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## Efuru Details

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Author : Flora Nwapa

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## From Reader Review Efuru for online ebook

### Jez says

It frustrates me reading some of the reviews for Efuru on here. All too often they mention enjoying this 'simple' novel, even though it lacks any 'real narrative'. To me these backhanded compliments smack of racism; the assumption that prose not florid in the Western Tradition is 'simple', that a story without high drama is without point.

Efuru is vivid and spare and elegant. Anyone criticising this novel for its simplicity - try to craft a response more eloquent than Efuru's when she speaks of 'suffering for herself'. As for the novel's 'point', Efuru's arc from devoted wife of undeserving men to self-possessed woman is electrifying. This novel could easily have ended with Efuru's emancipation involving her attending a white school and entering our wider world, but it doesn't. She is of the Igbo and her own nature is her saviour.

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### Molly Bagnall says

The last line of this book made me go h e c k y e a h

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### Sincerae says

I give Efuru five stars for it being meaningful to me on a personal level. The decent, honorable, and unselfish are often under appreciated in this life. Thus is the case of the main character Efuru who is beautiful, but she is more than just a pretty face. She is good-natured, honest, patient, generous, forgiving, industrious, a loyal wife, from a respected family, and well liked by the majority of the people in her village.

As for the author Flora Nwapa, her writing style is very stark. There are few curlicues of language or poetic flourishes here. The language is almost like reading a play's script. I would give her writing four stars.

The setting of Efuru is in a Nigerian village probably just after the First World War. The community, its harmony, and customs are described in a world that is changing for all the inhabitants both old and young. Though a young woman, Efuru is rather a throwback to the older simpler times. She rebels in eloping with her first husband, but her conscience won't permit her not to go back and apologize to her father who eagerly takes her back and forgives her.

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### Saberina Agyei says

Flora Nwapa's text is a pioneering example of female African literature. Not only does Efuru capture female life so vividly, it also contrasts with the male dominated African literature of the period in which Nwapa writes.

The reader is taken through the everyday life experiences of women in an African setting. Pregnancy, marriage, female circumcision are all discussed, alongside subtle nods to the presence of colonialism. The narrative is written in a style which is almost cinema-like, as it is able to capture and display circumstances the way film does.

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## **africawrites - The RAS' annual festival of African Literature says**

I'm currently reading Efuru - it's the first work of Flora Nwapa's that I am reading and I found the first line of the book riveting; although she has been a hovering presence in my literary awareness for a long-time I've never till now actually engaged with her work. That said, I'm aware as a pioneer, and she's one of the writers that Chimamanda Adichie namechecks often, and mentioned at our literature festival last year. African women writer's have definitely been under-rated and under celebrated, and that's one of the great things about the emergence of writers like Adichie, Chibundo Onuzo and Chika Unigwe - all great igbo writers for whom Flora Nwapa is definitely a forerunner.

**If you like this book or others like it, you may want to join us for Africa Writes. It takes place this year at the British Library from 5-7 July 2013.**

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**Dele Meiji Fatunla  
Website Editor  
Royal African Society**

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## **Ijeoma says**

### **Traditions of Igbo culture**

Now I was very astonished, considering the historical significance of this book, that no library in Dallas Texas carried this novel. What an insult. The book is a full and accurate portrayal of traditional Igbo culture, still evident to this day. It's moves along slowly and there are gaps in the storytelling towards the end, but overall the novel was fine.

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## **alison says**

should be read in conjunction with Things Fall Apart.

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## **Helynne says**

This beautiful novel describes the youth, marriage, motherhood and eventual personal epiphany of a young woman of contemporary Nigeria. Efuru's eventual tragedy is that she is not able to marry or raise children successfully. (Efurus' only daughter dies while she is still a small child, and a son never arrives). The book also describes quite matter-of-factly the horrific ritual of female circumcision--a painful clitorrectomy--that

all young women in this society are expected to undergo before marriage. Efur calls it her "bath," and willingly submits to the cutting and agony. (Although feminist groups are exposing this awful practice more and more to the world at large and trying to get it outlawed in Africa, the Middle East and other areas of the world where it is routinely practiced, the ritual still goes on today). Finally, Efur realizes that she surely must have a higher calling, and perceives that a goddess of her tribe, "the lady of the lake" has chosen her for another role. Efur muses at the story's end that the lady of the lake has never married nor had children, but still, the women of the community worship her.

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### **Ifeyinwa says**

a true african writer. I liked.

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### **Paul says**

Published in 1966, this apparently was the first book written by a Nigerian woman to be published (this is from Wiki so take with a pinch of salt). It is set in the same area and tradition as *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe. The blurb with the book sums it up;

"Efur, beautiful and respected, is loved and deserted by two ordinary undistinguished husbands."

