

ST MARKS COLLEGE NAMAGOMA
LITERATURE AND ENGLISH DEPARTMENT
LITERATURE IN ENGLISH NOTES
SENIOR TWO.

THINGS FALL APART

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Plot Overview

Summary Plot Overview

Okonkwo is a wealthy and respected warrior of the Umuofia clan, a lower Nigerian tribe that is part of a consortium of nine connected villages. He is haunted by the actions of Unoka, his cowardly and spendthrift father, who died in disrepute, leaving many village debts unsettled. In response, Okonkwo became a clansman, warrior, farmer, and family provider extraordinaire. He has a twelve-year-old son named Nwoye whom he finds lazy; Okonkwo worries that Nwoye will end up a failure like Unoka.

In a settlement with a neighboring tribe, Umuofia wins a virgin and a fifteen-year-old boy. Okonkwo takes charge of the boy, Ikemefuna, and finds an ideal son in him. Nwoye likewise forms a strong attachment to the newcomer. Despite his fondness for Ikemefuna and despite the fact that the boy begins to call him “father,” Okonkwo does not let himself show any affection for him.

During the Week of Peace, Okonkwo accuses his youngest wife, Ojiugo, of negligence. He severely beats her, breaking the peace of the sacred week. He makes some sacrifices to show his repentance, but he has shocked his community irreparably.

Ikemefuna stays with Okonkwo’s family for three years. Nwoye looks up to him as an older brother and, much to Okonkwo’s pleasure, develops a more masculine attitude. One day, the locusts come to Umuofia—they will come every year for seven years before disappearing for another generation. The village excitedly collects them because they are good to eat when cooked.

Ogbuefi Ezeudu, a respected village elder, informs Okonkwo in private that the Oracle has said that Ikemefuna must be killed. He tells Okonkwo that because Ikemefuna calls him “father,” Okonkwo should not take part in the boy’s death. Okonkwo lies to Ikemefuna, telling him that they must return him to his home village. Nwoye bursts into tears.

As he walks with the men of Umuofia, Ikemefuna thinks about seeing his mother. After several hours of walking, some of Okonkwo's clansmen attack the boy with machetes. Ikemefuna runs to Okonkwo for help. But Okonkwo, who doesn't wish to look weak in front of his fellow tribesmen, cuts the boy down despite the Oracle's admonishment. When Okonkwo returns home, Nwoye deduces that his friend is dead.

Okonkwo sinks into a depression, neither able to sleep nor eat. He visits his friend Obierika and begins to feel revived a bit. Okonkwo's daughter Ezinma falls ill, but she recovers after Okonkwo gathers leaves for her medicine.

The death of Ogbuefi Ezeudu is announced to the surrounding villages by means of the ekwe, a musical instrument. Okonkwo feels guilty because the last time Ezeudu visited him was to warn him against taking part in Ikemefuna's death. At Ogbuefi Ezeudu's large and elaborate funeral, the men beat drums and fire their guns. Tragedy compounds upon itself when Okonkwo's gun explodes and kills Ogbuefi Ezeudu's sixteen-year-old son.

Because killing a clansman is a crime against the earth goddess, Okonkwo must take his family into exile for seven years in order to atone. He gathers his most valuable belongings and takes his family to his mother's natal village, Mbanta. The men from Ogbuefi Ezeudu's quarter burn Okonkwo's buildings and kill his animals to cleanse the village of his sin.

Okonkwo's kinsmen, especially his uncle, Uchendu, receive him warmly. They help him build a new compound of huts and lend him yam seeds to start a farm. Although he is bitterly disappointed at his misfortune, Okonkwo reconciles himself to life in his motherland.

During the second year of Okonkwo's exile, Obierika brings several bags of cowries (shells used as currency) that he has made by selling Okonkwo's yams. Obierika plans to continue to do so until Okonkwo returns to the village. Obierika also brings the bad news that Abame, another village, has been destroyed by the white man.

Soon afterward, six missionaries travel to Mbanta. Through an interpreter named Mr. Kiaga, the missionaries' leader, Mr. Brown, speaks to the villagers. He tells them that their gods are false and that worshipping more than one God is idolatrous. But the villagers do not understand how the Holy Trinity can be accepted as one God. Although his aim is to convert the residents of Umuofia to Christianity, Mr. Brown does not allow his followers to antagonize the clan.

Mr. Brown grows ill and is soon replaced by Reverend James Smith, an intolerant and strict man. The more zealous converts are relieved to be free of Mr. Brown's policy of restraint. One such convert, Enoch, dares to unmask an egwugwu during the annual ceremony to honor the earth deity, an act equivalent to killing an ancestral spirit. The next day, the egwugwu burn Enoch's compound and Reverend Smith's church to the ground.

The District Commissioner is upset by the burning of the church and requests that the leaders of Umuofia meet with him. Once they are gathered, however, the leaders are handcuffed and thrown in jail, where they suffer insults and physical abuse.

After the prisoners are released, the clansmen hold a meeting, during which five court messengers approach and order the clansmen to desist. Expecting his fellow clan members to join him in uprising, Okonkwo kills their leader with his machete. When the crowd allows the other messengers to escape, Okonkwo realizes that his clan is not willing to go to war.

When the District Commissioner arrives at Okonkwo's compound, he finds that Okonkwo has hanged himself. Obierika and his friends lead the commissioner to the body. Obierika explains that suicide is a grave sin; thus, according to custom, none of Okonkwo's clansmen may touch his body. The commissioner, who is writing a book about Africa, believes that the story of Okonkwo's rebellion and death will make for an interesting paragraph or two. He has already chosen the book's title: *The Pacification of the Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger*.

Summary of the book

Page 2

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.

—W. B. Yeats, "The Second Coming"

Summary: Chapter 1

Among the Igbo . . . proverbs are the palm-oil with which words are eaten.

Okonkwo is a wealthy and respected warrior of the Umuofia clan, a lower Nigerian tribe that is part of a consortium of nine connected villages, including Okonkwo's village, Iguedo. In his youth, he brought honor to his village by beating Amalinze the Cat in a wrestling contest. Until his match with Okonkwo, the Cat had been undefeated for seven years. Okonkwo is completely unlike his now deceased father, Unoka, who feared the sight of blood and was always borrowing and losing money, which meant that his wife and children often went hungry. Unoka was, however, a skilled flute player and had a gift for, and love of, language.

Questions.

1. Discuss the character traits of Okonkwo as they are portrayed in this chapter.
2. Contrast the character traits of Okonkwo from that of Unoka.

Summary: Chapter 2

One night, the town crier rings the ogene, or gong, and requests that all of the clansmen gather in the market in the morning. At the gathering, Ogbuefi Ezeugo, a noted orator, announces that someone from the village of Mbaino murdered the wife of an Umuofia tribesman while she was in their market. The crowd expresses anger and indignation, and Okonkwo travels to Mbaino to deliver the message that they must hand over to Umuofia a virgin and a young man. Should Mbaino refuse to do so, the two villages must go to war, and Umuofia has a fierce reputation for its skill in war and magic. Okonkwo is chosen to represent his clan because he is its fiercest warrior. Earlier in the chapter, as he remembers his past victories, we learn about the five human heads that he has taken in battle. On important occasions, he drinks palm-wine from the first head that he captured. Not surprisingly, Mbaino agrees to Umuofia's terms. The elders give the virgin to Ogbuefi Udo as his wife but are not sure what to do with the fifteen-year-old boy, Ikemefuna. The elders decide to turn him over to Okonkwo for safekeeping and instruction. Okonkwo, in turn, instructs his first wife to care for Ikemefuna.

In addition to being a skilled warrior, Okonkwo is quite wealthy. He supports three wives and eight children, and each wife has her own hut. Okonkwo also has a barn full of yams, a shrine for his ancestors, and his own hut, called an obi.

Okonkwo fears weakness, a trait that he associates with his father and with women. When Okonkwo was a child, another boy called Unoka agbala, which is used to refer to women as well as to men who have not taken a title. Because he dreads weakness, Okonkwo is extremely demanding of his family. He finds his twelve-year-old son, Nwoye, to be lazy, so he beats and nags the boy constantly.

Question.

1. Discuss the character traits of the characters as developed in this chapter.
2. Discuss the themes developed in this chapter.

