

AKADi

Inspiring insights from our communities

GHANAIANS IN LITERATURE

Award-winning novelist Dorothy Koomson shares some insight into what inspired her writing career and the importance of authentic storytelling.

BOOK REVIEW **P.81**

WRITERS' TIPS **P.97**

INDUSTRY TRENDS **P.85**

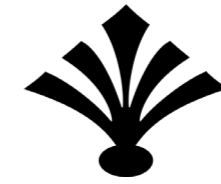


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EDITOR'S NOTE

I have a confession to make....I always wanted to be a novelist growing up and have many unfinished manuscripts in my room.

This is why I have to take my hat off to every writer featured in this issue (and those not), that had the resilience to make their ideas a reality and not just leave them hidden in a notebook. Ghanaians in Literature profiles 10 novelists that write across a range of genres from fiction to sci-fi, children's to adults, and even explore the use of Pidgin as a vehicle for storytelling.

A common thread is their passion for the craft inspite of the challenges many face in Ghana. What I hope this issue does is encourage those of us that love reading to seek out their books,

MisBeee

lobby and advocate for change and invest in those that are willing to make a difference to this literature ecosystem.

We've included tips from the writers featured in this issue and some suggested books you might like to read or buy for a loved one. There is also a list of organisations budding writers might like to check out as resources they can use to develop their craft.

Akadi means a source of light in the Ghanaian language Ewe. This publication aims to illuminate those transformative actions and inspiring experiences of Ghanaians on home soil and those in the Diaspora. Let us know if we met the mark in this issue, what you loved and what we can improve on for next time.

Until then, happy reading!

Abena Serwaa
Editor-in-Chief

www.akadimagazine.com





11

Ayesha Harruna Attah celebrates the power that writing has on changing hearts.



17

Fui Can-Tamakloe explores why writing in Pidgin is important.

CONTENTS

24

Sharon Dodua Otoo speaks about activism and how it shapes her writing.



40

Dorothy Koomson tells us why the central characters in her emotional thrillers are Black.



33

Nana Awere Damoah tells us why he is on a mission to boost consumption of literature in Ghana.



65

Franka Maria Andoh tells us why food is never far from her storytelling.



49

There's a need to create more books for the teenage and young adults' market. Abena Eyeson tells us more.



72

Ruby Yayra Goka was inspired to write her first novel after finding a lump in her breast. She tells us more.

57

Boakyewaa Glover explains why talking about taboo topics in Ghana is not a challenge for her.



81

Frances Mensah-Williams' novel – Imperfect Arrangements – focusses on love, life and relationships. Rhoda Korley-Owu reviews it and gives us her verdict.



A close-up portrait of Ayesha Harruna Attah, a Black woman with short, dark, curly hair. She is smiling broadly, showing her teeth. She is wearing a white shirt with a bold black geometric pattern. The background is a soft-focus outdoor scene with trees and a body of water under a bright sky.

11

Fiction

AYESHA HARRUNA ATTAH

*Born in Ghana but based in Senegal, Ayesha cites her parents, who ran literary magazine Imagine, as her first major influences. She has been writing officially since 2007 and is on the cusp of releasing her fourth book *The Deep Blue Between*, - a historical piece of fiction. She talks about her love of writing and why she'd like book distribution to be better in Ghana.*

Image credit: Itunu kuku

What genre do you write in?

I write mostly fiction and have published four books: *Harmatan Rain*, *Saturday's Shadows*, *The Hundred Wells of Salaga*, and *The Deep Blue Between*.

Who inspired you to write?

Being surrounded by writers and stories. My parents worked in journalism when I was growing up, so there was an abundance of stories, real and imagined. At first, I thought I would do something completely different, like medicine, but it was hard to run away!

Who is your favourite novelist?

I can't choose! Toni Morrison is high up on the list.

Are you a full-time or part time writer?

I am full-time now, but I also do other gigs. Sometimes, I edit or translate.

Has having another profession been useful?

It's honestly hard to make money from books alone for most writers unless you make it big, so having another source of income is almost indispensable. The downside of having another job is that it eats into writing time. On the other hand, you learn to become efficient and sometimes, you get material that can feed into your work.

Name your three challenges as a writer?

These are my specific challeng-

es; another writer might have different problems that keep them awake at night. Making money is probably top of the list. The second is with all the books that are published in a single month, how to get your book picked up, reviewed or noticed. And, finally, learning to balance all the moving parts of one's life. Time is a huge constraint I find myself constantly fighting for.

Do we have a particular challenge in Ghana?

We don't have enough distribution channels in Ghana. If we were able to really get books into all the corners of the country, I think people would be happy to see themselves represented in print. I would



*Ayesha spots her novel *The Hundred Wells of Salaga*.*

Image credit: Ayesha Harruna Attah

love for my books to be read by young people all over the north, for instance.

What are your three benefits as a writer?

I love that I can create worlds in my books. I get to have conversations with total strangers about some of the questions that plague me. There's an ancient African poem that talks about the benefit of being a writer, and I'm stealing the last point from it: 'One values a scribe for his understanding, for understanding transforms an eager person.' Because writing has the power to change hearts.

What trends do you see for African/ Ghanaian writers?

African writers are not limiting themselves to simply being 'African writers' and restricting themselves to the themes associated with that label. I've seen some amazing genre-bending work, and I'm here for it.

What are you working on now?

I'm working on a few projects including books five, six and seven. Some of them are in the embryo stage and I can't talk about them until they've gestated for a while.

Book five is my first non-fiction book on the kola nut, which I hope to be able to complete once we're out of confinement – it involves some amount of travel.

My first book for young adults,



All Ayesha's books.

Image credit: Ayesha Harruna Attah.

The Deep Blue Between, is out in October. It is about twin sisters Hassana and Husseina's whose home is in ruins after a brutal raid. The twins pursue separate paths in Brazil and the Gold Coast of West Africa but remain connected through shared dreams of water.



Ayesha's books are available on [Amazon](#) and [Apple iBooks](#). Her latest:

The Deep Blue Between can be ordered [here](#).

Find out more about Ayesha's work [here](#).



17

Flash Fiction

FUI CAN-TAMAKLOE

A flash fiction writer in Accra with one co-authored book and a couple more on the way, Fui talks about using music in his writing process and why writing in Pidgin is important.

Image credit: Belinda Osei-Mensah (Foto Moments)

In what genre is your writing in?

I'm still experimenting with genres but mostly, it is in the flash fiction category.

How long have you been a novelist/ writer/poet?

Officially since 2013, when I started blogging. Unofficially? More than 14 years.

How many books/anthologies have you written?

Only one so far. It's titled *Made In Ghana: A Collection of Short Stories*, co-authored and self-published by Rodney Assan in 2017. I am also editor for [The Nami Podcast](#), and fiction editor for the [Contemporary Ghanaian Writers' Series](#). My work has appeared

in the [Kenkey for Ewes & Other Very Short Stories](#) anthology, [Creatives Anonymous Ghana](#), [Tampered Press](#), and other online literary platforms.

Are you a full time/part time writer?

Gradually transitioning into being a full-time writer. I currently also teach literature part-time to young, private students and I also do some copywriting work for brands operating in Ghana.

Why is writing about everyday Ghana crucial?

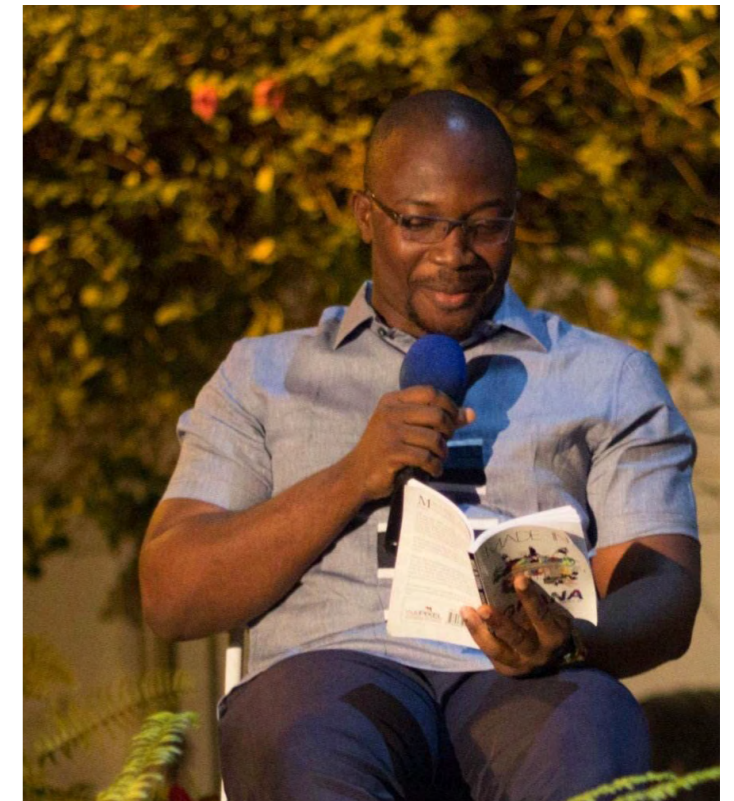
I think fiction is just as important in recording history as a picture or non-fiction article is. I aim to keep records of the different sides or perceptions of Ghana through the creation of characters

modelled from the leaves of real people, and my interactions with them. It's an important part of my process.

Why is writing in Pidgin important?

Firstly, inclusion. Ghanaians I know and grew up with, are not interested in reading because they are intimidated by English. To them, reading is a chore that they were forced to partake in in school, and they do not wish to pursue it out of an academic setting. Telling stories in Pidgin provides an option for people like that. And it's an option I've found they enjoy.

I write in Pidgin because of the range it provides in telling



Fui reads from his book
Image credit: David Boanuh co-founder of Beautiful Stories Studios

the Ghanaian story. *Made In Ghana* includes a short story in Pidgin called 'For Hiring'. There are some emotions you can work into a Pidgin story that don't quite fit into a story written in English.

It's a very active language, and tone is very important when reading. One story, with the same words, can mean more than one thing simply based on the tone the reader decides to use. I think that's a fascinating thing to happen to a reader while reading.

Also, it has the potential to uproot English as the Ghanaian lingua franca, seeing as it is a language we have control over and have made ours. It is an

amalgamation of different languages, has dynamic grammar rules, and involves more creativity in speaking than English does. So, I write in Pidgin in the hopes that one day we will see Pidgin as more than just an informal language.

