VOLUME 2

African Literature and Its Times

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Profiles of Notable Literary Works and the Historical Events That Influenced Them

Joyce Moss • Lorraine Valestuk

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JOYCE MOSS • LORRAINE VALESTUK

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General Preface

The world at the turn of the twenty-first century is a shrinking sphere. Innovative modes of transmission make communication from one continent to another almost instantaneous, encouraging the development of an increasingly global society, heightening the urgency of the need for mutual understanding. At the foundation of *World Literature and Its Times* is the belief that within a people's literature are keys to their perspectives, their emotions, and the formative events that have brought them to the present point.

As manifested in their literary works, societies experience phenomena that are in some instances universal and in other instances tied to time and place. T. S. Eliot's poem *The Wasteland,* for example, is set in Europe in the early 1920s, when the region was rife with the disenchantment of the post-World War I era. Coincidentally, Juan Rulfo's novel *Pedro Páramo,* set in Latin America over a spread of decades that includes the 1920s, features a protagonist whose last name means "bleak plain" or "wasteland." The two literary works, though written oceans apart, conjure a remarkably similar atmosphere. Likewise André Brink's novel *A Dry White Season* concerns the torture of political prisoners in South Africa in the 1970s while Isabelle Allende's *House of the Spirits* portrays such torture in Chile during the same decade. A close look at the two instances, however—and the two wastelands referred to above—exposes illuminating differences, which are tied to the times and places in which the respective works are set.

World Literature and Its Times regards both fiction and nonfiction as rich mediums for understanding the differences, as well as the similarities, among people and societies. In its view, full understanding of a literary work demands attention to events and attitudes of the periods in which the work takes place and the one in which it is written. The series therefore examines a wide range of novels, short stories, biographies, speeches, poems, and plays by contextualizing a work in these two periods. Each volume covers some 50 literary works that span a mix of centuries and genres. Invariably the literary work takes center stage, with its contents determining which issues—social, political, psychological, economic, or cultural—are covered in a given entry. Every entry discusses the relevant issues apart from the literary work, making connections to it when merited and allowing for comparisons between the literary and the historical realities. Close attention is also given to the literary work itself in the interest of gleaning historical understandings from it.

Of course, the function of literature is not necessarily to represent history accurately. Nevertheless the images promoted by a powerful literary work—be it José Hernandez's poem *The Gaucho Martín Fierro* (set in Argentina), Isak Dinesen's memoir *Out of Africa* (Kenya), or William Shakespeare's play *Macbeth* (Scotland)—leave impressions that are commonly taken to be historical. In taking literature as fact, one risks acquiring mistaken notions of history. In the

process of describing life in Africa, for example, various European novels of the early to mid-twentieth century evoked an image of its people as generally barbarous and simple- minded. Succeeding these novels were works that showed this image to be false, such as Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart,* which reveals the ethnic richness of life among the Igbo of Nigeria, evoking a sophistication that belies stereotypes in the earlier, European fiction. In fact, many of the works covered in this series upset longstanding stereotypes, from Bartolomé de Las Casas's *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies* (mid-1500s Latin America) to Ferdinand Oyono's *Houseboy* (mid-1900s French Cameroon).

Beyond upsetting stereotypic images, literary works broaden our understanding of history. They are able to convey more than the cut-and-dried record by portraying events in a way that captures the fears and challenges of a period, or by drawing attention to groups of people who are generally left out of standard histories. This is well illustrated with writings about women in different societies—from Rosario Ferré's short story "The Youngest Doll" (Puerto Rico), to Flora Nwapa's novel *Efuru* (Nigeria), to Mary Wollstonecraft's essay *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (England). Taken together, the entries present a cross-section of perspectives and experiences of women and others in the societies of a region in a manner that begins to do justice to their complexity.

Nonfiction too must be anchored in its place and times to derive its full value. Octavio Paz's essay *The Labyrinth of Solitude* explains the character of contemporary Mexicans as a product of historical experience; the entry on the essay amplifies this experience. Another entry, on Albert Memmi's *The Pillar of Salt,* uses the less direct genre of biography to depict the life of an Arab Jew during the Nazi occupation of North Africa. A third entry, on Frantz Fanon's essays in *The Wretched of the Earth,* considers the merits of violence in view of the ravages inflicted on the colonized in places such as Algeria.