Summary: Chapter 3

Okonkwo built his fortune alone as a sharecropper because Unoka was never able to have a successful harvest. When he visited the Oracle, Unoka was told that he failed because of his laziness. Ill-fated, Unoka died of a shameful illness, "swelling which was an abomination to the

earth goddess.” Those suffering from swelling stomachs and limbs are left in the Evil Forest to die so that they do not offend the earth by being buried. Unoka never held any of the community’s four prestigious titles (because they must be paid for), and he left numerous debts unpaid.

As a result, Okonkwo cannot count on Unoka’s help in building his own wealth and in constructing his obi. What’s more, he has to work hard to make up for his father’s negative strikes against him. Okonkwo succeeds in exceeding all the other clansmen as a warrior, a farmer, and a family provider. He begins by asking a wealthy clansman, Nwakibie, to give him 400 seed yams to start a farm. Because Nwakibie admired Okonkwo’s hard-working nature, he gave him eight hundred. One of Unoka’s friends gave him another four hundred, but because of horrible droughts and relentless downpours, Okonkwo could keep only one third of the harvest. Some farmers who were lazier than Okonkwo put off planting their yams and thus avoided the grave losses suffered by Okonkwo and the other industrious farmers. That year’s devastating harvest left a profound mark on Okonkwo, and for the rest of his life he considers his survival during that difficult period proof of his fortitude and inner mettle. Although his father tried to offer some words of comfort, Okonkwo felt only disgust for someone who would turn to words at a time when either action or silence was called for.

Question.

1. Discuss the lessons learnt from this chapter.

Summary: Chapter 4

The clan decides that Ikemefuna will stay with Okonkwo. Ikemefuna is homesick and scared at first, but Nwoye’s mother treats him as one of her own, and he is immediately popular with Okonkwo’s children. Ikemefuna knows many stories that the children have never heard before and he possesses many impressive skills, such as making flutes out of bamboo sticks and setting traps for little bush rodents. To Okonkwo’s delight, he also becomes like an older brother to Nwoye. Okonkwo himself grows quite fond of Ikemefuna, but he does not show any affection because he considers doing so a sign of weakness, which he refuses to tolerate in himself or others. Ikemefuna soon begins to call Okonkwo “father.”

During the Week of Peace, Okonkwo notices that his youngest wife, Ojiugo, has left her hut to have her hair braided without having cooked dinner. He beats her for her negligence, shamefully breaking the peace of the sacred week in a transgression known as nso-ani. The priest demands that Okonkwo sacrifice a nanny goat and a hen and pay a fine of one length of cloth and one hundred cowries (shells used as currency). Okonkwo truly repents for his sin and follows the

priest's orders. Ogbuefi Ezeudu observes that the punishment for breaking the Peace of Ani has become mild in Umuofia. He also criticizes another clan's practice of throwing the bodies of all who die during the Week of Peace into the Evil Forest.

After the Week of Peace, the villagers begin to clear the land in preparation for planting their farms. Nwoye and Ikemefuna help Okonkwo prepare the seed yams, but he finds fault with their work. Even though he knows that they are too young to understand farming completely, he hopes that criticism will drive his son to be a great man and farmer. Ikemefuna settles into Okonkwo's family and shares his large stock of folk tales.

Summary: Chapter 5

Just before the harvest, the village holds the Feast of the New Yam to give thanks to the earth goddess, Ani. Okonkwo doesn't really care for feasts because he considers them times of idleness. The women thoroughly 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. With nothing to do, Okonkwo becomes angry, and he finally comes up with an excuse to beat his second wife, Ekwefi. He then decides to go hunting with his gun. Okonkwo is not a good hunter, however, and Ekwefi mutters a snide remark under her breath about "guns that never shot." In a fit of fury, he shoots the gun at her but misses.

The annual wrestling contest comes the day after the feast. Ekwefi, in particular, enjoys the contest because Okonkwo won her heart when he defeated the Cat. He was too poor to pay her bride-price then, but she later ran away from her husband to be with him. Ezinma, Ekwefi's only child, takes a bowl of food to Okonkwo's hut. Okonkwo is very fond of Ezinma but rarely demonstrates his affection. Obiageli, the daughter of Okonkwo's first wife, is already there, waiting for him to finish the meal that she has brought him. Nkechi, the daughter of Okonkwo's third wife, Ojiugo, then brings a meal to Okonkwo.

Summary: Chapter 6

The wrestling match takes place on the village ilo, or common green. Drummers line the field, and the spectators are so excited that they must be held back. The wrestling begins with matches between boys ages fifteen and sixteen. Maduka, the son of Okonkwo's friend Obierika, wins one match within seconds. As the wrestling continues, Ekwefi speaks with Chielo, the priestess of Agbala, the Oracle of the Hills and Caves. The two women are good friends, and Chielo inquires about Ezinma, whom she calls "my daughter." They conclude that Ezinma seems to have "come to stay" because she has reached the age of ten.

Summary: Chapter 7

And at last the locusts did descend. They settled on every tree and on every blade of grass. . . .

Ikemefuna stays with Okonkwo's family for three years. He seems to have "kindled a new fire" in Nwoye, who, much to Okonkwo's pleasure, becomes more masculine in his attitude. Okonkwo knows that his son's development is a result of Ikemefuna's influence. He frequently invites the two into his obi to listen to violent, masculine stories. Although Nwoye misses his mother's stories, he knows that he pleases his father when he expresses disdain for women and their concerns.

To the village's surprise, locusts descend upon Umuofia. They come once in a generation and will return every year for seven years before disappearing for another lifetime. The village excitedly collects them because they are good to eat when cooked. Ogbuefi Ezeudu pays Okonkwo a visit, but he will not enter the hut to share the meal. Outside, he informs Okonkwo in private that the Oracle has decreed that Ikemefuna must be killed. He tells Okonkwo not to take part in the boy's death, as Ikemefuna calls him "father." Okonkwo lies to Ikemefuna, telling him that he will be returning to his home village. Nwoye bursts into tears.

During the long walk home with the men of Umuofia, Ikemefuna thinks about seeing his mother. After hours of walking, a man attacks him with a machete. Ikemefuna cries to Okonkwo for help. Okonkwo doesn't wish to look weak, so he cuts the boy down. When Okonkwo returns home, Nwoye intuits that his friend is dead. Something breaks inside him for the second time in his life; the first time was when he heard an infant crying in the Evil Forest, where newborn twins are left to die.

Summary: Chapter 8

Okonkwo sinks into a depression. He feels weak, and he cannot sleep or eat. When Ezinma brings him his evening meal three days later, she tells him that he must finish everything. He repeatedly wishes that she were a boy, and he berates himself for acting like a "shivering old woman." He visits his friend Obierika and congratulates Maduka on his successful wrestling. Obierika, in turn, requests that Okonkwo stay when his daughter's suitor arrives to determine a bride-price. Okonkwo complains to Obierika that his sons are not manly enough and says that he would be happier if Ezinma were a boy because she has "the right spirit." He and Obierika then argue over whether it was right of Okonkwo to partake in Ikemefuna's death.

Okonkwo begins to feel revived a bit. He decides that his unhappiness was a product of his idleness—if Ikemefuna had been murdered at a busier time of the year, he, Okonkwo, would have been completely undisturbed. Someone arrives to report the death of the oldest man in a

neighboring village. Strangely, the old man's wife died shortly thereafter. Okonkwo questions the man's reputed strength once he learns how attached he had been to his wife.

Okonkwo sits with Obierika while Obierika bargains his daughter's bride-price with the family of her suitor. Afterward, Obierika and his future son-in-law's relatives talk about the differing customs in other villages. They discuss the practice of, and skill at, tapping palm trees for palm-wine. Obierika talks about hearing stories of men with skin as white as chalk. Another man, Machi, pipes in that such a man passes through the village frequently and that his name is Amadi. Those who know Amadi, a leper, laugh—the polite term for leprosy is “the white skin.”

Summary: Chapter 9

Ekwefi awakes Okonkwo very early in the morning and tells him that Ezinma is dying. Okonkwo ascertains that Ezinma has a fever and sets about collecting medicine. Ezinma is Ekwefi's only child and the “center of her world.” Ekwefi is very lenient with her: Ezinma calls her by her first name and the dynamic of their relationship approaches equality.