Who inspired you to write?

My grandmother, my parents and Chinua Achebe. I grew up listening to my grandmother and my father telling me stories of Ghana before Independence. My mother was the first person to ever read something I wrote (I was seven at the time) and be impressed. And Chinua Achebe was the first person to tell me, through *Things Fall Apart*, that it was possible to write a story which featured a person as the

main character who didn't have blue eyes and blonde hair.

Who is your favourite novelist?

I find it hard to keep favourites, but if I had to choose a name it would be Nigerian novelist Elnathan John. *Born On A Tuesday* is a masterpiece.

Why is music important in your creative process?

It's a fascinating experience I've tried so many times. The first time I tried it, I was writing a story set in a time before I was born: the eighties. I was having difficulties describing a party scene. I went to YouTube to find videos of West African discos from the eighties.



Co-authors Rodney Assan and Fui.

Image credit: Victoria Menkah

Fui is working on some new material

Image credit: Belinda Osei-Mensah (Foto Moments)



I stumbled on some old disco songs and ended up making a Spotify playlist. And then, as I listened to the music, the scene just unfolded before my eyes. I haven't looked back since. Music has always been a part of my writing process. From classical music to jazz, I generally enjoy listening to music (normally without lyrics so I don't get distracted) while writing. But I had never thought to use music specific to my writing during the process. I think it's something that every writer should try.

over a three-year period, and the other is a collection of unpublished short stories. I'm also working on my first novella which is half-finished and waiting for one last spurt of productivity to be done. Since I've decided not to go through the hustle of self-publishing again, I can't really say when they will be available to the public.



Made in Ghana: A Collection of Short Stories is available at [Booknook](#) and [Amazon](#).

What are you working on now?

I have two manuscripts ready, that I am looking for homes for. One is a collection of poems

24

Activism

SHARON DODUA OTOO

Sharon is a Black British-Ghanaian writer based in Berlin who was born in England, and writes in both English and German. As well as being a novelist, she is the editor of English language book series Witnessed which gives various perspectives on being Black in Germany. She speaks about how her activism in Berlin has shaped her writing and what impact a writing competition had on her life.

Image credit (right): Tahir Della



How many books have you published?

I have published two novels - *The Things I Am Thinking While Smiling Politely* (2013) and *Synchronicity* (2014). In 2017, they were republished in a special double-edition.

What genre do you class your writing in?

I'm not sure there is an overarching description to fit my writing. *Synchronicity* has been labelled as 'afrofuturist' which I like very much. It's a kind of science fiction story, which introduces a main character who loses her ability to see colour - everyday, one colour disappears.

The Things I Am Thinking While Smiling Politely is much

more realistic plot-wise, although still experimental in the form. It tells the story of a woman whose marriage is breaking down and the effect this has on her relationships with her family members and friends.

Tell us about the book you are working on?

I haven't written anything like it before or read anything similar. The main character is called Ada and the story covers four eras: pre-colonial West Africa, 19th century England, Germany at the end of World War Two and Germany in 2019.

I wanted to explore the effect of traumatic histories on the present. The book is scheduled to launch in Berlin at the end of February 2021.



How do you start your writing process?

I try to grab the reader's attention with the opening sentence or the title. I am a fan of 'painting myself into a corner' which means I try to write something that seems impossible. The rest of the story then focuses on making that opening statement plausible.

Have you ever considered self-publishing?

I haven't used self-publishing in the strictest sense of the word. But

so far, most of my publications have been with a very small publisher called 'edition assemblage'. This is a collective, so a lot of the book production and promotion work is shared. For the first two novellas, I was heavily involved. For my forthcoming novel, I have had the luxury of focusing exclusively on the writing. Larger publishers typically have larger budgets and extensive networks. I can expect my book to be in major bookstores across Germany when it comes out. Smaller publishers are usually more open to experiment and take on niche interest projects. If it wasn't for my small publisher, it's unlikely any of the big publishers would have even noticed me.

Who or what inspires you to write?

I enjoy the creative process – describing emotions and rendering them relivable are a very important part of storytelling. I remember reading *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* by Mildred D. Taylor as a child and crying uncontrollably when the book ended. I wondered how it was possible that a few words on a page could make a reader feel this way? I wanted to be able to do that.

Have you found Berlin or London supportive places for your writing?

I lived in London and Brighton before permanently moving to Berlin and wrote in both places. Berlin is a much more supportive place

for creatives. In 2006, the cost of living was much lower in Berlin, whereas in Brighton I was working full-time and still only just scraping by.

In 2016, I participated in a literature competition called 'Die Tage der deutschsprachigen Literatur' which can roughly be described as 'X Factor' but for writers. Seven jury members nominate two authors each, who all read their texts on live television over three days. The entire process of deciding the winner is clear as the jury discussions and voting is completely transparent.

I won and was offered a contract with a major German publisher. I was paid an advance which meant I could resign from my job at the time and be a full-time writer. It's a complete luxury. I also received two stipends (not linked to the publisher). Without the competition, I would not be where I am today.

Della Doluptatur, quibus

image credit: ?

eine novelle von
sharon dodua otoo
aus dem englischen von mirjam nuenning

**die dinge,
die ich denke,
während ich
höflich lächle ...**



Tell us about your admiration for German playwright and poet Bertolt Brecht and German-Ghanaian activist, academician and poet May Ayim?

I loved Brecht's humour and was particularly inspired by his focus. For him it was not so important what happens in a story, his real fascination was how it happened. This inspired my first novella. The reader knows the climax of the story right at the beginning: the main character breaks up with her husband. I invite the reader to explore how and why the climax happens, just as Brecht did. I am also inspired by Ayim. I love how she combined activism and art in service of the Black communi-

ties in Germany. I have tried to do the same.

You have said that not enough Black writers write about the mundane and where there is narrative about Black people, it still tends to focus on poverty etc. Is that changing?

I also regret writing that now. It wasn't nuanced and it was pretty disrespectful to the people who had written those stories in the past. I was frustrated at the time, by the narrow focus which reproduced many stereotypes. I saw that within this trend there seemed to be no space to imagine Black joy, Black futures, Black love... and this is what I was criticising. Of course, the other stories should be written and published.

They just should not be the only stories being written and published. Black people are not a monolith. And yes, slowly this is changing. Authors like SchwarzRund, Noah Sow, Olivia Wenzel and Jackie Thomae have written novels which collectively give us a much richer perspective of Black experiences in Germany. And I am really happy about this.

How does your work with the Initiative of Black People in Germany (ISD) inform your writing?

ADEFRA – a Black queer feminist organisation in Germany and Initiative Schwarze Menschen (ISD) have been important in my political

development and through them my identity as a Black writer. I want to write in a tradition of other Black writers that centres Black stories and writes for Black people. This does not mean that non-Black people cannot read my work! But it means I am not writing with footnotes and asterisks. Black people shouldn't be reading my work and thinking "ah here she is trying to make sure that white people understand us". That's not my focus. And that's not the focus of Black political organisations in Germany either. Our focus is to empower Black people and pursue justice.



To find out more about Sharon and her work, visit [here](#).



33

Fiction

NANA AWERE DAMOAH

An award-winning author, publisher and online book retailer, Nana writes across a range of genres and readily uses social media platforms to share his work. He explores the need to boost the consumption of literature in Ghana and what he and his business partner are doing to address it.

Image credit (left): Benjamin Adu at Ophlex Media

What genres do you write in?

I write across poetry, fiction and non-fiction because there are some ideas I can express better depending on the form.

How many books have you written?

I've written eight books and contributed to two anthologies: *African Raw* (a collection of stories published by Ivor Hartmann) and *Mother* (a non-fiction to celebrate Mother's Day from writers including Atukwei Okai).

How long have you been a writer for?

I was first published in a newspaper in 1995 and in 1997, I won a national story writing competition. I started serious

non-fiction writing in 2004, and a couple of years later started blogging while studying for my engineering degree in Nottingham, UK, and sold my first written compilation to a friend. He said I had enough material for a book and should get a publisher. In 2008, I published my first book.

Who or what inspires your writing?

Chinua Achebe is an influence, especially for fiction writing. Dale Carnegie – *How to Win Friends and Influence People* changed my life at age 15. I copied his style in my first two books – *Excursions in my Mind* and *Through the Gates of Thought*. In Ghana, former *Spectator* editor Merari Alomele wrote a

satiric column on daily life, which was humorous but also made you pause and think. I used his style a lot in my fourth, fifth and sixth books.

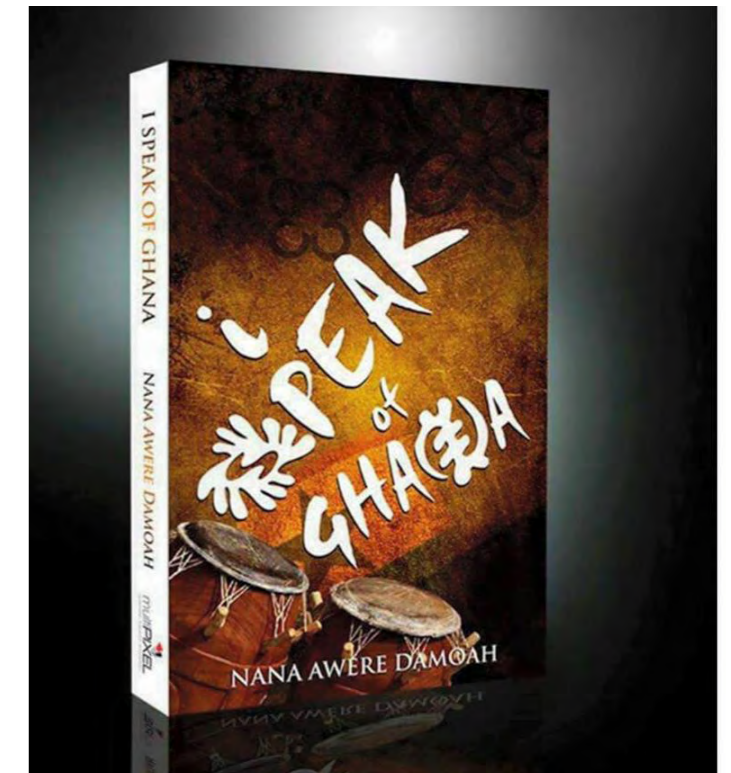
I would read Professor Kwesi Yankah's column in the *Mirror* religiously. He is now the minister of tertiary education. It was called 'Woes of a Kwatriot' (a combination of kwasia (fool) and patriot) and was really humorous. And my business partner Kofi Akpabli has influenced me to be bold in creating new work, expressions and terminologies in my writing.