The task of reconstructing the historical context of a literary work can be problematic. An author may present events out of chronological order, as Carlos Fuentes does in *The Death of Artemio Cruz* (Mexico), or may feature legendary heroes who defy attempts to fit them neatly into an exact time slot (such as the warrior Beowulf of Denmark, glorified in England's epic poetry; or the Manding hero Sunjata, who founds the empire of Mali). In the case of Fuentes's novel, *World Literature and Its Times* unscrambles the plot, providing a linear rendering of events and associated historical information. In the case of the epics, the series profiles customs particular to the respective cultures, arming the reader with details that inform the heroes' adventures. The approach sheds light on the relationship between fact and fiction, both of which are shown to provide insight into the people who generated the epic. As always, the series takes this approach with appreciation for the beauty of the literary work independent of historical facts, but also in the belief that ultimate regard is shown for the work by placing it in the context of pertinent events.

Beyond this underlying belief, the series is founded on the notion that a command of world literature bolsters knowledge of the writings produced by one's own society. Long before the present century, fiction and nonfiction writers from different locations influenced one another through trends and strategies in their literatures. In our postcolonial age, such cross-fertilization has quickened. Latin American literature, influenced by French and Spanish trends, in turn influences African writers of today. This is well illustrated by the Moroccan novel *The Sand Child,* one of whose characters resembles Argentine author Jorge Luis Borges. Likewise, Africa's literary tradition has affected and been affected by France's, and the same relationship holds true for the traditions of India and Great Britain. The degree of such literary intermixture promises only to multiply in our increasingly global society. In the process, world literature and its landmark texts gain even greater significance, attaining the potential to promote understanding not only of others, but also of ourselves.

The Selection of Literary Works

The works chosen for *African Literature and Its Times* have been carefully selected by professors at the universities detailed in "Acknowledgments." Keeping the literature-history connection in mind, the team made its selections based on a combination of factors: how frequently a literary work is studied, how closely it is tied to pivotal events in the past or present, and how strong and enduring its appeal has been to readers in and out of the society that produced it. Attention has been paid to all regions of the continent. There has also been a careful effort to represent female as well as male authors, to cover a mix of genres, and to include a number of pre-

colonial works available in English, though they are far scarcer than the current century's offering. Also for colonial and postcolonial works, the selection was limited to those that are presently available in English. However, recognizing that much of Africa's finest literature was written in other languages, a careful effort has been made to include translations of works that first appeared in Arabic, French, Portuguese, or a local African language as well as those that first appeared in English.

Format and Arrangement of Entries

The volumes in *World Literature and Its Times* are arranged geographically. Within each volume, entries are arranged alphabetically by title of the literary work. The time period in which the work is set appears at the beginning of an entry.

Each entry is organized as follows:

1. **Introduction**—identifying information in three parts:

   The literary work—specifies the genre, the place and time in which the work is set, the year it was first published, and, if applicable, the year in which it was first translated; also provided, for translations, is the title of the literary work in its original language.

   Synopsis—summarizes the storyline or contents of the work.

   Introductory paragraph—introduces the literary work in relation to the author's life.

2. **Events in History at the Time the Literary Work Takes Place**—describes social and political events that relate to the plot or contents of the literary work. The section may discuss background information as well as relevant events during the period in which the work is set. Subsections vary depending on the literary work. Taking a deductive approach, the section starts with events in history and telescopes inward to events in the literary work.

3. **The Literary Work in Focus**—summarizes in detail the plot or contents of the work, describes how it illuminates history, and identifies sources used by the author. After the summary of the work comes a subsection focusing on an aspect of the literature that illuminates our understanding of events or attitudes of the period. This subsection takes an inductive approach, starting with the literary work, and broadening outward to events in history. It is followed by a third subsection specifying sources that inspired elements of the work and discussing its literary context, or relation to other works.

4. **Events in History at the Time the Literary Work Was Written**—describes social, political, and/or literary events in the author's lifetime that relate to the plot or contents of a work. Also discussed in this section are the reviews or reception accorded the literary work.

5. **For More Information**—provides a list of all sources that have been cited in the entry as well as sources for further reading about the different issues or personalities featured in the entry.

If the literary work is set and written in the same time period, sections 2 and 4 of the entry on that work ("Events in History at the Time the Literary Work Takes Place" and "Events in History at the Time the Literary Work Was Written") are combined into the single section "Events in History at the Time of the Literary Work."

