

# Critical Insights: A Deep Dive into Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart

*Exploring Themes,  
Characters, Symbols, and  
Cultural Contexts*

Literary Lyrics



# THE CONCEPT

- **Introduction**
- **Summary**
- **Critical Analysis**
- **Q&A**



## Introduction to Things Fall Apart

Things Fall Apart is a novel written by Nigerian author Chinua Achebe, first published in 1958. It is widely regarded as a classic of African literature and a pioneering work in postcolonial literature. Set in the late 19th century, the novel portrays the life of Okonkwo, a respected leader in the Igbo community of Umuofia, as well as the impact of British colonialism and Christian missionaries on traditional African society. Achebe's work is both a detailed depiction of pre-colonial African life and a critical examination of the destructive effects of European colonization on indigenous cultures.

The novel is divided into three parts. The first part provides a vivid description of life in the Igbo community before the arrival of the Europeans. It introduces Okonkwo, a strong and proud man driven by the desire to overcome the shame of his father's failure. Okonkwo's father, Unoka, was considered weak and effeminate because he had no titles, was heavily in debt, and could not provide for his family. Determined not to follow in his father's footsteps, Okonkwo becomes a successful farmer, warrior, and leader, earning respect in his community. However, his pride and fear of being perceived as weak often lead to harsh decisions, particularly towards his family.

Achebe's portrayal of Igbo society is rich with cultural traditions, rituals, and beliefs. The community is shown to have a well-structured system of justice, governance, and religion, dispelling Western stereotypes of African societies as primitive or chaotic. Achebe highlights the complexity of Igbo life, where individuals are judged based on their personal achievements rather than their lineage, and where spirituality and ancestral traditions play a central role.

The second part of the novel deals with Okonkwo's personal tragedy. After accidentally killing a clansman, Okonkwo is exiled for seven years to his mother's village. During his exile, European missionaries arrive in Umuofia, bringing with them a new religion and a foreign way of life. Many of the Igbo people, particularly the marginalized and those dissatisfied with traditional practices, convert to Christianity. The conflict between the traditional beliefs and the new religion begins to erode the unity of the community, which had long been the bedrock of Igbo life.

The final part of the novel focuses on Okonkwo's return to Umuofia and his disillusionment with the changes that have taken place during his absence. The British colonial government has established a firm foothold in the region, bringing not only Christianity but also Western law and administration. Okonkwo struggles to rally his people to resist these changes, but he finds that many have already accepted the new order. His failure to restore the old ways leads to his ultimate downfall, and in a final act of defiance, he takes his own life.

Things Fall Apart is a powerful exploration of the complexities of tradition, identity, and change. Achebe masterfully balances the personal story of Okonkwo with the larger narrative of colonialism's impact on African societies. The novel's title, taken from W.B. Yeats' poem "The Second Coming," reflects the disintegration of both individual lives and entire cultures as a result of this clash of civilizations. Through Okonkwo's story, Achebe highlights the tragedy of losing one's cultural identity in the face of external forces, making Things Fall Apart a timeless work of literature.

## Summary of the novel “Things Fall Apart”

Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* is one of the most authentic stories ever written about life in Nigeria during the late 1800s and early 1900s. Even though it was first published in 1958, two years before Nigeria gained independence, it remains incredibly popular. In the United States alone, thousands of copies are sold every year, and millions have been sold worldwide, translated into many languages. The book has been turned into stage plays, radio shows, and TV programs. Teachers in high schools, colleges, and even graduate programs use it in classes on history, social studies, literature, and anthropology.

The title of the novel comes from a line in the poem *The Second Coming* by W. B. Yeats, an Irish poet and playwright:

*"Turning and turning in the widening gyre*

*The falcon cannot hear the falconer;*

*Things fall apart; the center cannot hold;*

*Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world."*

In this poem, Yeats paints a dark picture of a world falling into chaos because of some deep flaw in humanity. Achebe uses this idea in *Things Fall Apart* to show what happened to the Igbo society in Nigeria when British colonization began. The community of Umuofia, in the novel, was already struggling with its own internal issues. These problems made it hard for the Igbo people to resist the arrival of the British, who brought a new religion, new businesses, and a new government system.

In *The Second Coming*, Yeats describes an anti-Christ figure leading the world into destruction. Similarly, in *Things Fall Apart*, the arrival of foreign forces, with their new religion and government, causes the traditional world of Umuofia to fall apart, piece by piece. As the British take control, the Igbo society struggles to survive, showing how deeply colonialism disrupted their way of life.

### **Detailed Summary:**

#### **Part 1:**

##### **Chapter 1: Okonkwo's Rise and Family Life**

Set around the end of the 19th century, the novel begins by focusing on Okonkwo, the main character. He is a respected leader in the Igbo community of Umuofia, located in eastern Nigeria. At just eighteen years old, Okonkwo becomes famous for being the strongest wrestler in nine villages and beyond. He defeats Amalinze the Cat, a wrestler who had remained unbeaten for seven years.

This victory earned him a strong reputation throughout the nine villages of Umuofia. Okonkwo's fame keeps growing as he gets older. Over the years, he marries several wives and has children. However, Okonkwo has a quick temper and easily loses patience, especially with people who are not successful, like his father. When he gets angry, he often uses his fists instead of words, as he struggles to express himself calmly.

Okonkwo's father, Unoka, passed away ten years earlier. Unoka was known for being lazy and irresponsible, which made him a constant embarrassment to Okonkwo. Even though Unoka had a family to take care of, he often borrowed money but wasted it on palm-wine and parties with his neighbors. As a result, his family was left struggling with barely enough food to eat. He owed money to many people in the village and never managed to pay back his debts.

Unlike Okonkwo, Unoka loved music and was known for playing the flute with other musicians in the village, especially after the harvest. He enjoyed a carefree lifestyle in his youth, going from market to market to play music and feast. However, as an adult, Unoka was seen as a failure, and his family barely had enough to eat. Even though people laughed at him and refused to lend him more money, Unoka somehow always found a way to borrow more, increasing his debts.

One day, a neighbor named Okoye visits Unoka, bringing his goatskin mat to sit on. Unoka takes out a kola nut, a traditional gesture of hospitality, for his guest. The two men spend some time talking about health, harvests, and war. When the topic of war comes up, Unoka feels uncomfortable, as he dislikes war, so he shifts the conversation to music instead. Finally, Okoye tells Unoka why he came to visit—he wants to collect the debt of 200 cowries that Unoka owes him. Okoye speaks using proverbs, which the narrator describes as “the palm-oil with which words are eaten,” meaning they help to smoothen conversations. Once Unoka understands that Okoye is asking for repayment, he bursts into laughter. He shows Okoye the chalk lines on his wall that represent all his debts and says he will pay his larger debts first. Okoye, frustrated, rolls up his goatskin mat and leaves without his money.

When Unoka died, he had not earned any titles and was still deep in debt. Okonkwo feels ashamed of his father and works hard to build his own reputation. He becomes famous as the best wrestler in nine villages and a successful farmer. Okonkwo has three wives, two barns full of yams, and has earned two titles, which makes him one of the most respected men in the community. Because of his status, Okonkwo is asked to take care of Ikemefuna, a young boy who is given to the village of Umuofia by a neighboring village to prevent war. Unfortunately, Ikemefuna's fate is sealed, and he is later sacrificed by the village.

### **Analysis:**

The events in *Things Fall Apart* happen in the late 1800s and early 1900s, just before the British Empire started expanding into Nigeria. This novel shows us what life was like in Igbo culture,

which is very different from Western culture. In this first chapter, Chinua Achebe gives us a glimpse of different aspects of the Igbo way of life, such as:

- Legends and traditions: The story of the village founder who fought with a wild spirit.
- Symbols of honor: The importance of earning titles.
- Wealth indicators: Yams and cowrie shells show a person's wealth.
- Marriage customs: Men can have more than one wife.
- Timekeeping: The Igbo people count time by markets, and their weeks have four days.
- Social rituals: These include offering kola nuts, alligator pepper, and using chalk for certain ceremonies. Small talk and proverbs are also a big part of their social interactions.
- Music, entertainment, food, and drink: These are essential parts of Igbo life and celebrations.

Achebe carefully weaves these cultural details into the story to show how rich and sophisticated Igbo society is.

In this chapter, we also learn about Okonkwo, the main character, and his achievements. He is well-respected in his village because of his success. However, Okonkwo is deeply motivated by his desire to escape the shame of his father, Unoka, who was considered lazy and a failure. Okonkwo wants to be everything his father was not. He values manliness, strength, and hard work, and he is determined to gain success and recognition in his tribe.

Achebe structures *Things Fall Apart* like a Greek tragedy. In this form of storytelling, the focus is on a tragic hero, a character who is noble and courageous but is brought down by a personal flaw. In this case, Okonkwo is the tragic hero. He is respected and accomplished, but his biggest flaw is his obsession with appearing manly. He fears being seen as weak like his father, and this leads him to make violent and irrational decisions, which slowly unravel his achievements and noble qualities.

By the end of this chapter, Achebe gives a hint about Ikemefuna, a young boy who will be sent to live with Okonkwo's family as a peace offering. Achebe also hints that Ikemefuna is "doomed" and will meet a tragic fate.

A key aspect of Igbo society is also introduced here: the system of honorific titles. In Igbo culture, titles are an important way people measure their success and compare themselves to others, especially for Okonkwo. Unlike titles in Western cultures, these titles are not given by authorities or leaders. Instead, a person earns them by being able to pay for them. The more wealth a man has, the more titles he can buy, which increases his social standing.

There are up to four titles a man can take, each more expensive than the last. Most men can only afford the first title. Titles are shown through physical signs, like anklets or marks on the feet and face, so others can see who holds a title.



Some writers have said that this system was a way of "redistributing wealth" within the community. In a similar practice, some Native American tribes of the Pacific Northwest had a potlatch ceremony, where the person gaining honor gave gifts to others to show their wealth. This was also a way to encourage others to surpass them.

## **Chapter 2: The War Against the Amalinze Cat**

One night, as Okonkwo is getting ready for bed, he hears the town crier's drum. The crier is calling all the men of Umuofia to meet at the marketplace the next morning. Okonkwo senses that something serious is happening and wonders if it might be about a war with another clan. He recalls his past bravery in battles, including bringing home his fifth enemy's head from the last war.

When morning comes, the marketplace is packed with people. Ogbuefi Ezeugo, a respected elder, shouts "Umuofia kwenu" four times to get everyone's attention and quiet the crowd. He repeats it a fifth time before explaining that the people of Mbaino have killed a woman from Umuofia, who was the wife of Ogbuefi Udo. The crowd gets very angry, and they decide that Mbaino must either go to war or give Umuofia a young man and a virgin as compensation.

Umuofia is feared by its neighbors because of its power and magic. The clan only goes to war if their Oracle (the place where, or medium by which, the deities are consulted; here, the Oracle of the Hills and the Caves) agrees. Okonkwo is sent to Mbaino to negotiate, and after two days, he returns with a 15-year-old boy and a virgin from Mbaino. The boy's name is Ikemefuna. The narrator tells us that Ikemefuna's story will be remembered in Umuofia for a long time.

The elders of Umuofia decide that the girl will go to Ogbuefi Udo to replace his murdered wife. They decide that Ikemefuna will live with Okonkwo until they decide what to do with him. So, for the next three years, Ikemefuna lives in Okonkwo's household.

Okonkwo is very strict with his family and has a bad temper. He makes everyone in his household fear him. The narrator suggests that Okonkwo isn't cruel, but he is deeply afraid of failing and appearing weak. Okonkwo remembers a time when a friend called his father *agbala*, which means both a woman and a man with no titles. From then on, Okonkwo vowed to hate everything his father loved, including gentleness and idleness.

### **Analysis:**

In Chapter 2 of *Things Fall Apart*, we start to see more about the Igbo traditions and how important they are to the story. For example, there's a big difference between what is considered manly and what is considered womanly. Men are respected for their achievements and strength, while activities like taking care of children and chickens are seen as feminine.

Okonkwo wants to be the perfect example of manhood, but his fear of being seen as weak leads him to make some serious mistakes. He hates laziness and gentleness, and he expects his family to work as hard as he does, even though they are not as strong. He also often scolds and beats his oldest son, Nwoye.

In this chapter, we also see more about Igbo customs. For example, when the villagers gather in the marketplace, they show their loyalty and respect for what is considered manly. They refer to the murdered woman as “a daughter of Umuofia,” showing their close bond and respect for their community. The way the speaker addresses the crowd, turning in all four directions, shows the formal and ceremonial nature of their meetings.

We also learn about Umuofia’s religious practices, such as worshipping wooden objects that represent their personal gods and ancestral spirits. These objects are kept in a special place where they pray and make sacrifices.

Achebe uses traditional storytelling and proverbs to show what the Igbo people believe and value. For example:

- Okonkwo remembers when people called his father a woman, which shows how much he hates being seen as weak.
- There’s a proverb that says, “When the moon is shining, the cripple becomes hungry for a walk,” meaning that the light of the moon makes even those who are usually weak or unable to move feel more active and hopeful.
- There’s also a legend about an old woman with one leg that helps explain why other clans are afraid of Umuofia.

These elements help us understand more about the Igbo culture and how important traditions and beliefs are to the characters in the story.

### **Chapter 3: Ikemefuna's Arrival and Integration**

In Chapter 3 of *Things Fall Apart*, we learn more about Okonkwo's past and what shaped his character. This chapter helps us understand why Okonkwo is so driven and harsh.

The first story from Okonkwo’s past tells us about his father, Unoka. Unoka was known for his poor farming skills and constant bad harvests. He once went to the Oracle of the Hills and Caves to find out why his crops always failed. The priestess, Chika, told him bluntly that he hadn't offended the gods but that he was lazy and used poor land. She advised him to “work like a man.”



Unoka's misfortune followed him to his death. He died of a disease that the earth goddess, Ani, found unacceptable, so he couldn't be buried properly. Instead, he was taken to the Evil Forest to decay, adding to Okonkwo's shame.

The second story from Okonkwo's past shows his determination to succeed despite his father's failures. Okonkwo did not inherit any wealth or titles from Unoka. Instead, he had to start from scratch. He wanted to grow yams, which are considered a manly crop, and he sought help from Nwakibie, a wealthy man with many barns and wives. Okonkwo approached Nwakibie with respect, and after some conversation, Nwakibie gave him more seed-yams than he had hoped for.

However, that year turned out to be the worst for farming. The land faced both a severe drought and then heavy rains, which ruined many crops. Despite Okonkwo's hard work, his harvest was poor. This disaster was so severe that one man even hanged himself because of the crop failure. Despite the hardships, Okonkwo's strong will helped him survive, and he vowed that he would overcome any challenge.

#### **Chapter 4: The Feast of the New Yam and Cultural Tensions**

In this part of *Things Fall Apart*, Okonkwo's character and actions reveal much about his personality and relationships.

Okonkwo is known for his strict and often harsh treatment of others, especially those he views as less successful. For instance, during a meeting to plan the next ancestral feast, Okonkwo dismisses Osugo, a man without titles, by saying the meeting is "for men." When others support Osugo, Okonkwo reluctantly apologizes. This behavior illustrates Okonkwo's belief in strict adherence to masculine ideals and his impatience with those who don't meet his standards.

Despite his tough exterior, Okonkwo's achievements are notable. He is respected in the clan and is chosen to deliver a war ultimatum to an enemy village. The enemy treats him with great respect during the negotiations. Additionally, Okonkwo is selected to care for Ikemefuna, a boy who will stay with him until the clan decides his fate. Ikemefuna's arrival at Okonkwo's home is significant, as he remains there for three years, growing close to Okonkwo's family.

Ikemefuna initially struggles with his new life. He misses his family, refuses to eat, and even tries to run away. Okonkwo, who is determined not to show any softness, threatens him to ensure he eats, but Ikemefuna falls ill for twelve days. During his recovery, he gradually becomes more comfortable and less fearful.

As time goes on, Ikemefuna becomes well-liked in Okonkwo's household, especially by Nwoye, Okonkwo's son. Ikemefuna shows his skills by making useful items like flutes and traps. Even though Okonkwo secretly grows fond of Ikemefuna, he keeps his affection hidden, believing that showing warmth is a sign of weakness. He still includes Ikemefuna in important events, such as

meetings and feasts, where Ikemefuna helps carry Okonkwo's belongings and refers to him as "father."

During the Week of Peace, a sacred time when no one is allowed to speak harshly or engage in violence, Okonkwo breaks tradition. His youngest wife, Ojiugo, goes to a friend's house and forgets to prepare his meal. When she returns, Okonkwo beats her severely, disregarding the peace rules. This act is serious because it can endanger the village's crops. The priest of the earth goddess, Ani, orders Okonkwo to make sacrifices to atone for his actions. Although Okonkwo is privately regretful, he doesn't openly acknowledge his mistake, leading the village to gossip about his lack of respect for the gods.

After the Week of Peace, Okonkwo begins preparing his seed-yams for planting, a task he undertakes with great care. He allows Ikemefuna and Nwoye to help, but he is critical of their efforts, believing that they need to learn the proper way to prepare yams, a symbol of manliness and success. As the planting season progresses, Okonkwo's hard work continues, and Ikemefuna and Nwoye's bond grows stronger. The rainy season brings a break between planting and harvest, during which the village children, including Nwoye, enjoy listening to stories and playing.

