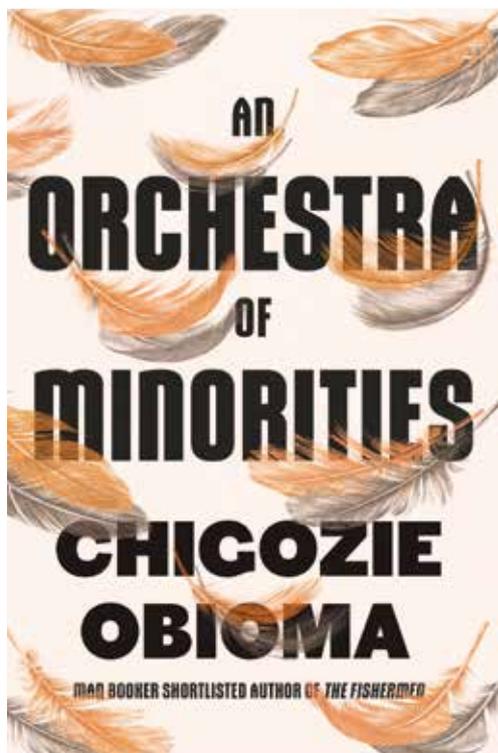




# Readers' Guide



## An Orchestra of Minorities Chigozie Obioma

Canongate

Other novels by Chigozie Obioma  
*The Fishermen* (2015)

[thebookerprizes.com](http://thebookerprizes.com)

## About the author

Chigozie Obioma was born in Akure, Nigeria on 24 October 1986. He is an assistant professor of Literature and Creative Writing at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. His debut novel, *The Fishermen*, was shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize 2015 and the *Guardian* First Book Award, and won several prizes including the *Los Angeles Times's* Art Seidenbaum Award for First Fiction. Obioma was named one of *Foreign Policy's* 100 Leading Global Thinkers of 2015. He currently lives in the United States.

## About the book

Umuahia, Nigeria. Chinonso, a young poultry farmer, sees a woman attempting to jump to her death from a highway bridge. Horrified by her recklessness, Chinonso joins her on the roadside and hurls two of his most prized chickens into the water below to demonstrate the severity of the fall. The woman, Ndali, is moved by his sacrifice.

Bonded by this strange night on the bridge, Chinonso and Ndali fall in love. But Ndali is from a wealthy family, and when they officially object to the union because he is uneducated, Chinonso sells most of his possessions to attend a small college in Cyprus. Once in Cyprus, he discovers that all is not what it seems. Furious at a world that continues to relegate him to the sidelines, Chinonso gets further and further away from his dream, from Ndali and the place he called home. Partly based on a true story, *An Orchestra of Minorities* is also a contemporary twist on Homer's *Odyssey*. In the mythic style of the Igbo literary tradition, Chigozie Obioma weaves a heart-wrenching epic about the tension between destiny and determination.

## What the judges thought

"Told in the wise and watchful, sometimes mischievous voice of the 'chi' or Igbo spirit guardian of Chinonso, a poor poultry farmer, this is a profoundly humane epic love story. Loosely based on the *Odyssey*, the trials and joys of Chinonso's journey exert a powerful hold on the reader's imagination, head and heart. A magnificent, original and revelatory novel"

## Discussion points

Chinonso's mission is driven by love, and he is prepared to do anything to marry Ndali. Are his efforts commendable, or is he naive?

The novel has similarities to Homer's *Odyssey* – the story of a man's difficult journey to the woman he loves. Why do you think this story is often used, even in contemporary literature?

How does the narrative voice of Chinonso's chi impact our understanding of his actions and feelings?

Chinonso has several experiences of racism. How does reading these scenes make you feel?

## Themed reading

Chinelo Okparanta *Under the Udala Trees*  
Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie *Half of a Yellow Sun*  
Namwali Serpell *The Old Drift*  
Ben Okri *The Famished Road*  
Homer *The Odyssey*

## Useful links

<https://www.chigozieobioma.com/>

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2019/jan/15/an-orchestra-of-minorities-chigozie-obioma-review>

<https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2019/01/chigozie-obiomas-orchestra-minorities-review/580738/>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/21/books/review/chigozie-obioma-orchestra-minorities.html>