



Dreams in a Time of War: A Childhood Memoir

By Ngugi Wa Thiong'O

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Born in 1938 in rural Kenya, Ngugi 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 Ngugi 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*, Ngugi 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.

From the Trade Paperback edition.

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Dreams in a Time of War: A Childhood Memoir By Ngugi Wa Thiong'O Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #666045 in eBooks
- Published on: 2010-03-02
- Released on: 2010-03-09
- Format: Kindle eBook

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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. . . . Ngugi'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 Ngugi offers us here is like nothing that's gone before. . . . There is a startling similarity between [Barack Obama's *Dreams From My Father*] and . . . Ngugi'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, Ngugi displays a plainspoken yet beautiful prose style. . . . Ngugi'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 ...

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Mollie Walker:

Have you spare time for just a day? What do you do when you have far more or little spare time? That's why, you can choose the suitable activity with regard to spend your time. Any person spent their particular spare time to take a wander, shopping, or went to the actual Mall. How about open or even read a book titled Dreams in a Time of War: A Childhood Memoir? Maybe it is to be best activity for you. You recognize beside you can spend your time with your favorite's book, you can better than before. Do you agree with it has the opinion or you have different opinion?

Ruby Carter:

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