Additional Features

Whenever possible, primary source material is provided through quotations in the text and material in sidebars. The sidebars include historical details that amplify issues raised in the text, and anecdotes that provide a fuller understanding of the temporal context. Every effort has been made in both the sidebars and the text to define in context unusual or locally nuanced terms. There are timelines in various entries to summarize intricate series of events. Finally, historically relevant illustrations enrich and further clarify the information.

Comments and Suggestions

Your comments on this series and suggestions for future editions are welcome. Please write: Editors, *World Literature and Its Times,* Gale Group, 27500 Drake Road, Farmington Hills, Michigan 48331-3535.

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Introduction to African Literature and Its Times

African literature first gained world renown in the 1950s and '60s, in large part because of World War II. The racism of the Axis powers before and during this war raised global consciousness about subject peoples everywhere. In Africa, members of colonized societies had put their lives on the line for the Allies against Germany and Italy, and those nations' racist pretensions to superiority. Now, in the postwar period, Africans refused to tolerate the racism that still raged on their own home ground. From Ghana in West Africa, to Algeria in North Africa, Kenya in East Africa, and Zimbabwe in southern Africa, nationalist leaders organized independence movements or fought life-and-death guerrilla campaigns to wrest themselves free from European domination. One after another, the groups achieved their goal, in some cases at horrific costs. In Kenya, the death toll climbed to 20,000; in Zimbabwe, to 30,000; in Algeria, to more than one million. Often the struggle called for enormous sacrifice, but it was a heady time nonetheless, one full of promise as well as uncertainty about what lay ahead and how Africans could best define themselves in the contemporary world. For nearly 70 years, since the last two decades of the nineteenth century, Africa's rich array of ethnic groups had suffered an era of intensified colonial rule. European powers vied for control of the continent, then often brutally imposed their colonial policies and cultures on its peoples. In the process, older, African political systems and ways of life were disrupted or undermined, a course of events that in many cases did severe damage to separate African senses of identity.

As the Nigerian novelist Chinua Achebe explains, the decades of European rule had an amnesic effect on Africa. They swept its peoples "out of the current of their history into somebody else's history," transformed them from major into minor players in their own lands, turned their saga into the saga of alien races in Africa, and obliterated "the real history that had been going on since the millenia ... especially because it was not written down" (*Conversations with Chinua Achebe* [Ed. Bernth Lindfors. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1997], 157). The reference here is to a rich foundation of oral literature—of proverb, song, folktale, and legend—that preceded the European invasions and has survived to the present day. In the early 1200s, poet-historians in the empire of Mali, for example, told and retold the story of their origins, the *Epic of Son-Jara* (or Sunjata), which in the 1950s found its way onto paper, the core of the story remarkably preserved for 700 years.

From the seventh into the eleventh century, Arab peoples mounted a series of invasions of North Africa that brought the Muslim religion to the continent. By the mid-1300s, when Ibn Battuta wrote his *Rihla* (see *Ibn Battuta in Black Africa*) Islam had penetrated into East and West Africa, as shown in his book of travels, the world's only existing eyewitness account of life in these areas during the fourteenth century.

Next came the first Europeans to venture south of the Sahara Desert, the Portuguese, who settled in coastal areas of the region during the fifteenth century and trafficked heavily in slaves. Over the next few centuries, other European powers became involved in the slave trade, abducting a total of perhaps 12 million Africans, among them a ten-year-old Igbo boy from West Africa, Olaudah Equiano. Kidnapped and sold into English slavery, Equiano later published his memoirs (*The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa the African*) to promote abolition, thereby initiating African protest literature, which would rear its defiant head on behalf of other pressing causes in the twentieth century. Meanwhile, in South Africa, the 1780s saw the birth of the Zulu chief Chaka, who would amass a kingdom that endured for much of the nineteenth century (1816-79), until the last two decades, when European nations embarked on a scramble for control of almost all of Africa. Apart from battling Africans, these nations competed with one another. In South Africa, on Chaka's home ground, the British waged war against descendants of the Dutch for territorial control. Elsewhere the Germans vied with the French, the Portuguese with the Germans, and the Italians with the English, the French, and the Turks. From the 1880s to the 1920s, most of Africa became subject to one European nation or another.

