



Dreams in a Time of War: A Childhood Memoir

By Ngugi wa Thiong'o

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Born in 1938 in rural Kenya, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o came of age in the shadow of World War II, amidst the terrible bloodshed in the war between the Mau Mau and the British. The son of a man whose four wives bore him more than a score of children, young Ngũgĩ displayed what was then considered a bizarre thirst for learning, yet it was unimaginable that he would grow up to become a world-renowned novelist, playwright, and critic.

In *Dreams in a Time of War*, Ngũgĩ deftly etches a bygone era, bearing witness to the social and political vicissitudes of life under colonialism and war. Speaking to the human right to dream even in the worst of times, this rich memoir of an African childhood abounds in delicate and powerful subtleties and complexities that are movingly told.

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Dreams in a Time of War: A Childhood Memoir By Ngugi wa Thiong'o Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Celebrated African author and activist Thiong'o tells no ordinary coming-of-age tale. The fifth child of his father's third wife—one of an extended family whose collective experiences range from rural farming and carpentry to WWII rifleman—Ngugi skillfully recounts the challenges and calamities of growing up in British-occupied Kenya. Born in 1938, he recalls a boyhood framed by his pursuit of education (he had a unspoken pact with his mother to always do his best) and by his developing awareness of nationalist politics. Through teachers and local storytellers he hears of such world figures as Winston Churchill, Jomo Kenyatta, and Jesse Owens; at home he eventually discovers that within his own family there are both Mau Mau rebels and colonial sympathizers. Tensions between tradition and modernity, a theme Ngugi explored in his first novel, 1964's *Weep Not Child*), become apparent in his fascination with the Old Testament and Christianity, and his fear when he is interrogated by military authorities. For readers, sequential time surrenders to a sense of narrative and an engaging humanity. (May)

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From [Booklist](#)

When Ngugi is accepted into an elite high school in Kenya, worried about where to get a pair of shoes, his brother is a Mau Mau guerrilla in the mountains. The world-renowned Kenyan writer looks back at his growing up in the 1950s in this crisp, clearly told memoir, which evokes the rising African nationalism of the era in all its conflict and complexity. The many fans of Ngugi's fiction will feel the truth of the young man's viewpoint and applaud his blasting of stereotypes about the country the whites had "discovered." Marcus Garvey is Ngugi's inspiration, both for his sense of self-reliance and for his ideas about nationalism versus the missionary and colonial projects, "which always assumed the fragility of the African mind." He remembers "settler newspapers" that portray terrorist massacre "without rhyme or reason" while the freedom fighters have no media to voice their side. A fascinating look at twentieth-century African history, but also a moving intellectual odyssey in which Ngugi learns to revere both modernity and tradition but to reserve a healthy skepticism of both. --Hazel Rochman

Review

"A testament to the resilience of youth and the strength of hope. . . . Vividly evokes the colonial era as experienced by Africans, and the resulting clash of cultures that produced one of the most significant African writers of our time. . . . Ng?g?'s greatest literary achievement in this book is to re-create, with almost uncanny success, how the world looked through mid-century African eyes."

—*The Boston Globe*

"Eye-opening. . . . The work Ng?g? offers us here is like nothing that's gone before. . . . There is a startling similarity between [Barack Obama's *Dreams From My Father*] and . . . Ng?g?'s eye-opening memoir. . . . It is admirably free of cant or sentimentality, and yet it is enough to make you weep."

—*The Washington Post*

"Startling, vivid. . . . Inspiring. . . . Whether recalling joyful or challenging times, Ng?g? displays a plainspoken yet beautiful prose style. . . . Ng?g?'s inspiring story is a testament to his extraordinary resilience and stubborn refusal to surrender his dreams."

—*Christian Science Monitor*

“Absorbing. . . . Infused with a child’s curiosity and wonder, this book is deeply touching in its revelation of a whole community’s stake in nurturing a writer.”

—*The Guardian* (London)

“Gives its readers an unforgettable sense of another time, a country and a continent in the middle of change. A small child learns to hold onto his dreams, even in a time of war.”

—*Los Angeles Times*

“Luminously evokes Kenya on the cusp of independence. . . . [This] memoir is suffused with affecting evocations of time and place, as well as a touching reminder that dreams can come true.”

—*Richmond Times Dispatch*

“Ngũgĩ has been a key figure in Kenya’s modern history, both as a writer and as a model for political engagement, and his three-volume memoir will serve as an important record of the country and the life.”

—*Irish Times*

“Crisp, clearly told. . . . A fascinating look at twentieth-century African history, but also a moving intellectual odyssey in which Ngũgĩ learns to revere both modernity and tradition but to reserve a healthy skepticism of both.”

—*Booklist*

“Ngũgĩ has returned to his roots to produce something delicate, fresh and scrupulously honest.”

—*The Spectator*

“Richly drawn. . . . A coming-of-age tale, gripping, endearing, shocking and funny by turns. . . . The surprise about *Dreams in a Time of War* is that, for all the provocation of history, and for all its clear-eyed evocation of an agonised time, it is not an angry book. . . . Ngũgĩ’s storyteller’s instinct for character and place, for recurring motifs and telling symbols, triumphs over the bleakness of background.”

—*The Scotsman*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Nancy Smith:

What do you think about book? It is just for students since they're still students or that for all people in the world, the actual best subject for that? Simply you can be answered for that issue above. Every person has several personality and hobby for each other. Don't to be obligated someone or something that they don't wish do that. You must know how great along with important the book *Dreams in a Time of War: A Childhood Memoir*. All type of book would you see on many resources. You can look for the internet methods or other social media.

Cierra Persaud:

Dreams in a Time of War: A Childhood Memoir can be one of your basic books that are good idea. Many of us recommend that straight away because this book has good vocabulary that will increase your knowledge in terminology, easy to understand, bit entertaining but nonetheless delivering the information. The writer

giving his/her effort to place every word into joy arrangement in writing Dreams in a Time of War: A Childhood Memoir nevertheless doesn't forget the main point, giving the reader the hottest along with based confirm resource facts that maybe you can be considered one of it. This great information may drawn you into new stage of crucial considering.

Robert Hensley:

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