



Beasts of No Nation

By Uzodinma Iweala
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Introduction

As civil war rages in an unnamed West-African nation, Agu, the school-aged protagonist of this stunning debut novel, is recruited into a unit of guerilla fighters. Haunted by his father's own death at the hands of militants, which he fled just before witnessing, Agu is vulnerable to the dangerous yet paternal nature of his new commander.

While the war rages on, Agu becomes increasingly divorced from the life he had known before the conflict started—a life of school friends, church services, and time with his family, still intact. As he vividly recalls these sunnier times, his daily reality continues to spin further downward into inexplicable brutality, primal fear, and loss of selfhood. In a powerful, strikingly original voice, Uzodinma Iweala leads the reader through the random travels, betrayals, and violence that mark Agu's new

community. Electrifying and engrossing, *Beasts of No Nation* announces the arrival of an extraordinary new writer.

Questions for Discussion

1. *Beasts of No Nation* is a novel with a strikingly original voice that brings to life the African patois of the young narrator, Agu. What effect did this unique voice have on your reading experience? Did it bring you closer to the character's thoughts and actions?
2. Some of the most moving scenes of the novel are told as flashbacks to Agu's life before his family was killed. What was your impression of his parents and the rest of the villagers who faced the looming threat of attack? What do you think you would do if faced with such an awful predicament?
3. The use of child soldiers has been documented by human rights organizations in a number of countries around the globe, including some in Africa. The author, however, chose to set his novel in an unnamed West African country. How did this choice influence your impressions of the story's landscape and the narrator's own understanding of his place in the world?
4. Agu is brought under the Commandant's rule against his will and is forced to commit atrocious acts of violence. Were you able to reconcile Agu's crimes because of his captivity, or did you feel he should be held accountable for his actions as a soldier?
5. In some respects, *Beasts of No Nation* has a happy ending, as Agu makes it to a refugee camp and undergoes counseling. Did you get the sense that Agu will be able to move past all of the horrific events emblazed in his memory and lead a normal, prosperous life? What besides his own terrible memories do you see as challenges on his path to recuperation?

About the Author

Uzodinma Iweala was born in Washington, DC in 1982. He graduated from Harvard University where he was a Mellon Mays Scholar and received a number of prizes for his writing, including the Eager Prize, Horman Prize, Le Baron Briggs Prize, and the Hoopes Prize for outstanding undergraduate thesis. He lives in Washington, DC and Lagos, Nigeria.