

## Arrow of God, by Chinua Achebe



Review by: Lauren Evans

I picked up this book after having read and enjoyed Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* several years ago. Released in 1964, it's the final novel in his African trilogy. This powerfully written and engaging story documents the struggle between continuity and change in 1920's Nigeria.

*Arrow of God* takes the reader to the district of Umuaro, where colonialism slowly takes reign over its more traditional way of life. The six villages that make up Umuaro are united by their worship of the god Ulu and work together as one. The book opens with a war between Umuaro and its neighboring district Okperi over land they want to claim. After meeting with Ezeulu, Ulu's chief priest, the British colonial administration steps in to stop the war and rules in favor of Okperi. This is the beginning of a chain of events that forever changes the community of Umuaro.

The Umuaro people are upset with Ezeulu because he didn't take their side, and because he walks the fine line between being friends with the white man and upholding Umuaro culture. Both the residents of Umuaro and the British administrators have their own customs, and neither understand or care to know about the other. This struggle between tradition and change creates a massive disconnect between what's happening on the ground and in the administration offices. The British administrators on the ground in the small area didn't agree with policies they were supposed to enforce, believing they contribute to and create problems rather than solving them.

What kept me captivated during this read was watching Ezeulu and his crazy actions, always wondering what he would do next. I also think that the common theme of misunderstanding in the book helped pull me in, because the frustrations that it created were very engaging.

Although I found it hard to get into at first, I really enjoyed reading this book and look forward to also reading *No Longer at Ease* to complete the trilogy. I think I will pick this one up again in the future to dig deeper into the story. Even Achebe notes in his introduction, "For *Arrow of God*, that peculiar quality may lie in the fact that it is the novel which I am most likely to be caught sitting down to read again."