Throughout these events, Okonkwo's harshness and his struggle with his personal expectations and societal norms are highlighted, as well as the developing relationships within his family.

## **Chapter 5: The Tragedy of Ezeudu's Funeral**

As the Feast of the New Yam approaches in Umuofia, the village prepares for the celebration that marks the beginning of the harvest season. This festival involves discarding all old yams and thoroughly cleaning all utensils and tools used for preparing and serving yams to ensure they are ready for the new crop. Relatives and guests from other villages are invited, and Okonkwo invites his wives' relatives. While the rest of the village eagerly anticipates the festival, Okonkwo dreads the prolonged celebrations and would prefer to focus on his farm work.

During the final stages of preparation, Okonkwo's repressed anger surfaces when he mistakenly believes someone has damaged one of his banana trees. In reality, the leaves were only cut to wrap food. Okonkwo's second wife, Ekwefi, confesses to using the leaves, but Okonkwo reacts by severely beating her to vent his frustrations. He then decides to go hunting with his old and ineffective gun, although he is neither skilled nor experienced in hunting. When Ekwefi comments about "guns that never shot," Okonkwo angrily aims the gun at her and pulls the trigger, though she is unharmed. He then walks away, leaving the situation unresolved.

Despite Okonkwo's outbursts, the festival proceeds with joy and excitement. Ekwefi, despite the earlier incident, looks forward to the wrestling matches held on the second day of the festival, a highlight of the event. These wrestling matches, which are fiercely contested between

Okonkwo's village and neighboring villages, remind Ekwefi of the time when Okonkwo won her heart with his wrestling prowess.

The women and children of Okonkwo's household enthusiastically prepare for the feast. Okonkwo, while he does not show it outwardly, has a special fondness for his daughter Ezinma. Despite his stern demeanor, he acknowledges his affection for her, though he compensates by scolding her twice while she waits on him.

On the morning of the second festival day, Ekwefi and Ezinma prepare a fowl for the feast. Ezinma, curious about her mother's cooking, asks questions and helps with the preparations. As the festival's wrestling matches draw near, Ekwefi is particularly excited, recalling how Okonkwo won her heart years ago with his wrestling feats.

In the midst of the festival preparations, Ezinma helps out by bringing live coals for cooking and deals with the aftermath of a broken pot. Despite her occasional troubles, Ikemefuna, who is living with Okonkwo's family, helps out and quiets the younger children with a look. When Ezinma delivers pottage to Okonkwo, he scolds her for her behavior, but inwardly, he holds a deep affection for her, recognizing her resemblance to her mother.

## **Chapter 6: The Dispute with Ezeani and the Role of Women**

On the second day of the Feast of the New Yam, the entire village gathers at the playing field to enjoy the wrestling matches between Okonkwo's village and a neighboring village. The festival's atmosphere is charged with excitement as the preliminary matches feature boys around fifteen or sixteen years old. These early bouts are mostly for entertainment and to build anticipation for the main events. Among the young wrestlers, Maduka, the son of Okonkwo's friend Obierika, stands out with a swift and impressive victory.

During a break in the wrestling, Ekwefi, Okonkwo's second wife, engages in a conversation with Chielo, the priestess of the Oracle of the Hills and the Caves. Chielo, who has a special fondness for Ekwefi's daughter Ezinma, casually discusses Okonkwo's recent outburst and inquires about Ezinma's well-being. Chielo affectionately refers to Ezinma as "my daughter" and reassures Ekwefi that children of Ezinma's age generally have a good chance of surviving past six years old.

As the drumming resumes, signaling the start of the more serious matches, two teams of twelve men each prepare to face off. The crowd eagerly anticipates the final match between the two best fighters from each village. Last year, the final bout between Ikezue and Okafu ended in a draw, with neither wrestler managing to defeat the other. This year, the match starts with both fighters evenly matched, but the tension escalates as Ikezue makes a crucial error. Okafu seizes the opportunity, defeats Ikezue, and becomes the hero of the day. The crowd jubilantly lifts Okafu in celebration, singing songs to honor his strength and skill.

## **Chapter 7: Ikemefuna's Fate and Okonkwo's Struggle**

Ikemefuna, who has been living with Okonkwo's family for three years, has formed a close bond with Nwoye. The boys have become like brothers, and Nwoye is increasingly influenced by Ikemefuna's presence. Okonkwo, pleased with Nwoye's growing masculinity, enjoys telling him and Ikemefuna stories of battle and heroism. Though Nwoye still secretly prefers his mother's traditional folktales, he pretends to disdain them in order to gain his father's approval.

One day, as Okonkwo and his sons are working on the compound walls, a swarm of locusts descends upon Umuofia. This event is a rare and welcome treat, and the villagers eagerly catch and roast the locusts. As Okonkwo and the boys feast on the locusts, Ogbuefi Ezeudu, the oldest man in the village, arrives with troubling news. He informs Okonkwo that the Oracle has decreed that Ikemefuna must be killed as retribution for a murder committed in Mbaino. Although the Oracle has ordered that Okonkwo should not participate in the killing because Ikemefuna calls him "father," Okonkwo is troubled by this command.

The next morning, Okonkwo tells Ikemefuna that he will be returning to his home in Mbaino. Ikemefuna, who does not believe this news, is comforted by the idea of returning to his family. However, when Nwoye hears about the departure, he is overcome with grief and tears, leading Okonkwo to beat him in frustration.

As Ikemefuna is led away with Okonkwo and other men of the village, he feels reassured by Okonkwo's presence, thinking of his family and home. But as they reach the edge of the village, the situation takes a dark turn. Okonkwo steps back, and Ikemefuna's fear resurfaces. One of the men in the group delivers the first blow with a machete. Ikemefuna, desperate and in pain, runs towards Okonkwo, crying out for him. In a moment of fear and to avoid appearing weak, Okonkwo delivers the fatal blow himself.

That evening, when Okonkwo returns home, Nwoye, who has sensed the truth about Ikemefuna's death, feels a deep inner turmoil. The pain he feels mirrors the sorrow he once experienced upon discovering abandoned twins left to die in the forest, a haunting memory that resurfaces in his grief.

## **Chapter 8: The Feast of the Locusts and the Role of Superstition**

For two days after Ikemefuna's death, Okonkwo is unable to eat or sleep, consumed by thoughts of the boy he considered a son. On the third day, when his daughter Ezinma brings him the food he requested, Okonkwo wishes that she were a boy. He is troubled by his own reaction to Ikemefuna's death, feeling that a man with his battle experience should not be so affected by the death of a boy.

Seeking to escape his distress, Okonkwo visits his friend Obierika. He praises Obierika's son Maduka for his wrestling victory and laments his own son Nwoye's lack of skill, comparing him

unfavorably to his own father, Unoka. To assert his masculinity, Okonkwo questions Obierika about why he did not participate in the killing of Ikemefuna. Obierika explains that he had other responsibilities and disapproves of Okonkwo's involvement, warning that such actions could anger the Earth and result in divine retribution.

Their conversation is interrupted by the news of the death of Ogbuefi Ndulue, an elder from a neighboring village. Ndulue's wife has also died, complicating the announcement. The mourners recall how closely Ndulue and his wife were, and Okonkwo and Obierika view this bond as a sign of weakness. They lament the decline in the prestige of the ozo title and discuss the fading traditions.

Feeling somewhat revitalized by the conversation, Okonkwo returns home and later participates in the negotiation of a bride-price for Obierika's daughter. The negotiations involve the exchange of sticks representing the amount agreed upon. The men then spend the evening feasting, drinking palm-wine, and criticizing the customs of neighboring villages, including the "white men," whom they compare disparagingly to lepers.

Throughout the evening, they reflect on the differences between their own customs and those of other cultures, including a humorous comparison to a leper named Amadi, highlighting their sense of superiority and disdain for foreign practices.

### **Chapter 9: The Strength of Tradition and the Role of Fate**

After three nights of troubled sleep, Okonkwo finally enjoys a good night's rest. However, he is abruptly awakened by his wife Ekwefi, who informs him that their daughter Ezinma is dying. Ezinma is Ekwefi's only surviving child, the light of her life, as all her previous nine children died in infancy. Okonkwo also has a special fondness for Ezinma and often wishes she were a boy due to her spirit and cleverness.

Immediately, Okonkwo gathers leaves, grasses, and barks from the forest to prepare medicine for Ezinma. Despite her young age, Ezinma has survived numerous illnesses, which people attribute to her being an ogbanje—a child believed to be possessed by an evil spirit that causes them to die young and return to their mother's womb to be reborn. Though Ezinma has lived longer than Ekwefi's other children, Ekwefi has faith that her daughter will have a long and happy life.

A year prior, a medicine man had unearthed Ezinma's iyi-uwa, an object linked to the ogbanje world. After Ezinma led the medicine man to the exact spot, he discovered a shiny pebble wrapped in a rag. The discovery was thought to sever Ezinma's connection to the ogbanje spirit, giving hope that she would no longer fall ill.

With the medicine prepared, Okonkwo administers it to Ezinma, who inhales the steam from the pot and soon falls asleep again, providing some relief to her worried parents.

### **Chapter 10: The Clash Between Custom and Change**

Chapter 10 vividly describes a village public trial held in the village commons. As the sun softens the day's heat, a large crowd gathers around the village playground, or ilo, where the trial will take place. The elders, seated on their stools, wait for the proceedings to begin, while the other men crowd behind them. Women stand on the edges, observing the event from a respectful distance. Nine stools are set aside for the egwugwu, who are masked representatives of the ancestors. Two groups, one led by Uzowulu and the other by Odukwe, stand ready for the hearing.

The egwugwu, adorned in elaborate costumes, make a grand entrance from their house, creating a sense of solemnity and ritual. Okonkwo's wives notice that one of the egwugwu has a springy gait reminiscent of Okonkwo's own, and they also observe that Okonkwo is not among the elders. Despite these observations, they remain silent about the coincidence.

The trial begins with Uzowulu accusing his in-laws of taking his wife, Mgbafo, from his home and demanding the return of her bride-price. Odukwe, Mgbafo's brother, does not dispute the fact that Mgbafo was taken, but he argues that it was to protect her from Uzowulu's daily beatings. Odukwe insists that Mgbafo will only return if Uzowulu swears never to beat her again.

The egwugwu retire to deliberate the case. Upon their return, their leader, Evil Forest, announces the verdict. Uzowulu is ordered to bring palm-wine to his in-laws and plead for his wife's return. Evil Forest also admonishes Uzowulu, stating that fighting with a woman is not a mark of bravery. Odukwe is instructed to accept the wine and allow Mgbafo to return to her husband.

After the resolution of this case, one elder expresses surprise at the importance of such a minor dispute reaching the egwugwu. Another elder explains that Uzowulu would not accept any decision unless it was made by the egwugwu.

The chapter closes as the scene shifts to another case involving a property dispute, signaling the continuation of the village's legal proceedings.

## **Chapter 11: The Story of the Turtle and the Hare**

As Okonkwo relaxes in his hut after dinner, he listens to the comforting sounds of his family recounting folk tales. Ekwefi is narrating a story about the Tortoise to their daughter, Ezinma, which explains why the Tortoise's shell is not smooth. When it's Ezinma's turn to share a story, the peaceful moment is interrupted by the eerie wail of Chielo, the priestess of Agbala. Chielo enters Okonkwo's hut and informs him that Agbala demands to see Ezinma. Despite Okonkwo's pleas for Chielo to return in the morning, she insists on taking Ezinma immediately.

Ezinma, terrified of the priestess, clings to Chielo's back as they make their way to Agbala's sacred cave. Seeing her only child in distress, Ekwefi decides to follow them. She chases after Chielo through the dark forest, guided only by the priestess's chanting. Ekwefi manages to keep them in sight but remains hidden. Chielo, sensing she is being followed, curses her pursuer.

Ekwefi, frightened, falls back and realizes they are heading past Agbala's cave towards Umuachi, the farthest village. However, Chielo soon turns back and returns to Agbala's cave.

Ekwefi waits anxiously outside the cave, feeling helpless in her inability to protect her daughter. Her anxiety is compounded when she hears a noise behind her and turns to find Okonkwo standing with a machete. Okonkwo has come to stand guard outside the cave, taking Ekwefi's place. Despite her fear, Ekwefi feels a sense of relief and gratitude for Okonkwo's presence. His silent support brings back memories of how she had left her first husband to be with him, recalling how she had knocked on his door to seek his company and later became his wife.

Another version of the scene describes a similar series of events. On a moonless night, Ekwefi and Ezinma are in their hut, sharing stories. Ekwefi recounts a tale about a cunning Tortoise who deceives birds to enjoy a feast, leading to his shell being cracked. As Ezinma prepares to tell her own story, Chielo arrives with her high-pitched voice, announcing that Agbala requires Ezinma's presence. Despite Chielo's command for Ekwefi to stay behind, she decides to follow her daughter.

Ekwefi struggles to keep up with Chielo through the dark forest and becomes increasingly anxious about what she will do if anything happens to Ezinma. When Chielo and Ezinma finally reach Agbala's cave, Ekwefi vows to rush in if she hears her daughter cry. As she waits, she hears a noise and turns to find Okonkwo, who has come to keep her company. The presence of her husband comforts Ekwefi, and she reflects on their past, remembering how she had chosen him over her previous husband and their early days together.

## **Chapter 12: The Arrival of the Missionaries and Initial Reactions**

After Chielo took Ezinma away, Okonkwo was unable to rest. He made several attempts to locate the cave where his daughter was being taken before finally finding Ekwefi waiting outside. Together, they waited anxiously through the night. When Chielo emerged from Agbala's cave early in the morning, she ignored Okonkwo and Ekwefi. Instead, she carried the sleeping Ezinma back to her home, with Okonkwo and Ekwefi trailing behind.

The next day, the village is abuzz with preparations for the uri, a significant ritual in Obierika's daughter's marriage. During this ceremony, the bride's suitor presents palm-oil to all members of the bride's immediate family, her relatives, and her extended kin. The bride's mother, with the help of other women, is expected to prepare food for the entire village.

Ekwefi, still weary from the previous night's ordeal, delays her departure to the celebration until Ezinma has eaten breakfast. Meanwhile, Okonkwo's other wives and children head to Obierika's compound, with the youngest wife promising to return later to prepare Okonkwo's afternoon meal.



At Obierika's compound, preparations for the uri are underway. Obierika is busy slaughtering two goats for the soup and admiring a third goat purchased from a neighboring village as a gift for the in-laws. The men discuss magical medicine from another village that attracts people to the market, helping to rob some of them. As the women cook, they hear a cry announcing that a cow has escaped. Several women leave to round up the cow and return it to its owner, who faces a hefty fine. The women ensure that every available woman participates in this task.

The palm-wine ceremony begins in the afternoon as guests gather to enjoy the first-delivered wine. The new in-laws present Obierika's family with fifty pots of wine, surpassing Okonkwo's estimate of thirty pots. The uri festivities continue into the night with much singing and dancing. The bride, holding a rooster, dances with the musicians before joining the celebration. As the event concludes, the bride is taken to her suitor's family for seven market weeks. Okonkwo makes a generous gift of two roosters to the occasion.

### **Chapter 13: The Destruction of the Igbo Religious Symbols**

In the dead of night, the sounds of a drum and a cannon announce the death of Ezeudu, a highly respected elder and warrior in the village. Okonkwo is troubled as he remembers Ezeudu's recent warning against participating in the killing of Ikemefuna.

The entire village gathers for the grand funeral ceremony, honoring Ezeudu's rare achievement of having earned three titles. The ceremony is marked by intense activities: men dance, guns are fired, and there is a frenzy of wailing. The egwugwu spirits, including a one-handed spirit, appear to honor Ezeudu. The noise and excitement reach a peak with the increasing intensity of the festivities.

Suddenly, amidst the chaos, an agonized cry pierces through the noise. The crowd falls silent as Ezeudu's sixteen-year-old son is discovered dead, a piece of iron from Okonkwo's gun having pierced his heart. This tragic accident is unprecedented in the history of Umuofia.

Okonkwo's accidental killing of a clansman is considered a serious crime against the earth goddess. Consequently, he and his family are condemned to exile from Umuofia for seven years. His wives and children, in tears, hurriedly pack their belongings into head loads. Friends assist by moving Okonkwo's yams to Obierika's compound for safekeeping.

The following morning, after Okonkwo's family has left for Mbanta, the village of his mother, a group of men from Ezeudu's quarter carry out traditional justice. They destroy Okonkwo's compound, burning his houses, killing his animals, and demolishing his barn. Obierika, while participating in this act of justice, reflects on the harshness of the punishment for an accident. He recalls his own past, particularly the painful memory of abandoning his twin children in the forest due to tribal customs.

### **Part 2:**

## **Chapter 14: The Role of Obierika and the Effects of Change**

Okonkwo arrives in Mbanta to begin his seven-year exile, and his maternal uncle, Uchendu, a respected village elder, warmly welcomes him. Uchendu quickly guesses the reason for Okonkwo's visit, listens to his story, and takes care of the necessary rituals and offerings. He provides Okonkwo with a plot of land to build a compound and additional land for farming. Uchendu's five sons each contribute three hundred seed-yams to help Okonkwo start his new farm.