The setting is rural and Efur is a woman who is independent and competent and trades for herself. The writing style is very similar to *Things Fall Apart* and if you enjoyed that you would certainly enjoy this. Like Achebe, Nwapa commentates rather than judges, but the messages are clear and this book is about the society of women in the same way *Things Fall Apart* is about the society of men. In my judgement this novel is every bit as good as *Things Fall Apart* and yet it is hardly known. Just look at the difference in ratings; *Things Fall Apart* has 141 386 ratings and 5993 reviews and Efur has 193 ratings and 17 reviews. This is not because of a difference in quality; they are both great books and in my opinion Efur is marginally better. Perhaps because it is written by a woman? Surely not?

The story opens a window onto customs and traditions going back centuries which are beginning to die out with younger generations and the encroachment of white culture and medicine. There is a not too graphic but very powerful description of genital mutilation. Efur is a wonderfully strong and vibrant character; apart from her father the men in her life are pretty useless and she concludes she is better off without them. She appears to be unable to produce lots of children and this is a source of sadness for her but she finds a role model in the form of the goddess of the lake who is beautiful, powerful, and independent and without children.

This is a great novel; much too neglected and well worth looking out for.

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### **Eliana Nzualo says**

I really enjoyed this book. It introduced me a bit more to Nigerian culture and traditions. I'm from Mozambique and I can see some similarities in the underlying misogyny described in the book.

It is also interesting to put this book in a time frame and confront this story with those of Wole Soyinka and Chinua Achebe.

The questions regarding the woman's role in the family and in society are still relevant today, which makes it perfect for young women such myself. Are you less of a woman if you don't have kids? What's the definition

of a 'good woman'? How can a couple build a healthy and strong relationship in a patriarchal environment? And so on. Great read! I enjoyed it very much.

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### **Cheryl says**

Achebe minced no words in his memoir *There Was a Country: A Personal History of Biafra*, when he mentioned his friendship with and respect for Flora Nwapa, Nigeria's first woman writer and former English professor (in fact her work clearly influenced Buchi Emecheta's, this I sensed from the prose arrangement). Reading this novel, I recalled Alice Walker's words in either *The World Has Changed: Conversations with Alice Walker*, or *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose*, where she insisted that feminism is a global thing, meaning one can't care about women from only a certain race. In fact, this same idea is stressed in *Awakenings: The Story of the Kate Chopin Revival*.

But I'll try not to digress. Efuru. Beautiful Efuru. She is one character I'll never forget. I love when a book leaves a character's portrait so wonderfully drawn across the windows of my mind that she assumes a role in my scholastic discussions on gender and she becomes a model of global comparison.

Efuru is every love-stricken daughter who marries without her parents' consent and alas, bears the brunt of such decision. Efuru is every woman who has loved a man as a partner and friend, but had him torn away by greed, gossip, and jealousy. Efuru is that woman who knows the pain of losing a child. She is the entrepreneur, breadwinner, survivor, and the strong female lead she never imagined herself to be, due to the inflictions of her patriarchal community. Efuru is a woman who moves to the beat of her town's river goddess, to the beat of her own drum.

You know that century-old idea that a girl's education is futile, since she is expected to marry and raise kids? It still exists. That century-old idea that a woman without children is barren or useless or even strange - it still exists. That century-old idea that a woman who does not understand her man somehow has an inherent need to be with other women is a "bad woman," and the woman who feels the same need to be with another is an adulteress, well that idea also still exists. I'll leave you with those thoughts, as they're all highlighted in this novel.

If you can, read this with a cup of palm wine and the weighty, bitter taste of kola nut resting on your tongue. What you can't do is read this for prose embellishments because you'd be disappointed. Nwapa, like most African writers, does not focus on prose design; rather, her prowess is in creating drama through storytelling, something most African writers do powerfully. Look up a play based in Africa and most likely, you'd be in good hands. 'Voice' is the center of good literature from Africa: one must imagine the story read aloud, possibly even dramatized, per African oral storytelling tradition. This story moves through dialogue, something difficult to do, and yet Nwapa makes it look simple.

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### **Colin Williams says**

Loved Things Fall Apart? Want to go back to Iboland? Want more beautifully simple writing? Want it from a woman's perspective? Well, Efuru is all of those things. However, while it is gorgeous, and convincing and has some interesting notes on polygamy, there seems to be no plot or central idea of the novel. I wish I knew more about genre theory, but perhaps this is realism? The events have no overarching order, but they just unfold, like they do in real life? No idea what to make of the story.

### Lydia Ume says

It's refreshing to read of a woman who lived in an unconventional way for her era. Independent, wise, resourceful Efuru is a delight.

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### Sami Tunji says

At first, I was afraid the novel might be boring, but gradually I began to enjoy it, precisely enjoying its richness in oral tradition. I have a feeling that this novel might have been the inspiration for Buchi Emecheta's Joys of Motherhood and Elechi Amadi's The Concubine. Anyway, it's quite an interesting read, like a voyage into the core of culture, precisely the Igbo culture, learning about generational pattern and woman empowerment.