Ekwefi's nine other children died in infancy. She developed the habit of naming them symbolic things such as “Onwumbiko,” which means, “Death, I implore you,” and “Ozoemena,” which means, “May it not happen again.” Okonkwo consulted a medicine man who told him that an ogbanje was tormenting them. An ogbanje is a “wicked” child who continually re-enters its mother's womb only to die again and again, causing its parents grief. A medicine man mutilated the dead body of Ekwefi's third child to discourage the ogbanje's return. When Ezinma was born, like most ogbanje children, she suffered many illnesses, but she recovered from all of them. A year before the start of the novel, when Ezinma was nine, a medicine man named Okagbue Uyanwa found her iyi-uwa, the small, buried pebble that is the ogbanje's physical link to the spirit world. Although the discovery of the iyi-uwa ought to have solved Ezinma's problems, every illness that Ezinma catches still brings terror and anxiety to Ekwefi.

Summary: Chapter 10

The village holds a ceremonial gathering to administer justice. The clan's ancestral spirits, which are known as egwugwu, emerge from a secret house into which no woman is allowed to step. The egwugwu take the form of masked men, and everyone suspects that Okonkwo is among them. The women and children are filled with fear even though they sense that the egwugwu are merely men impersonating spirits.

The first dispute that comes before the egwugwu involves an estranged husband and wife. The husband, Uzowulu, states that the three brothers of his wife, Mgbafo, beat him and took her and the children from his hut but would not return her bride-price. The woman's brothers state that he is a beastly man who beat their sister mercilessly, even causing her to miscarry once. They

argue that Uzowulu must beg Mgbafo to return to him. If she agrees, the brothers declare, Uzowulu must understand that they will cut his genitals off if he ever beats her again. The egwugwu decide in favor of Mgbafo. One village elder complains that such a trifling matter should not be brought before them.

Summary: Chapter 11

Ekwefi tells Ezinma a story about a greedy, cunning tortoise. All of the birds have been invited to a feast in the sky and Tortoise persuades the birds to lend him feathers to make wings so that he can attend the feast as well. As they travel to the feast, Tortoise also persuades them to take new names for the feast according to custom. He tells the birds that his name will be “All of you.” When they arrive, Tortoise asks his hosts for whom the feast is prepared. They reply, “For all of you.” Tortoise proceeds to eat and drink the best parts of the food and wine. The birds, angry and disgruntled at receiving only scraps, take back the feathers that they had given to Tortoise so that he is unable to fly home. Tortoise persuades Parrot to deliver a message to his wife: he wants her to cover their compound with their soft things so that he may jump from the sky without danger. Maliciously, Parrot tells Tortoise’s wife to bring out all of the hard things. When Tortoise jumps, his shell breaks into pieces on impact. A medicine man puts it together again, which is why Tortoise’s shell is not smooth.

Chielo, in her role as priestess, informs Ekwefi that Agbala, Oracle of the Hills and Caves, wishes to see Ezinma. Frightened, Okonkwo and Ekwefi try to persuade Chielo to wait until morning, but Chielo angrily reminds Okonkwo that he must not defy a god’s will. Chielo takes Ezinma on her back and forbids anyone to follow. Ekwefi overcomes her fear of divine punishment and follows anyway. Chielo, carrying Ezinma, makes her rounds of the nine villages. When Chielo finally enters the Oracle’s cave, Ekwefi resolves that if she hears Ezinma crying she will rush in to defend her—even against a god. Okonkwo startles her when he arrives at the cave with a machete. He calms Ekwefi and sits with her. She remembers when she ran away from her first husband to be Okonkwo’s wife. When he answered her knock at his door, they exchanged no words. He led her to his bed and began to undo her clothing.

Summary: Chapter 12

At dawn, Chielo exits the shrine with Ezinma on her back. Without saying a word, she takes Ezinma to Ekwefi’s hut and puts her to bed. It turns out that Okonkwo was extremely worried the night before, although he did not show it. He forced himself to wait a while before walking to the Oracle’s shrine. When he found it empty, he realized that Chielo was making her rounds to the nine villages, so he returned home to wait. In all, he made four trips to and from the caves. By the time he departed for the cave for the last time, Okonkwo was “gravely worried.”

Okonkwo's family begins to prepare for Obierika's daughter's uri, a betrothal ceremony. The villagers contribute food to the festivities and Obierika buys a huge goat to present to his future in-laws. The preparations are briefly interrupted when the women retrieve an escaped cow and the cow's owner pays a fine for setting his cows loose on his neighbors' farms. The suitor's family members arrive and settle the clan's doubts about their generosity by bringing an impressive fifty pots of wine to the celebration. The women greet the visitors and the men exchange ceremonial greetings. The feast is a success.

Summary: Chapter 13

Ogbuefi Ezeudu's death is announced to the surrounding villages with the ekwe, a musical instrument. Okonkwo shudders. The last time Ezeudu visited him was to warn him against taking part in Ikemefuna's death. Since Ezeudu was a great warrior who took three of the clan's four titles, his funeral is large and elaborate. The men beat drums and fire their guns. Okonkwo's gun accidentally goes off and kills Ezeudu's sixteen-year-old son.

Killing a clansman is a crime against the earth goddess, so Okonkwo must atone by taking his family into exile for seven years. Okonkwo gathers his most valuable belongings and takes his family to his mother's natal village, Mbanta. According to the mandates of tradition, the men from Ezeudu's quarter burn Okonkwo's buildings and kill his animals to cleanse the village of his sin. Obierika questions why a man should suffer so much for an accidental killing. He then mourns the deaths of his wife's twins, whom he was forced to throw away, wondering what crime they committed.

Analysis: Chapters 12–13

In the previous section, we see Okonkwo's behavior the night of the incident with Chielo as it appears to Ekwefi: Okonkwo shows up with his machete and fulfills the role of the strong, manly protector. At the beginning of Chapter 12, though, the narrator focuses on Okonkwo's internal state and we see his true feelings rather than his apparent ones. Because Okonkwo views affection as a sign of weakness, he forces himself to wait before following Chielo. Each time he makes the trip to the caves and finds her missing, he returns home again to wait. Not until his fourth trip does he encounter Ekwefi. Okonkwo is not the cruel, heartless man that he presents himself to be; rather, he is gravely worried about Ezinma's welfare. His hyperbolic understanding of manliness—the result of his tragic flaw—prevents his better nature from showing itself fully. Chielo's actions force Okonkwo to acknowledge how important his wife and child are to him.

The importance of kinship bonds in manifests itself in the ramifications of the violation of such bonds. When Ikemefuna enters Okonkwo's family as a surrogate son, he begins to heal the tension that exists between Okonkwo and Nwoye as a result of Okonkwo's difficulty in dealing with the memory of his father. Ikemefuna is thus presented as a possible solution to Okonkwo's tragic flaw. But Okonkwo fails to overcome his flaw and, in killing the boy who has become his son, damages his relationship with Nwoye permanently. Moreover, he seriously injures Nwoye's respect for, and adherence to, Igbo cultural tradition.

Summary: Chapter 14

Okonkwo's uncle, Uchendu, and the rest of his kinsmen receive him warmly. They help him build a new compound of huts and lend him yam seeds to start a farm. Soon, the rain that signals the beginning of the farming season arrives, in the unusual form of huge drops of hail. Okonkwo works hard on his new farm but with less enthusiasm than he had the first time around. He has toiled all his life because he wanted "to become one of the lords of the clan," but now that possibility is gone. Uchendu perceives Okonkwo's disappointment but waits to speak with him until after his son's wedding. Okonkwo takes part in the ceremony.

The following day, Uchendu gathers together his entire family, including Okonkwo. He points out that one of the most common names they give is Nneka, meaning "Mother is Supreme"—a man belongs to his fatherland and stays there when life is good, but he seeks refuge in his motherland when life is bitter and harsh. Uchendu uses the analogy of children, who belong to their fathers but seek refuge in their mothers' huts when their fathers beat them. Uchendu advises Okonkwo to receive the comfort of the motherland gratefully. He reminds Okonkwo that many have been worse off—Uchendu himself has lost all but one of his six wives and buried twenty-two children. Even so, Uchendu tells Okonkwo, "I did not hang myself, and I am still alive."

Summary: Chapter 15

During the second year of Okonkwo's exile, Obierika brings several bags of cowries to Okonkwo. He also brings bad news: a village named Abame has been destroyed. It seems that a white man arrived in Abame on an "iron horse" (which we find out later is a bicycle) during the planting season. The village elders consulted their oracle, which prophesied that the white man would be followed by others, who would bring destruction to Abame. The villagers killed the white man and tied his bicycle to their sacred tree to prevent it from getting away and telling the white man's friends. A while later, a group of white men discovered the bicycle and guessed their comrade's fate. Weeks later, a group of men surrounded Abame's market and destroyed almost everybody in the village. Uchendu asks Obierika what the first white man said to the villagers. Obierika replies that he said nothing, or rather, he said things that the villagers did not understand. Uchendu declares that Abame was foolish to kill a man who said nothing. Okonkwo

agrees that the villagers were fools, but he believes that they should have heeded the oracle's warning and armed themselves.

