

# Delve Deeper into *Big Men*

A film by Rachel Boynton

This list of fiction and nonfiction books, compiled by Hanna Lee, Susan Conlon and Erica Bess of Princeton Public Library, provides a range of perspectives on the issues raised by the POV documentary *Big Men*.

*Big Men*, directed by Rachel Boynton and executive produced by Brad Pitt, goes to Ghana to provide an unprecedented look at the global deal making and dark underside of oil development — a contest for money and power that is reshaping the world. The film was an Official Selection of the 2013 Tribeca Film Festival.

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## ADULT NONFICTION

**Alexander, Max. *Bright Lights, No City: An African Adventure on Bad Roads With A Brother and A Very Weird Business Plan*. New York: Hyperion, 2012.** The hilarious story of two brothers, a truckload of batteries, and a brilliant plan to bring light--and new business opportunities--to Ghana. Irreverent, hilarious, and ultimately inspiring, *Bright Lights, No City* challenges accepted notions of charity, shows the power of broadening your horizons, and suggests that there is hope and opportunity in Africa.

**Hochschild, Adam. *King Leopold's Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998.** In the 1880s, as the European powers were carving up Africa, King Leopold II of Belgium seized the vast and mostly unexplored territory surrounding the Congo River. Carrying out a genocidal plundering of the Congo, he looted its rubber, brutalized its people, and ultimately slashed its population by ten million.

**Maass, Peter. *Crude World: The Violent Twilight of Oil*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2009.** Maass, a *New York Times Magazine* reporter, travels the world to investigate the

repercussions of oil-based economies and the corruption, violence, secrecy and environmental hazards that go along with them. In addition to proposing solutions to relieve countries of their reliance on oil, he provides a useful background of the economic and political history of this controversial raw material.

**Thurow, Roger. *Enough: Why the World's Poorest Starve in an Age of Plenty*. New York: Public Affairs, 2009.** In the West we think of famine as a natural disaster, brought about by drought, or as the legacy of brutal dictators. But in this powerful investigative narrative, Thurow & Kilman show exactly how, in the past few decades, American, British, and European policies conspired to keep Africa hungry and unable to feed itself.

**Easterly, William. *The Tyranny of Experts: Economists, Dictators, and The Forgotten Rights of the Poor*. New York: Basic Books, 2014.** In *The Tyranny of Experts*, economist William Easterly traces the history of the fight against global poverty. Presenting a wealth of cutting-edge economic research, Easterly argues that only a new model of development—one predicated on respect for the individual rights of people in developing countries, that understands that unchecked state power is the problem and not the solution—will be capable of ending global poverty once and for all.

**Rotberg, Robert I. *Corruption, Global Security and World Order*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2009.** *Corruption, Global Security, and World Order* explores the ties between corrupt practice and threats to global peace, corrupt practice and the suppression of human rights and development, corrupt practice and the maintenance of tyranny, and corruption in health and education.

**Peel, Michael. *Swampful of Dollars: Pipelines and Paramilitaries at Nigeria's Oil Frontier*. Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2010.** Blending vivid reportage, history, and investigative journalism, in *A Swamp Full of Dollars* journalist Michael Peel tells the story of this extraordinary country. Peel makes the connection between Western energy consumption and the breakdown of the Nigerian state, where the corruption of the haves is matched only by the determination and ingenuity of the have-nots.

**Ghazvinian, John. *Untapped: The Scramble for Africa's Oil*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2008.** John Ghazvinian traveled through twelve African countries—from Sudan to Congo to Angola—talking to warlords, industry executives, bandits, activists, priests, missionaries, oil-rig workers, scientists, and ordinary people whose lives have been transformed—not necessarily for the better—by the riches beneath their feet. The result is a high-octane narrative that reveals the challenges, obstacles, reasons for despair, and reasons for hope emerging from the world's newest energy hot spot.

**Lowe, John S. *Oil and Gas Law in a Nutsell, 6<sup>th</sup> Edition*. West Academic Publishing, 2014.** This text provides authoritative coverage of the legal rules that govern the development of privately owned mineral rights, which often also apply to government-owned resources. It covers topics such as the nature, protection, and conveyance of oil and gas rights, leasing, and taxation.

**Houser, Trevor. *Fueling Up: The Economic Implications of America's Oil and Gas Boom*. Peterson Institute for International Economics, 2014.** As the US economy struggles to emerge from the Great Recession, many see the recent oil boom as a possible source of economic salvation. Until now, however, there has



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been little objective analysis of the energy boom's economic consequences. In this major study, Trevor Houser and Shashank Mohan fill that gap.