With the rush of colonizers came missionaries and their educational systems, which led to the emergence of an African literature written in European languages. Also affected were works in Arabic, a language long used in Africa for writing. The continent's literature evolved from the early through the mid-twentieth century into a vigorous collection, including novels, short stories, plays, poems, memoirs, and essays, most of them politically tinged. To a great extent, literature in Africa is a medium of expression that aims to serve the inhabitants: it has taken on the challenge of coming to grips with what happened to them under and after colonization, of creating stories whose intention is to aid people in the daily struggle of life. In a sense, as Achebe explains about his own separate novels, the various works all tell the same story, the story of Africa in today's world, of its relationship to Europe, of the issues that confront its people in the present, which can be understood only by examining their past, their particular histories, which literature passes on from one generation to the next. Africa is a huge continent, characterized by diversity; to do it justice one must view the whole picture, its multiplicity of issues, and from different angles. "You don't," argues Achebe, "stand in one place to see it, you move around the arena and take different perspectives . . . . [T]o get it right you have to circulate the arena and take your shots like a photographer from different positions" (*Conversations with Chinua Achebe.* [Ed. Bernth Lindfors. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1997], 156). It is to this end that the mix of works has been selected for inclusion in *African Literature and Its Times.*

Colonial rule was at first confusing. With it came benefits, like the advantages of education, and liabilities, like forced labor, the seizure of indigenous lands, and legal double standards for the colonizers and the colonized. Astutely, Africans learned to sort out the benefits from the liabilities, as evident in their coming-of-age stories. Literatures around the world feature such stories, or bildungsromans; there is a difference, though, to these tales in Africa. Stories of growth here have involved an extra dimension, an expanding consciousness of the hypocrisy inherent in colonialism, which professed to benefit the same peoples that it so profoundly oppressed. The growing awareness of this reality produced an additional type of "coming-of-age" story in African literature. In the first place, there were tales of passage into adulthood that involved finding one's place in a bifurcated world of traditional and European forces (as reflected in Taha Husayn's *An Egyptian Childhood* (Egypt) and Camara Laye's *Dark Child* (French Guinea). In the second, less obvious, place, the growth process involved a dawning awareness of being denigrated and exploited because of one's race, and, in the case of women, because of one's gender. These recognitions manifest themselves in novels from different reaches of the continent—in Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Weep Not, Child* (Kenya), for example; in Ferdinand Oyono's *Houseboy* (Cameroon Republic); and in Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* (Zimbabwe). In some respects, the identity crises in such novels are unique to a specific environment; in other respects, similar by virtue of being African.

Along with these coming-of-age threads, from the canon of literary works in Africa one can extract mutual concerns about other issues as well. There are works about polygamy and the stress colonialism placed on marriages, about colonialism's abuses, and about its failure to acknowledge the validity of precolonial customs—issues that surface, respectively, in *Song of Lawino and Song of Ocol* (Uganda), *We Killed Mangy-Dog and*

Other Stories (Mozambique), and *Death and the King's Horseman* (Nigeria). A host of additional issues surface in works set around the continent, as evident in the sampling below:

- **African defiance**—*God's Bits of Wood* (Senegal and French Sudan), *Mine Boy* (South Africa), *Things Fall Apart* (Nigeria)
- **Idealism**—*Cry, the Beloved Country* (South Africa), "Farahat's Republic" (Egypt), *When Rain Clouds Gather* (Botswana)
- **Intra-African generation gap**—*The Joys of Motherhood* (Nigeria), *Valley Song* (South Africa)
- **Interethnic conflict**—*Chaka* (South Africa), *The Last Duty* (Nigeria), *The Pillar of Salt* (Tunisia)
- **Parental and extended family devotion**—*The Oil Man of Obange* (Nigeria), *Nervous Conditions* (Zimbabwe)
- **Fusion of the worldly and supernatural**—*The Famished Road* (Nigeria), *The Dark Child* (French Guinea)
- **Traditionalism versus colonialism**—*Mission to Kala* (Cameroon), *Midaqq Alley* (Egypt)
- **Official torture**—*Houseboy* (Cameroon Republic), *Waiting for the Barbarians* (South Africa)
- **Violent liberation**—*The Wretched of the Earth* (Algeria), "The Rivonia Trial Speech" (South Africa)
- **Women's rights and roles**—*Fantasia* (Algeria), *Efuru* (Nigeria), *The Sand Child* (Morocco)