The reason for Obierika's visit and for the bags of cowries that he brings Okonkwo is business. Obierika has been selling the biggest of Okonkwo's yams and also some of his seed yams. He has given others to sharecroppers for planting. He plans to continue to bring Okonkwo the money from his yams until Okonkwo returns to Iguedo.

Summary: Chapter 16

Two years after his first visit (and three years after Okonkwo's exile), Obierika returns to Mbanta. He has decided to visit Okonkwo because he has seen Nwoye with some of the Christian missionaries who have arrived. Most of the other converts, Obierika finds, have been *efulefu*, men who hold no status and who are generally ignored by the clan. Okonkwo will not talk about Nwoye, but Nwoye's mother tells Obierika some of the story.

The narrator tells the story of Nwoye's conversion: six missionaries, headed by a white man, travel to Mbanta. The white man speaks to the village through an interpreter, who, we learn later, is named Mr. Kiaga. The interpreter's dialect incites mirthful laughter because he always uses Umuofia's word for "my buttocks" when he means "myself." He tells the villagers that they are all brothers and sons of God. He accuses them of worshipping false gods of wood and stone. The missionaries have come, he tells his audience, to persuade the villagers to leave their false gods and accept the one true God. The villagers, however, do not understand how the Holy Trinity can be accepted as one God. They also cannot see how God can have a son and not a wife. Many of them laugh and leave after the interpreter asserts that Umuofia's gods are incapable of doing any harm. The missionaries then burst into evangelical song. Okonkwo thinks that these newcomers must be insane, but Nwoye is instantly captivated. The "poetry of the new religion" seems to answer his questions about the deaths of Ikemefuna and the twin newborns, soothing him "like the drops of frozen rain melting on the dry palate."

Summary: Chapter 17

The missionaries request a piece of land on which to build a church. The village leaders and elders offer them a plot in the Evil Forest, believing that the missionaries will not accept it. To the elders' amazement, the missionaries rejoice in the offer. But the elders are certain that the forest's sinister spirits and forces will kill the missionaries within days. To their surprise,

however, nothing happens, and the church soon wins its first three converts. The villagers point out that sometimes their ancestral spirits will allow an offending man a grace period of twenty-eight days before they punish his sins, but they are completely astounded when nothing happens after twenty-eight days. The church thus wins more converts, including a pregnant woman, Nneka. Her four previous pregnancies produced twins, and her husband and his family are not sorry to see her go.

One of Okonkwo's cousins notices Nwoye among the Christians and informs Okonkwo. When Nwoye returns, Okonkwo chokes him by the neck, demanding to know where he has been. Uchendu orders him to let go of the boy. Nwoye leaves his father's compound and travels to a school in Umuofia to learn reading and writing. Okonkwo wonders how he could ever have fathered such an effeminate, weak son.

Summary: Chapter 18

The church wins many converts from the efulefu (titleless, worthless men). One day, several osu, or outcasts, come to church. Many of the converts move away from them, though they do not leave the service. Afterward, there is an uproar, but Mr. Kiaga firmly refuses to deny the outcasts membership to the church. He argues that they will not die if they cut their hair or break any of the other taboos that have been imposed upon them. Mr. Kiaga's steadfast conviction persuades most of the other converts not to reject their new faith simply because the outcasts have joined them. The osu soon become the most zealous members of the church. To the clan's disbelief, one boasts that he killed the sacred royal python. Okonkwo urges Mbanta to drive the Christians out with violence, but the rulers and elders decide to ostracize them instead. Okonkwo bitterly remarks that this is a "womanly" clan. After announcing the new policy of ostracism, the elders learn that the man who boasted of killing the snake has died of an illness. The villagers' trust in their gods is thereby reaffirmed, and they cease to ostracize the converts.

Summary: Chapter 19

Okonkwo's seven years of exile in Mbanta are drawing to an end. Before he returns to Umuofia, he provides a large feast for his mother's kinsmen. He is grateful to them but secretly regrets the missed opportunity to have further increased his status and influence among his own clan. He also regrets having spent time with such un-masculine people. At the feast, one man expresses surprise that Okonkwo has been so generous with his food and another praises Okonkwo's devotion to the kinship bond. He also expresses concern for the younger generation, as Christianity is winning people away from their families and traditions.

Analysis: Chapters 17–19

Nwoye is drawn to Christianity because it seems to answer his long-held doubts about his native religion, specifically the abandonment of twin newborns and Ikemefuna's death. Furthermore, Nwoye feels himself exiled from his society because of his disbelief in its laws, and the church offers refuge to those whom society has cast out. The church's value system will allow twins to live, for example, which offers comfort to the pregnant woman who has had to endure the casting away to die of her four sets of newborn twins. Similarly, men without titles turn to Christianity to find affirmation of their individual worth. The *osu* are able to discard others' perception of them as members of an ostracized caste and enter the church as the equals of other converts.

Okonkwo, on the other hand, has good reason to reject Christianity. Should Mbanta not drive the missionaries away, his killing of Ikemefuna would lose part of its religious justification. The damage to his relationship with Nwoye also seems more pointless than before. Both matters become his mistake rather than the result of divine will. Moreover, men of high status like Okonkwo view the church as a threat because it undermines the cultural value of their accomplishments. Their titles and their positions as religious authorities and clan leaders lose force and prestige if men of lower status are not there—the great cannot be measured against the worthless if the worthless have disappeared.

Summary: Chapter 20

Okonkwo has planned since his first year in exile to rebuild his compound on a larger scale. He also wants to take two more wives and get titles for his sons. He has managed to get over Nwoye's disgraceful departure, but he still regrets that Ezinma is a girl. He asked that she wait to marry in Umuofia, after his exile, to which she consented. She even persuaded her sister, Obiageli, to do the same. Okonkwo hopes to attract interest when he returns with two beautiful, marriageable daughters.

However, Umuofia is much changed after seven years. The church has grown in strength and the white men subject the villagers to their judicial system and rules of government. They are harsh and arrogant, and Okonkwo cannot believe that his clan has not driven the white men and their church out. Sorrowfully, Obierika explains that the church has weakened the ties of kinship and that it is too late to drive the white men out. Many of the clansmen are now on the white man's side. Okonkwo observes that the white man is very shrewd because he came in peace and appeared to have only benevolent interests in the Africans, who thus permitted him to stay. They discuss the story of Aneto, who was hanged by the government after he killed a man with whom he had a dispute. Aneto had been unsatisfied with the new court's ruling on the dispute because it

ignored custom. Obierika and Okonkwo conclude their discussion on a fatalistic note, sitting in silence together.

Summary: Chapter 21

Many people of Umuofia are not entirely unhappy with the white men's influence on their community. They have set up trading posts, and money is flowing into the village. Mr. Brown, the white missionary, restrains his flock from antagonizing the clan. He and Akunna, one of the clan's leaders, meet often to debate and discuss their respective religious views. Akunna explains that the clan also has just one god, Chukwu, who created the world and the other gods. Mr. Brown replies that there are no other gods. He points to a carving and states that it is not a god but a piece of wood. Akunna agrees that it is a piece of wood, but wood created by Chukwu. Neither converts the other, but each leaves with a greater understanding of the other's faith.

Mr. Brown builds a hospital and a school. He begs the villagers to send their children to school and warns them that if they do not, strangers who can read and write will come to rule them. His arguments are fairly effective and his hospital wins praise for its treatments. When Okonkwo first returns to Umuofia, Mr. Brown goes to tell him that Nwoye is in a training college for teachers. Okonkwo chases him away with threats of violence. Not long afterward, Mr. Brown's health begins to fail, and, sad, he leaves his flock.

Okonkwo's daughters attract many suitors, but to his grave disappointment, his clan takes no particular interest in his return. The ozo initiation ceremony occurs only once in three years, meaning that he must wait two years to initiate his sons. He deeply regrets the changes in his once warlike people.

Analysis: Chapters 20–21

Okonkwo's status as a warrior and farmer and his clan's perception of him have changed since his exile. His increasing loss of power and prestige brings him great anxiety. Any remaining doubt that Okonkwo is slightly crazy is quelled when we learn that he has been fantasizing about, and seriously planning for, his triumphant return to his village since his departure. Okonkwo has great expectations for himself—in Chapter 20 we are told that, "he saw himself taking the highest title of the land."

