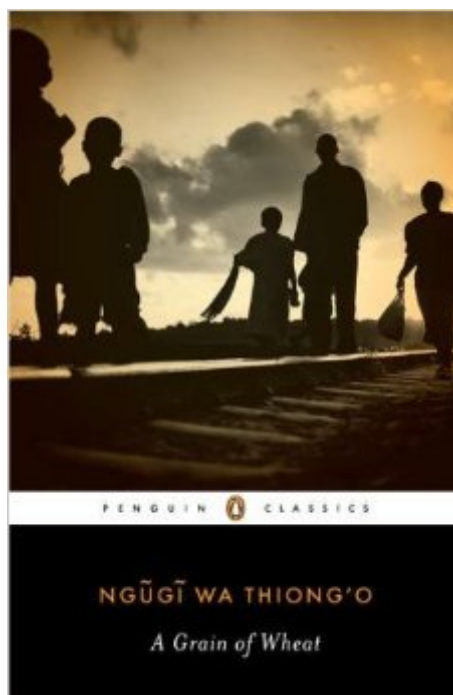


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A Grain Of Wheat (Penguin African Writers)



Synopsis

The best-known novel by the great Kenyan writer Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, set in the wake of the Mau Mau rebellion and on the cusp of Kenya's independence from Britain, *A Grain of Wheat* follows a group of villagers whose lives have been transformed by the 1952–1960 Emergency. At the center of it all is the reticent Mugo, the village's chosen hero and a man haunted by a terrible secret. As we learn of the villagers' tangled histories in a narrative interwoven with myth and peppered with allusions to real-life leaders, including Jomo Kenyatta, a masterly story unfolds in which compromises are forced, friendships are betrayed, and loves are tested. For more than seventy years, Penguin has been the leading publisher of classic literature in the English-speaking world. With more than 1,700 titles, Penguin Classics represents a global bookshelf of the best works throughout history and across genres and disciplines. Readers trust the series to provide authoritative texts enhanced by introductions and notes by distinguished scholars and contemporary authors, as well as up-to-date translations by award-winning translators.

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Customer Reviews

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, born into Kenya's largest ethnic group, the Kikuyu, in 1938, was educated at Makerere University in Kampala, Uganda and the University of Leeds. His *Weep Not, Child*, published in 1964, was the first novel in English to be published by an East African author. *A Grain of Wheat*, Ngũgĩ's postcolonial novel of political, social, sexual, and religious struggle, death, and rebirth, was published in 1967, when he had begun working, first, as a reporter and, then, as a

university professor. In December 1977, shortly before the death of Kenya's first president Jomo Kenyatta, vice president Daniel arap Moi, who would later rule Kenya with an iron hand, had Ngugi detained for a year as a political prisoner for what Moi regarded as the unsettling political message of Ngugi's popular play "I Will Marry When I Want". With the play, Ngugi turned his attention from Kenya's emergence from British occupation to the political corruption of independent Kenya. After his release from prison, Ngugi was unable to resume his university post. He left Kenya in 1982 and now publishes exclusively in his native Gikuyu, because he views the structure of the English language as containing a European, and hence foreign, vision of Africa. Ngugi is regarded as one of the leading African authors of the last half-century. "A Grain of Wheat" is not realism in the Western style. It does not set out to tell one story from one character's point of view. It does not rely on finely drawn character development, interior monologue, dilemmas established early and worked out late, and the sort of rational choices which characters exercising free will make in Western fiction.

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