



Malibongwe: Praise the women

Celebrating the women writers of Africa.

Introduction

You will have heard of some of these authors. Others will be new to you. Some of these stories are heartrending. Others are hilarious. Some of them manage to be both. They are all an absolute delight to read.

This is a list of 20 books by African Women Writers.

This list contains two women who have won the Nobel Prize for Literature – Nadine Gordimer and Doris Lessing – and many other prize-winning authors. But don't let that put you off. The books are wonderful.

Read and enjoy.

1. Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi

Half of a Yellow Sun.

Set in Nigeria during the 1960s, this novel contains three main characters who get swept up in the violence during these turbulent years. It is about Africa, about the end of colonialism, about class and race, and the ways in which love can complicate these things.

2. Ba, Mariama

So long a letter

A bestselling title in Heinemann's long-established 'African Writers Series', this novel is now being published with a new introduction as part of the new series 'African Writers Series Classics'.

3. Dangarembga, Tsitsi

The Book of Not: a novel

'The Book of Not', a sequel to 'Nervous Conditions', traces Tambu's continuing quest to redefine the personal, political and historical forces that threaten to destroy the fabric of her community - and reveals how its aftermath still bedevils Africans today.

4. El Saadawi, Nawal

Walking through Fire.

Walking Through Fire takes up the story of Nawal El Saadawi's extraordinary life. It describes the passion for justice that has shaped her writing.

5. Emecheta, Buchi

The Joys of Motherhood

Nnu Ego is a woman who gives all her energy, money and everything she has to raising her children - leaving her little time to make friends.

6. Farah, Nuruddin

Links

Jeebleh is returning to Mogadishu from New York for the first time in 20 years. It is not a nostalgic trip: he is returning to visit his mother's grave and settle her outstanding accounts. Also, the niece of his childhood friend has been abducted, and Jeebleh steps in to search for the child.



7. Gordimer, Nadine

Get a life

Paul Bannerman, an ecologist in Africa, believes he controls the trajectory of his life with the markers of vocation and marriage. But when he is diagnosed with thyroid cancer, he receives treatment that makes him radioactive and a danger to others, leading him to question his outlook on life.

8. Head, Bessie

A Question of Power

It is never clear to Elizabeth whether the mission principal's cruel revelations of her origins is at the bottom of her mental breakdown, but in the dark loneliness of the Botswanan night, the frightened South African refugee slips in and out of sanity.

9. Jooste, Pamela

People like ourselves

Julia belongs to the inner circle of Johannesburg high society. But in the new South Africa, things have changed - the days of tea on the lawn are over. Julia's husband is a serial adulterer who is no longer prepared to pay for the small luxuries she has always enjoyed and she doesn't seem to be able to manage the 'home workers'.

10. Joubert, Elsa

The Last Sunday

Set in South Africa, this story describes the life of a pastor to a remote community of Boer farmers whose lives centre round the church and their scattered farms, only intermittently aware of the black townships that surround them. The author also wrote "Poppie" and "To Die at Sunset".

11. Lessing, Doris

Alfred and Emily

Doris Lessing explores the lives of her parents, both of them irrevocably damaged by the Great War. Her father wanted the life of an English farmer, but shrapnel almost killed him in the trenches, & thereafter had to wear a wooden leg. Her mother's great love was a doctor, who drowned in the Channel, & she spent the war nursing the wounded.

12. Mabuza, Lindiwe

Footprints and Fingerprints.

A collection of poetry by someone who has spent her life in the struggle for freedom in South Africa, and in the reconstruction of her country following the end of apartheid. Lindiwe Mabuza is the current South African High Commissioner to the UK.

13. Magona, Sindiwe

Living, loving and lying awake at night

A collection of short stories which bring the full range of South African women's experience under apartheid to light.

14. Mhlophe, Gcina

Love child

Gcina Mhlophe is a poet, playwright, performer and South Africa's favourite storyteller. In this collection, she shares her personal journey through the social and political landscapes of the 1980s, with its recollected moments of struggle and transformation along the way.



15. Schonstein, Patricia

A Quilt of Dreams

'A Quilt of Dreams' is a story of two people whose lives intertwine without them ever knowing each other - one a heavy-drinking white man and the other the young daughter of a black activist. This tale captures the harsh and brutal realities of South Africa's past with its raw and sore racism, interlacing them with hope.

16. Schreiner, Olive

The Story of an African Farm

A classic account of colonial life in South Africa at the beginning of the C20th.

17. Slovo, Gillian

Ties of Blood

A saga of three generations and two families in 20th century South Africa. One family is white, Jewish refugees from Lithuania - the other black, the servants to the first. As the children grow up their lives are entangled with each other and with the South African politics and history.

18. Soueif, Ahdaf

The Map of Love

One hundred years after one of her forebears married into an Egyptian family, Isabel returns to Egypt after falling in love with an Egyptian in New York. The story in a story explores inter-racial love in a heart-piercing manner.

19. Trapido, Barbara

Frankie and Stankie

Dinah and her sister Lisa are growing up in South Africa in the fifties. It is at school that Dinah first learns about racism. As we follow Dinah from childhood, through adolescence and marriage, to voluntary exile in London, we get a vivid glimpse of one of the darker passages of 20th century history.

20. Wicomb, Zoe

Playing in the Light

Set in a beautifully rendered 1990s Cape Town, this novel revolves around Marion, a woman of Afrikaner background, who hates travelling but nonetheless runs a travel agency, and her complex relationship with Brenda, the first black woman she has ever employed.

Compiled David Kenvyn, ACTSA National Executive