Despite the generous help, Okonkwo finds little joy in his new circumstances. He feels that he is merely "marking time" in Mbanta, unable to find pleasure in the hard work needed to establish a new farm. He laments his interrupted ambitions and blames his chi, or personal god, for his failure to achieve lasting greatness. Uchendu notices Okonkwo's despair and decides to address it later.

Uchendu's twenty-seven children gather for an isa-ifi ceremony, a final marriage ritual to determine if the bride of Uchendu's youngest son has been faithful during their courtship. The ceremony is detailed, showing the importance of this ritual in confirming the bride's fidelity.

The following day, Uchendu gathers his family, including Okonkwo, and discusses Okonkwo's feelings of discouragement. Uchendu uses a series of questions to help Okonkwo and others understand why returning to one's motherland can be a time of solace and support during difficult times. He advises Okonkwo to comfort his family, accept the support of his kinsmen, and prepare for his eventual return to Umuofia. Uchendu emphasizes that even in hardship, like a seven-year exile, there are more severe misfortunes, and it's crucial to find comfort and support from one's maternal family.

## **Chapter 15: The Christians' Influence and the Split in the Community**

During Okonkwo's second year of exile, his friend Obierika, accompanied by two young men, visits him in Mbanta. After Obierika is introduced to Uchendu, he shares some disturbing news about the village of Abame.

Obierika recounts how a white man arrived in Abame on a bicycle, which the villagers called an "iron horse." Initially, the villagers were terrified, but some approached and touched his white skin out of curiosity. The village elders consulted their Oracle, who foretold that the white man would bring destruction to their clan and that more white men would come in great numbers, like locusts. The white man, who seemed to utter a word like "Mbaino," perhaps the name of another village, was killed by the villagers, and his bicycle was tied to a sacred tree.

A few weeks later, three more white men and a group of native followers came to Abame while most of the villagers were working in the fields. After seeing the bicycle on the tree, the group

left. However, weeks later, on a market day, a large group of white men returned, surrounded the market, and began shooting. Almost all of the villagers were killed, leaving the village deserted.

Okonkwo and Uchendu agree that the Abame villagers made a grave mistake by killing the white man without understanding who he was. They had heard stories about white men coming with guns and strong drink, taking slaves, but they had never taken these stories seriously.

After their meal, Obierika gives Okonkwo the money he earned from selling some of Okonkwo's yams and seed-yams. He promises to continue sending the profits until Okonkwo returns to Umuofia or until, as he puts it, "green men [come] to our clan and shoot us."

### **Chapter 16: The Death of Ikemefuna and Okonkwo's Distress**

Two years later, Obierika visits Mbanta again, bringing more troubling news. White Christian missionaries have arrived in Umuofia, established a church, and started converting some of the villagers. The clan leaders are displeased but dismiss the converts as *efulefu*, meaning worthless or weak men who hold no titles and thus lack influence.

Obierika's main purpose for this visit is to inform Okonkwo that he has seen Nwoye among the missionaries in Umuofia. When Obierika asked Nwoye about his presence there, Nwoye declared that he was "one of them" and even denied Okonkwo as his father, saying, "he is not my father."

Okonkwo refuses to discuss Nwoye with Obierika. Instead, Obierika learns about the missionaries' arrival from Nwoye's mother. Six men, including a white missionary, came to Mbanta, arousing curiosity among the villagers after hearing about the destruction of Abame. The white man had an Igbo interpreter with a peculiar dialect. He preached about Christianity, introducing a new god who created the world and promised eternal life in his kingdom, replacing the old gods of wood and stone. The white man also mentioned that he and his people would be settling among them and bringing many iron horses, or bicycles.

Despite many questions from the villagers, who were skeptical of the missionary's claims about their traditional gods, the missionaries began singing a joyful hymn. This music caught the villagers' attention and made a significant impact.

Okonkwo, dismissing the missionary's message as nonsense, walked away. However, Nwoye was moved by the new religion, finding its compassion appealing. It offered answers to his doubts about the customs of killing twins and Ikemefuna.

### **Chapter 17: The Conversion of Nwoye and the Impact on Family**

In Chapter 17, the story continues with Nwoye's conversion to Christianity. The missionaries, who have been staying in the Mbanta marketplace, request land to build a church. The elders agree to give them a plot in the Evil Forest, a place considered cursed because it is where people

who died of evil diseases are buried and where the magical objects of medicine men are kept. The elders believe the missionaries will not survive long on this cursed land, thinking their presence will be short-lived.

To everyone's surprise, the missionaries build their church without any trouble. They endure for twenty-eight days—the maximum time allowed by tradition before the gods should intervene. This defies local beliefs and impresses the villagers, who start to see the missionaries' magic and power as real. The church quickly gains more followers, including its first female convert, a pregnant woman who had previously abandoned her twins in the forest.

The white missionary eventually leaves for Umuofia, but his interpreter, Mr. Kiaga, stays in Mbanta to manage the new congregation. As the number of converts grows, Nwoye secretly becomes more interested in the new religion and wishes to attend church services, though he fears his father's reaction if he is discovered.

One day, Okonkwo's cousin, Amikwu, spots Nwoye at the church and immediately informs Okonkwo. When Nwoye returns home, Okonkwo, furious, confronts him and demands to know where he has been. He starts to beat Nwoye with a heavy stick, but Uchendu intervenes, ordering Okonkwo to stop. Nwoye then leaves and does not come back, moving to Umuofia where he joins the school started by the missionary. He plans to return one day to convert his mother and siblings.

Initially, Okonkwo is enraged by his son's actions, but he soon decides that Nwoye is not worth his anger. He worries that his other children might also abandon their ancestral customs in favor of the new religion. Reflecting on his situation, Okonkwo feels that he has failed as a father, lamenting that his son, unlike himself, is weak and unmanly. He thinks about his own reputation as a fierce warrior and realizes with bitterness that his once fiery spirit has produced nothing but “cold, impotent ash” in Nwoye.

## **Chapter 18: The Rebellion Against the Missionaries and the Church**

Initially, the Christian church and the clan in Mbanta are largely separated. The villagers believe that the Christians, who live in the feared Evil Forest, will eventually fail. The missionaries even rescue abandoned twins, which further alienates them from the clan.

At one point, three converts declare that the traditional gods are dead and that they are ready to burn the village's sacred shrines. This declaration infuriates the villagers, who respond by beating the converts severely. After this incident, interactions between the Christians and the clan remain minimal for a while.

Rumors soon spread that the church is establishing its own government, but the villagers largely ignore these stories. However, a new issue arises when the *osu*, the outcasts of Mbanta, begin to show interest in Christianity. The *osu* are marginalized in society, forbidden to marry free people

and buried in the Evil Forest when they die. They see that the church welcomes twins and hope that they, too, might be accepted.

Two osu attend church services, which sparks protests among other converts. They argue that Mr. Kiaga, the interpreter, does not understand the shame of associating with osu. Despite this, Mr. Kiaga insists that the osu need the church the most and welcomes them. He advises them to shave their traditional hair, which is a mark of their outcast status. Some converts leave the church, but many osu embrace Christianity, becoming some of the most devoted members.

A year later, one of the osu converts, Okoli, is rumored to have killed the sacred python, an animal highly revered by the clan. The clan leaders and elders gather to decide on a response. Okonkwo, now a prominent leader in his motherland, suggests a violent reaction, but the elders prefer a more peaceful approach, which is to exclude Christians from all aspects of clan life.

This exclusion means that Christians are barred from using the market, the stream, the chalk quarry, and the red earth pit. Okoli, who denies killing the python, falls ill and dies by the end of the day. The villagers interpret his death as divine retribution for the sacrilege, leading them to decide not to pursue further action against the Christians.

### **Chapter 19: The Decision to Take Action Against the Colonizers**

As Okonkwo nears the end of his seven-year exile in Mbanta, he feels that this period has been a waste of time. He believes that, had he not been forced into exile, he could have achieved the highest status in Umuofia. To prepare for his return, Okonkwo sends money to his friend Obierika in Umuofia to rebuild two of the huts in his compound that were destroyed. He plans to complete the construction of the remaining huts upon his return.

As the time for his family to return to Umuofia approaches, Okonkwo decides to host a grand feast for his mother's kinsmen in Mbanta to express his gratitude for their hospitality during his exile. Preparations for the feast involve picking and preparing vegetables, slaughtering goats and fowl, and cooking traditional dishes.

During the feast, Uchendu, Okonkwo's mother's brother, is honored as the eldest man present. He performs the traditional ceremony of breaking the kola nut and prays for the health and prosperity of the family. As the celebration continues, one of the oldest clan members rises to thank Okonkwo for the splendid feast. He also addresses the younger generation with concern, lamenting the erosion of traditional values as many people, including family members, are drawn to Christianity. He expresses worry about the future of the clan and its ability to survive amidst these changes, before once again thanking Okonkwo for his generosity.

### **Part 3**

### **Chapter 20: The Arrest of the Leaders and the Response of the Clan**

Upon returning to Umuofia after his seven-year exile, Okonkwo is determined to make a grand comeback and compensate for what he sees as lost time. He plans to rebuild his compound even larger than before and to construct huts for two new wives. Despite the setback of his son Nwoye converting to Christianity, Okonkwo is hopeful that his other five sons will meet his expectations. He takes pride in his daughter Ezinma, who has grown into a beautiful young woman. Ezinma's health has improved significantly, and despite numerous marriage proposals from suitors in Mbanta, she has refused them, aligning with her father's wish for her to marry in Umuofia. Ezinma has also encouraged her half-sister Obiageli to wait for a marriage arrangement in Umuofia.

Upon his return to Umuofia, Okonkwo is dismayed to find significant changes. The Christian church has made substantial inroads, converting many respected individuals who have abandoned their traditional titles. The white men have established a court system and a prison, with native court messengers enforcing their laws. Okonkwo is baffled by why the people of Umuofia have not used violence to drive out the white men. His friend Obierika explains that they fear the fate of Abame, a village that was destroyed by the white intruders. He recounts a recent incident where a villager was hanged for a land dispute, a punishment that would have been exile under traditional laws. Obierika reflects on how the white men have quietly imposed their rule, remaining ignorant of local customs and languages, and have enforced their harsh governance without regard for traditional ways.

## **Chapter 21: The Return of Okonkwo and the Disintegration of the Tribe**

In Umuofia, not all members of the Igbo clan are opposed to the changes brought by the Europeans. The arrival of the white men has introduced new wealth into the village through the export of palm oil and palm nut kernels. This economic boost is welcomed by many.

The white missionary, Mr. Brown, is notable for his respectful approach to converting the Igbo people. He makes an effort to understand their traditional beliefs, engaging in thoughtful discussions with clan elders about their gods and religious practices. Mr. Brown also works to prevent overly zealous church members from antagonizing those who adhere to traditional ways. His patience and respectful manner earn him the friendship of several clan leaders, who start to appreciate his perspective.

Mr. Brown encourages the Igbo to send their children to his school, arguing that education is crucial for maintaining control over their land. His efforts are successful, and people of all ages begin to attend the school. Although his work strengthens the position of the church and the white men, it takes a toll on Mr. Brown's health, forcing him to return to his home.

Before leaving, Mr. Brown informs Okonkwo that his son Nwoye, now called Isaac, has been sent to a teaching college in another town. Okonkwo reacts with anger and drives Mr. Brown away, forbidding him from returning.

Okonkwo's return to Umuofia is less triumphant than he had hoped. The community's focus on new changes means his arrival goes largely unnoticed. He is unable to perform the ceremonies for his sons, as these rites only occur every three years, and this year is not one of them. Okonkwo is disheartened by the transformation he sees in Umuofia. The once fierce and proud clan now appears weakened, and Okonkwo laments the loss of their traditional strength and unity, reflecting on how the clan seems to be "breaking up and falling apart," echoing the novel's title.

## **Chapter 22: The Imprisonment of the Clan Leaders and the Consequences**

The new head of the Christian church in Umuofia, Reverend James Smith, is very different from his predecessor, Mr. Brown. Unlike Mr. Brown, who was known for his compassion and willingness to understand Igbo customs, Reverend Smith is harsh and intolerant. He criticizes Mr. Brown for his lenient approach and is determined to correct what he sees as Mr. Brown's mistakes. Reverend Smith believes that Mr. Brown was more interested in increasing the number of converts rather than truly converting them to Christianity.

Reverend Smith's lack of tolerance for traditional Igbo practices becomes evident when he suspends a young woman whose husband had performed a traditional ritual on their dead ogbanje child. Smith condemns the practice of believing that such children come back to the mother's womb to be reborn, calling it the work of the devil.

During an annual ceremony honoring the earth deity, the egwugwu, who are considered ancestral spirits, perform traditional dances. Enoch, a zealous convert, provokes a confrontation by daring the egwugwu to touch a Christian. One of the egwugwu responds by striking him, but Enoch retaliates by unmasking the egwugwu, a serious offense that, according to tradition, kills the spirit.

The next day, the egwugwu, in anger, gather and attack Enoch's compound, destroying it with fire and machetes. Enoch seeks refuge in the church, but the egwugwu follow him. When Reverend Smith and his interpreter, Okeke, meet them at the church door, the egwugwu leader scolds them for not understanding their customs and announces that while they will not harm Reverend Smith because of Mr. Brown's past friendship, they intend to destroy the church.

Despite Reverend Smith's attempts to calm them and plead for peace, the egwugwu proceed to demolish the church. This act of destruction momentarily pacifies the clan's anger but underscores the deepening conflict between the traditional Igbo beliefs and the new Christian religion.

## **Chapter 23: The Rise of New Leaders and the Decline of Tradition**

Okonkwo feels a sense of satisfaction after the church's destruction, believing that the village is returning to its traditional, warlike ways. He takes pleasure in seeing the clan act like warriors,



though they didn't fully follow his advice to kill the missionary or expel all Christians from Umuofia.

When the District Commissioner returns from his trip, he calls six leaders of the village, including Okonkwo, to his office. The leaders go to the meeting armed with machetes but are forced to put their weapons aside when they arrive.

During the meeting, as one of the leaders begins to explain the events leading to the destruction of the church, the District Commissioner and his men suddenly handcuff the leaders and take them to a guardroom. The Commissioner tells them that their actions were wrong and that they must be judged according to the laws of the Commissioner's "great queen." They are told they will be imprisoned and released only after paying a fine of two hundred bags of cowries.

In prison, the leaders are mistreated by the guards, who shave their heads and deny them food, water, and toilet facilities for two days. On the third day, the leaders discuss paying the fine, but Okonkwo bitterly reflects that they should have killed the white man when they had the chance. A guard overhears him and beats all the men with a stick.

Meanwhile, court messengers go around the village informing everyone that the fine has been increased to two hundred and fifty bags of cowries — fifty of which the messengers will keep for themselves. Rumors spread about possible hangings and shootings that happened in Abame, creating fear among the villagers. At a town meeting, the Umuofians decide to collect the money to pay the fine and secure the release of their leaders.

#### **Chapter 24: The Destruction of Okonkwo's Compound and the Loss of Identity**

After the village pays the fine, the District Commissioner releases the six leaders, including Okonkwo. They return to their homes in silence, deeply dejected, and avoid speaking to anyone. Okonkwo's relatives and friends, waiting in his hut, see the marks of the prison guards' beatings on his back but remain silent. Obierika urges Okonkwo to eat the meal prepared by his daughter, Ezinma, but Okonkwo eats only out of courtesy.

That night, the village crier announces a meeting for the following morning. Okonkwo, lying awake, seethes with thoughts of revenge. He hopes that Umuofia will rise up against the intruders. If the village does not take action, he plans to do so himself. His anger also targets villagers who prefer peace over the idea of war, even a symbolic "war of blame."

The next morning, the marketplace fills with people from all parts of the village, except those allied with the white foreigners. At the meeting, one of the leaders who had been imprisoned urges the clan to fight against the white invaders, even if it means battling fellow clansmen.

As the meeting progresses, five court messengers arrive and order the gathering to disperse on the white man's orders. Okonkwo, filled with rage, steps forward and beheads the lead messenger with his machete. The remaining messengers escape unharmed, and the onlookers are

paralyzed with fear and confusion. A voice among the crowd asks, “Why did he do it?” Seeing this inaction and lack of resolve, Okonkwo cleans his machete, realizes that his people are not willing to go to war, and walks away in despair.

### **Chapter 25: The Final Confrontation and the Reflection on the Past**

Following the killing of the messenger, the District Commissioner arrives at Okonkwo's compound with his armed entourage and demands to see Okonkwo. Obierika, who is present, insists that Okonkwo is not at home. The Commissioner, growing frustrated and threatening to arrest everyone, insists on finding Okonkwo. Obierika, though reluctant, eventually agrees to lead the Commissioner to Okonkwo's location, hoping that the soldiers might assist them in some way.

Obierika guides the Commissioner and his men to a spot behind the compound, where they discover Okonkwo's lifeless body hanging from a tree. This act of suicide, viewed as a grave sin against the earth according to clan traditions, cannot be handled by the people of Umuofia. Obierika asks the Commissioner if his men can remove the body and arrange for its burial, as the clansmen cannot touch it themselves.

