



So Long a Letter

By Mariama Ba

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Written by award-winning African novelist Mariama Ba and translated from the original French, *So Long a Letter* has been recognized as one of Africa's 100 Best Books of the 20th Century. The brief narrative, written as an extended letter, is a sequence of reminiscences—some wistful, some bitter—recounted by recently widowed Senegalese schoolteacher Ramatoulaye Fall. Addressed to a lifelong friend, Aissatou, it is a record of Ramatoulaye's emotional struggle for survival after her husband betrayed their marriage by taking a second wife. This semi-autobiographical account is a perceptive testimony to the plight of educated and articulate Muslim women. Angered by the traditions that allow polygyny, they inhabit a social milieu dominated by attitudes and values that deny them status equal to men. Ramatoulaye hopes for a world where the best of old customs and new freedom can be combined.

Considered a classic of contemporary African women's literature, *So Long a Letter* is a must-read for anyone interested in African literature and the passage from colonialism to modernism in a Muslim country.

Winner of the prestigious Noma Award for Publishing in Africa.

Titles of related interest from Waveland Press: Beti (trans. Moore), *The Poor Christ of Bomba* (ISBN 9781577664185); Emecheta, *Kehinde* (ISBN 9781577664192); Equiano (ed. Edwards), *Equiano's Travels* (ISBN 9781577664871); La Guma, *In the Fog of the Seasons' End* (ISBN 9781478600251); Marechera, *The House of Hunger* (ISBN 9781478604730); and Oyono (trans. Reed), *Houseboy* (ISBN 9781577669883).

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

"This is a beautiful new edition of a timeless classic of African literature. Ba brings the issue of polygamy into sharp, almost familiar focus for readers who might think it bizarre and safely foreign. I am pleased to see this treasure back in print." Catherine E. Bolten, University of Notre Dame

"I used this novel in my African literature course and it was great. The students researched Senegal and the discussions were lively, enthusiastic, and compelled the quiet students to join in. It was a rewarding experience." Immaculate Kizza, University of Tennessee

Review

So Long a Letter is a landmark book - a sensation in its own country and an education for outsiders. Mariama Ba, a longtime women's activist, set out to write a book that exposed the double standard between men and women in Africa. The result, **So Long a Letter**, eventually won the first Noma Award for Publishing in Africa. The book itself takes the form of a long letter written by a widow, Ramatoulaye, to her friend, over the mandatory forty-day mourning period following the death of a husband. Both women had married for love and had happy, productive marriages; both were educated, had work they loved and were intellectually alive. During their lives, both of these women's husbands chose to take a second wife - and each woman then made a different choice. Ramatoulaye decided to stay married, although it meant rarely seeing her husband and knowing that he was squandering money on a young girl, a friend of her own daughter. Ramatoulaye's friend divorced her husband and eventually left the country, settling in the United States. In her letter, Ramatoulaye examines her life and that of other women of Senegal - their upbringing and training and the cultural restrictions placed upon them. It is a devastating attack, made all the more powerful because of the intelligence and maturity of the narrator and the ability of Mariama Ba to honor two very different choices within one framework. -- *For great reviews of books for girls, check out Let's Hear It for the Girls: 375 Great Books for Readers 2-14.* -- *From 500 Great Books by Women; review by Erica Bauermeister*

Language Notes

Text: English, French (translation)

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Vickie Miller:

What do you ponder on book? It is just for students since they are still students or the idea for all people in the world, the actual best subject for that? Just simply you can be answered for that question above. Every person has distinct personality and hobby for each other. Don't to be compelled someone or something that they don't want do that. You must know how great along with important the book So Long a Letter. All type of book would you see on many options. You can look for the internet methods or other social media.

Peggy Nunes:

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Rodolfo Odum:

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Don Morris:

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