairdressers of Harare (2010) by Tendai Huchu

The Hairdressers of Harare is the debut novel by Zimbabwean writer Tendai Huchu. Set in Harare, it tells the story of Vimbai, a sought after hairdresser whose position in Mrs Khumalo's salon is threatened by the arrival of the enigmatic Dhumisani.

83. Memory of Love (2010) by Aminatta Forna

Memory of Love is set in post-war Sierra Leon. It explores the lives of characters searching for connection and absolution in a country still reeling from the aftermaths of a civil war. The novel won the Commonwealth Writers' Prize Best Book Award.

84. Lyric Alley (2010) by Leila Aboulela

British rule is nearing its end and with their son and heir turned suddenly incapacitated, a wealthy Sudanese family must make decisions that force them to come to terms with the shifting grounds of their claim to power. Aboulela presents a powerful portrait of 1950s Sudan.

85. Memoirs of a Porcupine (2006) by Alain Mabanckou

A talkative porcupine is the animal double of a man named Kibanda. The porcupine narrates the sordid tale of their escapades in a Congolese village.

Congo-Brazzaville author Alain Mabanckou crafts the story in his signature dark humor. The novel was a finalist for the Man Booker International Prize, 2015.

86. The Madams (2006) by Zukiswa Wanner

The Madams is the story of Thandi, a black woman who hires a white maid. The maid's presence disrupts her life and household, setting in motion a series of conflicts that evoke South Africa's history of racial tension.

87. The Unconfessed (2006) by Yvette Christianse

The Unconfessed is a beautifully poetic debut by South African born Yvette Christianse. Drawing from court records, she tells the gut-wrenching story of a 19th-century slave woman in South Africa. It was a finalist in the 2006 PEN/Hemingway Award.

89. Playing in the Light (2006) by Zoe Wicomb

Playing in the Light is the third novel by South African-Scottish writer Zoe Wicomb. Set in 1990s Cape Town, the novel revolves around Marion Campbell, who runs a travel agency and struggles to negotiate a complex relationship with Brenda, her first black employee in post-apartheid South Africa.

90. Everything Good Will Come (2005) by Sefi Atta

A coming of age story, Sefi Atta's debut novel tells the story of Enitan, chronicling her experience as she fights for independence amidst patriarchal expectations. The novel won the Wole Soyinka Prize for Literature in Africa.

91. Queen Pokou (2005) by Veronique Tadjo

Ivorian novelist Veronique Tadjo breaths new life into an old story. *Queen Pokou* is the story of the founding of the Baoule people by Queen Abraha Pokou in 18th Century. The story explores intimate relationships between mother and child and the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade.

92. Book of the Chameleon (2004) by Jose Agualusa

This is the surreal story of Félix Ventura who sells pasts to clients in need of new memories and lineages. One of Agualusa's most memorable novels, *The Book of the Chameleon* is narrated by a friendly gecko perched on Felix's living-room wall.

93. Graceland (2004) by Chris Abani

Graceland is the debut novel by Nigerian author Chris Abani. Lagos city is the setting for this story of a teenager who does an Elvis Presley impersonation to irk out a living. It explores the resilience of family and friendship in spite of harrowing experiences of bereavement and destitution.

94. Waiting for an Angel (2002) by Helon Habila

Struggling journalist Lomba is at the heart of loosely connected stories about life in Nigeria's military dictatorship. *Waiting for an Angel* is Habila's most lyrical novel and captures both the hopelessness and resilience of a world careening into political upheaval.

95. Heart of Redness (2000) by Zakes Mda

In the 19th century, a prophetess named Nongqawuse tells the Xhosa people to kill their cattle and burn their crops in order to send the British away from their land. The tragic outcome of carrying out her prophecy creates a rift in the community. 150 years later, the descendants are still at war, and their conflict is played out in an Eastern Cape town in South Africa.

96. Sleepwalking Land (1999) by Mia Cuto

This magical realist classic by Mozambican author Mia Couto tells the story of a boy and an old man barely surviving in a post-apocalyptic, war-ravaged town. They stumble upon a burned-out bus and decide to make it home. While clearing out the corpses trapped and burned in the bus, they find a journal kept by one of the dead passengers. Nightly reading of this journal transports the old man and the boy into alternate realities and parallel spaces.

97. Nuruddin Farah, Secrets (1998)

Secrets is the third novel in the Blood in the Sun trilogy by Somali writer Nuruddin Farah. It is a compelling dark family psychodrama, which tells the story of a Somali family straining under the mystery of a past that refuses to be kept secret. When the novel came out in 1998, it marked one of the crowning moments of the 20th century in the African literary scene.

98. Ben Okri, The Famished Road (1991)

The Famished Road is one of the most celebrated magical realist novels. Drawing from Yoruba mythology, Okri weaves the story of Azaro, a boy who is torn between a past life as a spirit being and a present life as a boy with magical powers. The novel won the Booker Prize for Fiction in 1991.

100. Woman of the Aeroplanes (1988) by Kojo Laing

Kojo Laing's novels are best for readers with a taste for extremely experimental books. *Woman of the Aeroplanes*, often cited as an early form of African science fiction, tells the story of an African village caught up in a distance-defying relationship with a Scottish town.

101. Woman at Point Zero (1983) by Nawal El Saadawi

Nawal El Saadawi draws from her study of imprisoned women in Egypt to write this gut-wrenching story about Firdaus, a woman who faces death sentence for killing a pimp. The story chronicles the experiences that brought Firdaus to that point.

102. July's People (1981) by Nadine Gordimer

July's People is a futuristic novel by South African author Nadine Gordimer written before the end of apartheid. Gordimer dramatizes a 'what if' situation on the relationship between blacks and whites. The novel tells the story of a white family, the Smales and their three children, rescued by their African servant July when forced to flee Johannesburg amid an all-black revolution.

103. Waiting for the Barbarians (1980) by J.M. Coetzee

Waiting for the Barbarians is a prize-winning novel by South African writer J.M. Coetzee. It is a startling allegory of the war between oppressor and oppressed. First published in 1980, it was chosen by Penguin for its series Great Books of the 20th Century.

