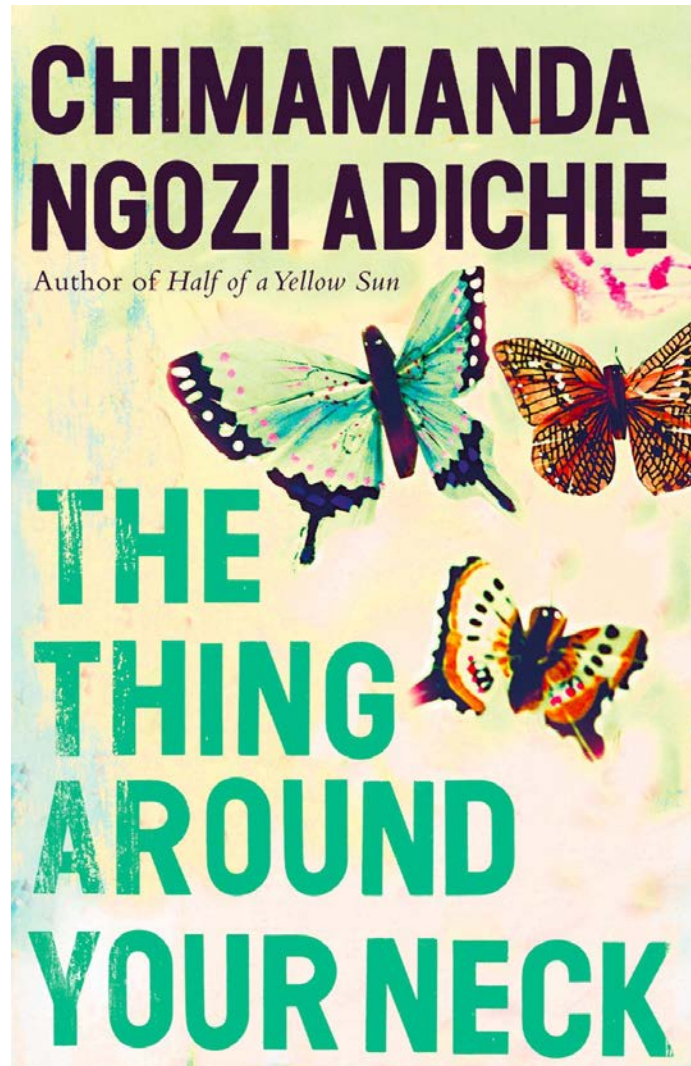


Choose a serif font (a font with “tails”) like this one, Californian FB.

*The Thing Around Your Neck* Multimedia Research Project

The picture of the novel cover is optional. I like it because it balances the amount of white space.



On a cover page, your MLA Heading goes at the bottom. It should be double spaced.

Tip: Check the page layout tab, and remove the spacing after. It's usually defaulted to 9pt.

Victoria Orepitan and Ashely Miller

Ms. Millepitan

English I PreAP/GT, Period 6

19 May 2016

Begin numbering on the second page. Page numbers can be inserted by going to the “Insert” tab and selecting “Page Number”. To remove the page number from the first page, select “Different First Page” in the Header menu.

Type your last name(s) ahead of the page number.

## Preface

We were inspired by a TED Talk called, “The Danger of a Single Story.” In this talk, the author, Chimamanda Adichie shares her experiences as a Nigerian attending an American university. She warns the audience against making assumptions, and she shares anecdotes about her life. As a young girl she loved literature, but she didn’t know that Africans could be characters in books because every book she read was written by, for, and about white westerners (Americans and Europeans). Reading *The Thing Around Your Neck* inspired us to take a look at stereotypes and limitations in the literary world. We want to analyze the literary canon and move beyond its limitations to take a more honest look at how different peoples and cultures are represented in classic literature.

Our topic is important because many students are only exposed to other cultures through literature. As the world becomes more diverse, it is important for students to gain a true understanding of people different from them. A culture presented through the lens of someone who isn’t a part of it is inherently biased. Even authors with good intentions are unable to truly capture the nuances of a people they’ve only studied. It’s like when our parents say, “We were kids once, too.” Yes, they were, but they aren’t now, and they aren’t living our experiences.