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### Emily Mack says

Had to read it for a world lit class. I liked it, I didn't love it. The beginning and end were better than the middle. Universal, cross-cultural truths about motherhood, marriage, femininity, gossip, community, education and change. The writing style is VERY straightforward, dry, short sentences lots of dialogue. Difficult to keep the characters' names and relationships to each other straight. I'm glad I read it once, probably won't read it again.

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### Aubrey says

4.5/5

*Perhaps self-imposed suffering appeals to her. It does not appeal to me. I know I am capable of suffering for greater things. But to suffer for a truant husband, an irresponsible husband like Adizua is to debase suffering. My own suffering will be noble.*

There're certain novels I've referred to as "\_\_\_\_\_ for adults" wherein I name them as examples that go above and beyond the call of their genre (as dictated by status quo "classics") in terms of complexity, lack of lazy writing in the form of stereotypes, and overall treatment of not the structure of their type, but the philosophy. Postcolonial literature has been a thing for some time now, the artificial debts imposed by former imperial powers (France without its colonial after payments would be a third world country in a heartbeat), and, time, moving as it does, can seem set in its ways if one isn't paying critical attention. White writers can't get away with writing about Africa as one would a playground/zoo as much as they used to, but I still find myself confronted with uncritical trash in well respected public mouthpieces. Nwapa's 'Efuru', then, is a breath of fresh air, especially in a world where Things Fall Apart is practically the only book of Africa, specifically Nigeria, specifically Igbo, that the average person who claims to be a reader has in their back history.

If there is pathos in 'Efuru', it is for human beings, not spectacle. If there is history, it is the everyday acknowledgement of real characters, not the drama of white people in nonwhite wonderland. If there is culture, it is done, not described as it is by writers who pander to "diversity" and believe that, despite not

living the diversity, they can somehow fake it. This is a story of a woman who lives through her own insensible tragedies and absurd dooms, but the times they are a' changing, and what was grounds for enslavement is now enabled by the Church, what once killed is now cured, and what was once respected absolutely is now destroyed by the past complicity that first built up its reputation. White people are more aggravating yet doddering parental figure than ultimate villain, and when they do show up it is as comic relief or touches of dramatic plot point. The main story is a matter of individual versus community, gender roles, social machinations, legal (or lack thereof) statutes relating to domestic matters, religious influence, old versus new, accredited versus familiar, all of which is not nearly so dryly thematic when as read as it sounds when listed out. As said, this is a novel for adults, and I don't mean the lazy indicators of such in terms of violence and sex and other gratuitous shock tropes. I mean adult in that there are no right answers, or there are no right answers yet, or there will never be any right answers so long as life goes along unquestioned and individuals trust that the mold of their ancestors will protect their progeny, so long as they all fit. All the while exteriorizing the concerns of the non-Nigerian hoping to "accurately" portray the Nigerian(/African), of course.

This is the best book I've read so far in 2018, so I can excuse my putting off reading it for so long with the reasoning that this initial good fortune will provide motivation to take a chance on other, solo names. This particular work is on a number of "Best Books of \_\_\_\_\_", on a lesser scale than So Long a Letter but still to an extent that I fear people will read this, feel satisfied with themselves, and then use that satisfied feeling to power their reading of 99+ books by white people. If you claim the right to read your own myopic way out of freedom and whatnot, sure, go your own way. Just don't come crying to me when your myopia becomes other's legal extradition policies and your standing for no one results in you standing alone.

*The booming of the cannons was announcing the departure of a great son, the last of the generation that had direct contact with the white people who exchanged their cannons, hot drinks and cheap ornaments for black slaves.*

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## **Ricki Nordmeyer says**

I read this as part of a week-long book discussion on Female African writers. this was the first book written by an African woman writer and ultimately inspired Buchi Emecheta's "The Joy of Motherhood", with its last line. The protagonist is a Nigerian girl who must submit to the traditional female genital mutilation which was the standard in the early 20th century as well as currently in some African countries. Her inability to get pregnant dooms her first marriage and reveals the importance of having children in Nigerian life. although stylistically this was not a well written work, Nwapa was emulating the storytelling nature of her people and the way people talk.

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## **D says**

Different style and content.

Efuru slept soundly that night. She dreamt of the woman of the lake, her beauty, her long hair and her riches. She had lived for ages at the bottom of the lake. She was as old as the lake itself. She was happy, she was wealthy. She was beautiful. She gave women beauty and wealth but she had no child. She had never experienced the joy of motherhood. Why then did the women worship her?

## **Corvinus Maximilus says**

Efuru is a well respected woman in the community who marries an undistinguished man that no one knows. Even though no one understands her choice they still hold her in high esteem. Efuru's life isn't as society expects, but through her challenges she carries herself superbly. The last paragraph of the book, her musing on the worship of the Lady of the Lake, rounded off the story perfectly. "And yet we worship her." This last line to me alludes to change in the society, is the only purpose of womanhood to be a wife and have children?

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