104. Joys of Motherhood (1979) by Buchi Emecheta

After a childless marriage, Nnu Ego eventually remarries and has many children. But her tribulations are only just beginning. The novel captures the travails of a woman insisting on her humanity in a world held bound by patriarchal values.

105. So Long a Letter (1979) by Mariama Ba

In the isolation of mourning, Ramatoulaye pens a long letter to her best friend Aissatou now living in far away America. Ba's novel is a wonderful telling of what it means to be young, ambitious, and female in late 20th century Dakar. The novel won the inaugural Noma Prize for Publishing in Africa in 1980.

106. The House of Hunger (1978) by Dambudzo Marechera

The House of Hunger is a riotous beauty of a book composed of the titular novella and nine story fragments. It offers a searing look at black township life by following an ensemble of strange yet sometimes lovable characters.

107. Our Sister Killjoy (1977) by Ama Ata Aidoo

Our Sister Killjoy is the debut novel by Ghanaian author Ama Ata Aidoo. It tells the story of Sisi, a Ghanaian student living near the Bavarian forest. Ever so perceptive of the world around her, Sisi muses about race, history, and feminist ideas.

108. When Rain Clouds Gather (1968) by Bessie Head

Bessie Head was born in South Africa but is usually considered Botswana's most influential writer. *When Rain Clouds Gather*, set against the backdrop of rural Botswana, is a semi-autobiographical account of a young South African refugee who settles in a remote village in Botswana to escape the psychological torture of her experience of apartheid in South Africa.

109. The Beautiful Ones are Not Yet Born (1968) by Ayi Kwei Armah

The Beautiful Ones are Not Yet Born is a debut novel by Ghanaian writer Ayi Kwei Armah. Set against the backdrop of Ghana's independence, the novel dramatizes the experience of a clerk at the railway station as he struggles to confront the reality of post-independence Ghanaian.

110. A Grain of Wheat (1967) by Ngugi wa Thiong'o

A Grain of Wheat is considered one of Ngugi wa Thiong'o's best novels. Set in the wake of the Mau Mau rebellion, the novel reimagines the eve of Kenya's independence. It addresses the feelings and expectations of the people as they await political freedom.

111. Seasons of Migration to the North (1966) by Tayeb Salih

Warning bells are set off when Sa'eed, a farmer in a Sudanese village, addresses the narrator with an impeccable Oxford accent. As the story progresses, it becomes obvious that Sa'eed is hiding sordid and unspeakable secrets. The narrator's attempt to piece the puzzle of Sa'eed's elusive past draws him into a twisted tale of seduction and murder.

112. Efuru (1966) by Flora Nwapa

Efuru is thought to be the first-ever internationally published story by a black African woman. It chronicles the domestic life of a village woman as she challenges gender norms and resists the demands of patriarchy.

113. The Poor Christ of Bomba (1959) by Mongo Beti

It is the 1930s in a southern Cameroonian mission. A French priest called Father Drumont takes a 15-day trip into the interior to revitalize backsliding church members in the region of Tala. Meanwhile, the church is running a labor camp where unmarried girls are held. The story is told with Beti's signature humor and incisive critique of colonial power.

114. Things Fall Apart (1958) by Chinua Achebe

18 year old Okonkwo overcomes his lowly station in life to become a rich and famous farmer. But his charmed life goes on a downward spiral after he kills his foster son in an act of ritual execution. Achebe paints the life of a small 19th century African community with broad colorful strokes---ancestral festivals, wedding parties, squabbling co-wives, wrestling matches, beguiling folk tales, and catchy proverbs.

115. Amos Tutuola, My Life in the Bush of Ghosts (1954)

Amos Tutuola is a foremost Nigerian fantasist. In his second novel, he tells the story of a boy who enters a mysterious forest while running away from slave raiders. For 24 years, he searches for the way back home without much success, partly because what he imagines to be an ordinary patch of forest next to his hometown is actually the notorious Bush of Ghosts, a parallel world tucked between the human world and the sphere of the gods and peopled by strange creatures.

116. Camara Laye, The African Child (1953)

The African Child, first published in French as L'Enfant noir, is an autobiographical novel about Camara Laye's youth in Kouroussa, French Guinea.

117. Cry the Beloved Country (1948) by Alan Paton

Alan Paton was in a Norwegian Cathedral when he conceived the idea for this haunting novel about a small town Zulu priest and his desperate search for his son in the streets of Johannesburg.

118. Forest of a Thousand Deamons (1938) by D. O. Fagunwa

A pioneer of Yoruba fantasy, D. O. Fagunwa is best known for Forest of A Thousand Daemons, an adventure story about a hunter who goes on daredevil expeditions into an old forest haunted by strange and ghoulish creatures.

119. **Chaka (1923) by Thomas Mofolo**

Chaka is a fictional retelling of the exploits of the 19th century Zulu king Chaka. It chronicles Chaka's use of violence, military genius, charisma, and a good bit of magic to conquer surrounding nations and brings the Zulu people under his rule.

MEMOIRS AND BIOGRAPHY

Recent years has seen a rise in creative non-fiction of all kinds. The books in this collection covers a wide range of subject matters, including mental health, body image, creative life, and sexuality.

120. **The Dragons, the Giant, the Women (2020) Wayetu Moore**

Written in her signature lush prose, Wayetu Moore's memoir details her family's flight from Liberia's first war in the late '80s and her struggle to find a place in the United States, a country torn by racial conflict.

121. **That Hair (2020) (trans.) Eric Becker | Djaimilia Pereira de Almeida**

Angolan-Portuguese writer Djaimilia Pereira de Almeida reflects on the old truth that the personal is always political. In her semi-autobiography available in English for the first time, hair is a feminist trope for exploring race and self-discovery.

122. **Embracing My Shadow: Growing Up Lesbian in Nigeria (2020) by Unoma Azuah**

Nigerian writer and activist Unoma Azuah uses stories to make space for the expression of queer African life. Her memoir, *Embracing My Shadow*, is a brilliant chronicle of her experience as a lesbian in Nigeria.

123. **They Called Me Queer (2019) Windvogel and Koopman (Eds)**

When Cassava Republic introduced readers to lesbian experiences in Nigeria with *She Called Me Women*, it was the start of a new phase. One year later, Windvogel and Koopman released this stellar and inspiring collection of personal stories by queer people of color in South Africa.