Adichie’s novel traces the experiences of several Nigerians, living in Nigeria and in America. As a collection, her stories reveal the complexity of the “Nigerian” experience—removing the “otherness” often associated with African cultures. Her stories aren’t “African” stories—they are stories about people who happen to be Nigerian—and her awareness of their complex nature and the lack of African tropes elevates her stories. With *The Thing Around Your Neck* Adichie challenges the canon by writing honestly about what she knows—and ignoring a literary history that viewed Africa as a single, mostly sad, story.

Use 1 inch margins all around and double space.

## Table of Contents

Preface	2
Table of Contents	3
Interview with an African	4
True Colors (a painting)	7
Recipe/Poem	8
Travel Brochure	9
Moving Beyond a Single Story	10
Works Cited	13
Annotated Bibliography	14
Epilogue	15

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Note that the “Table of Contents” is included in the Table of Contents.

If your creative media can be transcribed, you don't need a descriptive paragraph.

## Interview with an African

**Question:** Critics tend to categorize you as either a Nigerian author, a feminist or even an African-American writer. Do you feel that such generalizations might be reductive or do you see categorization as something positive in the sense that your being the “new voice of Nigerian literature”, for example, might inspire younger Nigerian writers to follow in your footsteps?

**Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie:** Generalizations are always reductive, I think, because they shrink you from a whole to a mere part. I am Nigerian, feminist, Black, Igbo, and more, but when I am categorized as one, it makes it almost impossible to be seen as all of the others, and I find this limiting.

I used to insist that I was simply a writer; I rejected tags before ‘writer,’ especially tags based on race like ‘black’ or ‘African,’ because they are not value-free. They come with baggage. For example, a black writer who wrote about Africa would be placed on the ‘ethnic’ shelf in many bookstores in the US and UK, ‘ethnic’ in this sense subtly suggests not being quite on a par with ‘mainstream’ writing. A white writer, such as the Polish Ryszard Kapuscinski would not be on that ‘ethnic’ shelf. He would be considered ‘mainstream’ although he would be writing on the same subject as the black writer. The point is that it would be preferable if categorizations were based on the writing rather than on the writer.

Yet, we cannot deny that there are strong linkages based on race or gender or nationality. Being part of an under-represented group brings with it a sense of ‘we-ness’ which is why I feel an odd pride when an Igbo or an African or African-American or woman or Nigerian does well. I suppose categorization can be positive in this way. My being seen as a ‘Nigerian writer’ could motivate other Nigerian writers, in a way that my just being a ‘writer’ would not.

The more I think about just being a ‘writer,’ the more I realize that it is a position that is too easy to take. It would work only in a happily homogenized fantasy world. I cannot be just a ‘writer’ all the time; there are situations in which I will simply have to accept some tag before it. We all carry

different labels and they come into play in what we write and in how we are read. The sad thing is that critics and sometimes readers do not hold all labels in equal significance.

I am less resentful of categorizations. I accept, sometimes even celebrate, them but I still feel much ambivalence about them. I am also wary of the baggage that comes with them and of having somebody else be prescriptive about them.

**Q: Do you think that, as a writer, you have a political role to play?**

CNA: I don't think that all writers should have political roles, but I do think that I, as a person who writes realist fiction set in Africa, almost automatically have a political role. In a place of scarce resources made scarcer by artificial means, life is always political. In writing about that life, you assume a political role.

**Q: How important is language and style in your work? Do you view the Igbo language as a major influence on your fiction?**

CNA: Igbo is a major influence since most of my characters speak it and since I mutter in Igbo when the writing is not going well.

Language and style are very important to me; I am a keen admirer of good prose stylists and I can tell, right away, which writers pay attention to style. I care about the rhythm of a sentence. I care about word choice. I much respect poetic prose done well.

**Q: In several interviews you have mentioned Chinua Achebe as one of your favorite novelists. Could you tell us about your other literary influences? How have other works (or people) affected your writing?**

CNA: I really don't know. I am sometimes suspicious of the 'literary influences' question. It makes me wonder if it really means "tell us who you are trying to imitate." It also makes me wonder if the person asking is trying to 'place' you somewhere as a writer. Chinua Achebe will always be important to me because his work influenced not so much my style as my writing philosophy: reading him emboldened me, gave me permission to write about the things I knew well.