The District Commissioner, intrigued and somewhat detached, orders his men to take down Okonkwo's body and bring both the corpse and the gathered crowd to the court. As he departs, he reflects on his experiences in Africa, considering how he will incorporate the events into his book. He envisions writing a chapter or perhaps a compelling paragraph about Okonkwo's actions and his final act of suicide, and he decides to title his book *The Pacification of the Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger*.

## **Critical Analysis of the novel “Things Fall Apart”**

Things Fall Apart by Nigerian author Chinua Achebe, first published in 1958, is a very important book in African literature. It tells the story of a strong Igbo man named Okonkwo who lives in pre-colonial Nigeria. Okonkwo is a proud warrior in his community, and the novel shows how he tries to deal with the changes happening around him. Achebe does a great job of showing the rich culture of the Igbo people, including their traditions, beliefs, and way of life.

However, when European colonizers arrive, everything begins to change. Okonkwo’s world starts to fall apart as the colonizers bring new customs and beliefs that clash with the Igbo way of life. This change represents the bigger impact of colonialism on African societies. The novel explores the struggle between holding onto traditions and facing new changes, giving readers a deep understanding of what happens when one culture is forced upon another.

Historically, Things Fall Apart takes place during the time when European colonization was spreading across Africa. It reflects the tensions and challenges African communities faced when dealing with European powers. Achebe's novel criticizes the colonial stories written by Europeans and Americans, which often ignored or misrepresented the true African experience. Even today, this novel is still relevant because it talks about themes like identity, power, and the lasting effects of colonization. Things Fall Apart is considered a classic not just in African literature, but in world literature, helping people better understand history from different perspectives.

### **Chinua Achebe:**

Chinua Achebe (November 16, 1930 – March 21, 2013) was a Nigerian writer known for his powerful stories about how African societies were affected by Western customs and values. His work often focuses on the struggles faced by traditional African communities when they encounter new influences from Europe.

Achebe's first novel, Things Fall Apart (1958), tells the story of a traditional Igbo man facing changes brought by European missionaries and colonial rule. His next book, No Longer at Ease (1960), follows a young man who has trouble balancing his modern job with his traditional values.

In Arrow of God (1964), Achebe explores the life of a village chief priest who struggles with the effects of British rule. Other novels, like A Man of the People (1966) and Anthills of the Savannah (1987), discuss issues of corruption and other problems in postcolonial Africa.

Achebe also wrote short stories and children's books, such as How the Leopard Got His Claws (1973) and poetry collections like Beware, Soul-Brother (1971). He published essays and autobiographical works, including Morning Yet on Creation Day (1975) and There Was a

Country: A Personal History of Biafra (2012). In 2007, Achebe received the Man Booker International Prize for his contributions to literature.

Achebe's writings remain influential, offering deep insights into African culture and the effects of colonialism.

### **Key Facts about Things Fall Apart:**

- Full Title: Things Fall Apart
- Author: Chinua Achebe
- Type of Work: Novel
- Genre: Postcolonial critique; tragedy
- Language: English
- Time and Place Written: 1959, Nigeria
- Date of First Publication: 1959
- Publisher: Heinemann Educational Books
- In-Depth Facts: Narrator The story is told by a narrator who isn't named. This narrator understands and shows compassion for the people living in the village of Umuofia.
- Point of View: The story is told from a third-person perspective, which means the narrator is outside the story and knows everything about the characters. The narrator follows Okonkwo but also shares the thoughts and feelings of other characters.
- Tone: The tone of the novel is a mix of irony, tragedy, satire, and fable-like storytelling. It often presents events in a way that makes us think deeply about their meanings.
- Tense: The story is told in the past tense.
- Setting (Time): The events take place in the 1890s.
- Setting (Place): The story is set in Lower Nigerian villages, mainly in Iguedo and Mbanta.
- Protagonist: Okonkwo is the main character. He is a strong and respected leader in his village.
- Major Conflict: The main conflict is between the traditional customs of the Igbo people and the new ways brought by British colonizers. Okonkwo also struggles with his own personal issues, trying to be the opposite of his father, whom he saw as weak and unsuccessful.
- Rising Action: Tension builds when Enoch reveals a secret, causing the egwugwu (spiritual elders) to burn down the church. The District Commissioner arrests leaders of Umuofia, adding to the conflict.
- Climax: The most intense part of the story happens when Okonkwo kills a court messenger who represents the new colonial authority.
- Falling Action: After this event, the villagers let the remaining white government messengers go, and Okonkwo, feeling that his clan is weak, takes his own life.

- Themes:
  - The struggle between old traditions and new changes
  - Different ideas about what it means to be masculine
  - Language as a sign of cultural differences
- Motifs:
  - Chi: This represents a person's fate or personal god.
  - Animal Imagery: Animals are often used to symbolize traits and qualities.
- Symbols:
  - Locusts: Symbolize the arrival of the white colonizers who bring change and trouble.
  - Fire: Represents Okonkwo's fierce and destructive nature.
  - Drums: Symbolize the unity and connection of the village community, like the heartbeat of the clan.
- Foreshadowing:
  - Ikemefuna's Fate: Ikemefuna is described as "ill-fated," hinting that something bad will happen to him later in the story.
  - Arrival of Locusts: The locusts' arrival suggests that the colonizers are coming and will cause problems.
  - Obierika's Joke: When Obierika jokingly suggests Okonkwo should kill himself, it hints at Okonkwo's eventual suicide.

### **Historical Context:**

Things Fall Apart takes place in Nigeria during the 1890s, a time when British colonial rule was just starting. The story shows how Igbo society is changing as it encounters the British for the first time. During this period, many books written by Europeans often showed African people in a negative light, portraying them as primitive or savage. For example, Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* depicted Africans as wild and inferior.

Chinua Achebe wrote *Things Fall Apart* to challenge these unfair stereotypes. His novel offers a balanced view, showing the richness and complexity of Igbo culture and traditions. Instead of portraying Africans as savages, Achebe shows them as a people with their own deep and meaningful ways of life, making his book an important work in postcolonial literature.

### **Literary Context:**

When Chinua Achebe published *Things Fall Apart*, one of his main goals was to show the world that African societies were complex, lively, and full of culture. He wanted to correct the way many Westerners saw African life as primitive, simple, and backward. Achebe believed that if Africans didn't tell their own stories, people would keep misunderstanding their history and culture. Even though some Western writers like Joyce Cary (who wrote *Mister Johnson*) had good intentions, they still made mistakes in how they described Africa. Cary worked as a

colonial officer in Nigeria and had sympathy for the people, but Achebe felt he, like other Western writers such as Joseph Conrad, didn't truly understand Africa. These authors made the continent seem like a dark, mysterious place full of people who were hard to understand, which Achebe considered a racist view.

For example, Conrad's famous novel *Heart of Darkness* spoke out against European imperialism, but it still portrayed Africans as less human, mysterious, and exotic. In a 1994 interview, Achebe expressed his frustration with this inaccurate portrayal of African culture by white colonial writers. However, he didn't say students should avoid reading writers like Conrad or Cary. Instead, Achebe encouraged students to read these works to understand the deep racism that existed during the colonial era.

Achebe also wrote *Things Fall Apart* for his Nigerian audience. In 1964, he explained that he wanted to help his people regain confidence in their identity and history. He didn't want them to believe the lie that their past was all about savagery and darkness, which only Europeans could "save" them from. Achebe wanted his African readers to realize that their culture, while not perfect, had a rich history and was worth celebrating.

In the novel, the Europeans' misunderstanding of Africa is shown through two characters: Reverend James Smith and the unnamed District Commissioner. Reverend Smith is a strict missionary who refuses to respect or make room for Nigerian traditions. He believes that only his religion matters, and the local customs hold no value. The District Commissioner, on the other hand, thinks of himself as a kind leader who studies African customs but still sees the people as "primitive" and needing his guidance to become modern. Both men believe their European values are superior and fail to see any worth in African traditions. The Commissioner even plans to write a book titled *The Pacification of the Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger*, which shows how little he values African culture.

To challenge this one-sided view, Achebe brings to life a vibrant African society in his novel, complete with its own religion, government, economy, arts, and justice system. Even though the Igbo people were not as technologically advanced as the Europeans, their culture was very complex. Achebe reverses the typical portrayals seen in works by writers like Conrad and Cary, who often created simple, flat African characters. In *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe turns the tables by making the European characters more stereotypical—most of them are rigid, inflexible, and driven by imperialism. In contrast, the Igbo characters are full of personality and many are open to new ideas.

However, Achebe doesn't show the Igbo culture as perfect. He doesn't create an overly romantic or idealized version of his people. Some Western writers who opposed colonialism, such as Joseph Conrad and George Orwell, often described non-Western cultures as "noble savages"—people who were pure and uncorrupted but still seen as primitive. These writers argued that advanced Western societies destroyed the innocence of non-Western people. Achebe didn't agree

with this view either. He believed it was a myth to think African cultures were once perfect and then ruined by Europeans. Achebe's novel portrays both the positive and negative sides of Igbo society, showing that it had flaws even before the Europeans arrived. He is critical of his own culture while also criticizing the colonizers.

Achebe became a key figure in a global literary movement that sought to define and tell the African experience from an African perspective. Other important writers in this movement include Wole Soyinka, Aime Cesaire, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Derek Walcott, Leopold Senghor, and Birago Diop. These authors not only told stories of their own cultures but also encouraged readers around the world to reflect on their own beliefs in this ever-changing world.

When *Things Fall Apart* was published, it stood out from other colonial literature. Written in English by an African author, it helped bring African literature into the global spotlight. Achebe's contribution to modern African literature and its recognition around the world cannot be overstated.

(Note: In the novel, Achebe uses the old spelling "Ibo" for the community, but today, the spelling "Igbo" is more commonly used.)

### **Brief History of Nigeria:**

Nigeria's history is closely tied to its location. The country is bigger than the state of Texas and lies on the west coast of Africa, just north of the equator and below the Sahara Desert. Nigeria is home to over 200 different ethnic groups, each with its own language, beliefs, and customs. The largest of these groups are the Yoruba in the west, who are mostly Protestant, the Catholic Igbo in the east, and the Muslim Hausa-Fulani in the north. Nigeria's diversity is the result of thousands of years of people migrating, trading, and settling in the area.

The events in *Things Fall Apart* take place at the end of the 19th century and the early 20th century. Even though the British didn't take full control of Nigeria until 1904, they had been active in West Africa since the early 1800s. During the 1600s and 1700s, the British were major buyers of African slaves. But in 1807, they banned the slave trade within their empire. Although they didn't yet rule Nigeria, internal wars continued to increase the number of captured slaves. In 1861, frustrated with the ongoing slave trade, the British decided to take control of Lagos, a key center for slave trading. Slowly, they extended their rule across the rest of Nigeria.

The British had more reasons than just stopping the slave trade for occupying Nigeria. They were competing with other European nations for control of the natural resources in West Africa. At the Berlin Conference in 1884-85, European countries met to divide Africa among themselves, and the British claimed Nigeria as their territory. They bought goods like palm oil, peanuts, rubber, and cotton from Nigerians, making some local traders quite rich. By the early 1900s, the British officially united Nigeria's many different ethnic groups into one colony.



The British took control of Nigeria using a mix of government power, religious missions, and economic opportunities. In the north, they worked with local Muslim leaders to collect taxes and govern on their behalf. In the south, however, where people like the Igbo (the group featured in *Things Fall Apart*) didn't have a single central authority, the British had to use force to keep control.

A real-life event inspired a scene in *Things Fall Apart* where the village of Abame is destroyed. In 1905, in the community of Ahiara, a white man rode into the village on a bicycle and was killed by locals. In response, a month later, British soldiers came to the area and killed many people. This incident led to further British military action, such as the Bende-Onitsha Hinterland Expedition, which aimed to destroy any Igbo resistance. The British also passed laws to punish entire villages for crimes committed by a few individuals.

Despite their harsh rule, the British set up an efficient administration and introduced aspects of British culture to Nigeria. They sent many talented young Nigerians to study in England. These educated Nigerians eventually became nationalists, demanding independence for their country. In 1947, the British agreed to Nigeria's demands and began a ten-year plan to hand over power. Nigeria finally gained independence on October 1, 1960, and became a republic in 1963.

However, after the British left, Nigeria faced challenges like corruption and poor leadership. Military coups and dictatorships in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s interrupted Nigeria's early attempts at democracy. In 1993, Nigeria held a democratic election, but it was followed by another bloodless coup. This cycle of political instability has continued in Nigeria, which remains the most populous country in Africa but struggles with violence and corruption.

### **Summary:**

As a young man, Okonkwo becomes one of the strongest wrestlers in his village. He values strength and toughness and fears being seen as weak like his father, Unoka.

Okonkwo becomes wealthy and respected, with three wives and a lot of yams. He is strict with his family and only shows anger, believing that emotions like kindness are signs of weakness. He worries about his son, Nwoye, whom he sees as lazy, just like Unoka.

One day, the village has a dispute with a neighboring group. To settle it, they demand a virgin and a 15-year-old boy named Ikemefuna as sacrifices. Ikemefuna comes to live with Okonkwo's family for three years. During this time, he becomes close to Nwoye, sharing stories and teaching him about manly tasks. Okonkwo likes Ikemefuna and starts to think of him as a son.

When the village elder, Ezeudu, tells Okonkwo that Ikemefuna must be killed, he advises Okonkwo not to participate because Ikemefuna sees him as a father. Okonkwo ignores this advice, afraid of being seen as weak, and kills Ikemefuna himself.

Soon after, Ezeudu dies, and his funeral draws the whole village. During the burial, Okonkwo's gun accidentally goes off and kills Ezeudu's son. Because this is an accidental killing, Okonkwo and his family must leave the village for seven years.

In exile, Okonkwo and his family work hard to build a new farm in his mother's village, Mbanta. They are treated well by his mother's relatives, but Okonkwo is unhappy and dreams of returning to his old village, Umuofia.

While in Mbanta, the white men start arriving in nearby villages, bringing new ideas and religion. When they come to Mbanta, the villagers find their religion strange, but Nwoye is drawn to it and joins the Christians to escape from his father's anger.

When Okonkwo returns to Umuofia, he finds that the white men have changed things. Mr. Brown, a white missionary, has built a school and hospital, and many villagers are sending their children to school. But Mr. Brown soon leaves because of health issues, and Reverend Smith takes over. Reverend Smith is strict and causes tension with the villagers.

One of the Christian converts, Enoch, does something that offends the clan by tearing a mask off a sacred ceremony figure. The villagers respond by burning down the church. The District Commissioner tricks the clan leaders into meeting him, where they are insulted and beaten before being released.

The next morning, the clan leaders discuss going to war. However, they are interrupted by court messengers. Filled with anger, Okonkwo kills one of the messengers with his machete. Seeing that no one supports him, Okonkwo decides to hang himself.

The next day, when the District Commissioner comes to arrest Okonkwo, the villagers show him Okonkwo's body. They explain that it is a terrible thing for a man to commit suicide, so they cannot touch the body. The District Commissioner finds this custom interesting and decides to include it in his book about Nigeria, which he plans to call *The Pacification of the Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger*.

## **Themes:**

### **The Clash of Tradition and Modernity:**

The title of *Things Fall Apart* comes from a poem by Irish poet W.B. Yeats called "The Second Coming." The poem says, "Things fall apart; the center cannot hold; / Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world." This line reflects how the traditional society in the novel is falling apart due to major changes.

The story focuses on the customs and traditions of Umuofia, like marriage, funerals, and harvests. Chinua Achebe uses a third-person narrator, which means the story is told by someone outside the characters. This helps the reader understand the traditions of Umuofia better, as the

narrator can explain things like their love of proverbs and how they make decisions. If the story were told only from Okonkwo's point of view, we might not get as clear a picture of these traditions.

The novel shows how these traditions cannot withstand the impact of the white men who bring new ideas and change. As the white men take over, Umuofia society begins to fall apart.

Okonkwo and his son Nwoye represent tradition and change. Okonkwo is a symbol of tradition because he values old customs, social status, and strength. However, as the story progresses, Okonkwo loses his place in society, which represents the decline of traditional Umuofia. His strict adherence to tradition also leads him to kill his adopted son, Ikemefuna, which causes his own son Nwoye to distance himself from him. Nwoye struggles with some of Umuofia's customs, like abandoning twins and sacrificing innocent people. These conflicts lead him to join the Christian missionaries when he has the chance.

Overall, *Things Fall Apart* illustrates the clash between traditional African society and the changes brought by colonialism, and how these changes affect both individuals and their communities.

## **Glossary:**

### **Part 1**

**Gyre:** This word means a circular or spiral movement, like a spinning motion. It appears in the book's opening lines, taken from a poem called *The Second Coming* by W.B. Yeats.

**Okonkwo:** This is the main character's name, and it suggests a sense of male pride and stubbornness.

**Umuofia:** The name of Okonkwo's village, meaning "children of the forest" and refers to a place that has not yet been influenced by Europeans.

**Harmattan:** A dry, dusty wind that blows from the Sahara Desert toward the Atlantic Ocean. It mostly happens from November to March.

