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Caine Prize winner Brian Chikwava tackles the realities of life in London for Africa's dispossessed in this fearlessly political and very funny story of an illegal Zimbabwean immigrant seeking a better life in England — with a past he is determined to hide.

Harare North Details

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Author : Brian Chikwava

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From Reader Review Harare North for online ebook

Meghan says

I really wanted to like this novel. It's in one of my favourite places in the entire world (London). It has lots of references to my favourite place to read about (Sub-saharan Africa). But I couldn't do it. It just didn't work for me. I felt it started out strong, but by the end, I had no investment in any of the characters. The fatal flaw is the protagonist. He's unlikeable, which in and off itself isn't a problem, there are plenty of unlikeable protagonists, but that Chikwava doesn't give him enough emotional depth that I felt interested in how his story would play out. He just does stuff without any real sense of consequence, and I just didn't care by the end.

So strong start, then sort of fizzled out.

Nicola says

As a person who was born and grew up in Harare I was thrilled to stumble upon this book because who doesn't love a book written by one of their own right? Much to my dismay I found the author's writing style painful to read. I think the character's themselves and their stories are interesting but I wouldn't recommend this to anyone.

Natasha says

Half read but very good on disturbing life of migrant whose identity eventually slips into his compatriot. Brutal, funny, delicately managed writing of atrocity towards the ethical

Emma Clarke says

This book is about a Zimbabwean man who claims asylum in London. He lives in abject poverty and struggles to earn a living.

It manages to underline how vulnerable asylum seekers are in the U.K. while also keeping a sense of humour. Some parts of the book made me laugh.

Faith says

The language used by the author was painful if not annoying. I have never heard of this language in Zimbabwe or outside. This really put me off as the portrayal I feel is not representative of how Zimbabweans speak.

Alex says

This book is so powerful. I grew up white and middle-class (and British) in London and it was heart-breaking and fascinating to see my hometown through completely different eyes. I'd highly recommend this book, and if you're very familiar with London I'd recommend it even more.

Megan says

A bit complicated for the level of attention I gave it. Grim too.

Lisa Burgess says

It took me several attempts to read this book. I kept getting mired in the speaker's language, but when I finally got past page 50, I was in the mode and thoroughly enjoyed the book. Quite an amazing exploration of a psyche gone awry. Now I want to read it a second time.

Al says

A book with a difference!

Written by a Zimbabwean living in London it kept me interested enough to keep reading although at times I found the Zimbo-lingo (read pidgin English) irritating. However, it all makes sense if you read it as an African listening to an African.....

Funny and sad but definitely worth a read.

africawrites - The RAS' annual festival of African Literature says

In Harare North Brian Chikwava introduces us to a wholly original voice emanating out of a South London squat. The nameless Zimbabwean narrator is recently arrived from Harare, with a questionable past involvement as one of President Mugabe's youthful thugs, clutching a briefcase - the contents of which are not fully revealed until the end of the novel. Our narrator hustles, cheats and scrapes his way round South London introducing us to a cast of characters surviving perilously close to the bread line. This is a novel that will introduce many readers to a new world of illegal immigration, hand-to-mouth living and the unseen trauma many who arrive in Britain bring with them from previous experiences.

MT

Rima says

You have no idea how amazing this book is if you don't read it. Chikwava writes a witty and dark book and it leaves you laughing and terrified when you're done. Crawling deep into your duvet terrified.

Alliyah says

A truly brilliant and thought-provoking read but the ending totally caught me off guard!! I think I would have given it 5 stars if the huge plot twist had been more than a few lines long. Would have made it easier to understand/digest.

Lucy Hastings says

Finally finished last night. Set in Brixton in areas I know, lived a group of African illegal immigrants. Two were from Zimbabwe another was a woman with a baby. All lived in an awful, rat infested squat and tried to make a life together. It gave a good insight into the struggles of finding 'graft' and living hand to mouth. The discovery of the food bin behind Marks and Spencers led to violence. The politics of Africa and the status they had back home comes into play here, where people held court underneath the chestnut tree in the middle of Brixton.

The text is written with Zimbabwe dialect which at times makes sense and at others lost me.

Overall an interesting enough insight into another world in Brixton and the harsh realities of surviving in an alien world, in territory I am familiar with.

I was happy to finish it as it is quite difficult read.

Nana Fredua-Agyeman says

The narrative in Harare North is unique; it dealt away with the entire grammatical caboodle that burdens the writer when using a character who is not versed in the English syntax because it is not his first language; or even if it were, because he has adopted and adapted it to suit his daily needs. Brian Chikwava's protagonist is not burdened with the flowery, indulging, and literary complications of the English language; he has given the layman's English as it is spoken and understood by the majority of non-English speaking folks whose formal education was cut short before they could imbibe the whole grammatical rules. In this way, Chikwava has created a character who is not only believable in his actions but also in his speech and thought. Perhaps this is the closest, and the boldest, one has come to delineating between the two levels or standards of spoken English. The Nigerians do it a lot, but mostly in the dialogue. However, since Brian's narrative is in the first person, this sort of language - again not Pidgin as in the case of most Nigerian authors, but of one struggling to speak English as it is known - runs through the entire 230 pages.

continue here <http://freduagyeman.blogspot.com/2012...>

Rebekka Hindbo says

Read for uni. Maybe I just didn't understand this book but I couldn't really get into it or enjoy it.. Hopefully I'll have a better understanding of it when we discuss it in class.

After discussing it I will give it a star more (started with 2, now 3) because I had not understood the book. Upon discussing it became more interesting but it is still confusing if you just read it and does not discuss it or research it.
