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*The Criterion*



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**Title:** *Half of a Yellow Sun*

**Author:** Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

**Publisher:** Harper Perennial

**Place of Publication:** London

**Year of Publication:** 2014

**Pages:** 433

**Price:** 450 INR

**ISBN:** 978-0-00-727237-2

**Genre:** Historical Fiction

**Reviewed by:**

**Dr Sonika Sethi**

**Assistant Professor, Dept of English**

**S D College, Ambala Cantt**

The by-lanes of memory visited by the young author effectively portray the trauma of the strife ridden state of Nigeria in the 1960s. The end of colonial period saw the emergence of discordant voices in the native countries. Some of these strifes resulted in civil wars that tore apart not only the lives but also the psyches of the people. Such is the world presented by Chimamanda Adichie in her novel *Half of a Yellow Sun* winner of the Orange Prize for Fiction. A poignant tale of the conflict of interests between the Igbo and Hausa tribe of Nigeria and their struggle for power, convincingly and factually brings to focus the misery of the ordinary lives caught in the conundrums of petty politics. The life of Odenigbo, a Professor of Mathematics at the University of Nigeria and a radical man is engulfed in the fires of hatred set ablaze by the political interests of the power hungry militia. What begins as a fairy tale of a little boy Ugwu, a boy from a poor village, enchanted equally by the luxurious lifestyle of his master Odenigbo and his girlfriend Olanna, develops into the most intricate plot of entangled lives and emotions caught in the web of prevailing circumstances. Nigeria is torn apart into two— the Muslim dominated state of Nigeria ruled by the Hausa tribesmen and the state of Biafra ruled by the rebelling Igbo tribe. Biafra which appeared on the African map for less than an year chose for its emblem a half sun in yellow colour. All the soldiers had to bear this emblem on their sleeves. The civil war that ensued between these two states has been presented to the readers on multiple levels. Half-baked

men, teenagers and young men are forcibly taken away from their homes and parents and enlisted in the Biafran army. Without giving them any sort of training and without any ammunition, they are simply pushed into the midst of war. Civilians have no rights, no food, and no security— neither from the enemy nor from their own army. Every other young girl is raped by the enemy or by the drunken soldiers deputed for the security of the civilians. In the mid of all this exists another set of individuals like Olanna's parents, who run away, leaving behind their daughters just to save their own skins. Olanna's sister Kainene is a shrewd business woman, who deals in army contracts for supplying oil and other goods, seizes the opportunity to further her interests. Her lover, Richard, an Englishman, is in love with the African art and culture and considers himself to be a true Biafran. On the whole, the novel showcases the truthful nature of the presentation of historical fiction by an author who can be considered to be the next big thing in the world of literature to come out of Nigeria after Chinua Achebe and his *Things Fall Apart*. A must read for all those interested in historical fiction.