**Unoka:** Okonkwo's father's name, which means "home is supreme." This implies that Unoka preferred staying at home and avoiding hard work or trying to gain fame and honor.

**Cowries:** These are small shells from a sea creature that were once used as money in parts of Africa and Asia.

**Egwugwu:** These are the leaders of the clan who wear masks during certain rituals and speak on behalf of the spirits. The word can refer to one leader or several.

**Markets:** In Igbo culture, weeks have four days, and the first day is the market day. So when they talk about three or four markets, it means twelve to sixteen days have passed.

**Kites:** Birds of prey that hunt small animals, insects, and reptiles. They have long, pointed wings and usually a forked tail.

**Okoye:** A common name, similar to "John Doe" in English. In the story, Okoye represents all the people to whom Unoka owes money.

**Kola Nut:** A seed from an African tree, which contains caffeine. Kola nuts symbolize energy and are often used as a friendly offering to visitors, usually with alligator pepper.

**Alligator Pepper:** A small, brown fruit from an African shrub. Its seeds are hot, like black pepper, and often served with kola nuts as part of a welcoming ritual for visitors.

**Chalk:** Chalk symbolizes peace in Umuofia. The people use it to mark the floor and sometimes their toes or faces to show their level of honor in the community. For example, Okoye marks his toe to indicate he has earned his first title.

**Mbaino:** The name of another community, meaning "four settlements."

**Ekwe:** A type of drum.

**Udu:** A clay pot used in rituals.

**Ogene:** A type of gong used in the community.

**Ibo:** This is the name for the people from southeastern Nigeria, who are skilled traders and known for their art. Today, the word is spelled "Igbo."

**Idemili Title:** This is a third-level title of honor in Umuofia, named after the river god Idemili.

### **Igbo Traditional Life:**

In the beginning of the novel *Things Fall Apart*, Chinua Achebe shows us how the Ibo people live in a traditional way. He describes their daily lives, how they work, and the special ceremonies they have during different seasons. We see how the Ibo people care about their community and share a common culture. They have rules and values that guide their lives, and these are closely connected to nature. Their wisdom is passed down through stories, proverbs, and festivals. Achebe gives us a clear idea of how they manage their social, spiritual, and economic life, as well as farming and laws.

But even though the Ibo society is well-organized and has beautiful traditions, it can also be strict and unfair. Achebe shows us how some traditions hurt people, especially those who are weaker or different. For example, they leave newborn twins in the forest because of a belief, they

kill Ikemefuna, a boy who was living with them, as a sacrifice, and they treat the osu (a lower caste) unfairly by not allowing them to fully join the community.

One of the characters, Obierika, starts to wonder if these traditions are really fair. In Chapter 13, he thinks that many of the laws are followed out of fear or habit, rather than a real belief that they are right. The society's strict rules can be hard for people to follow, and it can put pressure on them to obey, even if the customs seem cruel. This is especially true for Okonkwo, who struggles to follow the harsh rules of his society.

### **The Struggle with Fate:**

From the beginning, Okonkwo's strong will helps him succeed in Umuofia. He rises from being the son of a poor man to becoming a respected leader in the clan. He is known for his wrestling skills, which are not just due to luck but his hard work. There is a saying in Umuofia: "When a man says yes, his chi (personal god) says yes too." Okonkwo's determination makes his chi agree with him.

However, as things start to go wrong for Okonkwo, he begins to blame his fate. This change starts with the death of Ikemefuna. Ikemefuna, like the infant twins in the story, is a victim who has no control over what happens to him. Okonkwo blames the Oracle for his role in Ikemefuna's death, even though some people in the clan believe he had a choice. Later, when Okonkwo accidentally kills Ezeudu's son with his gun, he is forced into exile. Even though he eventually returns, he feels defeated. He begins to think that his fate, or chi, is against him. He realizes that the old saying—that a man's chi will agree with him if he is determined—might not be true for him.

### **Okonkwo's Pride: How It Helps and Hurts Him**

Okonkwo's biggest problem is his pride. Pride is when you feel very good about yourself and your achievements. Okonkwo is proud because he has done many great things. He is one of the best warriors in his village and has become very successful.

However, Okonkwo's pride can be a problem. He has very high standards and gets upset when others don't meet them. For example, he is disappointed in his son, Nwoye, because Nwoye doesn't act like a strong warrior. Okonkwo's pride makes him harsh and tough on Nwoye.

When Okonkwo is sent away from his village, it really hurts his pride. He feels like he has lost his place and wants to make things right. When he returns, he wants to fight against the European invaders to show that he is still strong and proud. He uses a strong example to explain his feelings: if someone comes into his house and makes a mess, he would not ignore it; he would take action.

In the end, Okonkwo's pride leads him to make violent choices. This violence causes him to face big problems and, ultimately, leads to his tragic end.

## **Colonial Domination:**

In *Things Fall Apart*, Chinua Achebe shows how the British took control of the Ibo people's land and changed their way of life. The British thought their culture was better and wanted to replace the Ibo religion and customs with their own. They came to Umuofia saying they wanted to "bring civilization" to Africa (p.151).

At first, the British arrived quietly with their new religion. The Ibo people allowed them to stay because they thought the British were peaceful. But there is an Ibo saying that warns people that silence can be dangerous, and it's better to know someone's intentions (Chapter 15). Obierika, one of the characters, realized that the British were slowly building their power. He saw that the new religion was dividing the Ibo people, making it hard for the community to stay united. Without unity, the Ibo became weaker and more vulnerable to the British taking over more parts of their lives (Chapter 20).

Only a small number of Ibo people first joined the Christian church, but the British were able to stay because the Ibo were tolerant of other religions (Chapters 2, 22). Mr. Brown, one of the British leaders, learned about the Ibo religion but refused to see its value. He and other colonizers called the Ibo people "primitive" to justify taking control. Mr. Brown knew that Christianity wouldn't appeal to people who were happy in Ibo society, so instead of attacking the Ibo directly, he introduced schools to teach the British way of life and to slowly replace Ibo culture. Trade with the British also made the Ibo more dependent on the new economy (Chapter 21).

From the start, the British used violence and fear to force the Ibo people to follow their rules (Chapters 15, 20, 23). The British didn't understand or respect Ibo customs, and they judged the Ibo by their own standards. The District Commissioner, one of the British leaders, imprisoned the Ibo elders unfairly and told them they couldn't do things that were wrong "in the dominion of our queen" (p.141), mixing personal corruption with the power of British rule (Chapters 20, 23).

Reverend Smith, another British leader, was very strict and encouraged the Christians to disrespect the Ibo. His leadership made the British control even harsher (Chapter 22). In the final part of the story, Achebe shows how painful and sad this time was for the Ibo people as they faced this crisis.

## **The Power of Language:**

In Umuofia, language is very important. Great speakers like Ogbuefi Ezeugo are honored and given special burials because they play a key role in clan meetings and decisions. Storytelling is also crucial in the clan. Through stories, whether about warriors or moral lessons, clan members learn about their roles and get motivated to act. Even when Western religion arrives, it spreads through stories and songs. Nwoye's first encounter with a hymn marks his shift from being part of the clan to joining Christianity.

The white District Commissioner notices how important language is to the Umuofia, but he views it negatively. He thinks that their love for words is excessive and annoying. This reflects his condescending attitude and hints at how Western culture will eventually overshadow Umuofia's. At the end of the novel, he plans to write a book with the title *The Pacification of the Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger*. The title is long and pompous, but it shows how the white men view their language and culture as superior. Reading and writing in English become symbols of power, and more clan members start to attend the white schools.

Achebe's use of Igbo words in the novel fights back against this domination. He shows that some African ideas can't be fully captured in English. By using Igbo words, idioms, and repetition, Achebe keeps an African touch in his writing. English, though imposed by colonizers, becomes a shared language across Nigeria. Achebe uses it to tell a story that connects with many people in Nigeria, taking something imposed and making it his own.

### **Family Gaps: How Okonkwo's Generation Clash Shapes Their Lives**

In *Things Fall Apart*, there are two big gaps between generations that show how different family members think and act.

The first gap is between Okonkwo and his father, Unoka. Unoka was not a warrior and did not achieve great things. Instead, he liked to relax, drink, and play music with his friends. He did not work hard or try to become famous. Okonkwo, however, is very different. He is very strong and wants to be a great warrior. He is embarrassed by his father's easy-going nature and thinks Unoka is weak and cowardly.

The second gap is between Okonkwo and his oldest son, Nwoye. Nwoye is more like his grandfather Unoka than his father Okonkwo. Nwoye does not like fighting and war, and he enjoys listening to his mother's stories, which Okonkwo thinks are useless and feminine. Nwoye does not want to be a warrior like his father wants him to be. He feels unhappy with his father's expectations and eventually leaves home to join the Christian church.

Both Unoka and Nwoye are different from Okonkwo. While Okonkwo is very strict and focused on being a warrior, his father and son have different interests and ways of living. The story shows that Okonkwo's way of life might be more unusual compared to his father and son, who follow different paths.

### **The Struggle with Masculinity:**

Okonkwo is determined to be as masculine as possible. He works hard to become a powerful leader in his tribe, Umuofia, and values strength and aggression. He is very disappointed that his son Nwoye does not match his own aggressive behavior. Okonkwo even wishes his daughter Ezinma were a boy, showing how much he loves her but also how much he values traditional masculine roles.

Early in the novel, Okonkwo insults a man without a title by calling him a woman, showing how highly masculinity is regarded in Umuofia. Despite his strength and success, Okonkwo's rigid adherence to masculine ideals eventually causes his downfall. He becomes unable to adapt to the changes in his clan. His commitment to masculinity leads him to kill his own surrogate son, act violently against the white man despite his better judgment, and ultimately hang himself rather than face punishment. His aggression, which he thought was a strength, becomes his weakness and prevents him from coping with the new, subtler ways of the white colonizers.

Nwoye, Okonkwo's son, struggles with these expectations of masculinity. He wants to make his father proud by being traditional and aggressive, but he is troubled by the violence in Umuofia's rituals. Eventually, he finds comfort in Christianity, which seems gentler and less violent. This move is similar to what Okonkwo's uncle Uchendu says after the family is exiled: "A child belongs to its father. But when a father beats his child, the child seeks comfort from its mother." Nwoye leaves his father's harsh expectations to seek solace in the more compassionate Christian faith.

### **Clashing Religions: The Impact of Faith on Umuofia**

In *Things Fall Apart*, religion plays a big role in showing how different cultures can be, yet also how similar they are. In Umuofia, religion is deeply connected to farming and nature. The gods are powerful and often feared because the people rely on natural cycles for their survival. On the other hand, the white men, represented by missionaries like Mr. Brown, view religion as a form of education. They don't believe in fearing gods; instead, they use fear to control people by locking them up, starving them, or beating them when they break the rules.

When Akunna, a leader from a neighboring tribe, talks with Mr. Brown, he points out how both religions are similar. Akunna compares their wooden statues of gods to Mr. Brown himself, suggesting that both are just symbols of their respective gods. He also notes that the people of Umuofia might only pretend to believe in some aspects of their religion, like the masked gods, which are actually just tribe members in disguise. This conversation helps show that Umuofia's religion is not primitive but rather complex, with its own rich traditions and understandings.

This clash of religions highlights the theme from the Yeats poem quoted at the beginning of the novel. The poem describes a world falling apart, and in the novel, Western religion causes a breakdown in Umuofia's society. By giving power to outcasts and those without titles, Western religion undermines the traditional leaders and their justice system, leading to the collapse of Umuofia's old way of life.

### **Characters:**

#### **Okonkwo:**



In *Things Fall Apart*, Okonkwo works hard to become the opposite of his father, Unoka, who was seen as weak and unsuccessful. Unoka was lazy, poor, and gentle, and he liked music and talking. Okonkwo rejects everything about his father and tries to become the ideal man in his society. He becomes strong, wealthy, hardworking, brave, and avoids anything he considers “soft,” like music and talking about feelings. He believes that showing emotion is a sign of weakness.

Okonkwo’s hard work pays off. He becomes rich, marries three women, and has many children. However, as the white men arrive and start to change things in Umuofia, Okonkwo struggles to adapt. He finds that his old ways of violence and aggression are no longer useful. The new way of dealing with problems is to be more compliant and less confrontational, which is hard for Okonkwo to accept.

Okonkwo is a tragic hero because his strong qualities—his commitment to manliness and anger—lead to his downfall. Even though he is a respected and successful man, his inability to show his feelings and adapt to change causes his ruin. The novel shows us that beneath his tough exterior, Okonkwo has complex emotions. For example, he secretly follows his wife into the forest because he is worried about their daughter, Ezinma. This reveals a softer side of Okonkwo that he hides from others.

### **Nwoye:**

Nwoye, Okonkwo’s oldest son, feels overshadowed by his father, who is strong, successful, and tough. Nwoye doesn’t share his father’s interests and is more like his grandfather, Unoka, who was gentle and liked storytelling. Nwoye gets beaten often because he struggles to meet Okonkwo’s high expectations. However, things change when Ikemefuna arrives. Ikemefuna, who becomes like an older brother to Nwoye, shows him a gentler way to be a man. This makes Okonkwo start to accept Nwoye more.

Despite this, Nwoye remains conflicted. He tries to act tough to please his father but misses the comforting stories his mother used to tell him. The turning point for Nwoye comes with the tragic death of Ikemefuna. The loss makes Nwoye pull away from his father’s values and feel bitter towards him.

When missionaries come to their village, Nwoye finds new hope and joins them. Although Okonkwo is angry and disowns him for not being “manly” enough, Nwoye finally finds peace away from his father’s harsh expectations and oppressive ways.

### **Obierika:**

Obierika is Okonkwo’s best friend, and his personality is very different from Okonkwo’s. While Okonkwo acts quickly without thinking, Obierika is calm and always thinks before making decisions. Obierika does not believe in using violence to fight against the British, but Okonkwo

does. Obierika is open to new ideas and understands that the world is changing, while Okonkwo cannot accept any changes to the old Igbo traditions.

Even though they are very different, Obierika is a loyal friend. When Okonkwo is sad about Ikemefuna's death, Obierika comforts him, even though he didn't agree with what Okonkwo did. When Okonkwo is sent away from the village, Obierika helps him by selling his yams and giving him the money.

Obierika also questions the Igbo traditions and laws, thinking that some changes might make life better. Okonkwo, on the other hand, wants to fight the British with violence. Obierika knows it is too late to fight because the British have already divided their community. He says that the white man has "cut apart the things that held us together, and we have fallen apart."

### **Ezinma:**

Ezinma is Okonkwo's favorite daughter and the only child of his wife, Ekwefi. She is brave and sometimes even challenges her father's decisions. Okonkwo often thinks about how he wishes Ezinma were a boy because she shows qualities he values, like strength and courage. Despite this, Ezinma earns his full attention, love, and respect. They have a special bond, and she shares many of his traits, which makes her confident and mature.

As she grows up, Ezinma becomes a beautiful young woman. She decides to wait until her family returns from exile before getting married. By doing this, she helps her father use his political power more effectively, showing that she, like Okonkwo, values strategy over personal feelings.

### **Ikemefuna:**

Ikemefuna is a young boy who is given to the people of Umuofia by the village of Mbaino to avoid a war. Ikemefuna doesn't know that his father was involved in the death of a girl from Umuofia, and he doesn't understand why he has to leave his family, including his mother and sister.

When Ikemefuna is brought to Umuofia, he is sent to live with Okonkwo, a strong and respected man in the village. Ikemefuna stays in Okonkwo's house for three years and starts to think of Okonkwo as his real father. He also becomes very close to Nwoye, Okonkwo's son, and the two boys become best friends, spending all their time together.

After three years, the village elders decide that Ikemefuna must be killed as part of their customs. Even though Ikemefuna calls Okonkwo "father," Okonkwo feels like he must be part of the execution. He is afraid that if he doesn't help, people will think he is weak. Even though Okonkwo has grown fond of the boy, he ends up delivering the final blow that takes Ikemefuna's life.

Ikemefuna's death breaks the bond between Okonkwo and his son, Nwoye. It is also a bad sign for what happens later in the story, as Okonkwo is later forced to leave Umuofia. Ikemefuna's death marks the beginning of things going wrong for Okonkwo and his family.

### **Unoka:**

Unoka is Okonkwo's father, who passed away ten years before the story begins. Although Unoka is not alive in the novel, he is still important in Okonkwo's memories. Since he was a child, Okonkwo felt embarrassed by his father. One reason was that Unoka was scared of blood, which made him unable to become a warrior. This meant he couldn't earn any important titles in the community. Instead of helping the village, Unoka was known for borrowing money from many people and rarely paying it back.

Unoka loved things like playing music and was more interested in creative activities. To Okonkwo, this made his father seem weak and lazy. Okonkwo believed that men should be strong and hard-working, not soft or creative. Because of his father's reputation, Okonkwo became very focused on being strong, successful, and masculine, doing everything to be the opposite of Unoka.