In terms of what inspires me to write, it came from a desire to document my life experiences for future generations to read.

How did you first get published?

I used a paid publishing service that was advertised in the

Image credit: John Benjamin Yanney at multiPIXEL



Economist while on a UK business trip. The service turned manuscripts into professional publications, printed them and put them on Amazon. I used the same process – known as vanity press publishing – for my second book. The company – Athena Press - doesn't exist now but the service is similar to lulu.com.

How much did that set you back?

For the first one, £2,800. I took a loan to fund that. Two years later, I published a second book using the same process. Although I didn't make money from these books, I call it my publishing diploma because I had enough experience to self-publish my

third book, and make better returns. Those experiences became the foundation for the publishing house DAkpabli & Associates, which I created with fellow writer Kofi Akpabli in 2017.

What is your writing process?

I use two formats. I have the end-to-end process in my head – so I know the beginning and end, fill in the middle and I develop the characters. And with stories such as 'October Rush' - one of the stories in the book *Tales From Different Tails* - I experimented by publishing it on Facebook.

October Rush is when university senior men in Ghana try to 'rush on'* first-year fresher ladies.

*['Rushing-on' varies and can

cover a guy looking for a girlfriend, just sex or merely participating in the university traditional of chasing female freshers].

Facebook followers loved it and their questions shaped the story further. That story won me first prize in the Ama Ata Aidoo Short Story Award at the Ghana Association Of Writers.

I never set out to write a book. I say to people, the best way to eat an elephant is not to swallow it. In the same way, I take my writing a chunk at a time. I write over two years which gives me enough material to publish.

Which of your books is your favourite?

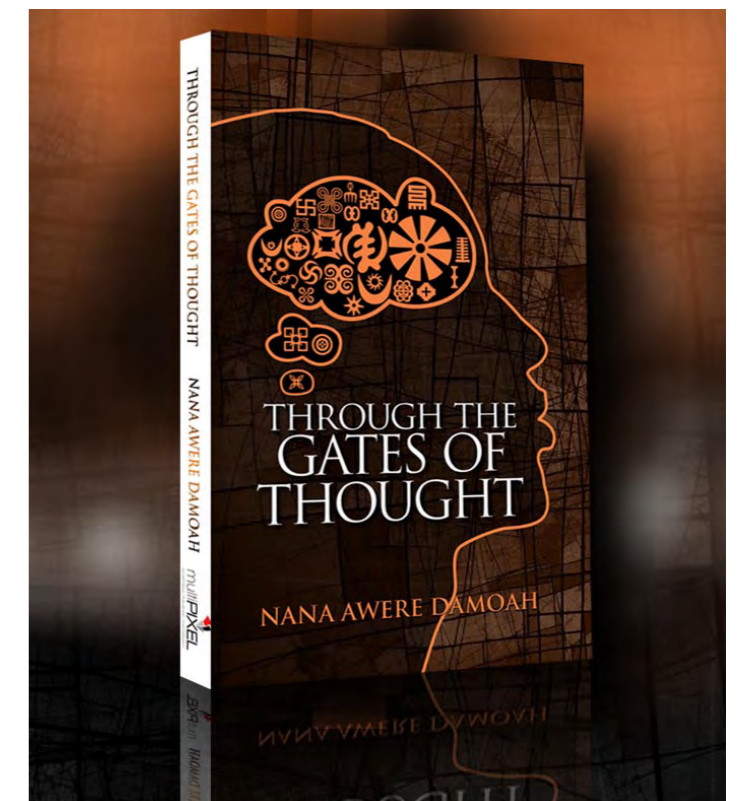
That's like asking me to choose my favourite child!

If you really want to know me as a person, then it's my first book *Excursions in my Mind*.

Book five - *Sebitically Speaking* - was fun to write because

Image credit: John Benjamin

Yanney multiPIXEL



it's based on my favourite uncle Wofa Kapokyiky's life. He was a drunkard. Because I took the words of a drunkard, I had more poetic licence and could blame it on the drunkard speaking.

Book number four - *I Speak of Ghana* is the one I read and laugh over. It brought me some notoriety. So, I've chosen three 'children' and I have three children, so I can satisfy all of them!

Do enough Ghanaians read for pleasure?

Beyond the classroom, the appetite for reading declines but Ghanaians do read. I think what is missing is books that speak to our environment, our experience that we can

connect with emotionally. If someone is reading about harmattan, (Nkrumah) Circle or kelewele, why wouldn't they enjoy the content?

The appetite for reading is shifting but I think you have to engineer the change you wish to see. This is why Kofi and I stage reading clinics across parts of Ghana promoting reading for pleasure. We are seeing improvements otherwise online book retailer Booknook, which was established in 2017, would not be in business.



Nana shares more on Ghana's literature scene on page 99 or visit him at www.nanaaweredamoah.wordpress.com/

AKADi Magazine

inform, inspire, illuminate

AKADi means a source of light in the Ghanaian language Ewe and this magazine aims to shine a light on the transformative actions of Ghanaians across the globe.

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40

Emotional Thriller

DOROTHY KOOMSON

Named by the Independent newspaper as Britain's biggest selling Black author of adult fiction, award-winning writer Dorothy Koomson has 15 novels to her name including her latest All My Lies Are True, which was published in July 2020.

Her books feature a central Black female character and elements of her Ghanaian heritage are always present in her work.

Dorothy's books have been translated into more than 30 languages with sales that exceed two million copies in the UK alone. Her novel The Ice Cream Girls was loosely adapted to TV for British channel ITV1 in 2013.



Image source: Dorothy Koomson

Image credit: Niall McDiarmid

Was there a single event that led you to becoming a best-selling author?

There were so many events along the road, but the main one was . . . hold onto your hats . . . finishing my first book. Nothing that has come afterwards would have happened if I didn't finish that book. People forget that at the bottom of every successful author's career is the fact that they finished their first book. In other words, they created something that was there to be published.

How did you have the discipline at 13 years old to write your first novel *There's A Thin Line Between Love And Hate*?

At the time, I didn't think of it

as being disciplined, it was just something I wanted to do. My mum had made a comment about me spending my time better by writing a book rather than hanging around with friends in the street, and I thought: yes, why not? I loved reading, I'd read a book series called *The Garden Gang* by Jayne Fisher, a girl who was about my age, so I thought, if she can do it so can I.

Is resilience the reason why you are able to write so prolifically now?

I love writing so it's the need to tell stories that has kept me going over the years. And now I write so prolifically - as you say - because it's my job and I always put my heart and soul into my work.

Some describe your writing as gritty women's contemporary fiction; other's as popular fiction. How would you describe it?

A few years ago, I used to get so hung up on how people described my books – for example I used to hate the term 'chicklit'. But now it doesn't bother me. People like to classify books as a shorthand for how they want to talk about your books.

I describe my books as emotional thrillers because there is very often a thriller or crime element to them but the focus is on how the crime has effected the people involved rather than the solving of the crime.

But I'm often told that my books are genre defying because they often have a mix of crime/thriller,

humour, drama and romance. *The Chocolate Run*, for example, has much more romance than, say, *All My Lies Are True*, which has much more drama and 'whodunnit' about it. I like to tell stories about real life and real people, and that means exploring difficult subjects. I like having the opportunity to bring out into the open things we try to avoid talking about – such as homelessness and eating disorders. I love telling those types of stories because the real world is often a mix of all those things.

Has your Ghanaian heritage influenced your work?

There's almost always an element of Ghana in my books. The characters are often of Ghanaian heritage or they'll cook

Ghanaian food.

Sometimes I use cities or regions in Ghana as surnames. And, of course, *The Beach Wedding* - my quick read - is set in Ghana and Brighton.

How have you navigated around expectations of what Black writers should write?

The one thing you have to do with your writing is put your heart and soul into it. *Always*. If you don't, readers can always tell. You can pick up a book and it might not be polished or perfect, but you can see that person has tried. If they haven't, you can tell and I always think it puts me off that book and that writer. For that reason, I say to people to always tell the story you want.

Telling the story I want to tell how I want to tell it is the only way I can do my job. And it's what will keep you going when you're rejected time and time again. Yes, take advice, but it's your story and you need to find a way to make the story work. If you're doing what other people tell you to do, then your story is not yours and you won't have the same passion for it.

What can fellow writers do to ensure their authentic stories get published?

We're at a moment where the big traditional publishers are actively seeking Black writers. I'm not sure how long that will last, or if there'll be some kind of backlash when these books don't live up to the high



Dorothy Koomson. Image credit: Niall McDiarmid

expectations placed on them, but I hope to see more opportunities for Black writers to tell their stories as time goes on. There are several independent publishers that are inclusive and looking for stories from Black writers, which are just as good as the 'big' publishers. These are all out there as well as self-publishing. Sometimes you have to pick the route that is best for you. Some people I know who were 'traditionally' published actually went to self-publishing because they liked the control it gave them.

How do you develop a novel?