Summary: Chapter 22

Reverend James Smith, a strict and intolerant man, replaces Mr. Brown. He demands the utmost obedience to the letter of the Bible and disapproves of Mr. Brown's tolerant and unorthodox policies. The more zealous converts are relieved to be free of Mr. Brown's policy of restraint. One such convert, Enoch, dares to unmask an egwugwu during the annual ceremony to honor the earth deity, an act equivalent to killing an ancestral spirit. The next day, the egwugwu burn Enoch's compound to the ground. They then gather in front of the church to confront Reverend Smith and his fellow Christians. They tell the Christians that they only wish to destroy the church in order to cleanse their village of Enoch's horrible sin. Smith replies that he will stand his ground. He forbids them to touch the church, but his interpreter alters Smith's statement for fear that the unvarnished truth will be too harsh and that he will suffer as the messenger of bad news. He tells the egwugwu that Smith demands that they leave the matter in his hands. They ignore Smith's orders and burn the church.

Questions.

1. Discuss the character traits of reverend smith and Enoch as portrayed in this chapter.
2. Discuss the themes portrayed in this chapter.

Summary: Chapter 23

Okonkwo is almost happy again, despite the fact that his clan did not agree to kill the Christians or drive them away. Even so, he and the rest of the villagers are on their guard, and for the next two days they arm themselves with guns and machetes. The District Commissioner returns from his tour and requests that the leaders of Umuofia meet with him. They go, taking only their machetes because guns would be "unseemly." The commissioner talks to them in condescending terms and says that they should discuss the church's burning "as friends." No sooner have they put their machetes on the floor than a group of soldiers surprises them. They are handcuffed and thrown in jail for several days, where they suffer insults and physical abuse. A kind of bail is set at two hundred bags of cowries. The court messengers tell the people of Umuofia that they must pay a fine of two hundred and fifty bags of cowries or their leaders will be hanged—by upping the price these messengers will make a profit as intermediaries. The town crier announces an emergency village meeting. Even Ezinma returns home from her twenty-eight-day visit to her future in-laws. The next morning they decide to collect the cowries necessary to pay the fine.

Analysis: Chapters 22–23

Reverend Smith causes a great deal of conflict between the church and the clan with his refusal to understand and respect traditional Igbo culture. Mr. Brown, by contrast, is far more lenient

with the converts' retention of some of their old beliefs and doesn't draw as clear a line between the converts and the Igbo community. Smith, however, demands a complete rejection of the converts' old religious beliefs. The text ironically comments that he "sees things as black and white." While on the one hand this comment refers simply to an inability to grasp the gradations in a given situation, it also refers, of course, to race relations and colonial power. Interestingly, Achebe has named Smith's predecessor "Brown," as if to suggest that the latter's practice of compromise and benevolence is in some way related to his ability to see the shades between the poles of black and white. Smith, by contrast, is a stereotypical European colonialist, as the generic quality of his name reflects. His inability to practice mutual respect and tolerance incites a dangerous zealous fervor in some of the more eager converts, such as Enoch. Smith's attitude encourages Enoch to insult traditional Igbo culture.

That Enoch is the son of the snake-priest makes his suspected killing of the sacred python all the more dire a transgression. Enoch's conversion and alleged attack on the python emblemize the transition from the old order to the new. The old religion, with its insistence on deism and animal worship, is overturned from within by one. In its place comes the new religion, which, for all its protestations of love and harmony, brandishes a fiery logic and fierce resolve to convert the Igbo at any cost.

Enoch figures as a double for Okonkwo, although they espouse different beliefs. They are similar in temperament, and each man rebels against the practices and legacies of his father. Like Okonkwo, Enoch feels above all others in his tradition. He also feels contempt for them—he imagines that every sermon is "preached for the benefit of his enemies," and, in the middle of church, he gives knowing looks whenever he feels that his superiority has been affirmed. Most important, in his blind and unthinking adherence to Christianity, Enoch allows his violent desires to take over, just as Okonkwo is prone to do.

The language barrier between the colonists and the villagers enables a crucial misunderstanding to take place. Unawareness of his interpreter's attempt to appease the villagers, Smith considers the burning of the church an open show of disrespect for the church and his authority. The power that the interpreter holds highlights the weaknesses and vulnerability created by the language gap, reinforcing Mr. Brown's belief that reading and writing are essential skills for the villagers if they hope to maintain their autonomy. This miscommunication reminds us of Parrot's trickiness in Ekwefi's story about Tortoise.

Summary: Chapter 24

After their release, the prisoners return to the village with such brooding looks that the women and children from the village are afraid to greet them. The whole village is overcome with a tense and unnatural silence. Ezinma takes Okonkwo some food, and she and Obierika notice the whip marks on his back.

The village crier announces another meeting for the following morning, and the clan is filled with a sense of foreboding. At sunrise, the villagers gather. Okonkwo has slept very little out of excitement and anticipation. He has thought it over and decided on a course of action to which he will stick no matter what the village decides as a whole. He takes out his war dress and assesses his smoked raffia skirt, tall feather headgear, and shield as in adequate condition. He remembers his former glories in battle and ponders that the nature of man has changed. The meeting is packed with men from all of the clan's nine villages.

The first speaker laments the damage that the white man and his church have done to the clan and bewails the desecration of the gods and ancestral spirits. He reminds the clan that it may have to spill clansmen's blood if it enters into battle with the white men. In the middle of the speech, five court messengers approach the crowd. Their leader orders the meeting to end. No sooner have the words left the messenger's mouth than Okonkwo kills him with two strokes of his machete. A tumult rises in the crowd, but not the kind for which Okonkwo hopes: the villagers allow the messengers to escape and bring the meeting to a conclusion. Someone even asks why Okonkwo killed the messenger. Understanding that his clan will not go to war, Okonkwo wipes his machete free of blood and departs.

He had already chosen the title of the book . . . The Pacification of the Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger.

Summary: Chapter 25

When the District Commissioner arrives at Okonkwo's compound, he finds a small group of men sitting outside. He asks for Okonkwo, and the men tell him that Okonkwo is not at home. The commissioner asks a second time, and Obierika repeats his initial answer. The commissioner starts to get angry and threatens to imprison them all if they do not cooperate. Obierika agrees to lead him to Okonkwo in return for some assistance. Although the commissioner does not understand the gist of the exchange, he follows Obierika and a group of clansmen. They proceed to a small bush behind Okonkwo's compound, where they discover Okonkwo's body dangling from a tree. He has hanged himself.

Obierika explains that suicide is a grave sin and his clansmen may not touch Okonkwo's body. Though they have sent for strangers from a distant village to help take the body down, they also ask the commissioner for help. He asks why they cannot do it themselves, and they explain that his body is evil now and that only strangers may touch it. They are not allowed to bury it, but again, strangers can. Obierika displays an uncharacteristic flash of temper and lashes out at the commissioner, blaming him for Okonkwo's death and praising his friend's greatness. The commissioner decides to honor the group's request, but he leaves and orders his messengers to do the work. As he departs, he congratulates himself for having added to his store of knowledge of African customs.

The commissioner, who is in the middle of writing a book about Africa, imagines that the circumstances of Okonkwo's death will make an interesting paragraph or two, if not an entire chapter. He has already chosen the title: *The Pacification of the Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger*.

Okonkwo, the son of the effeminate and lazy Unoka, strives to make his way in a world that seems to value manliness. In so doing, he rejects everything for which he believes his father stood. Unoka was idle, poor, profligate, cowardly, gentle, and interested in music and conversation. Okonkwo consciously adopts opposite ideals and becomes productive, wealthy, thrifty, brave, violent, and adamantly opposed to music and anything else that he perceives to be "soft," such as conversation and emotion. He is stoic to a fault.

CHARACTER AND CHARACTER ANALYSIS

OKONKWO

Okonkwo achieves great social and financial success by embracing these ideals. He marries three women and fathers several children. Nevertheless, just as his father was at odds with the values of the community around him, so too does Okonkwo find himself unable to adapt to changing times as the white man comes to live among the Umuofians. As it becomes evident that compliance rather than violence constitutes the wisest principle for survival, Okonkwo realizes that he has become a relic, no longer able to function within his changing society.