### **Ogbuefi Ezeudo:**

Ezeudo is the oldest man in the village and a respected speaker. He tells Okonkwo not to join in the killing of Ikemefuna, but Okonkwo does not listen to his advice. Soon after this, Ezeudo dies, and during his funeral, something terrible happens. Okonkwo's gun accidentally explodes, and a piece of it hits and kills Ezeudo's son. Because of this accident, Okonkwo and his family are punished and have to leave the village for seven years. This is part of their community's rules when someone accidentally kills another person.

### **Ekwefi:**

Ekwefi is Okonkwo's second wife and the mother of Ezinma. She was once the most beautiful woman in the village and left her first husband to be with Okonkwo. Ezinma is Ekwefi's only child who survived, and they share a very close bond. Ekwefi had nine other children, but they all passed away when they were babies. Because of this, she is very worried about losing Ezinma too.

### **Uchendu:**

Uchendu is Okonkwo's mother's younger brother. When Okonkwo and his family go to live with him in his village, Uchendu welcomes them warmly and takes good care of them. He advises Okonkwo to be thankful for the comfort of his mother's village and to respect the spirits of the ancestors, especially his own mother who is buried there. Uchendu has had a lot of sadness in his life because many of his wives and children have died. Unlike Okonkwo, who often acts

quickly without thinking, Uchendu is calm and wise. He helps show how different Okonkwo is by being a peaceful and thoughtful person.

**Enoch:**

Enoch is a very passionate follower of the Christian church in Umuofia. He does something very disrespectful by tearing the mask off a traditional spirit figure during a ceremony. This act causes a big fight between the traditional ways of the village and the new Christian rules. Mr. Brown, who was the first missionary, tries to keep Enoch's actions in check to avoid problems, but Reverend Smith, the next missionary, encourages Enoch's extreme behavior.

**Chielo:**

Chielo is a priestess in Umuofia who serves the goddess Agbala. She is a widow with two children and is very close to Ekwefi and her daughter, Ezinma. Chielo likes Ezinma a lot and calls her "my daughter." Once, Chielo carries Ezinma on her back for a long distance to help her with a special ritual to make the gods happy.

**Akunna:**

Akunna is an important leader in Umuofia. He talks with Mr. Brown, the missionary, about their different religions in a friendly way. Akunna helps Mr. Brown understand the Igbo beliefs better, which helps Mr. Brown convert more people by respecting their old ways. Akunna also explains his own religion clearly and finds similarities between his beliefs and those of the Christian missionaries.

**Nwakibie:**

Nwakibie is a rich man in the village who helps Okonkwo by lending him 800 seed yams, which is more than Okonkwo asked for. This support is important because it helps Okonkwo start building his own wealth and reputation.

**Mr. Kiaga:**

Mr. Kiaga is a native who becomes a Christian missionary. He arrives in Mbanta and starts converting people to Christianity, including Okonkwo's son, Nwoye, and many others in the village.

**Okagbue Uyanwa:**

Okagbue Uyanwa is a well-known healer. Okonkwo calls him for help when his daughter Ezinma is sick. Okagbue uses his special knowledge to try and make Ezinma better.

**Maduka:**

Maduka is Obierika's son and is known for being a skilled wrestler. When he wins a wrestling match, Okonkwo is impressed and wishes he had strong, successful sons like Maduka.

**Obiageli:**

Obiageli is Okonkwo's daughter from his first wife. She is about the same age as Ezinma, and even though they are close in age, Ezinma has a lot of influence over her.

**Ojiugo:**

Ojiugo is Okonkwo's youngest wife and the mother of Nkechi. She is treated poorly by Okonkwo, especially during the Week of Peace, when Okonkwo gets very angry and hits her.

**Mr. Brown:**

Mr. Brown is the first white missionary who comes to the village of Umuofia. He tries to show respect and make peace between the church and the people of the village. Mr. Brown talks with Akunna, an important man in the village, to learn more about the Igbo traditions and beliefs. He also helps the village by building a school and a hospital. He encourages the villagers to send their children to school and gives them gifts like clothes and towels. He tells them that learning to read and write is important for their future leaders.

Mr. Brown is different from Reverend Smith, who comes after him. Mr. Brown does not use violence or force to make people follow the church. Instead, he tries to understand the Igbo religion and uses that knowledge to peacefully encourage people to join the church.

**Reverend James Smith:**

When Mr. Brown leaves because he is not feeling well, Reverend Smith takes over. Reverend Smith is very different from Mr. Brown. He is strict and impatient, and he doesn't care about the local customs or culture. He criticizes Mr. Brown for being too friendly with the villagers and starts using harsh methods to try and change their ways.

**District Commissioner:**

At the end of the story, the District Commissioner arrives in Umuofia after Okonkwo kills a white man. He is writing a book about his time in Nigeria and decides to call it "The Pacification of the Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger." This title shows that he thinks of the Igbo people as simple and not important. Instead of seeing them as real people with their own rich traditions, he views them as subjects to study.

**Symbols:**

**Yams:**

In the beginning of the story, yams are called “the king of crops.” This means yams are very important in Umuofia and are seen as a manly thing. The year in the village is planned around when they plant and harvest yams. Okonkwo’s mood changes depending on the time of year.

During the Feast of the New Yam, Okonkwo gets annoyed because there’s too much celebrating and not enough work. He even gets angry and takes it out on his wife, Ekwefi. But when it’s time to plant yams, Okonkwo is happier. He gets upset with Ikemefuna and Nwoye if they don’t handle the yams correctly, but he actually likes working hard during this season.

Yams take a lot of work to grow, and only men plant them. A man’s success and how well he takes care of his family is shown by how much yam he can grow.

### **Roaring Flame:**

Okonkwo is known for being like a "Roaring Flame"—strong, powerful, and always full of energy. He thinks these traits are good for a man, and he’s upset that his son Nwoye is not like him. But in Chapter 17, as Okonkwo looks into the fire, he realizes something important: "Living fire begets cold, impotent ash." This means that a strong, fiery attitude can sometimes lead to something weak and powerless, like how a fire turns into cold ash.

Okonkwo understands that his own anger and impatience might have made Nwoye different from him, but he doesn’t see that his fiery nature could eventually lead to his own downfall. In the end, Okonkwo’s constant anger and impatience lead to his own destruction, especially when he gets so mad that he kills a white messenger.

### **Locusts:**

Locusts are a type of insect, and they look a bit like grasshoppers. They are known for swarming in huge groups. When locusts gather in big numbers, they can be very destructive. They eat a lot of plants, especially crops like grains and vegetables. This can be a big problem because it means the plants are gone, and people can have less food to eat.

In the story *Things Fall Apart*, locusts appear in the village in a big swarm. This is important because it symbolizes or represents something bad that is about to happen. Just like locusts destroy crops, the arrival of the colonizers (the white people) brings big changes and problems to the Ibo people. The locusts show that something big and troublesome is coming, which is similar to how the colonizers bring new rules and problems to the village.

### **Ikemefuna:**

In the story, Ikemefuna is a boy who is sent to live with Okonkwo's family as part of a peace deal between villages. He becomes close to Okonkwo's family and is like a brother to Okonkwo’s son, Nwoye. Ikemefuna symbolizes the idea of something good that can suddenly end. Just like

Ikemefuna's life changes suddenly when the village decides he must be killed, sometimes good things in life can end quickly and unexpectedly.

### **The Cold Ash:**

This symbol comes from a moment in the story when Okonkwo is looking at the fire and thinks about how "living fire begets cold, impotent ash." The fire represents Okonkwo's strong, fierce personality. The cold ash represents the opposite—something that is no longer alive or strong. This symbol shows how Okonkwo's strong anger and aggression can lead to something weak and lifeless, just like a strong fire eventually turns into cold ash. It helps us understand how Okonkwo's own fierce nature can cause problems and lead to his downfall.

### **The Ibo Gods:**

In the story, the Ibo people worship different gods, who are important to their way of life. These gods represent the beliefs and traditions of the Ibo people. They are like special helpers or protectors who guide and influence the people's lives. The gods symbolize the old ways and the traditional values that the Ibo people follow. When the new colonizers come and bring their own beliefs, it's a big change for the Ibo people, and they struggle between keeping their old beliefs and adapting to the new ones. The Ibo gods show the importance of tradition and the challenge of facing new ideas that conflict with what people have always known.

### **Genre:**

#### **Tragedy in "Things Fall Apart":**

A tragedy is a story where the main character faces a lot of problems and eventually has a very sad ending. "Things Fall Apart" is a tragedy because it shows how Okonkwo's life falls apart and how his whole community changes in a way that makes him very unhappy.

From the start of the book, we see that Okonkwo cares a lot about being seen as a strong, brave man. He wants to be very successful and respected, especially because his own father was not successful. Okonkwo works hard to prove himself and become an important person in his village.

But things get worse when Christian missionaries and British colonizers come to his village. They bring big changes that threaten the Igbo way of life, which Okonkwo wants to protect. These changes make it impossible for Okonkwo to be the honored leader he hoped to be.

Feeling that he has no way to fix things, Okonkwo becomes very sad and eventually takes his own life, which is considered the worst thing someone from his culture can do.

The title "Things Fall Apart" also suggests that the story will end sadly. The title comes from a poem by W.B. Yeats, which talks about the world falling into chaos. In "Things Fall Apart," we see hints of this chaos at important moments, like when people are afraid of evil spirits or when

the village faces great trouble. These moments show us that a sad ending is coming, just like the poem suggests.

### **Post-colonial Fiction:**

*Things Fall Apart* is a post-colonial novel, which means it talks about the effects of European colonization on African cultures. Written by Chinua Achebe, the story is set in Nigeria and follows Okonkwo, a respected leader in his village. The book shows how his life and his community change drastically when British colonizers and Christian missionaries arrive. It highlights the clash between traditional Igbo ways and new foreign influences, exploring how colonization disrupts and transforms local customs and values.

### **Style:**

In *Things Fall Apart*, Chinua Achebe writes in a clear and simple way to make the story feel like a true historical account. His sentences are straightforward and easy to understand, which helps readers follow the story about Okonkwo and his village. For example, Achebe writes:

*“Okonkwo was well known throughout the nine villages and even beyond. His fame rested on solid personal achievements. As a young man of eighteen he had brought honor to his village by throwing Amalinze the Cat. Amalinze was the great wrestler who for seven years was unbeaten, from Umuofia to Mbaino.”*

Achebe uses simple verbs and keeps the language direct, making the story feel real and easy to believe. However, he also includes some Igbo words and phrases to show the special culture of the Igbo people. For instance, the term "ogbanje" means a child who keeps dying and being reborn. Achebe sometimes translates these words, but other times, he leaves them in Igbo to show their unique cultural meaning.

Another example from the book is a proverb: *“Oji odu achu ijiji-o-o!* (The one that uses its tail to drive flies away!)” This shows how Achebe mixes English with Igbo to give readers a taste of Igbo culture while keeping the story easy to read.

### **Setting:**

*Things Fall Apart* is set in the late 1800s in a region called Igboland, which is now part of Nigeria. Most of the story happens before European missionaries arrive. The people in Igboland live in groups of villages that help each other for safety. The main village in the story is Umuofia, which is one of nine villages that work together.

In Igboland, the importance of a place can depend on where a person's parents are from. For example, Umuofia is where Okonkwo's father came from, so it's his fatherland. When Okonkwo is sent away for accidentally killing someone, he goes to live in Mbanta, which is his mother's village or his motherland. Okonkwo feels that being in his motherland makes him look weak.



The story takes place at a time when British people are just starting to come to Igboland. They first come with their religion, not with weapons. Later, they will take control by force. Though Achebe doesn't show much direct violence in the book, he hints at it towards the end. The District Commissioner in the story is writing a book called *The Pacification of the Tribes of the Lower Niger*, which hints at the coming violence. As the novel says:

*“The white man is very clever. He came quietly and peaceably with his religion. We were amused at his foolishness and allowed him to stay. Now he has come to break our clan and take our place.”*

This quote shows how the British arrival, which started with peaceful missions, eventually leads to big changes and problems for the Igbo people.

### **Point of View:**

In *Things Fall Apart*, the story is told by a narrator who knows everything about all the characters. This means the narrator can tell us what each character is thinking and feeling. The narrator doesn't judge the characters or their actions. For instance, even though Okonkwo is unhappy with his father, Unoka, because he didn't enjoy fighting, the narrator describes Unoka with kindness, showing his love for music instead.

The narrator also helps us see that Okonkwo, who appears harsh, has a softer side deep down. The narrator's role is to explain Igbo culture, helping readers understand things like the importance of proverbs in conversations. For example, when explaining the use of proverbs, the narrator notes, “Among the Ibo the art of conversation is regarded very highly, and proverbs are the palm-oil with which words are eaten.” This means proverbs are a special and important part of communication in Igbo culture.

By explaining these cultural details, the narrator helps us understand the Igbo world, but it also creates a bit of distance, making us see the Igbo people as different from ourselves.

### **Tone:**

The objective tone also helps readers make their own opinions about the characters. For example, we can decide if Okonkwo was right to focus only on gaining status or if Nwoye was right to join the Christian faith. The narrator gives us enough information to understand these choices and the Igbo way of life, allowing us to see that the problems in the story are not only due to British colonization but also due to issues within Igbo society itself.

### **Foreshadowing:**

Foreshadowing is a way of giving hints or clues about something that will happen later in a story. It's like a sneak peek into the future events of the story, showing or suggesting what might come next. For example, if a story describes dark clouds gathering, it might be hinting that a storm is

on the way. In *Things Fall Apart*, the author, Chinua Achebe, uses hints to show that something bad is going to happen in the story. These hints are called “foreshadowing.” Here’s how Achebe uses foreshadowing:

- **The Title and Epigraph:** The title of the book, “*Things Fall Apart*,” and the quote from a poem by W. B. Yeats at the beginning of the book give a clue that the story will end in trouble. Yeats’s poem talks about a scary and uncertain future, asking, “What rough beast slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?” Achebe uses this to hint that big changes and difficulties are coming.
- **The Locusts:** Early in the story, a swarm of locusts appears. The narrator says these locusts are just the first wave, like scouts, before a bigger swarm arrives. This is a hint that the arrival of the locusts is like the arrival of the British missionaries and later the colonial rulers.
- **Proverbs:** Achebe uses proverbs, or wise sayings, to hint at what might happen later. For example, after Okonkwo gets exiled, the narrator uses a proverb that means if one thing goes wrong, other problems will follow. This suggests that more challenges are coming.
- **Nwoye’s Conversion:** Nwoye, Okonkwo’s son, eventually joins the Christian religion, which surprises his father. Before this happens, there are hints that Nwoye might be unhappy with his father’s harsh ways and certain Igbo customs. For example, Nwoye likes the stories his mother tells, which are different from the violent stories his father forces him to hear. This love for gentle stories and the troubling aspects of Igbo traditions help prepare readers for Nwoye’s conversion to Christianity.
- **Okonkwo’s Suicide:** There are also clues about Okonkwo’s tragic end. Early in the story, a man who is very sad after a bad yam harvest hangs himself. Later, when Okonkwo is in exile, he jokingly talks about how killing one of his sons wouldn’t be enough to thank his friend. His friend jokingly replies, “Then kill yourself.” This dark joke becomes significant later when Okonkwo feels a sense of doom about his future, hinting at his eventual suicide.

These hints help us understand that the story is moving toward some serious and sad events, showing how things will fall apart in the end.

### **Antagonist & Protagonist:**

In *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe, the main characters are the protagonist and the antagonist.

### **Protagonist:**

The protagonist is the main character who drives the story forward. In this novel, Okonkwo is the protagonist. He is a respected leader in his village, Umuofia, and he works very hard to be successful and strong. Okonkwo’s main goal is to become a great warrior and to avoid being like

his father, Unoka, who was poor and unsuccessful. Throughout the story, we follow Okonkwo's life as he faces many challenges and tries to protect his family and his village. Okonkwo's determination and pride make him a strong protagonist, but also lead to his struggles.

### **Antagonist:**

The antagonist is the character or force that creates problems or challenges for the protagonist. In *Things Fall Apart*, there isn't just one antagonist. Instead, there are several forces that make life difficult for Okonkwo:

- **Colonialism:** The arrival of European colonizers and missionaries in Igboland brings new rules and changes that threaten the traditional way of life. These changes disrupt Okonkwo's world and make it hard for him to continue living as he always has.
- **Personal Conflicts:** Okonkwo also faces internal struggles, such as his difficulty in understanding and connecting with his son, Nwoye, who eventually converts to Christianity. This personal conflict adds to Okonkwo's challenges and feelings of failure.

In summary, Okonkwo is the protagonist who faces various antagonists, including both external forces like colonialism and internal conflicts that make his journey difficult and complex.

### **Allusion:**

Allusion is a literary device where the author refers to a person, place, event, or another work of literature, often indirectly. It helps readers connect with broader themes or historical contexts.

In *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe uses allusions to reference historical events, cultural practices, and other literary works. For example, the novel's title, *Things Fall Apart*, is an allusion to W.B. Yeats's poem "The Second Coming." Yeats's poem reflects on the chaos and disintegration at the end of an era, which parallels the disintegration of Igbo culture due to colonialism. Achebe includes an epigraph from Yeats's poem at the beginning of the novel:

*"Turning and turning in the widening gyre / The falcon cannot hear the falconer; / Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold."*

This allusion to Yeats's poem helps set the tone for the novel. Just as Yeats's poem describes the unraveling of societal order, *Things Fall Apart* illustrates the breakdown of the Igbo society as it faces the disruption caused by British colonialism.