I am influenced by everything I read, I suppose. I read bad fiction, and it influences me in such a way that I know what never to do. I read good fiction and it makes things flow for me, as it were. I generally prefer quiet, careful writing, story and style done well, literature that makes you think of that interesting word ‘art.’ One of my favorite novels is ‘Reef’ by Romesh Gunesequera. Some writers I have recently reread and will probably read again are Paule Marshall, Amit Chaudhuri, John Banville, Nawal El-Saadawi, Graham Greene, Flora Nwapa, Bernard Malamud, Ivan Turgenev and the incredibly talented John Gregory Brown.

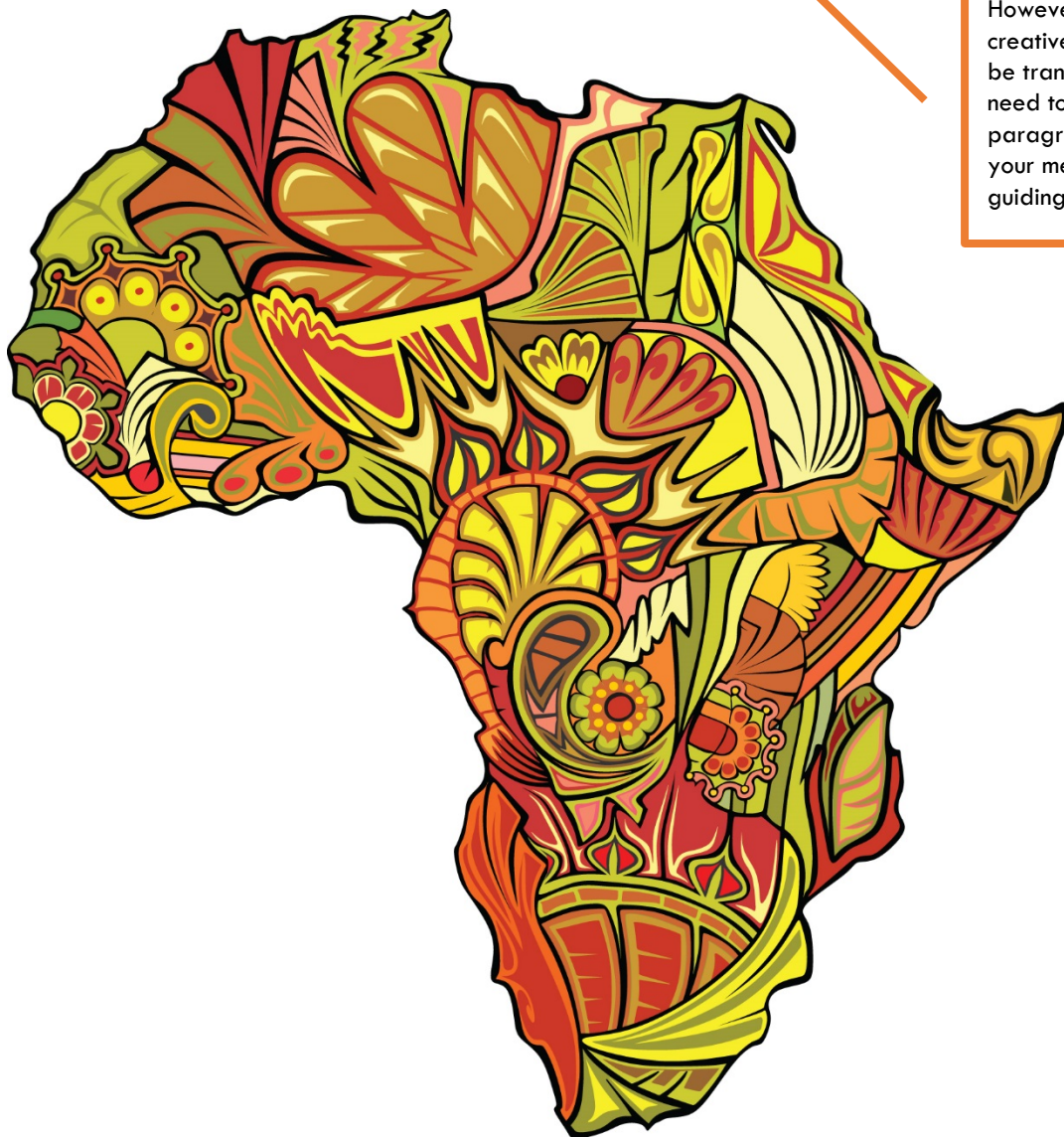
So many people have affected my writing; for everyone I meet and/or talk to, there is the possibility of my fiction being influenced. Of my contemporaries, perhaps the greatest influence is my friend the Kenyan writer Binyavanga Wainaina. I am in awe of his brilliance. Although we often disagree, I think our ideas take better shape when bounced back and forth between each other.

