

**Chinua Achebe** was born in Ogidi, Nigeria, in 1930, the son of devout evangelical Protestants. He has travelled widely and is now a famous novelist, poet, story-writer, broadcaster and teacher. His work has had a dramatic impact on the development of literature in Africa and often explores the effects of European customs and beliefs on traditional African society.

**Bessie Head** was born in South Africa in 1937 to a black father and a white mother. As a consequence of apartheid she was fostered and attended a mission school, before training to become a teacher. She took up permanent exile in Botswana, and became a citizen in 1979. Botswana was the setting for her three novels, and she also wrote a number of short stories and autobiographical pieces. She died in 1986.

**Nadine Gordimer** was born into a well-off family in a mining town outside Johannesburg, South Africa in 1923. She began writing at the age of nine and her first story, 'Come Again Tomorrow', appeared in print when she was only fourteen. Her writing deals with the moral and psychological tensions of her racially divided home country. Gordimer was a founding member of the Congress of South African Writers, and received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1991.

**Khamsing Srinawak** was born in Thailand in 1930. His family were buffalo farmers, but supported his education into secondary school. He studied economics at Thammasat University and journalism at Chulalongkorn University. He is best known for his short stories detailing the lives of rural Thai villagers and the social problems they face. In 1992 he was recognised as a 'National Artist of Literature in Thailand'.

**Anita Desai** was born in 1937 in India to a German mother and an Indian father. She has written many novels, short stories and children's books - including *Clear Light of Day*, *In Custody* and *Fasting, Feasting* - exploring tensions within the family, amongst other themes. *The Village by the Sea* won the Guardian Award for children's fiction in 1982. Anita Desai writes in English, saying, "I first learned English when I went to school. It was the first language that I learned to read and write, so it became my literary language." She is currently a Professor on the Creative Writing course at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and a Fellow of Girton College, Cambridge.

**Feng Ji-cai** was born in China in 1942 and brought up in Tianjin. He began writing in his spare time but by profession he was a teacher of traditional Chinese painting. His first novel, *The Boxer*, was highly acclaimed and Ji-cai began writing full time after its publication. He won national awards for his short story 'The Figure-Carved Pipe' and his novel *Ah!*.

**Karl Sealy** was born in Barbados in 1932. He was a storywriter, poet and critic. His work has appeared in several anthologies, including *Global Tales*, edited by Beverley Naidoo. He also wrote for Caribbean journals and the magazine *Bim*.

**Ismith Khan** was born in Trinidad and Tobago in 1925 and is the author of the classic Caribbean novels, *The Jumbie Bird*, *The Crucifixion* and *The Obeah Man*. It was said of *The Obeah Man* that 'Khan's tale of people living in the slow-moving heat of the tropics packs life into every word'. Khan has also written several short stories.

**Ruth Praver Jhabvala** was born in 1927 in Germany. She moved to India after her marriage to an Indian architect. Since 1955 she has written twelve novels and in 1975 she won the Booker Prize for *Heat and Dust*, subsequently winning a BAFTA for Best Screenplay for the filmed adaptation. Jhabvala received Academy Awards for her adaptations of E. M. Forster's novels *Howards End* and *A Room with a View*.

**R. K. Narayan** was born in Madras, India in 1906. His first novel *Swami and Friends*, was set in the fictional town of Malgudi, which he then used as a setting for subsequent novels. He has also published five collections of short stories, two travel books, four collections of essays, a memoir and some translations of Indian epics and myths.

**Amy Tan** was born in 1952 in Oakland, California. She grew up in the San Francisco Bay area and received her master's degree in Linguistics from San Jose State University. In 1989 she won The National Book Award and the L.A. Times Book Award for her first novel, *The Joy Luck Club*. Her characters are constantly searching for a balance between their Chinese heritage and their American lifestyle.

**Yuri Nagibin** was born in Moscow in 1924. He was best known for his short stories, which include 'Komaro', 'A Girl and an Echo' and 'The Whip'. The themes explored by Nagibin range from war and rural life, to history and music. He wrote scripts for a number of films, such as *The Chairman*, about life on a collective farm, which became a legend of national Russian cinema. Nagibin died in 1994.