124. I'm Telling the Truth, but I'm Lying: Essays (2019) by Bassey Ikpi

Bassey Ikpi is a Nigerian American spoken word poet and writer. Her memoir is an intimate look at mental health. She draws from her personal experiences struggling with bipolar disorder to write a moving account of the effects of mental illness on childhood, family, career, and community.

125. Broken Place Outer Spaces: Finding Creativity in the Unexpected (2019) by Nnedi Okorafor

Nnedi Okorafor is an award-winning author of fourteen books. In *Broken Place Outer Spaces*, she takes the reader behind the scenes of her creative success to reveal the powerful experience of "breaking" and becoming. She talks about her paralysis, subsequent recovery, and the decision to become a writer.

126. Not My Time to Die (2019) by Yolande Mukagasana

Not My Time to Die tells the story of Yolande Mukagasana, a Rwandan nurse and mother of three children who runs her clinic in Nyamirambo. She is planning a party for her wedding anniversary when genocide starts and turns her world upside down. Targeted because she's a successful woman and a Tutsi, she flees for her life. Yolande's account of the Rwandan genocide is an essential and honest account of the darkest days in one of Africa's most beloved nations.

127. Beneath the Tamarind Tree (2019) Isha Sesay

A CNN correspondent at the time, Isha Sesay was on the frontlines of the media wave around the kidnap of school girls in Chibok, Nigeria. With this book, she revisits the event in order to unearth intimate stories about loss but also of courage.

128. A Stranger's Pose (2018) by Emmanuel Iduma

Nigerian writer and critic's recollections in *A Stranger's Pose* captures his journeys to African cities depict the captivating power of wanderlust and the sense of loss and longing that haunts the traveler's ever-widening distance from home.

129. Lives of Great Men: Living and Loving as an African Gay Man (2017) by Chike Frank Edozien

Chike Frankie Edozien is a professor of journalism at New York University. His memoir, *Lives of Great Men*, is the first book by a Nigerian about LGBTQ life in Nigeria. It won the 2018 LAMBDA Literary Award for Gay Memoir.

130. Safe House: Explorations in Creative Nonfiction (2016) edited by Ellah Wakatama Allfrey

Zimbabwean editor Ellah Wakatama Allfrey corals some of the most vibrant new voices in the African literary scene in this ground breaking collection of non-fiction pieces exploring various aspects of African life.

131. Born A Crime (2016) by Trevor Noah

Born a Crime is a reflective and beautifully crafted narrative about a mischievous young boy who grows into a restless young man as he struggles to find himself in a world where he was never supposed to exist. It captures the young man's relationship with his fearless and rebellious mother, who is bent on sheltering her son from the cycle of violence that threatens her own life.

132. Looking for Transwonderworld: Travels in Nigeria (2012) by Noo Saro-Wiwa

Noo Saro-Wiwa is the daughter of celebrated Nigerian writer and activist Ken Saro-Wiwa, killed in 1995 by the dictator Sani Abacha. Noo was brought up in England, but every summer, she visited Nigeria. The memoir reflects on her attempts to rediscover the country her father loved.

133. One Day I Will Write about this Place (2011) by Binyavanga Wainaina

Binyavanga Wainaina was a Kenya writer and winner of the 2002 Caine Prize for African Writing for his short story Homecoming. His memoir is a vivid and compelling story about Wainana's middle-class Kenyan childhood and his quest for relevance.

ESSAY

This list is reserved for books that don't quite fit the category of memoirs or creative non-fiction. It features books by writers weighing in on timely issues.

134. Conditional Citizens (2020) by Laila Lalami

Leila Lalami's *Conditional Citizens* is a beautiful collection of essays straddling the personal and the political. It exposes the contradictions at the heart of American political life and dissects the long-standing structures that keep "outsiders" out. Leila Lalami is a Moroccan American academic, novelist, and essayist.

135. Stranger Faces (2020) by Namwali Serpell

Namwali Serpell is an award-winning Zambian novelist of, most recently, *Old Drift*. In *Stranger Faces*, she takes on philosophy and political culture to explore the meanings we give to people's faces. She asks why it matters to interrogate our beliefs and myths about the face.

136. Sensuous Knowledge: A Black Feminist Approach for Everyone (2020) by Minna Salami

Minna Salami is a Finnish Nigerian journalist. Her debut book, *Sensuous Knowledge*, offers an Africa-centered, black feminist approach to knowledge by excavating African cosmologies, philosophies, history, and art to dismantle patriarchal ideals of beauty, power, and womanhood.

137. Sex and Lies: True Stories of Women Intimate Lives in the Arab World (2020) by Leila Slimani

Leila Slimani is an award-winning Franco-Moroccan journalist and writer of bestselling fiction about sexually expressive female characters. *Sex and Lies*, her first nonfiction book translated to English, shows how Moroccan women navigate suppressive sexual politics.

138. The Seven Necessary Sins for Women and Girls (2019) by Mona Eltahawy

Mona Eltahawy is an Egyptian-American journalist based in New York. *The Seven Necessary Sins for Women and Girls* is a manifesto that turns girls into “angry, ambitious, profane, violent, attention-seeking, lustful, and powerful” beings. She criticizes the culture of feminine respectability, arguing that girls should be taught to harness anger, desire, and joy.

139. Mask Off: Masculinity Redefined (2019) JJ Bola

With this book, British-Congolese writer JJ Bola establishes himself as a feminist ally. Bola, who has done a lot of youth-centered community organizing, addresses young male audiences in this book. He argues for the reimagining of masculinity through the lens of feminist ideals.

140. These Bones Will Rise Again (2018) Panashe Chigumadzi

This book gives a unique take on Zimbabwe as a nation reshaping itself after a turbulent past. Blending reportage and memoir, Panashe Chigumadzi connects the dots of Zimbabwe's history using her grandmother's life as an organizing frame.

141. We Should all be Feminists (2014) by Chimamanda Adichie

We Should all be Feminists is a book-length essay by award-winning novelist Chimamanda Adichie, adapted from her well-known TED Talk by the same name. Adichie redefines feminism for the twenty-first century.