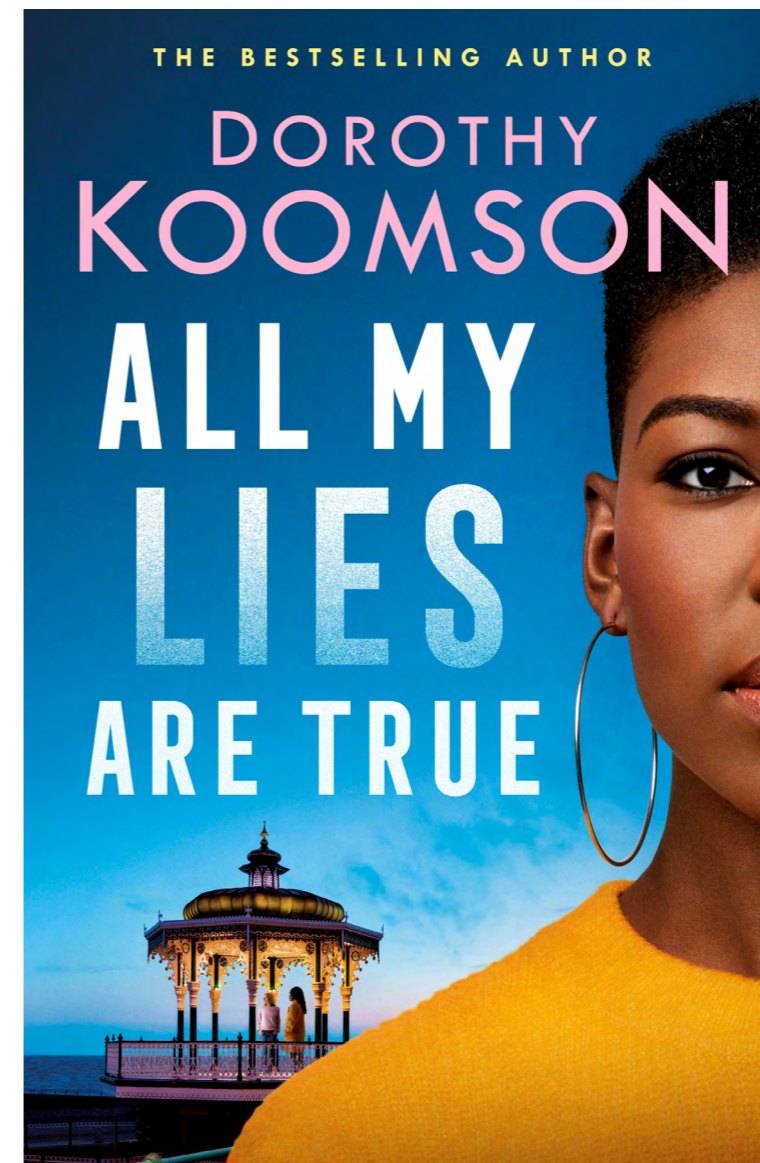
It's different every time. Sometimes I have ideas while I'm writing one book and I'm suddenly desperate to write that.

Sometimes I have several ideas on the go at once and I have to choose between them. Other times I'll be starting one book and it becomes something completely different.

The only advice I can give you about developing a novel, is to think about your story, do your research and get writing. Some people plot the whole thing out, others (like me) don't. Try to find the groove that works best for you. And get on with it.

How do you deal with writer's block caused by emotional pressure?

Sometimes I have to accept that I need a break away from what I'm doing. Sometimes I just push through because I've got a deadline and I can't afford to not



changed my life: *The Cupid Effect*, my first book to be published. And *Girl, Woman, Other* by Bernardine Evaristo. One of her characters picks up a Dorothy Koomson book and that was one of the most amazing moments. It was like, I've been recognised by a writer as incredible as her.



Dorothy's latest novel and others are available at: www.dorothykoomson.co.uk

keep writing. Often, I'll incorporate the emotional pressure into the story as a way of working it out. Recently, I've been writing poetry to get my emotions out. **Who is your favourite author?**

I don't have a favourite author any more. There are so many writers out there creating these amazing books that I can't choose between them. Two books that

NOW THAT
DOROTHY'S
ARTICLE HAS BEEN
REMOVED FROM THIS PAGE,
ABENA'S ARTICLE WILL GET A
DPS, BUT BOAKYWAA'S DPS WILL
BE BROKEN UP.
PLEASE CONFIRM YOU'RE HAPPY
FOR ME PROCEED, AND
CONFIRM WHAT YOU'D LIKE TO
FILL THE BLANK PAGE ON PAGE
62.

49

Young Adult's Fiction

ABENA EYESON

Inspired to write after having her third child, Abena's debut novel centres around teenager Esi who reluctantly migrates from Ghana to the UK. Abena examines the challenges that ensue from migration and family separation and talks to us about the need to create more books for the young adults' market.



Image credit: Abena Eyeson

Tell us about yourself.

I live just outside London, with my husband and three children. I have a BA (Hons) in Law and Sociology, a Masters in Industrial Relations and a PhD in Development Studies. I started writing a couple of years ago.

Tell us about Looking Up.

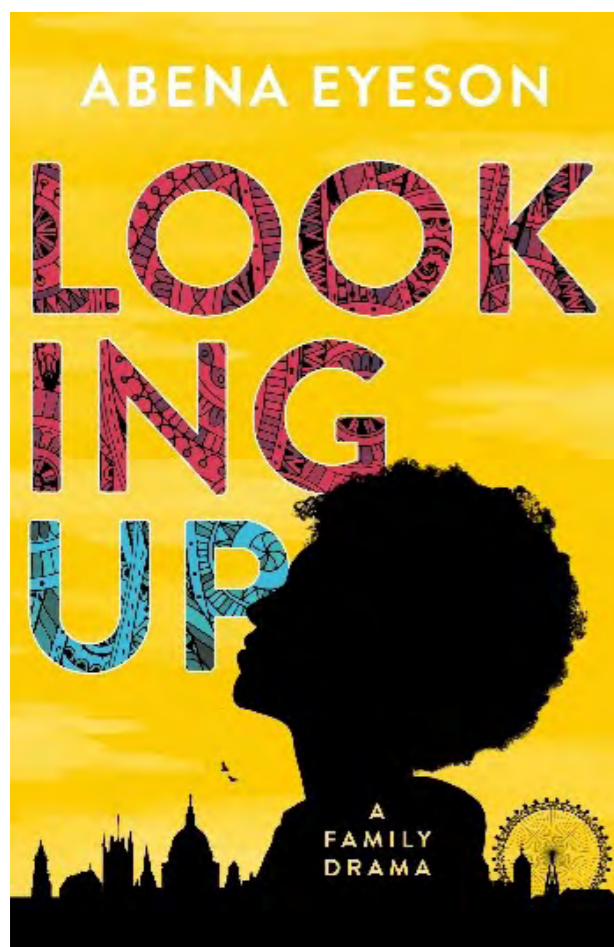
Looking Up is my first novel and was published in 2019. The book took three years to write and is written from 13-year-old Esi's perspective. She reluctantly leaves her grandma, cousin and aunty in Accra to join her mother Maggie, who is working in London. Esi's father has not been in her life since she was four. The transition forces Esi to

deal with challenges she has not faced before.

Why did you write this book?

I wanted to explore the impact that migration has on children, particularly as I feel that in some African cultures, we don't take children's views into account enough. Typically, children are seen but not always heard. Leaving a child behind while parents prepare a life for them in another country, although well intentioned, can cause some kind of trauma.

The book is not autobiographical as I left Ghana as a nine-year-old and I left with my parents. But it is based on the anecdotal experiences of other people who emigrated as children.



Abena Eyeson's book *Looking Up*

What inspired you to start writing?

I loved acting at school and university, but since leaving university and going into HR, I haven't acted and that side of me has lain dormant and frustrated.

Years later, I started getting a voice in my head that said *I think I can write fiction*, but for a while, I lacked the courage to write.

However, after having my third child, the voice got so loud that I was compelled to start to write.

The idea I started working on was what finally ended up as my novel. Writing fiction has given me a creative outlet that has quelled the frustration I was feeling.

What stories are you drawn to writing about?

I want to write stories with Black people as the central characters as

I don't think there are enough stories like that being published. I am also drawn to writing stories that reflect the immigrant experience.

I also think having more diverse books for this market matters. There are a lot more picture books with Black characters in them and adult books but I think books suitable for teenagers are less available.

I am working on a second, which will again be suitable for adults and teenagers, which is about the central characters finding the courage to speak up. It should be out in the next couple of years.

Who is your favourite novelist?

I don't have just one favourite author. I am a big fan of Andrea Levy because she wrote really well and based her fiction on her Jamaican roots. I like older authors such as Ama Ata Aidoo and Mariama Ba. There are many contemporary writers that I find inspiring like Nicola Yoon, Dorothy Koomson, Frances Mensah Williams and Yaba Badoe.

What are your three challenges as a writer?

My three challenges are getting a good agent (and therefore access to a traditional publisher), support in my development as a writer and generating sales of my book.

I originally tried to get published traditionally. I also tried to get an

agent, which is largely a must if you want to get fiction considered by a publisher in the UK.

When that felt like it was going nowhere, I decided to self-publish because I didn't want *Looking Up* to just sit and gather dust. I'd put too much in the book not to do anything with it.

What are the challenges and benefits of self-publishing?

The challenges with self-publishing are you have to pay for the services that a publisher would normally provide like editing. Or do it well enough yourself. Getting your book noticed, bought and building a readership is another challenge. I have had to jump in at the deep end of book marketing, using social media and learn 'on the job'.

But the benefits are that you are in charge. I changed the original book cover because I didn't think it worked after finding a reasonably priced cover designer who really



listened to what I wanted. With self-publishing, you can adopt strategies and make decisions about the book without anyone telling you what to do. You own the rights to your book.

I believe my challenge in not getting published via the traditional route was because I had no history as a writer and maybe they thought the subject matter was niche. But my goal with the second book is to get it traditionally published.

What have been your highlights?

Writing fiction is a way of exploring societal issues and encouraging readers to think about it. One of the pleasures

of being a writer is when other people read your work and can connect with it. It has been a thrill for me to hear from readers that the experiences of the main character Esi reminded them of theirs.

I find writing fulfilling and satisfying. It has taken me a while to find it and to build up my confidence to believe that my writing is good enough. But it really feels like something I was meant to do.



Visit www.abenaeyesonwrites.com for more.



57

Sci-Fi

BOAKYEWAA GLOVER

*After a seven-year hiatus, fiction writer Boakyewaa Glover is poised to launch her fourth book *Commitment* in 2021. She talks about why she's comfortable writing about taboo topics and why releasing her debut book *Circles* was therapeutic.*

Image credit: Boakyewaa Glover

What genre do you write in?

I primarily write thriller, romance, drama and science fiction.

How long have you been a writer?

Since I was probably six years old. I'm from a family of open and objective people who like to talk and debate. So, putting words to paper was natural. And my dad was a writer and a poet, so I believe it came from there.

What inspires your writing?

This may be a cliché, but life and imagination are what form my stories. Something happens in the day, and I create a story from it. Even my dreams are not simple. My dreams are

full-blown stories.

Circles explores topics considered taboo in Ghana such as same sex relationships and rape. Was that easy?

The writing process was easy and it was freeing. I am generally a very open person and believe in honesty and transparency. A lot of Ghanaians are generally tight-lipped about a lot of personal stuff. Me, not so much.

Once it was published, that's when it really sunk in about how against the mould it was. But I was still okay with that.