Okonkwo is a tragic hero in the classical sense: although he is a superior character, his tragic flaw—the equation of manliness with rashness, anger, and violence—brings about his own destruction. Okonkwo is gruff, at times, and usually unable to express his feelings (the narrator frequently uses the word "inwardly" in reference to Okonkwo's emotions). But his emotions are indeed quite complex, as his "manly" values conflict with his "unmanly" ones, such as fondness for Ikemefuna and Ezinma. The narrator privileges us with information that Okonkwo's fellow clan members do not have—that Okonkwo surreptitiously follows Ekwefi into the forest in pursuit of Ezinma, for example—and thus allows us to see the tender, worried father beneath the seemingly indifferent exterior.

Okonkwo is brave and courageous. In the text things fall apart, Okonkwo is looked at as a very brave character. In the first chapter, Okonkwo beats Amalige the cat whom for several years had held an unbeaten run. In fact his fight with Amalige is described to be the fieriest in the history of Umuofia. Okonkwo winning this fight at such a young age makes him to be looked at as brave and courageous character. He also participates in wars and on several occasions, he drinks his palm wine with the heads of those he killed. This proves that he is such a brave and courageous character.

Okonkwo is also looked as a caring and loving character. Though physically Okonkwo does not want to show that he loves since according to him, showing emotions of love is a feminine character. However, he loves his daughter Ezinma and he always wishes she was a boy. Okonkwo's love with Obierika is outstanding. Even when Okonkwo is banished from Umuofia, Obierika stands by his side. Obierika even sells Okonkwo's yams and sends the money to Okonkwo in Mbiano. This shows the love that Okonkwo has.

Okonkwo is looked at as a very hardworking character. Okonkwo is so self made since his father Unoka left him with no inheritance as other fathers in Umuofia did. Okonkwo starts from scratch to build an empire of wealth that makes him to be one of the men in the society to have titles. He goes to Nwakibi one of the wealthiest men in Umuofia from whom he gets yams. However much he gets bad yields at the start, Okonkwo does not give up he keeps on working hard until he becomes a man respectable in his society because of his spirit of hard work.

Okonkwo is also an intolerant character. Okonkwo detests anything that has a feminine character. In this case, he does not even want to show anything that will make him appear to have women character. Okonkwo gives his son Nwoye several beatings because he fails to please his with masculine character. He also kills Ikemefuna just because he could not tolerate to be looked as a coward since cowardice is looked as feminine.

Okonkwo is a proud character.

NWOYE

Nwoye, Okonkwo's oldest son, struggles in the shadow of his powerful, successful, and demanding father. His interests are different from Okonkwo's and resemble more closely those of Unoka, his grandfather. He undergoes many beatings, at a loss for how to please his father, until the arrival of Ikemefuna, who becomes like an older brother and teaches him a gentler form of successful masculinity. As a result, Okonkwo backs off, and Nwoye even starts to win his grudging approval. Nwoye remains conflicted, however: though he makes a show of scorning feminine things in order to please his father, he misses his mother's stories.

With the unconscionable murder of Ikemefuna, however, Nwoye retreats into himself and finds himself forever changed. His reluctance to accept Okonkwo's masculine values turns into pure embitterment toward him and his ways. When missionaries come to Mbanta, Nwoye's hope and faith are reawakened, and he eventually joins forces with them. Although Okonkwo curses his lot for having borne so "effeminate" a son and disowns Nwoye, Nwoye appears to have found peace at last in leaving the oppressive atmosphere of his father's tyranny

EZINMA

Ezinma, Okonkwo's favorite daughter and the only child of Ekwefi, is bold in the way that she approaches—and even sometimes contradicts—her father. Okonkwo remarks to himself multiple times that he wishes she had been born a boy, since he considers her to have such a masculine spirit.

Ezinma alone seems to win Okonkwo's full attention, affection, and, ironically, respect. She and he are kindred spirits, which boosts her confidence and precociousness.

She grows into a beautiful young woman who sensibly agrees to put off marriage until her family returns from exile so as to help her father leverage his sociopolitical power most effectively. In doing so, she shows an approach similar to that of Okonkwo: she puts strategy ahead of emotion.

MR BROWN

Mr. Brown represents Achebe's attempt to craft a well-rounded portrait of the colonial presence by tempering bad personalities with good ones. Mr. Brown's successor, **Reverend Smith, is zealous, vengeful, small-minded, and manipulative;** he thus stands in contrast to Mr. Brown, who, on the other hand, is benevolent if not always beneficent. Mr. Brown succeeds in winning a large number of converts because he listens to the villagers' stories, beliefs, and opinions.

He also accepts the converts unconditionally.

His conversation with Akunna represents this sympathetic stance. The derisive comments that Reverend Smith makes about Mr. Brown after the latter's departure illustrate the colonial intolerance for any kind of sympathy for, and genuine interest in, the native culture. The surname Brown hints at his ability to navigate successfully the clear-cut racial division between the colonizers and the colonized.

IKEMEFUNA

Ikemefuna comes to Umuofia early in the book, as settlement for a dispute with a nearby village. Not knowing what else to do with him, Okonkwo lets Ikemefuna live with his first wife. Ikemefuna quickly becomes a well-loved member of the family. He serves as a role model for Okonkwo's eldest son, Nwoye, and over time he also earns Okonkwo's respect. But more important than the role he plays in Okonkwo's family is the effect his death has on the unfolding events of the novel. When the village elders decide the time has come to kill Ikemefuna and finally settle the dispute with the neighboring village, Okonkwo insists on taking part in the execution, despite the fact that the boy calls him "father." Okonkwo ends up killing Ikemefuna himself out of fear that his failure to take responsibility would make him look weak. Ikemefuna's death irreversibly harms the relationship between Okonkwo and Nwoye. His death is also a bad omen that has a symbolic connection to Okonkwo's later exile from Umuofia. In this sense, the death of Ikemefuna signals the start of things falling apart.

UNOKA

Unoka is Okonkwo's father, who died ten years prior to the opening of the novel. Although Unoka is not physically present in the novel, he plays an important role in Okonkwo's memory. Ever since he was a child, Okonkwo felt deeply ashamed of his father. For one thing, Unoka felt squeamish about blood. His fear of blood prevented him from becoming a warrior and earning the kind of title that would have won him distinction within the community. In fact, Unoka tended to be more of a drain on the community than an active contributor. He had a reputation for borrowing large sums from various people, and he rarely if ever repaid his debts. Unoka also was drawn to creative activities, such as music. To Okonkwo, his father's aversion to violence and his preference for the arts marked him as an effeminate idler, precisely the opposite of what Okonkwo hoped to become. In the novel, Unoka's negative reputation drives Okonkwo's obsession with masculinity and personal achievement.

THEMES

Themes are the fundamental and often universal ideas explored in a literary work.

The Struggle Between Change and Tradition

As a story about a culture on the verge of change, *Things Fall Apart* deals with how the prospect and reality of change affect various characters. The tension about whether change should be privileged over tradition often involves questions of personal status. Okonkwo, for example, resists the new political and religious orders because he feels that they are not manly and that he himself will not be manly if he consents to join or even tolerate them. To some extent, Okonkwo's resistance of cultural change is also due to his fear of losing societal status. His sense of self-worth is dependent upon the traditional standards by which society judges him. This system of evaluating the self inspires many of the clan's outcasts to embrace Christianity. Long scorned, these outcasts find in the Christian value system a refuge from the Igbo cultural values that place them below everyone else. In their new community, these converts enjoy a more elevated status.

The villagers in general are caught between resisting and embracing change and they face the dilemma of trying to determine how best to adapt to the reality of change. Many of the villagers are excited about the new opportunities and techniques that the missionaries bring. This European influence, however, threatens to extinguish the need for the mastery of traditional methods of farming, harvesting, building, and cooking. These traditional methods, once crucial for survival, are now, to varying degrees, dispensable. Throughout the novel, Achebe shows how

dependent such traditions are upon storytelling and language and thus how quickly the abandonment of the Igbo language for English could lead to the eradication of these traditions.

Varying Interpretations of Masculinity

Okonkwo's relationship with his late father shapes much of his violent and ambitious demeanor. He wants to rise above his father's legacy of spendthrift, indolent behavior, which he views as weak and therefore effeminate. This association is inherent in the clan's language—the narrator mentions that the word for a man who has not taken any of the expensive, prestige-indicating titles is *agbala*, which also means “woman.” But, for the most part, Okonkwo's idea of manliness is not the clan's. He associates masculinity with aggression and feels that anger is the only emotion that he should display. For this reason, he frequently beats his wives, even threatening to kill them from time to time. We are told that he does not think about things, and we see him act rashly and impetuously. Yet others who are in no way effeminate do not behave in this way. Obierika, unlike Okonkwo, “was a man who thought about things.” Whereas Obierika refuses to accompany the men on the trip to kill Ikemefuna, Okonkwo not only volunteers to join the party that will execute his surrogate son but also violently stabs him with his machete simply because he is afraid of appearing weak.