**Ruppert, Michael C. *Confronting Collapse: The Crisis of Energy and Money in a Post Peak Oil World.* Chelsea Green Publishing, 2009.** In *Confronting Collapse*, author Michael C. Ruppert, a former LAPD narcotics officer turned investigative journalist, details the intricate connections between money and energy, including the ways in which oil shortages and price spikes triggered the economic crash that began in September 2008.

**Hofmeister, John. *Why We Hate the Oil Companies: Straight Talk from an Energy Insider.* MacMillan, 2011.** As president of Shell Oil, John Hofmeister was known for being a straight shooter, willing to challenge his peers throughout the industry. Now, he's a man on a mission, the founder of Citizens for Affordable Energy, crisscrossing the country in a grassroots campaign to change the way we look at energy in this country. Hofmeister offers an insider's view of what's behind the energy companies' posturing.

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## ADULT FICTION

**Achebe, Chinua. *A Man of the People.* New York: Anchor Books, 1989.** By the renowned author of *Things Fall Apart*, this novel foreshadows the Nigerian coups of 1966 and shows the color and vivacity as well as the violence and corruption of a society making its own way between the two worlds.

**Aidoo, Ama Ata. *No Sweetness Here and Other Stories.* New York: Feminist Press at the City University of New York, 1995.** Set in West Africa, these stories chart a geography of consciousness during a period of transition from a colonial society through independence into a postcolonial world still in progress today.

The volume is at once entertaining and deeply instructive not only about a changing Africa, but about such universal themes as love, marriage, work, family, sacrifice, privilege, and hierarchy.

**Habila, Helon. *Oil on Water: A Novel.* New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2011.** When a British oil tycoon's wife is kidnapped by guerilla forces, a young journalist and his mentor set out into the beautiful yet dangerous and devastating Nigerian delta in an effort to find the victim and report a story that could save their careers. Award-winning author Habila delves into the corrupt and polluted world of post-colonial Africa, where villages have been destroyed by the warfare between militants and the government soldiers fighting on the side of the petroleum companies.

**Watson, Christie. *Tiny Sunbirds, Far Away.* New York: Other Press, 2011.** When Blessing's father leaves her family for another woman, she, along with her mother and brother, are uprooted from their very comfortable life in Lagos, Nigeria and must move into the area surrounding the dangerous Niger delta, which is ripe with oil-related warfare and corruption that eventually lures in her frustrated brother. Despite the incredible adversity she experiences in her new life, Blessing desires greatly to find a way to fit in to her current circumstances.

**Sinclair, Upton. *Oil!* Penguin Books, 2007.** After writing *The Jungle*, his scathing indictment of the meatpacking industry, Sinclair turned his sights on the early days of the California oil industry in a highly entertaining story featuring a cavalcade of characters including senators, oil magnets, Hollywood film starlets, and a crusading evangelist.

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## NONFICTION FOR YOUNGER READERS

**Haerens, Margaret. *Oil (Global Viewpoints).* Farmington Hills: Greenhaven Press, 2010.** This volume focuses on the global oil outlook, offering perspectives from a diverse range of international sources. It explores the impact of oil supplies and pricing on individual countries like Germany and Venezuela; oil and its impact on the environment with examples from China, Japan and Canada; the relationship between global politics and oil, including countries in Africa and the Middle East; and the benefits and pitfalls of drilling for new oil reserves.

**Marrin, Albert. *Black Gold: The Story of Oil in Our Lives.* Scholastic Publishing, 2013.** Thick, foul, and slippery, oil is not pretty, but it drives our world. Without it, life as we live it today would be impossible. As its abundance shrinks and our dependence on it continues to grow, choices that are made will require sacrifice if we are to maintain an existence that will be sustainable for generations to come.

**Laxer, James. *Oil (A Groundwork Guide).* Groundwork Books, 2008.** Today, cheap, easily accessible oil supplies are dwindling, and we are beginning to recognize the true cost to the world's environment of our profligate use of this form of energy. As *Oil* shows, a substantial portion of the world's remaining supply lies in countries whose interests are not identical with those of the major industrial powers.

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## FICTION FOR YOUNGER READERS

**Achebe, Chinua. *Chike and the River.* Random House, 2011.** Eleven-year-old Chike longs to cross the Niger River to the city of Asaba, but he doesn't have the sixpence he needs to



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pay for the ferry ride. With the help of his friend S.M.O.G., he embarks on a series of adventures to help him get there. Once he finally makes it across the river, Chike realizes that life on the other side is far different from his expectations.

### **Mussi, Sarah. *The Door of No Return*. New York: Margaret K. McElderry Books, 2008.**

Sixteen-year-old Zac never believed his grandfather's tales about their enslaved ancestors being descended from an African king, but when his grandfather is murdered and the villains come after Zac, he sets out for Ghana to find King Baktu's long-lost treasure before the murderers do.