**Q: In the late 1980s, Ben Okri said this about the Nigerian Civil War: “That is one nightmare we have not really faced; any society, anywhere, any individual that doesn’t face their nightmares, the nightmares of their truths, their conditions, they diminish, because their nightmares get bigger.” Since you have written on the Biafran War, is this a statement you can relate to?**

**CNA:** Yes. I don’t think that we Nigerians have faced the realities of the war. I think it is a part of our history that we are so afraid of that we cloak it in silence or in cliché.

## True Colors

This painting represents the variety of peoples and cultures contained within Africa. Adichie’s writing encourages readers to look past the clichés of Africa. Her stories present a variety of people from a variety of social groups, economic groups, religions, and locations. She shows us through her characters that “Africa” is not a single person, image, or movement. The challenges her characters face are the challenges we all face—to live, to love, and to grow into the people we hope to be.



However, if your creative medium cannot be transcribed, you'll need to write a short paragraph connecting your medium to your guiding question.

Africa

Take one Pangea and shake, roughly with an earthquake,  
Keep the largest piece, the most fertile.  
Walk away for one hundred seventy million years...

Come back—  
O’—how she’s *grown!*

Sprinkle the land with gems, precious stones.  
Knead your fingers deep into the fertile soil—  
Plant a seed, or two, or three thousand. Watch them  
Grow.

Covet her beauty—then take it.  
Introduce foreign men. Weapons.  
Take slaves.

Create war—displace people. Pillage. Steal.  
Write a book about “the savage.” Leave.

“Help.” Write a song!—  
“We are the World! We are the children!”  
Hold hands.  
Watch a commercial—“Only *you* can help!”  
Shake your head. Turn off the TV. Maybe eat a sandwich.

Enjoy the fruits of her labors—but don’t make eye contact.

In the case of something like a poem, it’s up to you. If you feel that the connection is obvious, just present the poem. If it requires explanation, than please include the paragraph.



Travel Brochure

Our travel brochure is a parody of the African trope. It includes images of starving children, wild animals, and war. Each section satirizes a Western view of Africa. This brochure supports Adichie’s message that there is not just “one Africa.” Because our examples are so exaggerated, they convey a clear message that we (Americans) place Africa in a box that really doesn’t represent the continent accurately.



## Moving Beyond a Single Story

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Your structured, written medium should answer your guiding question. In an essay, your thesis will be explicit. In a letter or diary, your thesis may be implied, which is okay, too!

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Works Cited

Adichie, Chmamanda Ngozi. *The Thing Around Your Neck*. Anchor Books, June 2010, New York,

NY.

“Danger of Making Assumptions.” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, vol. 24, no. 2. Lenya Rose et. al,

Encyclopedia Brittanica, Inc, 2003.

Smith, Jane. *The Complexities of the Dark Continent*. Random House, 1998, Savannah, GA.



The entries in your Works Cited and your Annotated Bibliography should be formatted with a hanging indentation.

## Annotated Bibliography

Adichie, Chmamanda Ngozi. *The Thing Around Your Neck*. Anchor Books, June 2010, New York, NY.

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“Africa Avatar.” *Book In Africa* Website. Booking in Africa, 2016.


*This was one of the images in my travel brochure.*

“Danger of Making Assumptions.” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, vol. 24, no. 2. Lenya Rose et. al, Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc, 2003.

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Smith, Jane. *The Complexities of the Dark Continent*. Random House, 1998, Savannah, GA.

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## Epilogue

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