Releasing Circles was fantastic and therapeutic; cathartic and healing, and I enjoyed talking about it and pushing the

envelope. It made me wish I had done it earlier.

Have you noticed younger writers more unafraid of discussing sex and feelings?

Older writers talked about sex and feelings, but they used more innuendos and indirect language. The younger generation is a bit more overt in tackling controversial topics, but younger writers also have depth too.

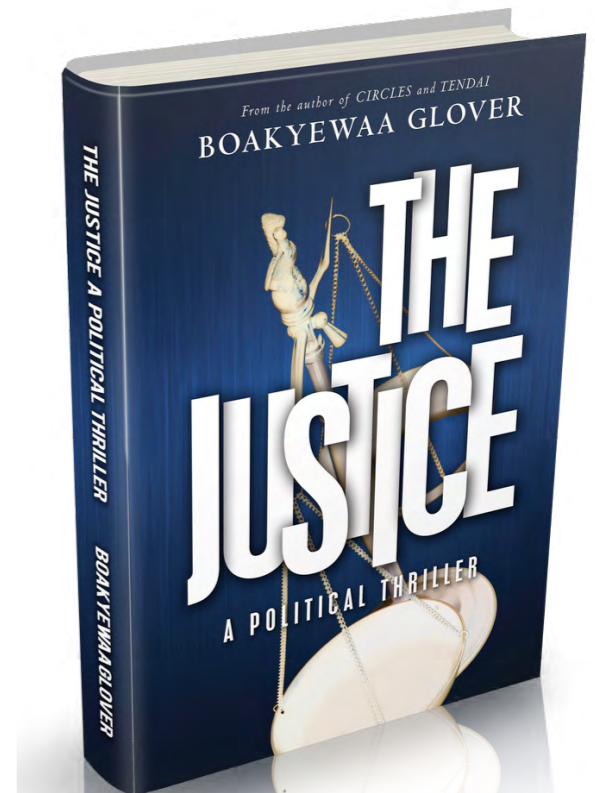
Sometimes it comes across as if all we write about is hot topics without much content to support it, but that's not the case. For me, I view myself as a writer who seeks to entertain, if you become educated along the line, that's fine, but I just want to entertain and not lecture you.

What is your writing process?

Writing is not just this free-flowing creative process. I am a creative but not a free-flowing one. I think of an idea and

The Justice

Image credit: Amazon



then I use outlines, research and imagination to pull it together. I like everything to be planned, outlined and predictable.

Are you an African writer or a writer who happens to be African?

I'm a writer who happens to be African. Sometimes when people hear 'African writer', they imagine that your books are all traditional Africa-based or Afrocentric. I don't like labels, but we can't get rid of them.

Who is your favourite novelist?

Oh, too many! But Chinua Achebe had a huge impact on me when I first read *Things Fall*

Apart. It's a brilliant piece of writing. If there was any book that I wish I had written, it would be that one.

But most of my favourites have been non-African writers in the drama, horror, science fiction, thriller and romance space. Stephen King, John Grisham, Frederick Forsyth, James Patterson, Sidney Sheldon, Paulo Coelho, Jeffrey Archer, Michael Crichton, Robert Ludlum, C. S. Lewis, Dan Brown, Nicholas Sparks, and Anne Rice.

What are the challenges as a writer?

There are incredibly talented writers out there, but getting access to the right agent or publisher is tough. Some other challenges are market access –

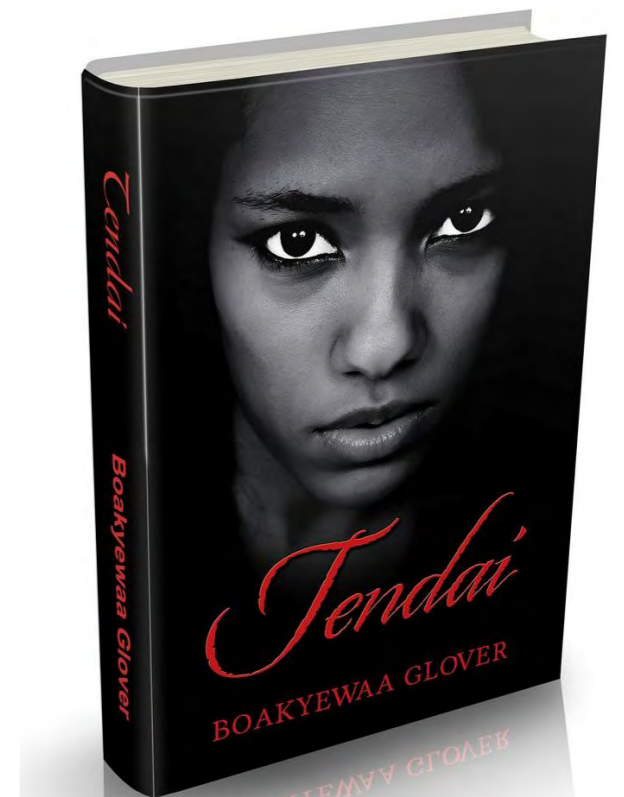
not a lot of bookstores and avenues for selling books at decent rates; publicity – not a lot of book events and opportunities to publicise your work; support – a lot of major companies sponsor music festivals and concerts, but they don't sponsor book events and readings, and readership. We are a culture primarily focused on instant gratification and entertainment like music, videos, TV etc. Not many are interested in spending hours reading a book. It doesn't mean readers aren't out there, I am just saying our market isn't as supported.

What impact does technology have on the quality of published work?

It has provided us with access to on-demand publishers, and enabled us to get our content online. The downside is that there's also poor quality content cropping up because

Tendai

Image credit: Boakyewaa Glover



on-demand publishing is easy.

What are you working on now?

I haven't released a book in seven years! It's hard to just write and make money from that so you tend to do other stuff. I am the founder and group director of Minds on Fire Group in Ghana, and have expertise in organisational psychology. I am working on a book called *Commitment*. It is not a sequel to my previous books but explores a woman's sacrifice in her quest to navigate between a love she had and lost, and a new complicated one.

Also, I have been writing tons of content and have been sharing on my website excerpts from a full-length book I wrote 25 years

ago called *Basic Reality*. I have also written a lockdown romance called *Connected, Yet Separated* which I hope will be published beyond my website.



Boakyewaa's books are available at www.boakyewaa.com and [Amazon](https://www.amazon.com).



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Maria Andoh
Yaw Mensah

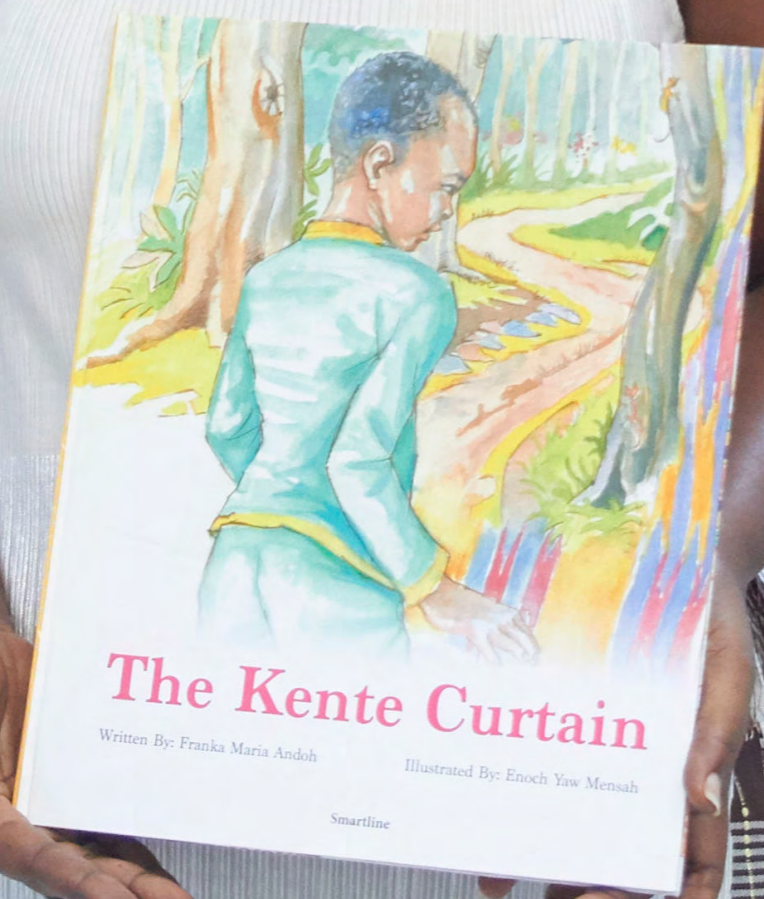
65

Children's Fiction

FRANKA MARIA ANDOH

Food is never far from storytelling for Franka, the ceo and founder of Josie's Cuppa Cappuccino in Accra. She is the author of eight children's books, has been hugely impacted by Maya Angelou's style of storytelling and is working on her first novel about a spy on a mission in Ghana. She tells us more.

Image credit: Charles William Coussey



What inspired you to start writing?

I loved to read as a child. I was the last born with five grown brothers in boarding schools, so I found reading an excellent source of company, joy, entertainment, and escape. In primary school, I discovered that I had the knack for writing humorous essays. My teacher, who was a nun, took my essays home to share with the other sisters.

Living in London from 1988 to 1994 was a source of inspiration to me. I discovered myself and in my last job, my bosses parting words to me were to 'write'. I didn't do anything with that until after a few years in Ghana, I got a job as the

editor of a magazine and got accepted on a British Council programme called 'Crossing Borders'. I was connected to other Ghanaian writers and had a mentor in the UK who reviewed my work and coached me for two years. That was the beginning of the earnest journey of writing.

You describe yourself as an emerging writer. Why?

Having worked with creatives for the last few years, I have realised that sometimes, we have self-doubt. I had struggles with my writing, thinking that I was not good enough, my writing wasn't complex enough. It's taken many years to accept that we all come to this table with individual styles and as social media grew and I



used it as a platform to tell stories, I came to recognise that my writing worked for people.

I think I use 'emerging writer' as a buffer for possible criticism of my work. It is time, I believe, to shove that 'cover' aside. What my personal insecurities have done on a positive note is to help me encourage young creatives who are going through the same kind of feelings that I experienced as a younger writer. I can tell them that the fear never really goes away, but it is important to keep

going in spite of the fear.

Tell us why you write children's books and short stories?