POETRY

As poetry makes a comeback in the global literary scene, African literature has not been left out. This list features mostly fresh, new, and diverse voices from the continent and the diaspora.

142. Un-American (2020) by Hafiza Geter

Nigerian-American poet Hafiza Geter is a powerful, new voice worthy of attention. She takes up the varied landscapes of her upbringing as the starting point for exploring questions of identity and belonging.

143. The Actual (2020) by Inua Ellams

“Word sorcerer” Inua Ellams exposes our current moment in all its stark realities. If you’re still reeling from a year of protests and pandemic, Ellams’ 55 poems will give you the language you seek to express your truth.

145. Deluge (2020) by Leila Chatti

Tunisian-American poet Leila Chatti takes readers on a poetic journey through her struggle with chronic vaginal bleeding. She looks at how faith and illness conspire to complicate the lives of women. Her writing is visceral and haunting.

146. Mamaseko (2020) by Thabile Makue

Blood is the central metaphor in Thabile Makue’s second poetry collection. Blood as a figure of bodily and historical connectedness is the context for Makue’s exploration of intergenerational trauma and the power of female bond.

147. Your Body is War (2019) by Mahtem Shiferraw

Mahtem Shiferraw is an Ethiopian-Eritrean writer and visual artist. *Your Body is War* is a deeply honest look at the female body placed in the context of violence but also a hopeful ode to survival and resistance. Shiferraw brings out war as a metaphor for all the ways in which women’s bodies are exposed to violence.

148. Modern Sudanese Poetry: An Anthology (2019) by Adil Babikir

Modern Sudanese Poetry features voices as diverse as the country's ethnic, cultural, and natural composition. Babikir provides a glimpse of Sudan's poetry scene as well as the country's modern history and post-independence trajectory.

149. This is How We Disappear (2019) by Titilope Sonuga

The Nigerian poet-actress Titilope Sonuga's third collection of poetry, *This is How We Disappear*, which explores the literal and metaphoric disappearance of women, is inspired by the Chibok Girls: the April 2014 abduction of 276 girls by the terrorist group Boko Haram.

150. The Careless Seamstress (2019) Tjawangwa Dema

T.J. Dema has been writing and performing poetry for many years. In this award-winning collection, she centers the lives of women—their labor, loves, resistances, and expression of power. The celebrated Ghanaian poet Kwame Dawes loves the collection and praises its powerful message and measured writing.

151. In Search of Equilibrium (2019) by Theresa Lola

In Search of Equilibrium is a debut poetry collection by Nigerian-British poet Theresa Lola. The poems interrogate the death of a loved one and how it affects faith. Lola was the joint winner of the 2018 Brunel International African Poetry Prize. She was appointed Young People's Laureate for London in 2019.

152. New-Generation African Poets Series (2014 – 2021) Kwame Dawes and Chris Abani (Editors)

The New-Generation African Poets series features box sets of poetry chapbooks by African poets who do not yet have full-length books. Edited by Chris Abani and Kwame Dawes, the box sets have been published annually since 2014. It is a great way to discover new African poets.

153. Teaching my Mother How to Give Birth (2011) by Warsan Shire

Warsan Shire's celebrated chap book is an anthem against patriarchy as it defines a woman's most intimate experiences. In her signature mesmerizing language, she explores the joy women can find in their shared experience in spite of the harrowing realities of patriarchal violence.

CHILDREN'S BOOKS

For anyone in search of African children's books, this list offers a starter kit of five books that feature inspiring stories about children being sweet, inquisitive, and triumphant.

154. I Have Brown Skin and Curly Hair (2020) Karen Theunissen

In this gorgeous book, Karen Theunissen contributes to the growing list of racially affirmative books for children of color. The rhymed narrative and beautiful illustration make this book a favorite for children and parents.

155. Sulwe (2019) Lupita Nyong'o

Lupita Nyong'o's children's book is a sweet, adorable manifesto for little children of color. A little girl named Sulwe is unhappy because of her dark skin. All this changes after a journey to the stars where she figures out what it truly means to be beautiful.

156. Sing to the Moon (2018) Nansubuga Nagadya Isdahl

In Isdahl's beautiful book about a Ugandan boy and his great grand father, childhood is for dreaming of big and bright things like stars and supernovas. This is a delightful addition to Lantana's growing catalogue of African children's books, which boasts offerings by the likes of Nnedi Okorafor and Wanuri Kahiu.

157. The Wooden Camel (2017) by Wanuri Kahiu

Written by Kenyan writer and filmmaker Wanuri Kahiu, *The Wooden Camel* tells the story of Etabo, a Turkana boy living in the Northwest of Kenya, who dreams of becoming a camel racer. Kahiu presents an inspiring story about a boy who pursues a cherished dream against all odds.

158. Chicken in the Kitchen (2015) by Nnedi Okorafor

The story chronicles a night in the life of a little Igbo girl named Anyaugo. It is the eve of the New Yam festival. Anyaugo's mother and aunties have pulled all the stops to stock the fridge with food for the celebration. But something very unlikely happens that could ruin all their effort. A humongous chicken has somehow found its way to the kitchen!

LIST BY GENRE AND SUBJECT MATTER

LIST BY GENRE + SUBJECT MATTER

LGBTQ	32 - 33
COMICS	34 - 35
YA/MIDDLE GRADE	36
FANTASY/SPECULATIVE/MYTHOLOGY	37 - 40
SCIENCE FICTION	41 - 42
HISTORICAL FICTION	43 - 45
TRILOGY	46 - 48
SHORT STORY COLLECTION	49 - 50

LGBTQ

After decades of being silenced and erased, queer experiences are being made visible in African writing. The books featured on this list are just a handful of the growing body of texts representing queer lives and worlds in African literature.

Embracing My Shadow: Growing Up Lesbian in Nigeria (2020) by Unoma Azuah

Nigerian writer and activist Unoma Azuah uses stories to make space for the expression of queer African life. Her memoir, *Embracing My Shadow*, is a brilliant chronicle of her experience as a lesbian in Nigeria.

The Death of Viveki Oji (2020) by Akwaeke Emezi

Nigerian novelist Akwaeke Emezi makes history with *The Death of Viveki Oji*, which explores trans experience in the Nigerian context. Like their debut novel *Freshwater*, this novel leads us right into the heart of a character who pays the ultimate price for daring to be different.

