

Coetzee

But the trickiest name is probably that of South African author JM Coetzee. The first syllable is pronounced **kuut** (uu as in book); debate rages about the pronunciation of the “ee” at the end. Many South Africans, whether Afrikaans speakers or not, pronounce this as a diphthong **EE-uh**, as in the word “idea”.

Indeed, **kuut-SEE-uh** was the Unit’s original recommendation in the early 1980s, based on the advice of the South African Broadcasting Corporation and his London publisher, Secker and Warburg. However, that vowel can also be pronounced as a monophthong (**kuut-SEE**), especially by those from the south of the country, and this is the pronunciation that the author uses and prefers the BBC to use too.

“How to Say,” *BBC News*, September 14, 2009, bbc.com. Cited in Wikipedia.

- 1940 b. Cape Town (English-speaking)
- 1961 BA English and math, U. of Cape Town
- 1968 PhD, in English, UT-Austin (on Samuel Beckett)
teaches at SUNY-Buffalo
- 1971 denied US permanent residence due to Vietnam War activism
- 1972 faculty, UCT
- 1974 *Dusklands* (Johannesburg: Ravan)
- 1983 *Life & Times of Michael K* (London: Secker & Warburg): Booker prize
- 1999 *Disgrace* (London: Secker & Warburg): Booker
- 1998 “The Novel in Africa” (lecture at Berkeley)
- 2002 emigrates to Australia
- 2003 *Elizabeth Costello* (London: Secker & Warburg)
Nobel Prize
- 2013–19 *Jesus* trilogy (not what you think)

Source: Colleen Lutz Clemens, “J. M. Coetzee,” in *Contemporary Literary Criticism*, vol. 516, ed. Rebecca Parks (Farmington Hills, MI: Gale, 2023), Literature Resource Center.

A second track took me from Nama and Malay deeper into the syntax of exotic languages....[I] reached the point of asking myself: If a latter-day ark were ever commissioned to take the best that mankind had to offer and make a fresh start on the farther planets, if it ever came down to that, might we not leave Shakespeare's plays and Beethoven's quartets behind to make room for the last aboriginal speaker of Dyrbal, even though that might be a fat old woman who scratched herself and smelled bad? It seemed an odd position for a student of English, the greatest imperial language of them all, to be falling into. It was a doubly odd position for someone with literary ambitions, albeit of the vaguest—ambitions to speak one day, somehow, in his own voice—to discover himself suspecting that languages spoke people or at the very least spoke through them.

J.M. Coetzee, "How I Learned About America—and Africa—in Texas," *New York Times Book Review*, April 15, 1984: 9, [ProQuest Historical Newspapers](#).

So as a student he moves on the fringes of the left without being part of the left. Sympathetic to the human concerns of the left, he is alienated, when the crunch comes, by its language—by all political language....Masses of people wake in him something close to panic.

J.M. Coetzee, "Retrospect," in *Doubling the Point: Essays and Interviews*, ed. David Attwell (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 394.