My first book, *Not a Little Girl Anymore*, was an award-winning handbook for young girls, helping them to understand their changing bodies and the transition from child to womanhood. This was part of a competition by The Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) which was finding ways to encourage young women not to let their periods stop them from acquiring an education. My children's books have always been about creating characters that my daughter and other African children

can connect with. Characters, settings, food had to include her in the story. I had realised when I started reading to her that many of the books available were not ones that she could recognise herself in. I felt that it was important for her sense of self and understanding of who she was as an African child to be able to immerse herself in stories about her culture. I also wanted the books to teach children from other parts of their world, that the starving children they saw on television did not represent the full picture of what life was like for children in Africa.

How do you start developing a novel?

I am currently working on my very first novel which is inspired



Children enjoying Franka's book

by a short film I made to celebrate my 50th birthday. I am a big fan of the 007 series, and I wrote a film script where the spy was a black guy and came to Ghana on a mission. One of my creatives suggested that I write a novel with the story as a source of inspiration. I would say that having an existing main character that the audience can root for was how I began to think about developing my novel.

Does your business influence your writing?

Yes, I would say that food always features in my stories. I like to use the platform of storytelling as a means of sharing local dishes. In

Koku the Cockerel, a popular *kelewele* seller in Adabraka is mentioned. The title *Dokono the Donkey* represents the very popular cornmeal called *dokono* or *kenkey*.

Are you traditionally published or self-published?

Three of my books were published by Smartline Publishers. I received a grant from the Ghana Danish Cultural Fund to print my collection of short stories and the handbook was published by FAWE. The coffee table book *Still Passionate About Coffee* – a limited edition and *Yum Yum the Bully Boy* were self-published.

It's easier to have a publisher handle your work, because it

takes away the stress of having to be a creative as well as a salesperson. Either way, it is tough out there and I always say that I am blessed to have a business that sustains and allows me to practise my creative craft.

What are the challenges and benefits of being a writer in Ghana?

One main challenge is that most writers cannot earn enough to make it a full-time career and are unable to quit their jobs and focus on this gift.

It is a gift that requires many hours of practise to get good at. The advantages are the possibilities to self-publish if you want to and find a market without going through publishers. I always say that there are lots of possibilities

in Ghana and we need to be able to look out for good opportunities to fulfil our dreams.



Franka's books are available at Vidya and Blue Knight on Spintex Road or visit her at:

frankaandoh.com



72

Young Adult Fiction

RUBY YAYRA GOKA

*Standfirst: Step into Volta Regional Hospital in Ho and you're likely to find qualified dentist Ruby, who heads the dental department. She is also an award-winning fiction writer who was inspired to write her first novel *Disfigured* after finding a small lump in her breast.*

All images credited to: [Jonathan Kwaffo](#)



What genre(s) would you put your writing in?

I write realistic fiction mostly for a young adult audience though I do have books for younger children and for adults.

How did you get into writing?

Back in dental school, I was part of the editorial team for our newsletter but I used to submit my stories anonymously because I was scared of the feedback I would receive. Even when some of my friends praised my stories, I still didn't fully believe I could call myself a writer.

Fast forward a few years later, I had completed dental school and was doing my house job when I discovered a small

lump in my breast. That led to me writing my first full length novel, *Disfigured*, (published in 2011) about a young woman who gets breast cancer. Thank God my lump turned out to be benign but the creative juices had been unleashed. I wrote my second novel, *In the Middle of Nowhere* shortly afterwards. I entered my first competition — the Burt Award for African Young Adult Literature around the same time and placed third with *Mystery of the Haunted House*. I've been writing ever since.

How many books have you written?

It still amazes me that I actually have published books! Even though I loved books, I never actually dreamed of writing

seriously but I currently have 15 published books and one submission in an anthology. I have seven complete manuscripts which are at varying stages of the editing process. And I have been commissioned by US non-profit organisation Worldreader to work on a book for young adults that is going to be part of a 'Women in Sports Series'. It should be on their site by the third quarter of the year.

What inspires your content?

Everyday things inspire my content. Some of my books have been inspired by new places I've visited e.g. *The Lost Royal Treasure* (Tarkwa), *In the Middle of Nowhere* (Sandema), *Perfectly Imperfect* (Sogakofe), others by snippets of conversations I've overheard, *The Haunted House*, and two by news items, *Plain Yellow* and *The Step-monster*. For *The Gift for Fafa*, I wanted to tell a story about a child who didn't fit in with her peers.

Ruby surrounded by her books



Are you an African writer or simply a writer?

I am a writer who is African. Stories are transcendental. They have the ability to cross barriers and defy the labels that we have put on ourselves to make one group of people feel superior to another. You enjoy a book or a story because of that emotional connection with characters not because of their race or species. I struggle to understand why there is an 'African Writers' section in bookshops when you don't see other book sections labelled as 'European' or 'American'.

Is the label a help or a hindrance?

Dr. Rudine Sims Bishop's

iconic quote about books being mirrors and windows illustrates this beautifully. I hope that my books will be a mirror to children of African descent and a window to our culture and experiences to children and/or adults of other races.

I believe in the universality of good characters and good stories. It's important that literature with African characters be represented in the world literary space and it's important that our stories are told by us. We matter. Our experiences matter. Our stories matter.

What is your writing process?

A greater part of my process is imagining my characters and getting to know them. When they're fleshed out, they begin to speak

and then I know I am ready to put them down on paper. The transcription process can take anything from a couple of weeks to a few months.

Are you a full-time/part-time writer?

Can I say both? I am a trained dentist and go to work five days a week but when I'm on my own time, working on a manuscript I commit fully to that as well.

Writing has opened so many doors for me. I've met so many incredible people, I get to travel, I get more writing commissions and I get to inspire the next crop of young writers.



Ruby's books are available at www.rubygoka.com; on [Amazon](https://www.amazon.com) and on [Booknook](https://www.booknook.com).

A selection of Ruby's books



Karen
in
China

Been around the world?

AKADi is on a mission to find at least one Ghanaian or person of Ghanaian heritage living in a country outside Ghana. According to the UN, there are 195 countries recognised as sovereign nations.

Help us to achieve this target by being part of our Ghanaians Abroad campaign.

If you are a Ghanaian living outside Ghana, tell us what it's like where you are, why you live there and what skills you think you've learnt or can share back in the Motherland.

Drop us an email at akadimagazine@gmail.com for more details and you could be featured next on our website www.akadimagazine.com



81

Review

FRANCES MENSAH WILLIAMS

*How do you make the best from an imperfect arrangement? If you love delving into people's lives, loves and relationships, **Imperfect Arrangements** is likely to hit the spot. **Rhoda Korley-Owu** shares her thoughts on the story, Frances' writing style and rates the book in this mini vlog.*

Image credit (left): Frances Mensah Williams

Imperfect Arrangements tells the story of three couples living in Accra, and their various relationship challenges over a 12-month period. Readers follow the experiences of best friends Theresa, Maku and Lyla, the men in their lives, and the highs and lows of these bonds.

"The focus is always about relationships in my books," Frances told an audience during her official book launch on Ghana's 63 Independence Day on 6 March 2020. "It's the means by which people explore who they are and understand those vulnerabilities. It gives them an opportunity to address those vulnerabilities

and it is how they grow. No one is perfect."

Resident bookworm Rhoda (pictured) got her hands on a copy and gave us her assessment. Click her image to find out more



Frances - the writer

Frances has written seven books – three are non-fiction and the remainder are fiction. Her fiction includes *Sweet Mercy* - a companion novella to *Imperfect Arrangements* and her first novels *From Pasta To Pigfoot* and *From Pasta To Pigfoot Second Helpings*. These two follow the life of Faye Bonsu – a Ghana-born Brit who reconnects with the Motherland and explores her identity. You can read more about this topic in **AKADi issue 2**. Frances was born in Ghana and lived between Ghana, the USA, Austria and the UK in early childhood. After building her career in London working in human resources management for international companies, she worked in Ghana for several

years before setting up Interims for Development, an award-winning London-based consultancy. She is the managing editor of [ReConnect Africa.com](https://ReConnectAfrica.com), an online careers and business publication for the African diaspora and works as an executive coach. Frances was awarded a CBE by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II in the 2020 New Year's Honours List for services to the African community in the UK and in Africa.



Visit www.francesmensahwilliams.com for more.



85

Industry

GHANA'S LITERATURE SCENE

Accord Literary - Ghana's first literary agency for children's books was launched in 2019, the agency signals a shift in Ghana's literary landscape which for decades has relied on writers doing the job of marketing their books to publishers.

Image credit (left): Christina Morillo

Co-founded by Deborah Ahenkorah Osei-Agyekum and Sarah Odedina, Accord Literary invests in mentoring, training and staging workshops with authors. The aim is to help build a community of African writers that are creating books for young readers. The Agency also provides extensive editorial support to authors that it signs on as they work on their books, Deborah said.

The focus on nurturing African talent is one that Deborah has held for years. She created [Golden Baobab](#) - the 12-year-old pan-African prize awarding body for children's books and the [African Bureau](#) - a publishing house that produces children's books by

African writers and illustrators. "The impetus for developing the Prize was to ensure that African children had access to books that were about them and their experience," said Deborah.

"The impetus for developing the Prize was to ensure that African children had access to books that were about them and their experience," said Deborah.

GHANAIAN TALENT

The Prize has helped to propel African writers from relative obscurity to an international stage with the likes of Portia Dery, a young writer from Tamale, Northern Ghana beating competition to become the winner of the 2014 Golden Baobab Prize for Picture Books. "Her book



Grandma's List was translated into six languages in seven countries and went on to win the Children's Africana Book Award 2018, and the Esi Sutherland Children's Book Prize in Ghana in 2019," Deborah said.

The arrival of Accord Literary helps to fill a much-needed skills gap in which African talent is nurtured through training and mentorship and engaging books connected through publishers to international

audiences. "We are working on an international publishing partnership through Accord that guarantees that when we find African authors, we are able to publish their books," said Deborah.

Accord has already signed five African writers. Three from Ghana - Akua Serwaa Amankwah, Ruby Goka Yayra and Elizabeth-Irene Baitie – and Kenyan writer P Ochieng Ochieng and Edudzi Adodo, who grew up in Togo.