La Bastarda (2019) by Trifonia Melibea Obono

La Bastarda is the first novel by an Equatorial Guinean woman to be translated into English. Obono narrates the story of an orphaned teen who rebels against the rigid norms of Fang culture.

Don't Whisper Too Much and the Portrait of a Young Artist from Bona Mbella (2019) by Friedda Ekoto

Frieda Ekotto's fiction opens up new grounds in African queer writing. She was one of the first to write fiction with humanizing representations of the lives of francophone African women loving women.

She Called Me a Woman (2018) Chitra Naragajan and Azeenarh Mohammed et al (Editor)

She Called me Woman is a collection of twenty-five first-hand pieces by Nigerian queer women building life and community in a climate of fear and discrimination. The stories are eye-opening but also tremendously hopeful.

Speak No Evil (2018) Uzodinma Iweala

In his second novel, the bestselling author of *Beast of No Nation* leaves the battlefield and the figure of the child soldier for a different kind of drama --- the kind that takes place in the household. The novel captures the intrigue and betrayals that trail a conservative Nigerian father's discovery that his son Niru is queer.

Lives of Great Men: Living and Loving as an African Gay Man (2017) by Chike Frank Edozien

Chike Frankie Edozien is a professor of journalism at New York University. His memoir, *Lives of Great Men*, is the first book by a Nigerian about LGBTQ life in Nigeria. It won the 2018 LAMBDA Literary Award for Gay Memoir.

Under the Udala Trees (2015) by Chinelo Okparanta

Set in 1960s Nigeria during the Biafra war, this debut novel tells the story of Ijeoma and her experience exploring her sexuality in a homophobic world. It is a moving and triumphant story of a young woman fighting to live a full life in a world that seeks to diminish her experience.

One Day I Will Write about this Place (2011) by Binyavanga Wainaina

Binyavanga Wainaina was a Kenya writer and winner of the 2002 Caine Prize for African Writing for his short story *Homecoming*. His memoir is a vivid and compelling story about Wainaina's middle-class Kenyan childhood in Kenya and his quest for relevance.

COMICS

This list features recently published comics from various parts of the continent.

On Ajayi Crowther Street (2019) Elnathan John

With his first comic book, Elnathan John conveys the absurd and delightful quirks of everyday Nigerian life. He transports the reader to Ajayi Crowther Street, a typical Lagos neighborhood where gossip, lies, secrets, big and little drama move life in unpredictable flows.

Karmzah: The Unleashing (2019) by Farida Bedwei

Inspired by her experience as someone living with cerebral palsy, Farida Bedwei creates Karmzah, a superhero archeologist living with cerebral palsy. The comic book is a mythology-infused account of Karmzah, powered by flying crutches, bringing down criminal masterminds.

Malika: The Queen Warrior (2018) Roye Okupe et al

Roye Okupe recreates 15th century West Africa in the second installment of the Malika series. Malika is a warrior queen and all round amazing leader. But her work as an empire builder is far from being over. As the Kingdom of Azzaz comes under new threats, she renews her resolve to protect her people.

La Guardia #1 (2018) Nnedi Okorafor

A pregnant sci-fi heroine, a sentient plant, and a New York City swarming with shape-shifting alien immigrants. Okorafor is undoubtedly the queen of uncharted territories when it comes to imagining future worlds built on black life.

Kugali Comics: An African Anthology (2018) Kugali Media

If you've ever had trouble sourcing Africa comic books and graphic novels, Kugali Media's Raki Edition is a god-sent. It showcases stunning work done by African artists and writers. The multi-genre collection features historical narratives, but also contemporary and futuristic pieces.

German Calendar, No December (2018) Sylvia Ofili and Birgit Weyhe

This stunning debut is the work of Swedish Nigerian writer Sylvia Ofili. It is a coming of age story about a mixed-race girl and her journey from the Nigerian city of Warri to Lagos to Germany. The Lagos bit of her experience is a wild tale of Nigerian boarding school shenanigans---the punishments, the chores, urban legends.

Shuri #1 (2018) Nnedi Okorafor and Leonardo Romero

If there is any author who can turn the enviable life of T'Challa's technophile sister Shuri into a wildly successful spinoff, it is Nnedi Okorafor. Enter Shuri's world of gadgets, gizmos, and black girl magic.

Kwezi (2016) by Loyiso Mkize and Clyde Beech

Arguably South Africa's first ever superhero, Kwezi gripped the imagination of readers when it was first released. It is a coming of age story centered a teenager with superhero powers who must come to terms with consequences of having such a gift.

Aya of Yop City (2005) by Marguerite Abouet and Clément Oubrerie

Set in 1970s Cote d'Ivoire, Aya of Yop City chronicles the everyday life of a teenager named Aya and her escapades with the colorful caste of characters in her vibrant city.

YA/MIDDLE GRADE

An exciting development in contemporary African fiction is the attention authors are given to younger readers. This list contains a wide variety of genres, from historical fiction to sci-fi/fantasy.

The Deep Blue Within (2020) by Ayesha Harruna Attah

Hassana and Husseina are twin sisters. An encounter with slave raiders pull them continents apart, but their love for travel bring them back together. Set in 19th century Accra, Attah's YA historical fiction is a beautiful sibling story.

Raybearer (2020) by Jordan Ifueko

Ifueko draws from African oral stories to build a stunning fantasy world. Evoking Adeyemi's *Children of Blood and Bone*, the novel features a female character bent on finding her place in the world on her own terms.

The Infinite (2020) by Patience Agbabi

Patience Agbabi creates a finely constructed sci-fi world around Leaplings--- children who can leap through time. A beautifully imagined world peppered with Nigerian cultural references, this book about a time-traveling black girl with autism is an inspiring read.

Ikenga (2020) by Nnedi Okorafor

Nnedi Okorafor dips into Igbo mythology to build a dazzling fantasy world for readers between ages 8 to 12. Following a personal tragedy, a boy named Nnamdi must confront powers that seek to destroy his hometown Kalaria.

