

Half of a Yellow Sun

By Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

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With effortless grace, celebrated author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie illuminates a seminal moment in modern African history: Biafra's impassioned struggle to establish an independent republic in southeastern Nigeria during the late 1960s. We experience this tumultuous decade alongside five unforgettable characters: Ugwu, a thirteen-year-old houseboy who works for Odenigbo, a university professor full of revolutionary zeal; Olanna, the professor’s beautiful young mistress who has abandoned her life in Lagos for a dusty town and her lover’s charm; and Richard, a shy young Englishman infatuated with Olanna’s willful twin sister Kainene. *Half of a Yellow Sun* is a tremendously evocative novel of the promise, hope, and disappointment of the Biafran war.

BONUS: This edition includes an excerpt from Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah*.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly
Starred Review. When the Igbo people of eastern Nigeria seceded in 1967 to form the independent nation of Biafra, a bloody, crippling three-year civil war followed. That period in African history is captured with haunting intimacy in this artful page-turner from Nigerian novelist Adichie (*Purple Hibiscus*). Adichie tells her profoundly gripping story primarily through the eyes and lives of Ugwu, a 13-year-old peasant houseboy who survives conscription into the raggedy Biafran army, and twin sisters Olanna and Kainene, who are from a wealthy and well-connected family. Tumultuous politics power the plot, and several sections are harrowing, particularly passages depicting the savage butchering of Olanna and Kainene's relatives. But this dramatic, intelligent epic has its lush and sultry side as well: rebellious Olanna is the mistress of Odenigbo, a university professor brimming with anticolonial zeal; business-minded Kainene takes as her lover fair-haired, blue-eyed Richard, a British expatriate come to Nigeria to write a book about Igbo-Ukwu art—and whose relationship with Kainene nearly ruptures when he spends one drunken night with Olanna. This is a transcendent novel of many descriptive triumphs, most notably its depiction of the impact of war's brutalities on peasants and intellectuals alike. It's a searing history lesson in fictional form, intensely evocative and immensely absorbing. *(Sept. 15)*
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From The New Yorker
Based loosely on political events in nineteen-sixties Nigeria, this novel focusses on two wealthy Igbo sisters, Olanna and Kainene, who drift apart as the newly independent nation struggles to remain unified. Olanna falls for an imperious academic whose political convictions mask his personal weaknesses; meanwhile, Kainene becomes involved with a shy, studious British expat. After a series of massacres targeting the Igbo people, the carefully genteel world of the two couples disintegrates. Adichie indicts the outside world for its indifference and probes the arrogance and ignorance that perpetuated the conflict. Yet this is no polemic. The characters and landscape are vividly painted, and details are often used to heartbreaking effect: soldiers, waiting to be armed, clutch sticks carved into the shape of rifles; an Igbo mother, in flight from a massacre, carries her daughter's severed head, the hair lovingly braided.
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From Bookmarks Magazine
Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, author of *Purple Hibiscus* (2003), was born in Nigeria in 1977 into a well-educated Igbo family. Drawing on her family's experience and Nigeria's history a decade before her birth, Adichie has written an ambitious, astonishing novel that succeeds on all levels. In her exploration of ethnic, religious, and class prejudices and genocide, Adichie focuses on the personal experiences of a few memorable individuals experiencing the drama of the conflict and the new nation. Her manipulation of point of view and time, from the years before and during the war, adds depth and perspective to her timely novel as secessionist tensions in the former Biafra persist.

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