



Prince George High School

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May 2018

Dear English 10H and IB students:

Welcome to the tenth grade and your comprehensive study of World Literature, advanced grammar, and SAT vocabulary. To begin your study of World Literature, you are to participate in summer reading. Your assignment this summer is to read *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe. This novel is available in public libraries and book stores. Copies of the assignment and the book are also available in the Prince George High School library and guidance office. **You do not have to purchase the book.**

Originally published in 1958, *Things Fall Apart* was one of the first novels by an African author to receive worldwide acclaim. Achebe wrote *Things Fall Apart* as a sharp criticism of imperialism, or the European colonization of countries outside of the European continent. Before you begin the novel, read the attached background information. Most publications of this book give information about the author and include a glossary of Ibo words and phrases that should also help you with reading comprehension. As you read, complete the attached assignments and prepare to turn them in during the first week of school. During the second week of school in September, you will be tested on the plot of the book. Please make sure you are familiar with the novel right before you return to school. These assignments will be your first grades in the class. **Please make sure all work is your own!**

I am looking forward to a wonderful, productive year in which you will come to appreciate and enjoy studying literature, grammar, and vocabulary. Much of our curriculum next year is intended to help you succeed in college. If you would like to purchase supplies for this class early, you will need a 2 inch 3 ring binder, sectional dividers, and highlighters for this class. See you in September as a sophomore at Prince George High School.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Emilie Merrill
English 10 Honors

Mrs. Elizabeth W. Houlihan
English 10 IB
Prince George High School (733-2720)

Historical Context: Things Fall Apart

EXPLORING Novels, 2003

Tribal Society

Things Fall Apart was published in 1958 just prior to Nigerian independence, but it depicts precolonial Africa. Achebe felt it was important to portray Nigerians as they really were—not just provide a shallow description of them as other authors had. The story takes place in the typical tribal village of Umuofia, where the inhabitants (whom Achebe calls the Ibo, but who are also known as the [Igbo](#)) practice rituals common to their native traditions.

The Ibo worshipped gods who protect, advise, and chastise them and who are represented by priests and priestesses within the clan. For example, the Oracle of the Hills and the Caves grants knowledge and wisdom to those who are brave enough to consult him. No one has ever seen the Oracle except his priestess, who is an Ibo woman who has special powers of her own. Not only did the gods advise the Ibo on community matters, but also they guided individuals. Each person had a personal god, or chi, that directed his or her actions. A strong chi meant a strong person; people with weak chis were pitied. Each man kept a separate hut, or shrine, where he stored the symbols of his personal god and his ancestral spirits.

A hunting and gathering society, the Ibo existed on vegetables, with yams as the primary crop. Yams were so important to them that the Ibo celebrated each new year with the Feast of the New Yam. This festival thanked Ani, the earth goddess and source of all fertility. The Ibo prepared for days for the festival, and the celebration itself lasted for two days. Yams also played a part in determining a man's status in the tribe—the more yams a man has, the higher his status. Trade with other villages was facilitated by small seashells called cowries which were used as a form of currency.

Within the village, people were grouped according to families, with the eldest man in the family having the most power. On matters affecting the whole village, an assembly of adult men debated courses of action, and men could influence these assemblies by purchasing "titles" from the tribal elders. This system encouraged hard work and the spread of wealth. People who transgressed against the laws and customs of the village had to confront the egwugwu, an assembly of tribesmen masked as spirits, who would settle disputes and hand out punishment. Individual villages also attained various degrees of political status. In the novel, other tribes respect and fear Umuofia. They believe that Umuofia's magic is powerful and that the village's war-medicine, or agadi-nwayi, is particularly potent. Neighboring clans always try to settle disputes peacefully with Umuofia to avoid having to war with them.

Christianity and Colonization

While Christianity spread across North and South Africa as early as the late fifteenth century, Christianity took its strongest hold when the majority of the missionaries arrived in the late 1800s. After centuries of taking slaves out of Africa, Britain had outlawed the [slave trade](#) and now saw the continent as ripe for colonization. Missionaries sent to convert the local population were often the first settlers. They believed they could atone for the horrors of [slavery](#) by saving the souls of Africans.

At first, Africans were mistrustful of European Christians, and took advantage of the education the missionaries provided without converting. Individuals who had no power under the current tribal order, however, soon converted; in the novel,

the missionaries who come to Umuofia convert only the weaker tribesmen, or efulefu. Missionaries would convince these tribesmen that their tribe worshipped false gods and that its false gods did not have the ability to punish them if they chose to join the mission. When the mission and its converts accepted even the outcasts of the clan, the missionaries' ranks grew. Eventually, some of the more important tribesmen would convert. As the mission expanded, the clan divided, discontent simmered, and conflicts arose.

English Bureaucrats and Colonization

After the arrival of the British, when conflicts came up between villages the white government would intervene instead of allowing villagers to settle them themselves. In the novel, a white District Commissioner brings with him court messengers whose duty it is to bring in people who break the white man's law. The messengers, called "Ashy-Buttocks" for the ash-colored shorts they wear, are hated for their high-handed attitudes. These messengers and interpreters were often African Christian converts who looked down on tribesmen who still followed traditional customs. If violence involved any white missionaries or bureaucrats, British soldiers would often slaughter whole villages instead of seeking and punishing guilty individuals. The British passed an ordinance in 1912 that legalized this practice, and during an uprising in 1915, British troops killed more than forty natives in retaliation for one dead and one wounded British soldier.

