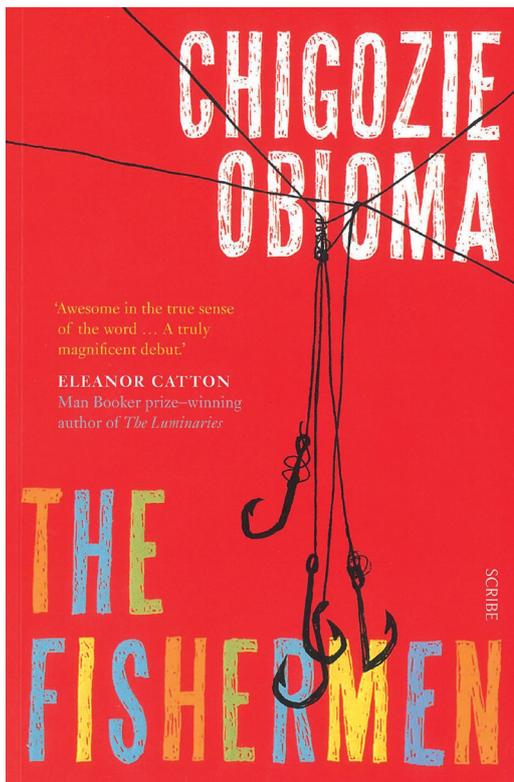


# Reader's Guide



*The Fishermen*  
is Chigozie Obioma's first novel.

## The Fishermen Chigozie Obioma

ONE, Pushkin Press

[www.themanbookerprize.com](http://www.themanbookerprize.com)

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## About the author

Chigozie Obioma was born in 1986 in Akure, Nigeria.

His short stories have appeared in the *Virginia Quarterly Review* and *New Madrid*. He was a Fall 2012 OMI Fellow at Ledig House, New York. He has lived in Nigeria, Cyprus and Turkey, and currently resides in the United States, where he has completed an MFA in Creative Writing at the University of Michigan and is now assistant professor of English at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

## The Fishermen

*The Fishermen* is set in a small town in Nigeria in the mid-1990s. Four brothers, the youngest is nine, use their strict father's absence from home to go fishing in a forbidden river and encounter a dangerous local madman, Abulu, whose mystic prophecy of violence threatens the very core of their close-knit family.

He predicts that one of the brothers – a fisherman – will kill another. This evil prophecy of violence causes a deep rift between the brothers and starts to break the deep fraternal bonds, unleashing a tragic chain of events.

Told by shy nine-year-old Benjamin, *The Fishermen* combines classic African storytelling with contemporary fiction, and illuminates Nigeria in all its historical, political and cultural complexity.

## Discussion points

The story is told in the narrative present as a recollection of past events by the now-adult Benjamin. At what points in the novel does the author revert back to the child's point of view, and why does he then switch back to that of an adult?

Many of the chapters start with Ben likening his family to animals: how are these comparisons used to mark changes in characters and a warning of the dangers to come?

'Themes are teasingly introduced in the present, then the narrative flow is halted and the story flashes back to illustrate the theme before resuming' (Helon Habila, *The Guardian*). What impact does this have on the reader?

Like most classic African novels, *The Fishermen* mixes the traditional English novel form with the oral storytelling tradition, dramatising the conflict between the traditional and the modern. How effective is the novel in this regard?

What insights does *The Fishermen* give you into Nigerian culture and history?

## Themed reading

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie *Half of a Yellow Sun*  
Chinua Achebe *Things Fall Apart*

## Useful links

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