More issues and illustrative literary works exist. Unique among them is apartheid, in effect in South Africa from 1948 to 1994. As apartheid's architects saw it, South Africa consisted of distinct nations, each of which ought to live in its own separate area, or homeland, with blacks entering the white homeland only for work. In theory, the policy promoted the idea of separate development. In reality, it served as the basis for all manner of abuses, protested in literature by blacks and whites alike. Peter Abrahams's *Mine Boy* and Nadine Gordimer's *Burger's Daughter* are novels in this vein, while Nelson Mandela's "Rivonia Trial Speech" tackles the issue through rhetoric. Like the rest of the continent, though, South Africa was much more than a black-and-white, one-issue society. There was the experience of the coloured, or mixed-race, minority to consider (see Alex La Guma's *A Walk in the Night*), and of the white minority that acted against apartheid (see André Brink's *A Dry White Season*). Of course, divisions in white South African society were nothing new; they had already surfaced in nineteenth-century literature, as shown in distinctions made between Afrikaner and British characters in Olive Schreiner's *Story of an African Farm.*

These and other works covered in *African Literature and Its Times* begin to convey the complexity of African societies, although space and the primarily historical focus preclude a comprehensive coverage. Postcolonial life, for example, gave rise in the 1970s and '80s to works about internal strife and to works by women writers. In keeping with these developments, the volume covers Isidore Okepwho's *The Last Duty,* about internal friction in a border town during the Nigerian Civil War, and Mariama Bâ's *So Long a Letter,* about women in transition in Senegal. But the rigors of selection preclude coverage of *Labyrinths,* a posthumous work by the Igbo poet Christopher Okigbo, a martyr in Nigeria's Civil War, or of *The Beggar's Strike,* a Senegalese novel by Aminata Sow-Fall about the marginalized group identified in the title.

On the other hand, the volume does include not only a mix of perspectives and experiences from all regions of the continent, but also stories that rise above the issues of the moment to convey the integrity of a culture apart from its encounter with colonialism. Two cases in point are Wole Soyinka's play *Death and the King's Horseman* and Chinua Achebe's novel *Things Fall Apart.* In the first instance, colonialism is a convenient excuse that allows a character to escape his duty to observe a difficult custom—to disastrous effect; the Yoruba, not the colonial view, takes precedence in the play. Similarly, in Achebe's novel, the protagonist lets his individual inclination overpower that of the group and the results are just as disastrous. Again the work rises above the colonial factor to reveal an indigenous truism, in this case of sanctioned behavior among the Igbo people.

The character, and beauty, of the literature surfaces not only in what it says but also in how it tells its stories. Most of the writers covered in this volume generate their works in a European language or in Arabic, in many cases Africanizing the language and genre, tailoring them to indigenous society. Achebe infuses his novel with elements of his own traditional folklore, as do Amos Tutuola (*The Palm-Wine Drinkard and His Dead Palm-Wine Tapster in the Deads' Town*), Flora Nwapa (*Efuru*), and Kateb Yacine (*Nedjma*). Likewise Soyinka incorporates into the dialogue of his play traditional proverbs and the type of

English spoken by Africans in the colonial power structure. In his short story "Farahat's Republic," Yusuf Idris breaks new ground by digressing from standard Arabic and including dialogue that reflects the dialects genuinely spoken in mid-1900s Egypt.

Lastly, African writers have shaped their literature by portraying in it a unique set of heroes, sometimes tragic heroes, but heroes nonetheless. In Soyinka's play an educated African dies to preserve the Yoruba world view. In *God's Bits of Wood,* Wolof (or Djolof) railway workers go on a deadly strike to protest unequal labor conditions. *Fantasia* highlights the role of rural women in Algeria's war for independence. In *A Dry White Season,* an African janitor and a white schoolteacher lose their lives to unmask the truth about an instance of official torture. In fact, the authors of all this literature are themselves heroes, for daring to generate literary works that have exposed or contradicted those in power. Some of these works were banned in their country of origin (*Burger's Daughter*—South Africa; *Woman at Point Zero*—Egypt). In other places, the works startled official versions of history by introducing an African perspective on European conquest (*Things Fall Apart*), by portraying the colonizer rather than the colonized as savage (*Yaka*), or by exposing forms of postcolonial oppression and corruption (*Sweet and Sour Milk*). Perhaps most important, though, has been the portrayal for Africans, and the rest of the world, of everyday heroes. In Nigeria there is a novel, *The Oil Man of Obange,* in which a father, despite hardship after hardship, literally works himself to death so that his sons and daughter can afford an education. An unsung hero, he is one of many who make Africa's heart beat.