Okonkwo's seven-year exile from his village only reinforces his notion that men are stronger than women. While in exile, he lives among the kinsmen of his motherland but resents the period in its entirety. The exile is his opportunity to get in touch with his feminine side and to acknowledge his maternal ancestors, but he keeps reminding himself that his maternal kinsmen are not as warlike and fierce as he remembers the villagers of Umuofia to be. He faults them for their preference of negotiation, compliance, and avoidance over anger and bloodshed. In Okonkwo's understanding, his uncle Uchendu exemplifies this pacifist (and therefore somewhat effeminate) mode.

Generational divide

Things Fall Apart spotlights two significant generational divides. The first divide separates Okonkwo from his father, Unoka. Unlike his son, Unoka is not a warrior, nor has he distinguished himself as a man in any other way. Instead, Unoka prefers to drink and play music with friends. For a hypermasculine man like Okonkwo, Unoka's lack of drive is shameful, and Okonkwo dismisses his father as a coward. Just as Okonkwo is divided from his father, he is also divided from his eldest son, Nwoye. Nwoye has much in common with his grandfather Unoka, especially with regard to his lack of interest in war and his love of the arts. Nwoye resists his

father's expectation that he become an accomplished warrior. He also feels drawn to his mother's stories, which Okonkwo sees as an effeminate waste of time. Eventually, Nwoye escapes his father's expectations and his wrath by running away and converting to Christianity. Although Okonkwo feels ashamed of both his father and his son, the novel suggests that Okonkwo is perhaps more of an anomaly than either Unoka or Nwoye.

Pride

Okonkwo's greatest weakness is his pride, which is constantly under threat both from within his community and from without. Okonkwo takes pride in his achievements. This pride is justifiable, since he has accomplished a lot. Not only has he proven himself among Umuofia's fiercest warriors, but he has also climbed Umuofia's social ladder faster than any of his peers. Yet Okonkwo's pride also makes him quick to disdain others who don't live up to his high standards. For instance, Nwoye's apparent lack of masculine qualities leads Okonkwo to worry about his own legacy and be aggressive towards Nwoye. Okonkwo's exile in Mbanta also deals a serious blow to his pride. When he returns to Umuofia he wants to restore his pride by defending his home against European influence. Okonkwo explains his position with an analogy: "If a man comes into my hut and defecates on the floor, what do I do? Do I shut my eyes? No! I take a stick and break his head." Okonkwo eventually resorts to violence to defend his pride, and this violence leads to his tragic downfall.

Repression

Throughout *Things Fall Apart* Okonkwo struggles with repressing his emotions. He represses his emotions because, more than anything else, he fears appearing weak and effeminate. Over and over in the novel Okonkwo's inner struggle to quash all emotional responses leads him to express himself with excessive cruelty. The narrator comments on this internal tug-of-war frequently. In chapter 4, for instance, the narrator explicitly addresses the theme of repression: "Okonkwo never showed any emotion openly, unless it be the emotion of anger. To show affection was a sign of weakness; the only thing worth demonstrating was strength." Okonkwo's belief that anger is the only appropriate emotion for a man to show causes significant problems for him, his family, and ultimately his community. For example, when Okonkwo kills Ikemefuna against the advice of Ogbuefi Ezeudu, he does so because "He was afraid of being thought weak." But Okonkwo's brutal killing of his adopted son breaks the heart of his blood son, Nwoye. This act deepens an already-existing wound between Okonkwo and Nwoye, one that never gets healed. Throughout the novel, emotional repression leads to damaging and eventually, for Okonkwo, tragic outbursts of anger and violence.

Explain the following themes in the novel things

1. Love
2. Western culture verses African traditional culture.

Questions.

1. What is the definition of masculinity according to the Igbo culture? Use vivid evidence from the novel Things Fall Apart.
2. What is the Okonkwo's contribution to what happens in Things Fall Apart?
3. Describe the character of Ezinma in the novel things fall apart.
4. What is the relevance of the novel things fall apart to our modern society.
5. What is the relevance of the title things fall apart to your understanding of the novel.
6. What do you admire in Ikemefuna?
7. What lessons do you learn from the novel Things Fall Apart?
8. Discuss three major themes in the novel Things Fall Apart
9. What is the role of Ikemefuna in the novel Things Fall Apart?
10. How does Okonkwo react the killing of Ikemefuna?

INTRODUCTION TO POETRY.

What is poetry?

Poetry refers to literary pieces of work that evoke a concentrated imaginative awareness of experiences or a specific emotional response through language chosen and arranged for its meaning, sound and rhythm.

According to the oxford dictionary, poetry is defined as a literary work in which specific intensity is given to the expression of feelings and ideas by use of distinctive style and rhythm.

Poetry can also be looked at as the use of condensed language to express a broad idea. Poetry creates imaginations, experiences and life. Poetry usually looks at the daily experiences that we face in our communities.

A person who writes poems is called a poet (male) for example Peter Kagayi from Uganda. He has written poems such as IN 2065, LAST NIGHT I TOLD A STRANGER ABOUT YOU. Poetess (female) for example Susan kiguli.

Question.

Write any five poets that you know.

Write at least three poems written by each of the poets mentioned above.

Characteristics of poetry.

- Poetry has distinctive features that make it to be unique from other literary forms. the characteristics of poetry are,
- The economy of words; poets usually carefully select words that can be used to express their message to a particular audience using fewer but heavily loaded with meaning words.
- The use of figurative language for example, use of metaphors, similes and many others.

- Use of stanzas
- The use of rhyme.

Importance of poetry.

- Poetry educates and it's a medium used to pass on moral values to individuals in a society.
- Poetry entertains due to the musicality and choice of words in poetry.
- Poetry criticises the wrongs that are done in our communities

Feelings, tone, mood.

- Feelings refer to the emotional state of the mind.
- Tone this refers to the speaker's quality of voice in a poem.
- Mood refers to a mental or emotional state or composure for example; I'm in a sad mood since I was dumped by my lover.

Describe a Positive Tone	Negative Tone	Describe Tones	Other
agreeable	annoyed	Ambivalent	
animated	bitter	Anxious	
clever	disgusted	Bashful	
clever	evil	Candid	
encouraging	guilty	Cautious	
fresh	hostile	Horrified	
gentle	hurtful	Intelligent	
hopeful	nasty	Mysterious	
kind	overbearing	Pragmatic	
loving	sarcastic	Political	
open	sardonic	Quizzical	
eased	resentful	Religious	
supportive		Secretive	
sympathetic		Secular	
warm		Strong	
describe a Positive Feeling	describe a Negative		Describe Feelings
amazed	aggravated		anxious
attractive	awful		awestruck
beautiful	chilly		bashful
b01d	depressed		cautious
brave	dirty		composed
cheerful	dreadful		easygoing

comfortable
delightful
excited
festive
free
jolly
optimistic
proud
wonderful

heavy
irritated
pessimistic
tearful
tense
terrible
tired
ugly
weak

horrified
intelligent
mysterious
political
quizzical
religious
secretive
secular
Shy

GROWING UP WITH POETRY.

The graceful giraffe cannot become a monkey.

My husband tells me
I have no ideas
Of modern beauty
He says
I have stuck
To old fashioned hair styles

He says
I am stupid and very backward
That my hair style
Makes him sick
Because I am dirty.

It is true
I cannot do my hair
As white women do

Listen,
My father comes from payira
My mother is a woman of koc!
I am a true Acoli
I am not a half caste
I am not a slave girl;
My father was not brought home
By the spear.

My mother was not exchanged
For a basket of millet.

Ask me what beauty is
To the acoli
And I will tell you
If you give me the chance.

You once saw me,
You saw my hairstyle
And you admired it,
And the boys loved it.
At the arena
Boys surrounded me\
And fought for me.

My mother taught me
Acoli hair fashions;
Which fits the kind
Of hair of the acoli and the occasion.

Listen,
Ostrich plumes differ
From chicken feathers
A monkey's tail
Is different from that of a giraffe
The crocodile's skin
Is not like the guinea fowl's
And the hippo is naked and hairless.

The hair of the Acoli
Is different from that of the Arab;
The Indian's hair
Resembles the tail of the horse;
It is like sisal strings
And needs to be cut
With scissors.
It is black,
And is different from that of white women.