FANTASY/SPECULATIVE/MAGICAL REALISM

African writers are often blending multiple literary traditions and drawing from mythology, folklore, and urban legends to craft stories. The result is a literary tradition where stories are so layered that they can't be boxed into one genre. We are honoring this genre-bending aspect of African fiction by creating a list of stories that are broadly non-realist. Note: there is a separate list for sci-fi.

Raybearer (2020) by Jordan Ifueko

Ifueko draws from African oral stories to build a stunning fantasy world. Evoking Adeyemi's *Children of Blood and Bone*, the novel features a female character bent on finding her place in the world on her own terms.

Ikenga (2020) by Nnedi Okorafor

Nnedi Okorafor dips into Igbo mythology to build a dazzling fantasy world for readers between ages 8 to 12. Following a personal tragedy, a boy named Nnamdi must confront powers that seek to destroy his hometown Kalaria.

David Mogo, Godhunter (2019) by Suyi Davies Okungbowa

Suyi Davies Okungbowa boldly experiments with storytelling, and the result is stunning. *David Mogo God Hunter* is a delightful, fast-paced story set in a fantastical world built around Yoruba deities.

An Orchestra of Minorities (2019) Chigozie Obioma

Chigozie Obioma tops the breakout success of *The Fisherman* with this novel about a poultry farmer who falls in love with a woman he saves from jumping off a bridge. The ensuing love story spirals into a set of messy life decisions that take the characters on a breathtaking odyssey.

Bird Summons (2019) Leila Aboulela

Leila Aboulela takes a break from short stories to write this gorgeous novel about three friends who encounter a mythical creature. Magic and folklore provide the narrative raw materials for a novel that explores questions of faith, femininity, and love through powerful representations of women's lives.

Children of Blood and Bones (2018) by Tomi Adeyemi

Children of Blood and Bone is the first book in the Orisha Legacy trilogy. Drawing from Yoruba mythology, Adeyemi tells the story of a girl who, at the risk of losing everything, goes on a near impossible odyssey to save the world and magic.

Intruders (2018) Mohale Mashigo

Mohale Mashigo, also known as Black Porcelain, burst into the African literary limelights with her unforgettable novel, titled *Yearning*. With her first short story collection, she mobilizes all her speculative fiction chops to dissect the feeling and experience of finding power in being different.

She Would be King (2018) by Wayetu Moore

In her fantasy-infused historical novel, Liberian writer Wayetu Moore retells the dramatic story of Liberia's origin through the lives of three strangers bound by secret powers. In her signature poetic style, she explores the complex ties that bind Africans and the diaspora.

Blackass (2015) by Igoni Barret Igoni

Kafka's *Metamorphosis* gets a Nigerian reboot in this story. Igoni Barrett gives Kafka's classic a stunningly beautiful make over in a tale about an unemployed Nigerian man who wakes up one ordinary morning and finds he is a white man. Furo Wariboko's new life as a white man is a series of adventures played out in the devious streets of Lagos.

Transparent City (2012) by Ondjaki

This is Ondjaki's magical realist account of life in Luanda. The story centers on Odonato, a man whose flesh becomes increasingly transparent as he encounters more of the bewildering city in search for his son. The novel won the José Saramago Literary Prize in 2013.

Memoirs of a Porcupine (2006) by Alain Mabanckou

A talkative porcupine is the animal double of a man named Kibanda. The porcupine narrates the sordid details of their escapades in a Congolese village. Congo-Brazzaville author Alain Mabanckou crafts the story in his signature dark humor. The novel was a finalist for the Man Booker International Prize, 2015.

Book of the Chameleon (2004) by Jose Agualusa

This is the surreal story of Félix Ventura who sells pasts to clients in need of new memories and lineages. One of Agualusa's most memorable novels, *The Book of the Chameleon* is narrated by a friendly gecko perched on Felix's living-room wall.

Sleepwalking Land (1999) by Mia Cuto

This magical realist classic by Mozambican author Mia Couto tells the story of a boy and an old man barely surviving in a post-apocalyptic, war-ravaged town. They stumble upon a burned-out bus and decide to make it home. While clearing out the corpses trapped and burned in the bus, they find a journal kept by one of the dead passengers. Nightly reading of this journal transports the old man and the boy into alternate realities and parallel spaces.

Ben Okri, *The Famished Road* (1991)

The Famished Road is one of the most celebrated magical realist novels. Drawing from Yoruba mythology, Okri weaves the story of Azaro, a boy who is torn between a past life as a spirit being and a present life as a boy with magical powers. The novel won the Booker Prize for Fiction in 1991.

Nuruddin Farah, *Secrets* (1998)

Secrets is the third novel in the *Blood in the Sun* trilogy by Somali writer Nuruddin Farah. It is a compelling dark family psychodrama, which tells the story of a Somali family straining under the mystery of a past that refuses to be kept secret. When the novel came out in 1998, it marked one of the crowning moments of the 20th century in the African literary scene.

Waiting for the Barbarians (1980) by J.M. Coetzee

Waiting for the Barbarians is a prize-winning novel by South African writer J.M. Coetzee. It is a startling allegory of the war between oppressor and oppressed. First published in 1980, it was chosen by Penguin for its series *Great Books of the 20th Century*.

Amos Tutuola, *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts* (1954)

Amos Tutuola is a foremost Nigerian fantasist. In his second novel, he tells the story of a boy who enters a mysterious forest while running away from slave raiders. For 24 years, he searches for the way back home without much success, partly because what he imagines to be an ordinary patch of forest next to his hometown is actually the notorious Bush of Ghosts, a parallel world tucked between the human world and the sphere of the gods and peopled by strange creatures.

Forest of a Thousand Deamons (1938) by D. O. Fagunwa

A pioneer of Yoruba fantasy, D. O. Fagunwa is best known for *Forest of A Thousand Daemons*, an adventure story about a hunter who goes on daredevil expeditions into an old forest haunted by strange and ghoulish creatures.

SCIENCE FICTION

African science fiction, which some have dubbed Africanfuturism, is a brand of science fiction rooted in African life and ideas. Though there has always been sci-fi in African literature, the last two decades have seen a major resurgence of the genre. The books on this list offer various representations of Africans in future worlds.