Chronology of Relevant Events

African Literature and Its Times

FROM AFRICAN EMPIRES TO THE FIRST COLONIZERS

South of the Sahara Desert, medieval Africa was largely dominated by the rise of three inland empires—Ghana, Mali, and Songhai. Other cultures developed as well, including the Yoruba and Igbo in today's Nigeria, the Wolof (or Djolof) in Senegal, and the Shona in Zimbabwe. Early trade with Mediterranean countries fostered the spread of Christianity to some African kingdoms, most notably to Axum in Ethiopia, while other kingdoms, such as Mali, were converted to Islam by the teachings of Muhammad after Arab invasions of the continent. Meanwhile, trade continued, over north–south and east–west routes that linked Africa to the Arabian peninsula, India, and the Mediterranean countries and enabled Africans to participate in international culture. Traders journeyed by land and sea to traffic in goods and slaves, their activity increasing after European explorers, led by the Portuguese, ventured into African territory. By the end of the seventeenth century, the Portuguese, British, French, and Dutch were poised to begin a competition for domination in Africa that would last for more than two hundred years.

	Historical Events	Related Literary Works
500	350–550 C.E. In Ethiopia, Axumites convert to Christianity as a result of Mediterranean contact	
	400–1100 Empire of Wagadu (ancient kingdom of Ghana) flourishes in the western Sudan	
	c. 570 The prophet Muhammad is born in the Middle East in Mecca	
	600–1300 Height of Nubian Christian kingdoms in eastern Sudan	
	620 Muhammad preaches his revelations	

	Historical Events	Related Literary Works
	632 Death of Muhammad	
	640–1000 Islamic faith and culture spread throughout North Africa	
	800–1000 Rise of Swahili town-states along East African coast	
1000	1000s Spread of Islamic religion into the western Sudan; Wagadu is a powerful center of trade, with gold from the south exchanged for salt and other goods from the north	
	1000–1500 Igbo people spread widely through southeast Nigeria, continuing to set up many town-states	*The Concubine* by Elechi Amadi
	1067–68 Cordoban geographer al-Bakri compiles detailed account of kingdom of Wagadu	
	1100s Yoruba people organize inland city-states in West Africa; Susu Empire briefly replaces Wagadu as major power in western Sudan	*The Palm-Wine Drinkard and His Dead Palm-Wine Tapster in the Deads' Town* by Amos Tutuola
	1230 Sumamru, king of Kaniaga, rebels against Wagadu, conquers empire	
	1235 Sunjata king of Kangaba, defeats Sumamuru at Battle of Krina, founds empire of Mali	*The Epic of Son-Jara* as told by Fa-Digi Sisòkò
	late 1200s–early 1500s East African city of Kilwa becomes powerful trading center, linking Zimbabwe, Mogadishu, Persia, and India	
	1230s–40s Rise of Great Zimbabwe empire in southeastern Africa; rise of Kisalian kingdom on the upper Kongo River	*African Laughter* by Doris Lessing
1300	1300s Height of Mali Empire, under ruler Mansa Musa (1312-37); first large state, Kitara, arises inland in East Africa; fall of Nubian Christian kingdoms in eastern Sudan	
	1324 Mansa Musa makes pilgrimage to Mecca	
	1329–31 Ibn Battuta visits East Africa; Great Zimbabwe culture achieves growing prosperity	*Ibn Battuta in Black Africa* by Abu Abdalla ibn Battuta
	1352–53 Ibn Battuta visits West Africa	*Ibn Battuta in Black Africa* by Abu Abdalla ibn Battuta
	1360 Decline of Mali empire begins with splitting off of the Wolof (Djolof) kingdom of Senegambia region	
	1370 Establishment of Solomonic dynasty in Ethiopia	
1400	1400s Wolof empire establishes itself in Senegal; end of Zimbabwe empire and rise of Mutapa and Torwa kingdoms in its place; rise of kingdom of Kongo	
	1415 Prince Henry the Navigator leads Portuguese conquest of Ceuta, a city in Morocco, inaugurating Portuguese efforts to extend trade down western coast of Africa	
	early 1440s The Atlantic trade between Europe and West Africa gets underway; slave trade by sea begins when Portuguese take captured Africans to Lisbon	
	1448 Portuguese establish first European trading post in West Africa	
	1450 Height of kingdom of Benin in West Africa; period of complex flow of influences among Yoruba, Benin, and Igbo cultures begins	
	1451–1601 About 367,000 Africans are taken from the continent by the Atlantic slave trade	
	1464–1591 Songhai kingdom on the bend of the Niger River establishes itself as an empire, with Sonni Ali as its ruler	