LITERARY TALENT

Ghana does not lack literary talent. As far back as 1920, the Young Men's Literary Club was established in what is now Ghana and evolved over time to become the Ghana

Association of Writers (GAW) in 1967. The Association supported a host of writers including poet Atukwei Okai and novelist Efua Sutherland and currently supports members to attend writers' residence programmes around the world; has established the GAW Schools Outreach, which establishes literary clubs in senior high schools, and has the GAW Annual Literary Awards which promotes writing and publishing standards.

Other writers' communities have sprung up since then including The Writers Project of Ghana (WPG), which engages Ghanaian writers through regular events including its CitiFM (97.3FM in Accra) radio segment; its 'Ghana Voices' public reading series,

and its annual literary festival, 'Pa Gya!', which this year will kick off on 16th October 2020.

Alongside these players are a host of others including Flash Fiction Ghana, Ghana Writes, Afrolitt, and Contemporary Ghanaian Writers Series.

MARKET CHALLENGES

Ghana's challenge is rather in creating professional structures and an ecosystem that supports emerging and existing talent.

"Golden Baobab is a non-profit and non-profits sit in a place where supply and demand do not meet. They act as a bridge," said Deborah. "In countries with a developed publishing industry, there is a whole ecosystem, which includes non-profits, funders, government and schools set up to train authors, illustrators, and designers. You have



marketeers, district leaders, library assistance, massive book distribution systems, access to technology and devices, and a generational culture where a large percentage of the population reads as children, ensuring that their children will read also. It's an ecosystem that forms over time when supply meets demand. And until then, everything operates in a silo." Hallmarks of this supply and demand disconnect are visible in Ghana's literary scene. Reading for pleasure is eclipsed by a bigger demand for the more lucrative market for academic books. Getting governments to dedicate resources towards story books when there are bigger

challenges such as children not having classrooms or teachers to teach them is a bigger task, Deborah pointed out. Meanwhile, weak distribution channels mean books written in Ghana struggle to command a wide national or international audience.

"Because of this, writers either need to have a solid income behind them or find a way to make their craft pay," said Mamle Kabu, a novelist and WPG co-director.

Novelists such as Boakyewaa Glover, who also works full time, agree. "A lot of major companies sponsor music festivals and concerts, but they don't sponsor book events and readings.

"We are [also] a culture primarily focused on instant gratification



and entertainment like music, videos, TV etc. Not many are interested in spending hours reading a book. It doesn't mean readers aren't out there, I am just saying our market isn't as supported."

INTERNATIONAL REACH

Writers that find in-country publishers have to accept that not too many of them have the extensive experience that more established markets – such as South Africa, the UK and USA have to edit and

proof-read to a high standard, market these books effectively, ensure writers are paid properly for book sales or their books distributed widely.

And as Mamle explained: “If you publish your book in Ghana, most likely it’s going to stay mainly in Ghana where the literature market is small and returns are not guaranteed. That means, at least thus far, that writers who want to promote their books beyond Ghana have to rely on international markets. Naturally, this can affect what they are writing and who they are writing for. As a result, writers here often get asked who they are writing for and there is this whole debate about Afri-

can writers ‘writing for the white gaze.’”

GETTING CREATIVE

One alternative that has blossomed over the past 20 years is the global industry of self-publishing and the growth of e-books and print on demand technology.

These are viewed as one way to bypass poor distribution channels, improve interconnectivity and bolster demand for reading books by African/Black writers.

“Publishers used to be the gatekeepers to the book world but technology began to democratise the industry,” said Deborah.

This is the route that Nana Awere Damoah, Accra-based novelist,

publisher and online book retailer, took. After using the now defunct Athena Press to self-publish his first two books from 2009, he learnt enough about the

process to independently publish all his books. He started to see demand for a publishing service during quarterly reading clinics he and his business partner Kofi Akpabli have been staging since 2012.

“We would tour parts of Ghana reading the books of published authors for people to hear. They were so successful we had new writers sending us their manuscripts for us to read. It was through this demand that in 2017 we created company DAKpabli & Associates,” he said.

In the same year, Nana also launched online retailer Booknook Ghana, which he said stocks around 4,000 titles – 90% of which are African with almost three-quarters coming from West Africa.



PEOPLE POWER

GAW is now in the process of creating an e-book platform/ e-commerce project along the lines of Amazon that will allow members to publish e-books and hard copy versions. Other industry players include Akoo-Books Audio, founded by Ama Dadson, which is touted as Ghana's first publishers and digital distributor of African audiobooks. The company uses Ghanaian actors as voiceovers for the story books and was inspired by Ama's mum - a children's book author – who lost her sight.

Where increased access to digital infrastructure is opening doors, Mamle believes global events may also have an impact.

"It's possible that the increased visibility of the Black Lives Matter movement may lead to publishers taking more interest in Black/ African writing in the coming years," she said.

Even before George Floyd's demise, these seeds of change were emerging with British-Ghanaian rapper Stormzy launching Merky Books in 2018 – an imprint within William Heinemann (part of Penguin Random House) that focuses on under-represented communities.

HarperCollins Publishers has been pushing a number of initiatives aimed at supporting Black talent from a writer's perspective and also through their BAME traineeship scheme, tackling underrepresentation in



the publishing business and wider industry.

Increased self-reflection has also encouraged fresh debate on the influence that colonialism has had on the definition of what should be included in the literature space. Fui Can-Tamakloe, a flash fiction writer, advocates for Pidgin to be included as a vehicle for literary expression. Meanwhile, Mamle believes the scope should be even wider.

"I would like to widen that scope and look for, say rap, which is

a form of poetry, and other creative forms of art, including some of our traditional ones that are not even written, to be included in literature. I feel like we have gone in a direction where we have walked away from so much of our art," she said.

SOLUTIONS

For now, the arrival of Accord Literary is a positive for Ghana's literary scene and the hope is that more will follow and others will continue to push these boundaries further. But until then, there is something that everyone can do – buy a book by a Black/African author, Deborah said.

"If everyone in the world went out tomorrow and bought a black book, give it six months, there would be a thousand more black books on the market."

HOW TO SUPPORT AFRICAN/ BLACK WRITERS

Seek out African/Black books

[African Book Addict](#)

[Brittle Paper](#)

[Indie Book Show Africa](#)

[James Mura](#)

[Tampered Press](#)

Find Black books

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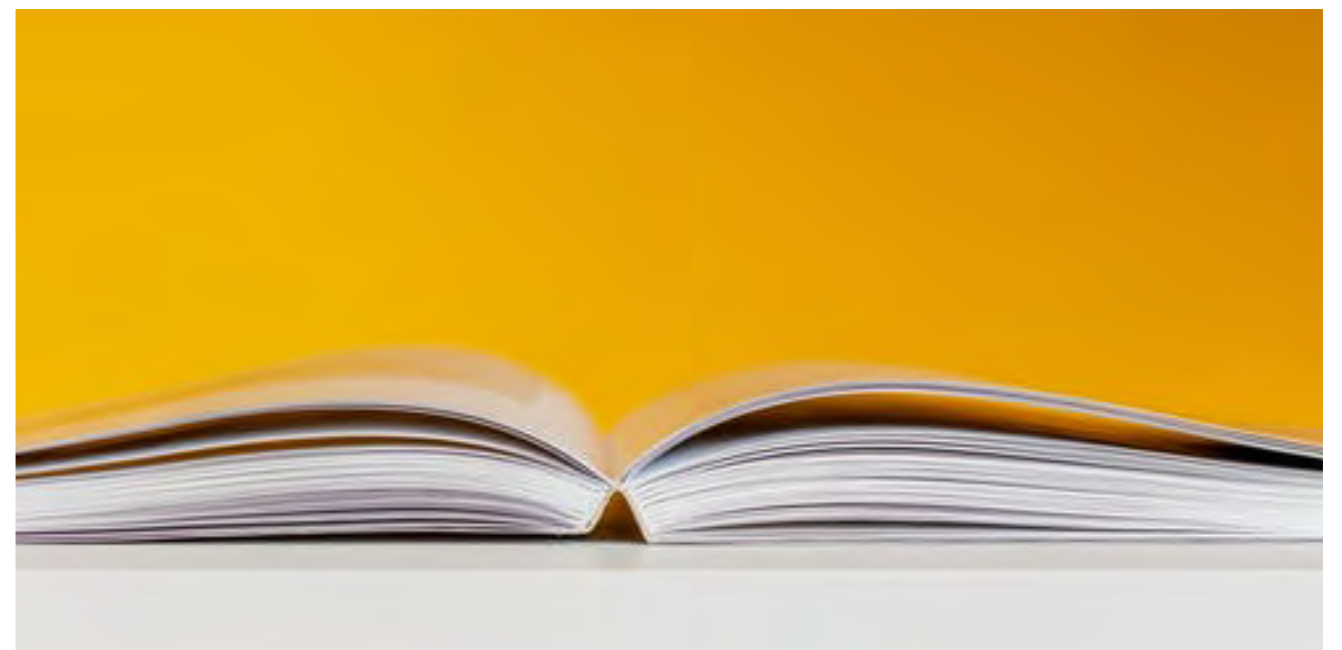
['Pa Gya!](#)

[The Writers and Artists](#)

WRITERS' TIPS

1 **Believe in your ability** and accept that things don't happen overnight - so be resilient and persistent – *Abena Eyeson*

2 **Access online courses** to improve your writing and read as widely as possible – *Franka Maria Andoh*



3 Writing is a muscle that needs daily training to write regularly.

Don't wait for inspiration to write. Try to have a daily quota. Maybe 1,000 words a day - *Fui Can-Tamakloe*

5 There are a lot of online platforms and prizes that take submissions, so overlook your **fear of getting rejected and submit** - *Fui Can-Tamakloe*

4 **Find friends or mentors** who can give you constructive feedback on your work - *Ayesha Harruna Attah*



6 **Write what you enjoy** and not just what will sell - *Boakyewaa Glover*



Get to know the types of books your target audience is reading and read them.