The Infinite (2020) by Patience Agbabi

Patience Agbabi creates a finely constructed sci-fi world around Leaplings---children who can leap through time. A beautifully imagined world peppered with Nigerian cultural references, this book about a time-traveling black girl is an inspiring read.

Incomplete Solutions (2019) by Wole Talabi

One of Nigeria's foremost sci-fi writer, Wole Talabi takes the reader on a journey that spans African cities and distant planets. *Incomplete Solution* is a collection of stories exploring technology, the future, and the African experience.

Do You Dream of Terra-Two? (2019) Temi Oh

In mainstream sci-fi, outer space is for superheroes and villains. Temi Oh subverts this tradition with a story about the emotional costs of space travel. 10 astronauts—6 are teenagers—set out on a mission to Earth's twin planet but fall into hard times as they deal with the personal toll of a 23-year journey.

Triangulum (2019) by Masande Ntshanga

Masande Ntshanga's *Triangulum* is a suspenseful dose of futuristic, apocalyptic, and philosophical goodness. Set in 2040, the story is centered on a manuscript that foretells the end of the world. A retired professor and science fiction writer is called upon to look into these claims.

A Spy in Time (2018) Imraan Coovadia

Johannesburg is the center of a post-apocalyptic story where a spy journeys through time to solve a mystery on which the fate of the world depends. Coovadia's blend of espionage and sci-fi creates a mind-bending tale that changes how we imagine Africa as a futuristic space.

After the Flare (2017) Deji Olukotun

In a post-apocalyptic world where the United States and the rest of world are cut off from civilization, the fate of humanity rests on the only functioning space station in Nigeria. A former NASA employee, an eccentric lunar geologist, and a brilliant scientist from India form an unlikely union in a bid to save the world from impending danger.

Rosewater (2016) by Tade Thompson

Rosewater is a town on edge. A community formed around the edges of a mysterious alien biodome. Its residents comprise the hopeful, the hungry, and the helpless—people eager for a glimpse inside the dome or a taste of its rumored healing powers.

Binti (2015) by Nnedi Okorafor

The first book in Okorafor's celebrated sci-fi trilogy, Binti is the story of a Himba girl with extraordinary math skills. She is on her way to the prestigious Oomza University when a tragedy suddenly strikes, prompting her to abandon her initial plan and instead try to save humanity. Binti is interplanetary space odyssey meet black girl magic. The novella won multiple awards, including the 2016 Hugo Award, 2016 Nebula Award, 2016 British Fantasy Award, and 2017 Nommo Award.

A Killing the Sun (2014) by Dilman Dila

Ugandan writers Dilman Dila is known for his ground breaking writing. With this collection, he offers stories exploring various aspects of Africa's technofutures.

AfroSF: Science Fiction by African Writers (2012) Edited by Ivor Hartmann

This groundbreaking collection is the first of three volumes in an anthology series featuring science fiction by African writers. The collection features writing by both established and upcoming writers. The series is loved by readers and hailed by critics. It has contributed to making African sci-fi an established genre.

HISTORICAL FICTION

Historical fiction is one of the oldest forms of the African novel. There has been a resurgence of the genre in recent times. Today, historical fiction is written mostly by women who retell Africa's past through the lens of powerful female characters. This list reflects that evolution.

The Deep Blue Withing (2020) by Ayesha Harruna Attah

Hassana and Husseina are twin sisters. An encounter with slave raiders pull them continents apart, but their love for travel bring them back together. Set in 19th century Accra, this YA historical fiction is a beautiful sibling story.

Out of Darkness, Shining Light (2019) by Patina Gappa

Zimbabwean novelist Patina Gappa's fourth book narrates the captivating experiences of the men and women who carried explorer and missionary Dr. Livingstone's body, papers, and maps, fifteen hundred miles across the continent so that his remains could be returned home to England. The novel is one of NPR's Best Books of 2019 and the 2020 Chautauqua Prize winner.

Shadow King (2019) by Maaza Mengiste

Set in the late 1930s during the Italian-Ethiopian War, Shadow King tells the story of Hirut, a peasant girl who inspires a band of women to stir a world dominated by men. The novel was shortlisted for the 2020 Booker Prize.

House of Stone (2018) by Novuyo Tshuma

The disappearance of a teenage boy sparks this epic tale about a couple's search for their son and the uncertain alliances they must court to get to the root of their loss. 400 pages of lightening wit, swirling with memorable characters.

She Would be King (2018) by Wayetu Moore

In her fantasy-infused historical novel, Liberian writer Wayetu Moore retells the dramatic story of Liberia's origin through the lives of three strangers bound by secret powers. In her signature poetic style, she explores the complex ties that bind Africans and the diaspora.

Dance of the Jakaranda (2017) by Peter Kimani

Peter Kimani is an award-winning Kenyan novelist and journalist. *Dance of the Jakaranda* is set in the shadows of Kenya's independence from Great Britain. The novel reimagines the unique circumstances that brought black, brown, and white men together to lay the railroad that heralded a nation's birth.

Homegoing (2016) by Yaa Gyasi

The debut novel by Ghanaian American author Yaa Gyasi follows the parallel paths of two half-sisters and their descendants through eight generations: from the Gold Coast to the plantations of Mississippi, from the American Civil War to Jazz Age Harlem. Yaa Gyasi's extraordinary novel illuminates slavery's troubled legacy both for those who were taken and those who stayed.

Under the Udala Trees (2015) by Chinelo Okparanta

Set in 1960s Nigeria during the Biafra war, this debut novel tells the story of Ijeoma and her experience exploring her sexuality in a homophobic world. It is a moving and triumphant story of a young woman fighting to live a full life in a world that seeks to diminish her experience.

Moor's Account (2014) by Laila Lalami

Mustafa al-Zamori, also known as Estebanico, is the first black explorer of the Americas. Moroccan novelist Laila Lalami brings him back to life in this powerful fictional memoirs centered on his travels. The novel was longlisted for the Booker prize.

Lyric Alley (2010) by Leila Aboulela

British rule is nearing its end and with their son and heir turned suddenly incapacitated, a wealthy Sudanese family must make decisions that force them to come to terms with the shifting grounds of their claim to power. Aboulela presents a powerful portrait of 1950s Sudan.

