

# A rain of words

Literature



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

World Literature Ousmane Sembene is a renowned figure in African literature circles. He was born in Senegal but later had to move abroad in search of better fortunes. While in France he did several menial jobs and eventually ended up returning back home. He is unique among African literary figures in that he embraced the whole artistic repertoire. Apart from writing he also tried his hand at painting and even film production. However, it is as a writer that he is best remembered. His most popular work was the novel *God's Bits of Wood* published in the year 1960.

Also paradoxically he was at times referred to as the “ most feminist of male writers in Africa”. This did not come by chance. He made it a habit to advocate for human rights in general but those of women particularly in his novels. He did the same in the aforementioned novel and it is also worth noting that his last film *Moolande*, a winner at the 2004 Cannes film Festival was a further step down the feminist route where he explored the controversial matter of female genital mutilation (Sembène 15).

Sembene was brought up by his maternal grandmother and stayed in touch with his feminine side for the rest of his life. He began to write about the strength of women at a time there were very few women writers of note still around. His main purpose in featuring strong women in this novel was to advance the standing of women in a very much patriarchal society.

His point of view was that the womenfolk were unnecessarily stifled and should have been given the occasion to showcase their true abilities. He also sought to debunk the myth that somehow there was such a thing as a superior sex. The significance of Sembene's approach to women's rights was that he gave them a voice at a time when they had few of their own to speak for them (Sembène 64). Also, being a man, he had the listening ear of most

men around him, who were these main perpetrators of these inequalities.

Work Cited

Sembène, Ousmane. *Gods Bits of Wood*. Oxford: Heinemann, 1995. Print.