### **Irony:**

Irony is a literary device where there is a contrast between expectations and reality. It can be situational, verbal, or dramatic.

Achebe uses irony to highlight the contrast between Okonkwo's expectations and the actual outcomes of his actions. When Okonkwo's friend, Obierika, jokes about killing himself to repay

a debt, Okonkwo reacts with a grim sense of foreboding. Later, Okonkwo actually does end up committing suicide, which is ironic given the earlier conversation. The irony lies in the fact that what was intended as a dark joke becomes a reality. This situation emphasizes the tragic nature of Okonkwo's life and the ultimate collapse of his values and society.

### **Imagery:**

Imagery involves using descriptive language to create vivid pictures in the reader's mind, appealing to the senses. Achebe uses imagery to bring the world of Igbo culture to life, helping readers visualize the setting and traditions. Achebe describes the arrival of the locusts:

*"The locusts came in the spring when the sun was hot, and the whole sky seemed to be a dark cloud."*

This imagery helps readers visualize the swarm of locusts descending on the village. The vivid description creates a sense of foreboding, as the locusts symbolize the coming of the British colonizers and their impact on Igbo life.

### **Simile:**

A simile is a comparison between two different things using the words "like" or "as."

Achebe uses similes to make descriptions more vivid and relatable. Achebe writes about the sound of drums:

*"The sound of the drums was like the cry of a bird."*

This simile helps readers understand the drum's sound by comparing it to something familiar. The comparison evokes a sense of urgency and rhythm, reflecting the cultural importance of drums in Igbo ceremonies.

### **Conflict:**

Conflict is a struggle between opposing forces that drives the plot. It can be internal (within a character) or external (between characters or between a character and their environment). Achebe presents multiple conflicts, including man vs. man, man vs. society, and man vs. self.

Okonkwo's internal struggle is evident when he fights against his own fear of weakness, which leads him to harshness towards his family and himself. Additionally, Okonkwo faces external conflict with the British colonizers who challenge Igbo traditions.

These conflicts drive the narrative and highlight Okonkwo's struggles with his identity, cultural values, and changing society. The internal and external conflicts reflect the broader theme of cultural disintegration and personal tragedy.

### **Metaphor:**

A metaphor is a figure of speech that directly compares two unlike things by stating that one is the other. Achebe uses metaphors to convey deeper meanings and themes. Achebe writes about Okonkwo's reputation:

*"Okonkwo was well known throughout the nine villages and even beyond."*

This metaphor of Okonkwo being "well known" suggests that he is not just a local figure but represents the broader strength and pride of Igbo culture. It also highlights the pressure Okonkwo feels to live up to his reputation, which ultimately contributes to his downfall.

## **1. Critical Analysis of Things Fall Apart by Chinua Achebe.**

### **Introduction:**

Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* is a powerful narrative about the destruction of traditional African societies, particularly the Igbo community, due to the arrival of European colonizers. The novel follows Okonkwo, a respected warrior, whose life is intertwined with his people's customs and values. The title, inspired by W.B. Yeats' poem *The Second Coming*, reflects how the fabric of Igbo society unravels with the coming of Western missionaries and colonialists. Achebe captures the clash of cultures, the consequences of colonialism, and the personal tragedy of Okonkwo, making this a landmark postcolonial text.

### **Clash of Cultures and Colonialism:**

One of the central themes in *Things Fall Apart* is the clash between traditional Igbo culture and Western values brought by British missionaries and colonialists. Achebe does not portray either culture as entirely good or bad. Instead, he presents a nuanced view of how both systems collide and lead to the downfall of the Igbo way of life. The arrival of the missionaries marks the beginning of the disintegration of Igbo society, a theme echoed in the line from Yeats' poem, "Things fall apart; the center cannot hold." Okonkwo, who represents the strength of Igbo traditions, watches helplessly as his culture is eroded, culminating in his tragic end.

The missionaries use persuasive tactics to convert the locals, who begin to question their customs. Okonkwo's son, Nwoye, is one of the first to embrace the new religion, alienating himself from his father. The novel highlights the complex reactions to colonialism: while some, like Okonkwo, resist the change, others, like Nwoye, find solace in the new faith. Achebe shows how colonialism not only divided communities but also families, as Nwoye's conversion drives a wedge between him and Okonkwo.

"The white man is very clever. He came quietly and peaceably with his religion... Now he has won our brothers, and our clan can no longer act like one."

### **The Rise and Fall of Okonkwo:**

Okonkwo's journey is central to the novel, symbolizing both the rise of a strong individual and the fall of an entire culture. Okonkwo is driven by a fear of being perceived as weak, like his father. This fear leads him to take extreme actions, such as killing Ikemefuna, a boy he cared for, to maintain his reputation. His need to embody strength reflects the values of his society, where masculinity and success are tied to physical power and wealth.

However, Okonkwo's rigid adherence to these values leads to his downfall. When the missionaries arrive, Okonkwo becomes increasingly isolated, unable to adapt to the changing world around him. His refusal to compromise or understand the new order ultimately results in his tragic demise.

"He has put a knife on the things that held us together, and we have fallen apart."

### **Disintegration of Igbo Society:**

The novel paints a vivid picture of the Igbo community before the arrival of the Europeans, showing a well-organized society with its own justice systems, traditions, and beliefs. However, the introduction of Christianity and Western governance undermines these structures. The Igbo are left divided, as some convert to Christianity, while others, like Okonkwo, cling to the old ways.

Achebe's portrayal of this cultural disintegration is both subtle and powerful. The once tight-knit society, represented by the unity in festivals, justice through tribal customs, and reverence for the earth goddess, gradually crumbles. As more people join the new faith, traditional values are questioned, and the societal bonds that once held the Igbo together begin to loosen.

"He mourned for the clan, which he saw breaking up and falling apart, and he mourned for the warlike men of Umuofia, who had so unaccountably become soft like women."

### **The Role of Women in Igbo Society:**

Achebe's portrayal of women in *Things Fall Apart* is multifaceted. On the one hand, the Igbo society is patriarchal, with women holding a secondary status. Okonkwo's wives, for instance, are expected to obey him, and he beats one of them during the sacred Week of Peace, a severe offense. However, women also play crucial roles in maintaining cultural and spiritual life. The earth goddess, Ani, is one of the most revered figures in Igbo religion, and women are vital in nurturing children and preserving family structures.

Okonkwo's relationship with his daughter Ezinma highlights the complex position of women. Ezinma, whom Okonkwo wishes were born a boy, is one of the few characters who can soften Okonkwo's otherwise harsh demeanor. This shows that, while women may be marginalized, they are also central to the emotional and cultural fabric of Igbo society.

### **Tragic End of Okonkwo:**

Okonkwo's suicide at the end of the novel marks the ultimate collapse of both his personal ambitions and the Igbo way of life. His death, considered an abomination by his own people, reflects the depth of his despair. He could not reconcile his desire to fight against the colonizers with the passivity of his people, nor could he accept the changes brought by the missionaries.

In his final moments, Okonkwo takes his life, a symbolic act that underscores the tragic consequences of the cultural collision. The man who once embodied strength and pride could not survive in the new world that had taken root in his homeland.

"Okonkwo's body is evil, and only strangers may touch it. His own people cannot bury him."

### **Conclusion:**

Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* is a profound exploration of the effects of colonialism on traditional societies, as well as the personal tragedy of a man caught between two worlds. Through Okonkwo's rise and fall, Achebe illustrates how colonialism dismantled the cultural foundations of African communities, leaving them fractured and vulnerable. The novel serves as both a celebration of Igbo culture and a poignant critique of the destructive forces of colonization. Achebe's narrative remains a powerful commentary on identity, cultural loss, and the human consequences of societal upheaval.



## Things Fall Apart Questions and Answers

Q.1. Describe the observance of the sacred week and throw light on the various customs relating thereto.

People did not work during the week of peace. People drank palm-wine and made merry. Most of them talked about the religious offence done by Okonkwo. According to the oldest man of the village, the man who broke the peace was dragged on the ground through the village until he died. It was only on one or two occasions for many years that the peace was broken in the past. It was also said by someone that it was a bad omen for a man to die during the sacred week. It was the custom in Obodoani that the men who died during this week were not buried but thrown into the dangerous part of the forest. It was a bad custom which the men brought into practice due to lack of understanding: The result was that their clan was fully of evil spirits of these unburied dead who were always doing harm to the living human beings.

Q.2. What is the significance of the title ‘Things Fall Apart’?

The title of Chinua Achebe’s novel “Things Fall Apart” is extracted from William Butler Yeats’ poem “Second Coming”. The title foreshadows the tragedy which the novel depicts. It also draws attention to the parallels between the English oppression of Ireland and its oppression of Nigeria.

Q.3. Describe the Feast of the New Yam.

Just before the harvest, the village Umuofia holds the Feast of the New Yam to give thanks to the earth goddess, Ani. The women scrub and decorate their huts, throw away all of their unused yams from the previous year, and use cam wood to paint their skin and that of their children with decorative designs. This is the beginning of new year.

Q.4. Who was Ogbuefi Ezeudu? What did he tell the other men who came to visit him?

He was the oldest man in the village. He told the two men visiting him that the punishment for breaking the peace of Ani had become very mild in their clans. He also told that his father told him that in the past the man who broke the peace was dragged on the ground through the village until he died but after a while it was stopped because it spoilt the peace which it was meant to establish. Ogbuefi Ezeudu also told that in Obodoani, there was a custom that a man who died during the week of peace was not buried but thrown into the dangerous forest. They threw away large number of men and women without burial. The result was that their clan was full of the evil spirits of these one unburied dead hungry to do harm to the living human beings.

Q.5. Who was Obiageli? How did she break her pitcher?

Obiageli was the real sister of Nwoye, she was making bragging with her pot. She had balanced it on her head. She folded her arms in front of her and began to swing her waist like a grown up lady. The pot fell down and was broken into pieces. At this, she burst into laughter. She began to

weep falsely when she reached near the iroka tree outside their compound. Now she had in her hand a cloth pad on which the pot must have rested on her head. Her mother consoled her and promised to buy her a new pot.

6. What did the people do during heavy rains as referred to in chapter 4 of the novel?

During heavy rains, children sat around their mother's cooking fire telling stories, or with their fathers in his Obi warning themselves from a long fire, roasting and eating maize. It was a brief resting period between the exacting and arduous planting season and the equally exacting but lighthearted month of harvests.

Q.7. Who was Nwayieke? Where did she live?

Ikemefuna told Nwoye that the proper name for corn cob with only a few scattered grains were the teeth of an old woman. After hearing this, Nwoye thought of Nwayieke who lived near the Udala tree. She had about three teeth and was always smoking her pipe.

Q.8. Who said the following and why? Explain the sense contained therein: "One would think he never suckled at his mother's breast."

In the opening lines of chapter-4, an old man made the above remarks about Okonkwo. The sense contained therein is that Okonkwo rose from poverty to be a prosperous and important person of his clan by the sweat of his brow. The old man did not say so out of enviousness. He respected him for his struggle to acquire such a high position in the society. According to the old man, he (Okonkwo) was a man of industry and utmost firmness.

Q.9. By whom were the following words said and why: "This meeting is for man."

The above words were uttered by Okonkwo to down 'Osugo' who contradicted him at a meeting held to discuss the programme of next ancestral feast. In other words, the sense of these words may be taken to call Osugo a woman because he had no title to his credit. Okonkwo was criticized for saying so by most of the people present in the meeting. The old man said that the man who made his fortune with the help of others should not forget to be humble. Okonkwo realized that he should not have said so and he felt sorry for what he said.

10. "Okonkwo's palm kernels had been cracked by a benevolent spirit." How far it is true?

When Okonkwo called Usugo a woman because he had no title to his credit, the old man retorted saying that Okonkwo should not have uttered the words disgracing Usugo. At this he (Okonkwo) felt sorry for what he had said.

It is not true that Okonkwo's palm kernels had been cracked for him by a benevolent spirit. He made his fortune himself. He struggled very hard to rise and prosper. Any man in his place would have surrendered to the sorrows, sufferings and difficulties falling in the way to progress. He faced all the difficulties with courage and reaped his harvest proving him a boon in his life.

At an early age he had achieved fame as the greatest wrestler. That was not luck. It was due to his hard work and sincerity that he was chosen by the nine villages to convey a message of war to their enemies or make them agree to give a young man and a virgin to compensate the murder of Udo's wife. When he reached Ikemefuna's village he was given a lad named Ikemefuna and a virgin who was given to Udo in place of his murdered wife. He was treated a man of great confidence by the villagers and the lad handed over to him by the village for due care.

Q.11. How did the contest of wrestling begin? Who won in the third bout?

The wrestling began with the boys of fifteen and sixteen. They were introduced to set the scene. Within a short time the first two bouts were over, the third was a sensational one, this was a wrestling which interested the crowd much. After sometime one wrestler did something that the other boy was flat on his back. The crowd roared and clapped. Okonkwo also sprang to his feet and quickly sat down again. Some boys carried him shoulders held high and danced through the cheering crowd. The name of the victorious boy was Maduka, the son of Obierika.

Q.12. Describe the discussion held between Ekwefi and Chielo at the ground of wrestling?

Ekwefi said to the woman standing beside her that she had never seen such a large crowd. The woman also asked her if Okonkwo nearly killed her with his gun. Ekwefi replied that it was true. Both the women talked for a long time. The woman with whom she talked was called Chielo. She was the priestess of Agbala the oracle hills and the caves. Chielo was a widow with two children. She was very friendly with Ekwefi. She loved Ezinma, the only daughter of Ekwefi very much. She was another person when the spirit of Agbala was on her.

Q.13. Give a description of the last wrestling match between Okafo and Ikezue.

The sun was about to set when the last match began. Okafo and Ikezue were among the best wrestlers. Some were of the opinion that Okafo was better than Ikezue and others regarded Ikezue as the better of the two. Last years, neither of the two could win the match. Ikezue held out his right hand, Okafo seized it and both started their tactics to down each other. Each one was playing his tricks to down the other. But one knew what the other was thinking. Both the wrestlers did their best but none could down the other. But it looked a drawn match. The two judges were ready to move forward to separate them. All of a sudden, Okafo raised his right leg and swung it over his rival's head. He was successful in throwing Ikezue in the bout. Okafo was carried home shoulder-high by his supporters. They sang in joy and the young women clapped.

14. Who was Ojiugo? Why did Okonkwo beat her?

Ojiugo was the youngest wife of Okonkwo. Once she went to her friend's house to get her hair interlaced. She did not return for long. She could therefore not cook the afternoon food. He went to her hut and found the fire place cold. He asked his second wife about Ojiugo. She told him that she had gone to plait her hair. When she returned he beat her very heavily. His first two

wives ran out under great confusion and told him that it was sacred weak and he should not beat her.

15. Who was Ezeani? Why was he displeased with Okonkwo?

Ezeani was the priest of the earth goddess, Ani. He called on Okonkwo at his house. He brought out Kola nut and offered it to the priest. The priest was in an angry mood. He told him that he would not eat in the house of a man who had no respect for gods and ancestors.

Okonkwo told him the reason why he beat his wife. The priest told him that it was a planting season and one week should be observed as a week of calmness. He agreed that his wife was at fault but she should have not been beaten by him during the planting season. He added that he had done a great mistake. He had insulted the earth goddess. She might refuse to give them good crops. His evil deed could ruin the whole clan. However, the priest asked him to bring to the shrine of Ani the next day, one she goat, one hen, a length of cloth, and a hundred cowries, offering of which would be necessary to pacify Ani's anger. Okonkwo did as the priest said, he also took with him a pot of palm-wine. But he had to do that against his will only to please the priest.

Q.16. Why did Okonkwo beat Nwoye heavily?

Okonkwo told Ikemefuna that he was to be taken to his home the next day. Nwoye overheard it and wept bitterly where upon his father beat him mercilessly.

17. Did Ikemefuna know that he was to be killed?

Yes, Ikemefuna remembered a time when some men had talked in low tones to his father. So he felt that he was not being taken to his house but he was being taken outside Umuofia to be killed.

18. Who told Nwoye's mother that Ikemefuna was going home? How did she react after knowing that?

Nwoye told his mother that Ikemefuna was being taken home. On hearing it, she dropped the pestle with which she was grinding pepper. She folded her arms across her breast and sighed "poor" child".

Q.19. How did Nwoye feel when he came to know about Ikemefuna's departure?

When Nwoye knew about Ikemefuna's departure, Throughout that day, he kept sitting in his mother's hut and wept bitterly.

20. What is an "Ozo" dance? By whom and when was it heard?

It is a kind of dance which took place when a man was taking one of the titles of his clan. On this occasion men rejoiced with music and dancing and a great feast. It was heard by the people at the

beginning of their journey undertaken with a purpose to take Ikemefuna out of the village to kill him.

21. State the condition of Ikemefuna when the man growled at him asking him not to stand looking back.

When Ikemefuna was being taken outside the village, one of the men growled at him and instructed him not to stand looking back, Ikemefuna was frightened. His hands trembled on the black pot he carried. To add to his fear, Okonkwo withdrew to the rear. Ikemefuna felt his legs melting under him.