The Unconfessed (2006) by Yvette Christianse

The Unconfessed is a beautifully poetic debut by South African born Yvette Christianse. Drawing from court records, she tells the gut-wrenching story of a 19th-century slave woman in South Africa. It was a finalist in the 2006 PEN/Hemingway Award.

Queen Pokou (2005) by Veronique Tadjo

Ivorian novelist Veronique Tadjo breaths new life into an old story. Queen Pokou is the story of the founding of the Baoule people by Queen Abraha Pokou in 18th Century. The story explores intimate relationships between mother and child and the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade.

Things Fall Apart (1958) by Chinua Achebe

18 year old Okonkwo overcomes his lowly station in life to become a rich and famous farmer. But his charmed life goes on a downward spiral after he kills his foster son in an act of ritual execution. Achebe paints the life of a small 19th century African community with broad colorful strokes---ancestral festivals, wedding parties, squabbling co-wives, wrestling matches, beguiling folk tales, and catchy proverbs.

Chaka (1923) by Thomas Mofolo

Chaka is a fictional retelling of the exploits of the 19th century Zulu king Chaka. It chronicles Chaka's use of violence, military genius, charisma, and a good bit of magic to conquer surrounding nations and brings the Zulu people under his rule

TRILOGY/SERIES

For readers looking for a long, sustained read, this list offers some of the most celebrated trilogies and series. Note that the trilogies are not listed chronologically.

The African Trilogy by Chinua Achebe

Things Fall Apart (1958), *No Longer at Ease* (1960), *Arrow of God* (1964)

Spans late 19th century to mid-20th century and captures the lives of three Igbo men coming to terms with colonial power.

The Cairo Trilogy by Naguib Mahfouz

Palace Walk (1956), *Palace of Desire* (1957), *Sugar Street* (1957)

Spans 1919 to 1944 and tells an epic family drama set in a middle-class Egyptian world.

The Blood in the Sun Trilogy by Nuruddin Farah

Maps (1986), *Gifts* (1993), *Secrets* (1998)

Magical-realism infused stories exploring Somalia's recent history.

The Tambudzai Trilogy by Tsitsi Dangarembga

Nervous Conditions (1988), *The Book of Not* (2006), and *This Mournable Body* (2018)

Follows the experiences of a Zimbabwean girl named Tambudzai as she tries, against all odds, to rise above the societal forces that keep her down.

The Famished Road Trilogy by Ben Okri

The Famished Road (1991), Songs of Enchantment (1993), and Infinite Riches (1998)

Ben Okri's magical realist classic captures the complicated family life of a boy torn between the spirit world and the world of humans.

The Binti Trilogy by Nnedi Okorafor

Binti (2015), *Binti: Home* (2017), *Binti: The Night Masquerade* (2018)

The sci-fi series follows the titular character, Binti, on her journey to university, her return home and ensuing friction with her family.

Wormwood Trilogy by Tade Thompson

Rosewater (2016); *The Rosewater Insurrection* (2019); *The Rosewater Redemption* (2019)

A sci-fi series set in a futuristic Nigeria.

The Faction Trilogy by Wole Soyinka

Aké: The Years of Childhood (1981); *Isara: A Voyage Around "Essay"* (1989); *Ibadan: The Penkelemes Years, A Memoir 1946-1965* (1994)

Memoirs named after particular places meaningful to Soyinka's life.

Darko Dawson Mysteries by Kwei Quartey

Wife of the Gods (2009); *Children of the Street* (2011); *Murder at Cape Three Points* (2014); *Gold of Our Fathers* (2014); *Death by His Grace* (2017)

Police procedurals set in Ghana.

AfroSF Anthology Series edited by Ivor Hartmann

The groundbreaking anthology of African sci-fi story is now in its third volume.

New-Generation African Poets Series edited Kwame Dawes and Chris Abani

The New-Generation African Poets series features box sets of poetry chapbooks by African poets who do not yet have full-length books. Edited by Chris Abani and Kwame Dawes, the box sets have been published annually since 2014. It is a great way to discover new African poets.

SHORT STORY COLLECTION

A large number of the short story collections here are published by indie presses on the continent and abroad. Indie presses have historically been at the heart of the African short story tradition. By publishing anthologies and collections, they foster spaces for emerging and established authors to experiment with new ideas.

The Waiting by Martin Egblewogbe (2020) by Martin Egblewogbe

Igifu (2020) by Scholastique Mukasonga

A Broken People's Playlist (2020) by Chimeka Garricks

Exhale: Queer African Erotic Fiction (2020) edited by HOLAAfrica!

Nairobi Noir (2020) edited by Peter Kimani

Addis Ababa Noir (2020) by edited Maaza Mengiste

Joburg Noir (2020) by Niq Mhlongo

Of Passion and Ink: New Voices from Cameroon (2020) edited by Dzekashu MacViban

The Cape Cod Bicycle War: and Other Stories (2020) by Billy Kahora

Dog Meat Samosa (2019) by Stanley Gazemba

The Quarter (2019) by Naguib Mahfouz, translated by Roger Allen

Chatsworth (2019) by Pravasan Pillay

Thirteen Months of Sunrise (2019) by Rania Mamoun, translated by Elisabeth Jaquette

Shut Up You're Pretty (2019) by Téa Mutonji

Incomplete Solutions (2019) by Wole Talabi

Better Never Than Late (2019) by Chika Unigwe

Minutes of Glory: and Other Stories (2019) by Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o

Let's Tell This Story Properly (2019) Jennifer Makumbi

The Lion's Binding Oath: and Other Stories (2018) by Ahmed Ismail Yusuf

Lagos Noir (2018) edited by Chris Abani

Friday Black (2018) by Nana Kwame Adjei-Brenyah

Rain and Other Stories (2017) by Mia Couto, translated by Eric M. B. Becker

The Magic Lamp: Dreams of Our Age (2017) by Ben Okri, illustrated by Rosemary Clunie

Speak Gigantular (2016) by Irenosen Okojie

Breach (2016) by Olumide Popoola and Annie Holmes

A Killing in the Sun (2014) by Dilman Dila

Love is Power, Or Something Like That (2013) by Igoni Barrett