	Historical Events	Related Literary Works
	1471 Portuguese arrive in West African coastal region west of the Volta River, which they name the Gold Coast (today's Ghana)	
	1481 Portuguese emissaries visit court of the king of Benin, establish commercial ties	
	1482–84 Diogo Cão, Portuguese explorer, reaches mouth of Congo River and establishes relations with the kingdom of Kongo	
	1487 Portuguese navigator Bartolemeu Días voyages around Cape of Good Hope	
	1498 Portuguese explorer Vasco da Gama sails around Africa to reach India from Europe; vigorous trade begins	
1500	1500s Rise of the Yoruba empire of Oyo in Nigeria; Portuguese threaten the independence of Swahili town-states and try to control Indian Ocean trade; rise of Sinnar kingdom in eastern Sudan	*Death and the King's Horseman* by Wole Soyinka
	1518 First direct delivery of slaves from Guinea coast to West Indies	
	1550–1600 Dutch traders reach Benin kingdom in West Africa; Portuguese trade on African coast is threatened by the Dutch, who build their first trading post on the Gold Coast	
1600	1600–1650s British build their first fort in West Africa on St. James Island; French, British, Dutch, and Portuguese trade with Niger Delta peoples; rise of Asante empire inland from the Gold Coast	
	1652–1795 The Dutch East India Company builds refreshment station at the Cape of Good Hope; descendants of Dutch settlers (the Afrikaners) expand into South African interior	
	1660s–90s British capture Dutch forts on Gold Coast; French capture Dutch stations in Senegal; Omani Arabs replace the Portuguese as dominant outside power in the affairs of the Swahili city- states	

EGYPT AND THE SUDAN: FROM ARAB CONQUEST TO REPUBLICS

Muslim Arab armies swept into Egypt in the seventh century, initiating the spread of Islam into the area, a religious legacy that persists to this day. By contrast, European interest in Egypt ignited fairly late, after French troops led by Napoleon invaded in 1798, only to be ignominiously driven out in 1801 by troops of the British and Ottoman Turks. Soon after, Egypt began its own rise to power, under the leader Muhammad 'Ali who conquered the Sudan and introduced numerous reforms. Fearing the presence of a strong state in the Mediterranean Sea, Great Britain moved to limit 'Ali's power base and establish its own. In 1882, after the 'Urabi rebellion and a series of riots directed at Europeans, British forces occupied Egypt, which officially became a British protectorate in 1914. Protests by the increasingly vocal Egyptian nationalist movement prompted Britain to grant Egypt nominal independence in 1922. After World War II, Egypt voted to dissolve treaties that made it a virtual colony of Britain. Greater changes were introduced in 1952, when a group of Egyptian army officers overthrew and abolished the monarchy, paving the way for Egypt to become an independent republic.

	Historical Events	Related Literary Works
600	639–42 C.E. Muslim Arabs conquer Egypt; Roman-Byzantine rule ends; Islam starts spreading into North Africa	
800	800s Rise in Egypt of Sufism, a mystical branch of Islam	
900	969–1171 Fatimid dynasty governs Egypt	
	972 Mosque and college of al-Azhar opens in Cairo	
1500	1517 Ottoman Turks invade and conquer Egypt	
	1798–1801 Napoleon conquers Egypt, but is ultimately driven out by British and Ottoman troops	
1800	1805–49 Muhammad 'Ali, a Turkish Army officer, establishes himself as khedive ("ruler") of Egypt, introduces educational and agricultural reforms with mixed success	
	1820 Egyptian ruler Muhammad 'Ali sends his forces to invade the Sudan	
1825		
1850	1856–69 French- and British-owned Suez Canal Company constructs canal, using thousands of Egyptian peasants to do manual labor; 20,000 die during construction	
	1863–79 Isma'il, Muhammad 'Ali's grandson, rules Egypt, amasses huge personal and state-related debts; he is ultimately deposed, exiled, and replaced by his son, Tawfiq	
	1870s *Othello* becomes first Shakespearean play to be performed in Middle East	*Season of Migration to the North* by Tayeb Salih
	1871–79 The preacher Jamal al-Din al-Afghani helps revive conservative Islam in Egypt until he is expelled	
1875	1880s Egypt's Native Courts are reformed	*The Maze of Justice* by Tawfiq al-Hakim
	1881–82 After presenting a list of grievances, Egyptian officers, led by Colonel Ahmad 'Urabi, are arrested by Tawfiq; Egyptian troops loyal to 'Urabi march on the palace, demanding his release; Tawfiq accedes, appointing 'Urabi Minister of War; unrest continues	
	1881–85 Muhammed Ahmad, a Sudanese holy man, declares a *jihad*—holy war—against the Egyptians, who, despite superior numbers and weapons, are driven from the Sudan	
	1882–1914 After anti-European riots in Alexandria, the British occupy Egypt, beginning period of "Veiled Protectorate"; 'Urabi and other mutineers are exiled to Sri Lanka	
	1885–98 Period of Sudanese independence	
	1890s Egypt regains financial solvency, but the British remain, despite an earlier pledge to depart; strikes and demonstrations are staged to protest British occupation	
	1896 Anglo-Egyptian army marches into the Sudan	
	1898 Sudanese are defeated in Battle of Omdurman, which ends independence; the Sudan will be ruled jointly by England and Egypt until 1956	
1900	1900–10 Approximately 4,500 village schools operate in Egypt	*An Egyptian Childhood* by Taha Husayn
	1907 Formation of Wafd ("the organization") marks birth of Egyptian nationalist movement	
	1908 Egyptian University opens	
	1914 Britain formally declares Egypt a protectorate	