22. What were the words uttered by Ikemefuna when a man behind him stroke him with his machet?

The words which were uttered by Ikemefuna were “My father, they have killed me.” These words were addressed to Okonkwo who in turn cut him down with his machet instead of sympathizing with him.

Q.23. What did Ogbuefi Ezeudu tell Okonkwo? By whom was the order pronounced to kill Ikemefuna?

Ogbuefi Ezeudu told Okonkwo that Umuofia had decided to kill Ikemefuna. This order was pronounced by the oracle of the hills and the caves. He added that they would take him outside the village as was the custom and kill him there. He asked Okonkwo not to bear a hand in his death because he called him his father.

24. When were the locusts seen in the atmosphere? What harm did they do?

The locusts were seen flying in the atmosphere during the cold harmattan season after the harvests had been gathered. They ate up all the wild grass in the fields. Much harm was not caused because crops were gathered.

Q.25. What did the people do when the locusts descended?

People came out of their houses to catch the locusts. They filled their bags, pots and baskets with them. They were roasted and spread in the sunshine to become dry and brittle. This rare food so gathered was eaten by them for many days.

Q.26. Where did the locusts stay at night? Depict the sight presented by the author in the play.

Locusts settled on every tree and every blade of grass. They settled on the roofs and covered the bare ground. Strong tree branches broke away under them and the whole earth became brownish swarmed with vast army of hungry locusts.

27. What did the elders say about locusts appearing and disappearing?

The elder said that locusts came once in a generation, reappeared every year for seven years and then disappeared for another life time. They went back to their caves in a distant land.

28. Name few of the stories that Nwoye's mother told the children.

She told the children-stories of the tortoise and his wily ways, and of the bird eneke-nti-oba, who challenged the whole world to a wrestling contest and was finally thrown by the cat. Story of the quarrel between Earth and Sky.

Q.29. What type of stories did Okonkwo tell the boys? Which stories did Nwoye like?

Okonkwo told the boys stories of the land, masculine stories of violence and bloodshed. Nwoye knew that it was right to be masculine and to be violent. But somehow he still preferred the stories that his mother used to tell.

30. Why was Okonkwo happy when Nwoye grumbled about women?

Okonkwo was happy because he wanted Nwoye to be able to control his women folk. He was of the opinion that if a man is unable to rule his women and his children, he is no real man. The man who is unable to control them is like the man in the song who had ten and one wives and not enough soup for his foo-foo.

31. What type of tasks did Nwoye like to do for the members of the family.

Nwoye was pleased to be sent for by his mother or another of his father's wives to do one of these difficult and masculine tasks in the home like splitting wood, or pounding food on receiving such a message through a younger brother or sister.

32. How did Obierika criticize Okonkwo's action of his participation in killing Ikemefuna?

During the discussion, Obierika said to Okonkwo that Ikemefuna called him his father and loved him greatly. It was his duty to save Ikemefuna and not to let him be killed. His action would not please the earth. He added if he were in his place he would have stayed at him.

33. What important news did Ofoedu bring when Obierika and Okonkwo were holding some discussions at the former's house?

Ofoedu told Obierika and Okonkwo that Ogbuefi Ezeudu, the oldest man in Ibe and his first wife, Ozoemena had died. Okonkwo remarked that Ezeudu was the powerful man who had led Umuofia to war in his youth. There was song about them, "He could not do anything without telling her."

34. During the course of discussion regarding the settlement of Ibe's marriage with Akueke, who served wine to the guests and the hosts and how?

Before the bride-price was settled at 20 bags of cowries, Ibo, the suitor of Akueke, began to serve wine. He filled the first horn and gave it to his father. Then he poured out to other. Okonkwo had his own horn which he gave to Ibe to fill.

Q.35. Describe the settlement of bride-price for the marriage of Ibe with Akueke.

As was the custom, Obierika presented to Ukegbu a bundle of short broomsticks which were fifteen instead of thirty as expected. This bundle was handed over to Ugkegu's eldest brother, Machi who said that they were expecting thirty. He said, "Marriage is a play and not a fight; so we are falling down again." It was thus that bride-price was finally settled at 20 bags of cowries.

Q.36. Who told Okonkwo that Ezinma was dying? What did he do when he heard so?

Ekwefi told Okonkwo that Ezinma was dying. He went into her hut and found Ezinma shivering beside a fire place. Taking his scythe, he went to the forest to bring leaves, grasses and barks of the trees for making the medicine for her daughter who was laid up with high fever. He got the grass etc. boiled and made Ezinma inhale the steam emitting from the liquid.

37. To whom did Okonkwo go after the death of Ekwefi's second child? What was he advised to do? How was the advice acted upon?

After the death of Ekwefi's second son, Okonkwo went to a medicine man to enquire what was wrong. He told Okonkwo that the first child was a wicked one who died and entered its mother's womb to be born again. He advised that during pregnancy Ekwefi should not sleep in her hut. She should go to live with her parents. She acted upon his advice. Her third child was born but he died on the eighth day.

38. What did the tortoise advise the birds to do, when they flew to the sky? What was the name which tortoise chose for himself and why?

He told the birds that it was an old age custom that Invitees to a great feast should assume new names. Accordingly, the birds took new names. Tortoise also took one. He was called, "All of you". He did so because he wanted to hold the title of chief guest in the feast and to eat the meal first of all.

39. What were the most delectable dishes served in the feast as referred to in the story of "Tortoise and the Birds" told by Ekwefi?

Hot soup full of meat and fish, pounded yam, yam pottage cooked with palm oil and fresh fish and palm wine were the most delectable dishes served to the guests in the feast arranged by the people of the sky for the birds. Q. 40. What interrupted Ezinma to continue her story?

She had to break off telling the story because she heard a loud voice. It was that of Chielo, the priestess of Agbala. She was possessed by the spirit of her god. The voice was like a sharp knife cutting through the night. She wanted to take Ezinma with her as ordained by her god.

41. Narrate the story which Obierika tells about a man who went to sell a goat and he was cheated.

A man went to sell a goat. He led it on a thick rope which market, he saw that people were pointing at him as they do to a mad man. He looked back and found a log of wood tied to the other end of the rope, instead of the goat. Obierika told Nwankwo that this is all done by way of medicine by swindlers.

Q.42. What was Obierika celebrating? What was the custom involved in it as referred to in chapter 13 of the play *Things Fall Apart*?

Obierika celebrated his daughter's 'Uri' viz. the day on which her suitor would bring palm wine not only to her parents but to all kinsmen attending the ceremony. All kiths and kins used to be invited to such a ceremony for a feast. The suitor had to give bride-price in a ceremony which had already taken place.

Q.43. Who followed the pot bearers in 'Uri' ceremony of Obierika's daughter?

After the pot bearers came to Ibe, the suitor and the elders of his family sat in the half moon completing the circle with their hosts. The pots of wine stood in their midst.

Q.44. Who presented Kola-nuts to the in-laws? Who broke the first one?

Obierika presented Kola-nuts to his in-laws. His eldest brother, Machi broke the first Kola-nut saying "Life to all of us". And let there be friendship between your family and ours.

Q.45. What edibles were served in the supper arranged on the occasion of the 'Uri' of Obierika's daughter?

The Kola had been eaten and the drinking of palm wine began. Groups of four or five people sat round with a pot in their midst. As the evening fell, food was presented to the guests. There were huge bowls of foo-foo and hot soup. Yam pottage was also served to the guests.

Q.46. Describe the manner in which the guests departed with the bride.

It was late at night that the guests rose to go. They took the bride with them. She was to spend seven market weeks with her suitor's family. They sang songs as they went. They paid short courtesy visits to the prominent men like Okonkwo who made a present of two cocks to them. They departed joyfully recreating their hosts.

Q.47. Describe Okonkwo's departure from Umuofia. What made him quit his native land?



When Okonkwo was handling his gun on the occasion of the funeral of Ezeudu, a piece of Iron exploded from his gun and pierced the body of Ezeudu's sixteen years old son. So, the only course open to Okonkwo was to leave his native place. It was a crime against the earth goddess to kill a clan man. Obierika and half a dozen other friends came to help and to console him. And before the cock crowed, Okonkwo and his family were fleeing to other land. It was a little village called Mbanta beyond the borders of Mbaino.

Q.48. What sort of harm did the people do to Okonkwo's property after he had left the village? Who mourned his calamity?

People in great numbers reached Okonkwo's compound. They set fire to his houses, demolished his red walls, killed his animals and destroyed his barn. It was the justice of the earth goddess. Obierika sat down in his hut and mourned his friend's calamity. He said, "Why should Okonkwo suffer for an offence he had not done knowingly."

49. Describe the action of the ancestors who appeared at the funeral of Ezeudu?

The ancestors from their domain appeared at Ezeudu's funeral. They spoke in a strange voice. Some of them were very violent. One of them appeared with a sharp machet and was only prevented from doing a serious crime by two men who restrained him with the help of a strong rope tied round his waist.

Q.50. How many titles had Ezeudu taken? How many titles were there in the clan?

Ezeudu had taken three titles in his life. It was a rare achievement. There were only four titles in the clan, and only one or two men in any generation ever achieved the fourth and the highest. When they did, they became the lords of the land.

Q.51. How did Obierika mourn Okonkwo's departure from the village?

Obierika was a man who thought about things. When the will of the goddess had been done, he sat down in his obi and mourned his friend's calamity. He thought why a man should suffer so grievously for an offence he had committed inadvertently. But although he thought for a long time he found no answer.

52. Where did Okonkwo go to pass seven years of exile after departing from his village? Who received him there?

Okonkwo left his village and went to live in Mbanta, the native village of his mother. Uchendu, the younger brother of Okonkwo's mother was the only elder surviving member of that family. It was he who received Okonkwo and provided him all possible help. When Uchendu saw him with his sad weary company, he guessed what had happened and asked no questions.

Q.53. What type of help was provided to Okonkwo by his mother's kinsmen in Mbanta?

Okonkwo was given a plot of ground on which to build his compound, and two or three pieces of land on which to farm during the coming planting season. With the help of his mother's kinsmen he built for himself an obi and three huts for his wives. He then installed his personal gods and the symbols of his departed fathers. Each of Uchendu's five sons contributed three hundred seed-yams to enable their cousin to plant a farm, before the life begins.

Q.54. Did Okonkwo have the vigour and zest of his youth at the new place? How did he feel living with his mother's kinsmen?

Okonkwo and his family worked very hard to plant a new farm. But it was like beginning life anew without the vigour and enthusiasm of youth, like learning to become left-handed in old age. Work no longer had for him the pleasure it used to have and when there was no work to do he sat in a silent half-sleep. Living at Mbanta, he was not so happy as in his native land.

Q.55. What was Okonkwo advised by Uchendu to do when he came to Mbanta?

Uchendu advised Okonkwo to comfort his wives and children and take them back to his village after seven years of banishment. He asked him not to lead a life full of sorrows. He shouted, remain happy and cheerful as before.

Q.56. Who were the rulers of Mbanta? What did the missionaries ask them to give?

There was no king to rule over the people of Mbanta. They had the men of high title, chief priest and the elders who served the purpose of a ruling machinery of the village. The missionaries asked the rulers to give them a plot of land to build their church. The rulers agreed to give them a portion of "Evil Forest".

57. What do you mean by "Evil Forest"? Could the missionaries get a plot of land as they wished?

"Evil Forest" was a plot of land outside the village. In it were buried all those who died of evil diseases, like leprosy and small-pox. It was also a dumping place for the potent fetishes (charms) of great medicine men when they died. The rulers agreed to give missionaries a part of such a forest to build their shrine. They were not expected to accept this offer but they felt obliged to the rulers when they were allowed to have the same.

Q.56. What did the inhabitants of Mbanta expect about missionaries' fate, if they began to build their shrine on the plot of land of the "Evil Forest"?

When the rulers of Mbanta had allowed the missionaries to build their shrine on a portion of land of the "Evil Forest", they began to clear the allotted part of the forest to build their shrine. The villagers expected them all to be dead within twenty-eight days at the most. But to their utter amazement nothing happened to them even after the lapse of 28 days. They were still all alive.

59. How did the dispute between the converts and the converted outcast arise?

Some outcast went into the church and adopted Christianity. There was an immediate stir among the converts. They raised a protest and were about to drive these people out when Mr. Kiaga stopped them and said, "Before God, there is no slave or free. We are all children of God and we must receive these as our brothers." Thus, the matter was subsided with the foresightedness of Mr. Kiaga.

Q.60. Who was Osu? Where was he buried? How was he treated by the villagers?

He was a person dedicated to god, a thing set apart, a taboo for ever. He could neither marry nor be married by the free born. He was in fact an outcast, living in a special area of the village, close to the great shrine wherever he went he carried with him the mark of his forbidden caste-long, tangled and dirty hair. A caste was taboo to him. He was a neglected creature. When he died, he was buried in the Evil Forest. The convert who told this tale wanted to say that outcasts cannot be followers of holy Christ.

Q.61. What action was decided to be taken in the Assembly of the rulers and the elders of Mbanta as introduced in chapter 18 of the novel?

After the incident of the dispute between the converts and the villagers, the rulers and the elders of Mbanta assembled to decide their action. Many of them spoke at great length and in fury. The spirit of ancestors was upon them. Okonkwo who had begun to play a part in the affairs of his new land said that until the abominable gang was chased out of the village with whips, there would be no peace. Everybody in the assembly spoke, and it was decided to extradite the Christians.

62. Who was the royal Python? Describe him as introduced in the novel?

The royal Python was a sacred animal which was supposed to be the emanation of the God of water. It was addressed as "Our Father", and was allowed to go wherever it chose, even into people's beds. It ate rats in the house and sometimes swallowed hen's eggs. If a clansman had killed a royal Python accidentally, he was to make sacrifices of atonement and perform an expensive burial ceremony such was done for a great man. No punishment was prescribed for a man who killed the Python knowingly. Nobody thought that such a thing could ever happen.

This Python is said to be killed by one of the outcasts. Perhaps it never did happen. That was the way the clan at first looked at it. No one had actually seen the man do it. The story had arisen among the Christians themselves.

63. When did Ikemefuna come back to Umuofia? What strange things occurred then?

Ikemefuna returned to Umuofia at the end of carefree season between harvest and planting. In fact, he recovered from his illness a few days before the week of peace began. It was the year when Okonkwo broke the peace by beating his youngest wife named Ojiugo and was punished

by Ezeani, the priest of the earth goddess by making him offer certain offerings at the altar of Ani (the earth goddess).

64. What was the proper name for a corn-cob with a few scattered grains?

The proper name for corn-cob with only a few scattered grains was 'eze-agadi-Nwayi' which mean the teeth of an old woman. This was told to Nwoye by Ikemefuna. After hearing this, Nwoye's mind at once went to Nwayieke who lived near the Udala tree. She had about three teeth and was always smoking her pipe.

Q.65. What did Okonkwo begin to do to build up a barn of his own? What made it worse in his case?

Okonkwo began to work for landlords on a sharecropping system. He was very foresighted and opted this system as it was the only repairs way of building up a barn of his own at a later stage. He got only third of the harvest after he had toiled hard throughout the year. The worse in his case was that he had to support his parents and two sisters. He was also fending for his father's house. It was in a bad condition and needed repairs. It was like pouring grains corn into a bag. His mother and sisters worked hard. But they grew women's crops like coco-yams, beans and cassava. Yam, the king of crops, was a man's crop.

Q.66. Why did the inhabitants of Umuofia not take down Okonkwo's dead body from the tree themselves? Why did they ask the commissioner to do this job?

According to the custom of the village, it was against their custom to take down Okonkwo's dead body from the tree. It was a curse for a man to take his own life. It was an offence against the earth and a man who did such an offence was not to be buried by his clansmen. So Obierika asked the commissioner to help them to bring the dead body down and bury it.

67. What did Obierika say to the commissioner when he was gazing at his friend's dangling body?

Obierika was pained to see his friend's dangling body. He turned suddenly to the commissioner and said in an angry mood that they had killed one of the greatest men in Umuofia. He added that his friend's body could be buried like a dog. He could not say any more.

Q.68. What did the commissioner plan to stress in his book which he was going to write?

The commissioner wanted to write a book in which he wished to include the story of Okonkwo who had killed a messenger and hanged himself. He thought that it would prove a very interesting reading. He had already chosen the title of the book, after much thought, "The Pacification of the Primitive Tribe."

Q.69. What does the repetition the number seven suggest in 'Things Fall Apart'?

In several places, the novel explicitly focuses on the theological and moral similarities between Christianity and Igbo religion. The repetition of the number seven — symbolically important to both religions — is another way of highlighting the similarities between the two cultures. The text refers to resting on the seventh day for both cultures.

Q.70. According to the oracle, why do Unoka's crops fail year after year?

Unoka, Okonkwo's father, visits the tribe's oracle, Agbala, to discover why he has bad harvests. Agbala's priestess says that he has no one but himself to blame for his bad harvests. She points out his laziness in contrast to his neighbours' admirable work ethic and sends him away with simple advice: "go home and work like a man."