A white woman's hair
Is soft like silk;
It is light
And brownish like
That of the brown monkey,
And is very different from mine
A black woman's hair
Is thick and curly;
It is true
Ring-warm sometime eats up
A little girl's hair
And terrible
But when hot porridge
Is put on the head and the dance is held
Under the sausage fruit tree
And the youths have sung

*You ring worm
Who is eating duka's hair?
Here is your porridge,*

Then the girl's hair
Begins to grow again
And the girl is pleased.
Okot p'bitek

Questions.

1. What is the poem about?
2. With valid evidence from the poem, state who the speaker is.
3. What comparisons does the husband make between his wife and foreigners?
4. Explain your feelings towards the speaker.
5. Which lessons do you learn from the poem?
6. Write a poem of your on the theme of education.

Answers.

The graceful giraffe cannot become a monkey

The speaker is:

A **wife** because in the first line, it says, 'My husband...'

Or a **traditional woman** because her husband refers to her as **backward** (stanza 2)

Or an **Acoli woman** because in stanza four, she says, 'I am a true Acoli'.

NB. The evidence is got from the different lines in the poem.
2 marks: one for mentioning the speaker and the other for the correct / valid reason.

The comparisons between the wife and foreigners:
The husband compares the **beauty** of the wife to that of the foreigners (the skin stanza 8).
The husband compares the **hairstyle** of the wife to that of the foreigners (stanza 1,2& 3).
2 marks: one each

Feelings towards the speaker:
I am **proud** of the speaker because she knows and appreciates who she is. (I am an Acoli)
I **admire** the speaker for standing up to her husband to tell him about the things he used to like about her much as he now thinks her stupid and backward.
I **love** the speaker for her courage to politely confront her husband or for the fact that she is proud of who she is.
I am **happy** for the speaker who stands up for herself.

All feelings towards the speaker should be **positive** because she is proud of her identity.
NB. Do not mark any answer with the word *feel e.g I feel proud*

4 marks: one each for every correctly expressed and explained point.

Lessons from the poem:

- ✓ I learn that I should appreciate who I am or be proud of who I am like the speaker.
- ✓ I learn that Charity begins at home unlike the husband in the poem who looks down on/scorns his wife for foreigners.
- ✓ I learn that one man's meat is another man's poison. (stanza 6)
- ✓ I learn to appreciate the differences in human beings because we cannot all be alike unlike the husband who wants his wife to be like foreigners.

2 marks: any 2 well explained lessons with evidence from the poem.

Own poem – **10** marks

Title: **1** mark (it should **not** be entitled Identity and **should be underlined**)

Correct number of lines (10 or more lines): **2** marks

Poem should bring out positivity on one's culture / background: **4** marks

Correct spelling & grammar: **2** marks

Presence of stanza format: **1** mark

Total marks = 20

AN AFRICAN THUNDERSTORM.

by David Rubadiri

From the west
Clouds come hurrying with the wind
Turning sharply
Here and there
Like a plague of locusts
Whirling,
Tossing up things on its tail
Like a madman chasing nothing.

Pregnant clouds
Ride stately on its back,
Gathering to perch on hills
Like sinister dark wings;
The wind whistles by
And trees bend to let it pass.

In the village
Screams of delighted children,
Toss and turn
In the din of the whirling wind,
Women,
Babies clinging on their backs
Dart about
In and out
Madly;
The wind whistles by
Whilst trees bend to let it pass.

Clothes wave like tattered flags
Flying off
To expose dangling breasts
As jagged blinding flashes
Rumble, tremble and crack
Amidst the smell of fired smoke
And the pelting march of the storm.

Questions.

1. What is the poem about?
2. Identify the speaker.
3. What are your feelings towards the speaker?
4. What makes the poem interesting?

Psalms 23 part II

The state is my shepherd, I shall not want; it makes me to
Lie down in a subsidized house
It leads me to political tranquility; it restores my faith in a lucrative future.
It leads me into paths of loans and pensions,
For its international reputation's sake.
Yea, even though the valley of the shadow
Of Kivvulu I will fear no Kondos;
For the state is with me, its tanks and guns comfort me.
It preserves for me a bank account, in the presence of devaluation;
It fills my pockets with allowances, my salary overflows.
Surely increments and promotion follow me all the days of my life;
And I shall dwell in senior staff quarters forever.

Questions.

1. What is the poem about?
2. Identify the speaker.
3. What are your feelings towards the speaker?
4. What makes the poem interesting?
5. Explain any two themes in the poem.

THE RETURN OF MGOFU BY FRANCIS IMBUGA.

About the author.

Francis Davis Imbuga (February 02, 1947 – November 18, 2012) was a Kenyan writer, playwright, literature scholar, teacher and professor at Kenyatta University. His works, including *Aminata* and *Betrayal in the City*, have become staples in the study of literature schools in Kenya. His works have consistently dealt with issues such as the clashes of modernity and tradition in the social organization of African communities. His play *Betrayal in the City* was Kenya's entry to FESTAC. His works have consistently dealt with issues such as the clashes of modernity and tradition in the social organisation of African communities. His play *Betrayal in the City* was Kenya's entry to FESTAC.

Francis Imbuga was a professor of literature at Kenyatta University, holding the posts of Dean of the Literature Department, Dean of Arts and Director of Quality Assurance. Imbuga was an honorary Fellow of the University of Iowa International Writing Programme.

Imbuga died on the night of Sunday November 18, 2012, after suffering a stroke.

Works

The Fourth Trial (1972)

Kisses of Fate (1972)

The Married Bachelor (1973)

Betrayal in the City (1976)

Games of Silence (1977)

The Successor (1979)

Man of Kafira (1984)

Aminata (1988)

The Burning of the Rags (1989)

Shrine of Tears (1992)
Miracle of Remera (2004)
The Green Cross Of Kafira (2013)

THE RETURN OF MGOFU

The return of Mgofu is a succinct and marvelously written play by one of the veteran playwrights- Francis Imbuga in the Kenyan theatre industry. The 62 page drama is a drama about two neighboring villages that face different fates because of their decisions. One village- Mndika is not as successful as their neighbor Nderema which was a peaceful one compared to Mndika. During turmoil in Mndika, a pregnant woman flees to Nderema and gives birth to Mgofu. Years later leaders in Mndika,-in their quest to resolve why their village despite having the best resources is not successful- sought to invite Mgofu Ngoda back to where his father belonged.

The cover of the book illustrates Africa being held in an arm while another arm in chains is trying to get a touch of the continent. Africa is shaded black. The book cover is an important aspect in understanding the book; that perhaps Africa is still struggling and the ones to rescue it are bound in chains.

The village of Mndika is in a bad state because of the unrest that is between its inhabitants. The author shrewdly with the use of African proverbs and sayings tells of a tale. His message about reconciliation and peace is concise. Keen to note is how good leadership is illustrated to be also a recipe for development in a state, specifically regarding the state of Nderema which blossomed under Mgofu Ngoda's rule.

The playwright uses otherworldly beings who aid the reader to understand the background of the story; especially the relationship between Mgofu Ngoda and Mndika. And as such, the concept of the importance of ancestors in Africa is highlighted.

As stated, the text is full of African sayings and proverbs and interestingly to note is that Francis Imbuga uses a proverb found in one of Chinua Achebe's novel, that "when a child washes his hands, he can eat with the kings". Such sayings show the appreciation for African literature and also African culture. The setting of the acts in the play also depict such honour to Africa and its values; with the characters' regalia and dialect not being too foreign from home.

A return by Mgofu Ngoda to his father's place of birth is complete but his fate is unknown as well as the fate of his daughter's marital status. The author however satisfies the reader as we see that the seer (Mgofu Ngoda) accepts to return.

The book is significant to Africa as it is known to be rich in resources but faces the quagmire of bad leadership, chaos and genocides that keeps the continent in a poor state. The author feels that

Africans benefit other continents more than they do their own, because of how governments treat the natives. However, it ends in a hopeful tone; that leaders will become wiser and seek to change the sorry state.

Themes in the return of Mgofu.

- Reconciliation and peace
- Conflict
- African traditional culture.

Questions.

- 1) Discuss the character traits of
 - a. Mgofu
- 2) What is the relevance of the play to the contemporary society?
- 3) Discuss the moral lessons learnt from the play.
- 4) What is the relevance of the title The Return of Mgofu to your understanding of the text?
- 5) Discuss the role of Mgofu in the play.
- 6) Discuss any three themes portrayed in the play.