	Historical Events	Related Literary Works
	1918 Egyptian delegates are not permitted to attend World War I Versailles Peace Conference	
	1919 Egyptian nationalists rebel against British rule	
	1922 Egypt gains formal but nominal independence from Great Britain	
	1923 Founding of the Egyptian Feminist Union; feminists Huda Sha'arawi and Saiza Nabarawi cast off their face veils in public	*Woman at Point Zero* by Nawal El Saadawi
	1924 Sir Lee Stack, British commander in chief of Anglo-Egyptian army, is killed by Wafdist agents; British demand heavy indemnities from Egyptian government; first Egyptian parliament convenes	
1925	1930s–40s Worldwide depression exacerbates crime in Egypt; political unrest leads to new political parties, banking and insurance industries become more "Egyptianized"	*The Maze of Justice* by Tawfiq al-Hakim
	1936 British and Egyptian governments sign agreement restricting British military occupation to Canal Zone	
	1938–41 Postsecondary schools are established in the Sudan, but it has no university	*Season of Migration to the North* by Tayeb Salih
	1939–45 Egyptian government allows Britain additional military bases in Egypt because of World War II; 140,000 British troops in Cairo in 1941	*Midaqq Alley* by Najib Mahfuz
	1940s Rise of Arab nationalism in Egypt; massive Allied buildup in Egypt stimulates industrial development; feminist movement gains momentum in Egypt and presses for reforms	
	1944 Egyptian Wafdist government, led by Prime Minister Mustafa al-Nahhas, is forced to resign; Egyptian Feminist Union hosts the Arab Feminist Conference	
	1945 After Egypt declares war on Germany, Egyptian Prime Minister Ahmad Mahir is assassinated by Nazi sympathizer; formation of the Arab Feminist Union	
	1946 Demonstrations by students and workers protest unresponsive Egyptian politicians and continued British presence in Egypt	
1950	1951 Egypt reasserts sovereignty, abrogates treaties that made it a virtual colony of Great Britain	
	1952 Free Officers, led by Gamal Abdul Nasser (Jamal 'Abd al-Nasir), overthrow monarchy, exiling King Faruq; all political parties are banned; Revolutionary Command Council provides transitional government, with General Muhammad Naguib (Muhammad Najib) as prime minister; British evacuate Egypt	"Farahat's Republic" by Yusuf Idris
	1953 Egypt officially abolishes monarchy and becomes a republic	
	1953–54 Power struggle between Nasser and Naguib ends with Naguib's arrest for attempted assassination of his rival	
	1954 Nasser negotiates treaty with British requiring their withdrawal from Canal Zone by June 1956	
	1956 The Sudan gains independence; Nasser is elected president of Egypt; Israeli, British, and French forces invade Egypt at Suez; after United Nations pressure, they withdraw	*Season of Migration to the North* by Tayeb Salih
	1958–61 Egypt and Syria form United Arab Republic, which ultimately dissolves	
	1960–68 Aswan High Dam is constructed in Egypt; Egypt and Israel fight June (1967) War	