8 Identify what works and what doesn't work in them and apply it to your writing – *Ruby Goka.*

If you want to write a novel start by writing a short story, **the more you write, the more you share, the more confident you become about your writing.** **7** - *Nana Awere Damoah*

9 There may be an illusion that writing will lead to fame. **Don't seek fame.** It's important to focus on the quality of content. Take your time, make it solid, well researched and well written - *Boakyewaa Glover*

10

Lazy writing isn't appealing. Don't buy into stereotypes, **actively engage the people you write about.** When you do that, you bring fresh breath into characters that people assume to be dead. Make your fiction as real as possible, and it'll be more

relatable that way - *Fui Can-Tamakloe*

Collaborate with different creatives. Write poetry for photographers, stories for rappers, write different kinds of literature - from radio dramas to film scripts. The only way to find your true voice as a writer is if you search for it - *Fui Can-Tamakloe*

11

12

Buy books from Ghanaian writers, actively support them, post your reactions or reviews or just give them a shout out. We like to hear about the impact of our words - *Boakyewaa Glover*



AKADI'S TOP CHILDREN'S READS

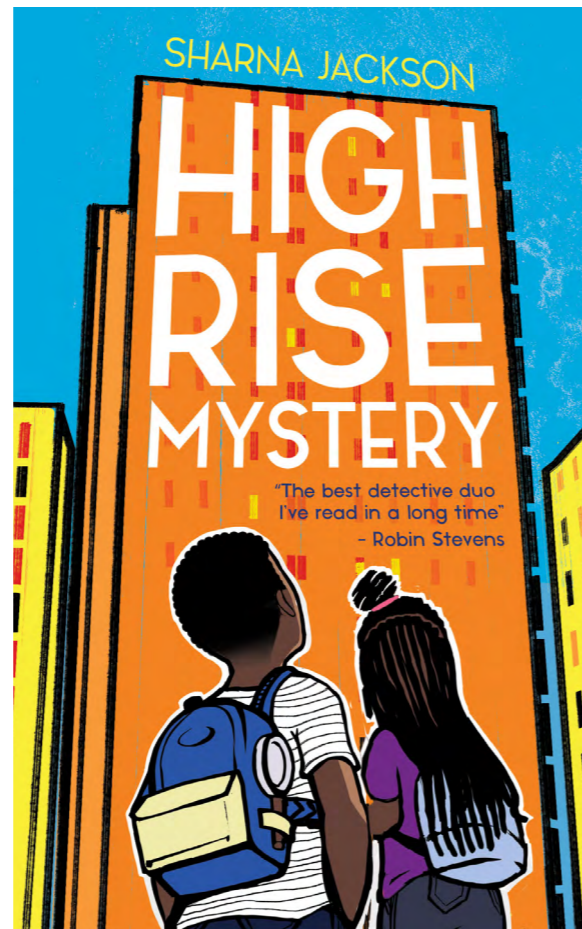
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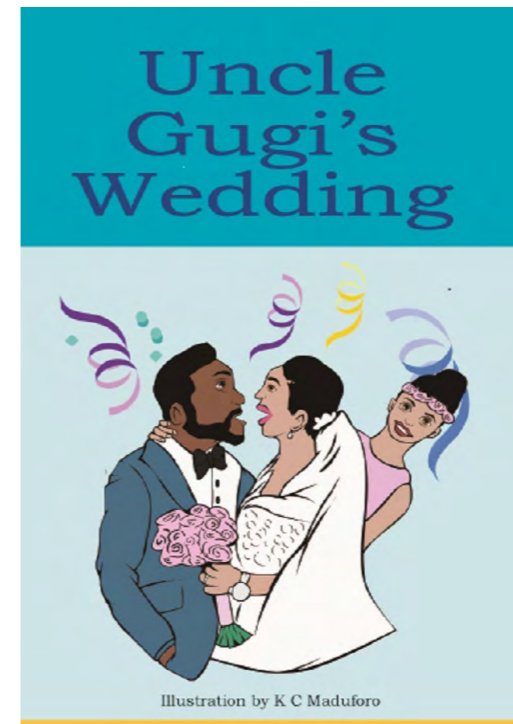
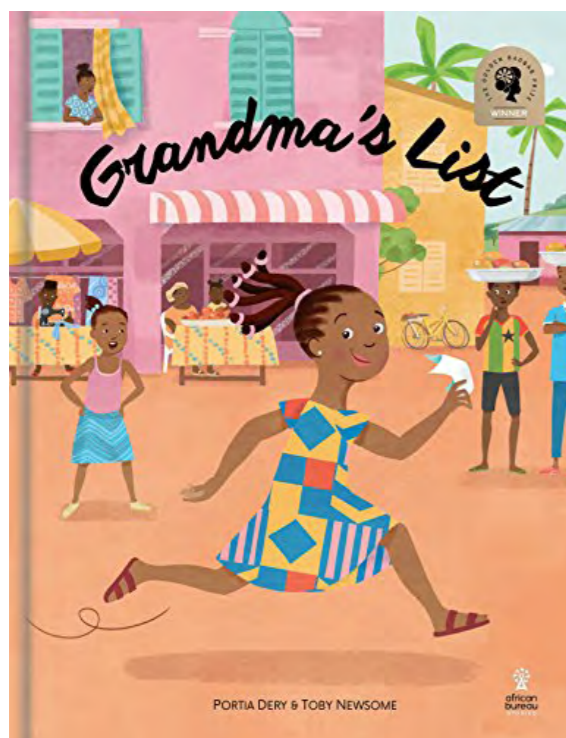
1 In ten stories (one per block), find out what really happens on the walk home from school, when there are no parents or teachers to supervise (or stop the fun!).

2 There's been a murder in *THE TRI*: the high-rise home to resident know-it-alls, Nik and Norva.

Who better to solve the case? .



3 Eight-year-old girl Fatima convinces her grandma that she is old enough to complete her chore list and dashes off running errands around her neighbourhood.



4 Kaycee is off to explore Nigerian culture and attend the wedding of the year - her beloved Uncle Gugi's Wedding. Grab your bags and join the adventure.

5 Once upon a time, there was a Daddy Wolf and his three little ugly wolf-cubs. One day, the daughters left home. What follows next is a tale of adventure and an unlikely friendship with a big bad hog.



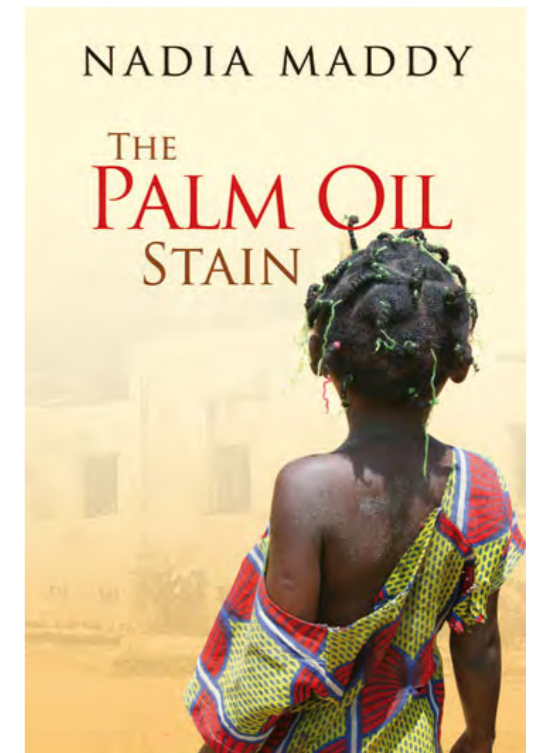
AKADI'S TOP ADULT READS

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1 Set over 36 minutes on a London rush-hour bus, *The 392* explores what divides and unites a cast of apparently unconnected passengers when a suspected terrorist boards.

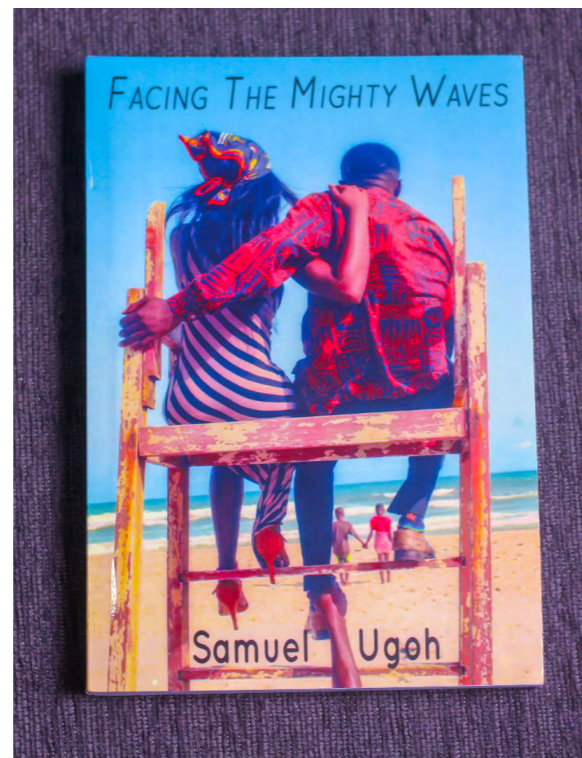
2 This love story relays the harsh reality of war, betrayal and redemption and is set against the backdrop of the Rebel War in Sierra Leone.



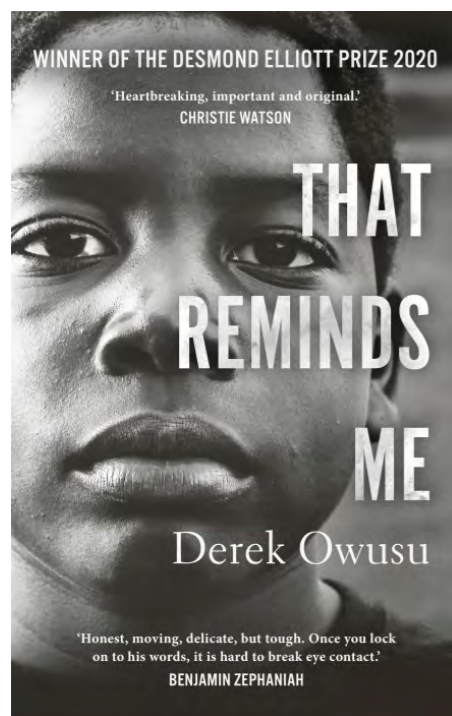
3 After the plane lands at the Lagos airport, three British-Nigerians go their separate ways. But their lives will intertwine again and change the course of things forever.



4 George and Ana are married and have difficulty having their own children. Things become metaphysical with the introduction of devils and seers and a trip to hell.



AKADi



5 From birth to adulthood, this story of a young man is told in fragments of memory. It explores questions of identity, belonging, addiction, sexuality, violence, family and religion.

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Ghana's Big Six go down in political history as the founding fathers that shaped modern-day Ghana. At AKADi, we will be bringing our big six - six British-Ghanaians that are leaving their mark in the world of British politics.

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