One of the most important results of Europe's colonization of Africa was the division of Africa into at least fifty nation-states. Rather than being a part of a society determined by common language and livelihood, Africans lived according to political **boundaries**. The divisions often split ethnic groups, leading to tension and sometimes violence. The cohesiveness of the traditional society was gone.

Nigerian Independence

British colonial rule in **Nigeria** lasted only fifty-seven years, from 1903 to 1960. Although Nigerians had long called for self-rule, it was not until the end of World War II that England began heeding these calls. The Richards Constitution of 1946 was the first attempt to grant some native rule by bringing the diverse peoples of Nigeria under one **representative government**. The three regions (northern, southern and western) were brought under the administration of one legislative council composed of twenty-eight Nigerians and seventeen British officers. Regional councils, however, guaranteed some independence from the national council and forged a link between local authorities, such as tribal chiefs, and the national government. There were three major tribes (the Hausa, the Yoruba and the Igbo) and more than eight smaller ones living in Nigeria. This diversity complicated the creation of a unified Nigeria. Between 1946 and 1960 the country went through several different constitutions, each one attempting to balance power between the regional and the national bodies of government.

On October 1, 1960, Nigeria attained full status as a sovereign state and a member of the British Commonwealth. But under the Constitution of 1960 the Queen of England was still the head of state. She remained the commander-in-chief of Nigeria's armed forces, and the Nigerian navy operated as part of Britain's Royal Navy. Nigerians felt frustrated by the implication that they were the subjects of a monarch living over 4,000 miles away. In 1963, five years after the publication of Achebe's novel, a new constitution would replace the British monarch with a Nigerian president as head of state in Nigeria.

Literary Traditions

Achebe wrote *Things Fall Apart* just before Nigeria received its independence. He intended the book for audiences outside Africa; he wanted to paint a true picture of precolonial Africa for those people who had no direct knowledge of traditional African societies. As a result of the Nigerians' acquisition of independence, the Nigerian educational system sought to encourage a national pride through the study of Nigerian heritage. The educational system required Achebe's book in high schools throughout the English-speaking countries in Africa. The book was well received. Chinua Achebe has been recognized as "the most original African novelist writing in English," according to Charles Larson in *The Emergence of African Fiction*. Critics throughout the world have praised *Things Fall Apart* as the first African English-language classic.

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Name _____

DATE DUE _____

DIALECTICAL JOURNAL- ENGLISH 10 HONORS and IB THINGS FALL APART

GUIDING QUESTION: To determine how a country's culture is reflected in its literature

DIRECTIONS: For your study of the novel *Things Fall Apart*, prepare a dialectical journal to help you with the guiding question. The purpose is for you to make note of evidence from the novel that reflects African culture and beliefs during a particular time period in history. You may record language, comments, literary devices, characters, beliefs and behaviors. There are several themes to examine: **religion, masculinity, respect & reputation, tradition & change, fate & free will, man & the natural world, and language & communication;** motifs* to examine: **Chi, Animal & Nature Imagery;** and symbols to examine: **fire, yams, and kola nuts.**

***Motif** is an object or idea that repeats itself throughout a literary work.

You must find, record, and explain **examples from the book.** Record them on the charts provided.

Themes in *Things Fall Apart*

RELIGION			MASCULINITY	
EXAMPLE	PAGE		EXAMPLE	PAGE
1. Clan View:			1. Okonkwo:	
EXPLANATION: what does this reflect?			EXPLANATION: what does this reflect?	
2. Clan View:			2. Nwoye:	
EXPLANATION: what does this reflect?			EXPLANATION: what does this reflect?	
3. Missionary Brown's View:			3. Unoka:	
EXPLANATION: what does this reflect?			EXPLANATION: what does this reflect?	
4. Missionary Smith's view:			4. Clan View:	
EXPLANATION: what does this reflect?			EXPLANATION: what does this reflect?	

TRADITION VS CHANGE			FATE & FREE WILL	
EXAMPLE	PAGE		EXAMPLE	PAGE
1. Clan View on the Osu/Outcast:			1. Ekwefi	
EXPLANATION: what does this reflect?			EXPLANATION: what does this reflect?	
2. Clan view on Government:			2. Twins:	
EXPLANATION: what does this reflect?			EXPLANATION: what does this reflect?	
3. Missionaries view on Outcasts/Converts:			3. Obanje	
EXPLANATION: what does this reflect?			EXPLANATION: what does this reflect?	
4. Colonialists view on Government:			4. Chi	
EXPLANATION: what does this reflect?			EXPLANATION: what does this reflect?	

LANGUAGE & COMMUNICATION			RESPECT & REPUTATION	
EXAMPLE	PAGE		EXAMPLE	PAGE
1. Example of a Proverb:			1. Clan View:	
EXPLANATION: what does this reflect?			EXPLANATION: what does this reflect?	
2. Example of a Proverb:			2. Okonkwo's View:	
EXPLANATION: what does this reflect?			EXPLANATION: what does this reflect?	
3. Uzowulu's Trial:			3. Colonist's View:	
EXPLANATION: what does this reflect?			EXPLANATION: what does this reflect?	
4. Motherland/ Uchendu- Okonkwo's Uncle			4. Unoka- Okonkwo's Father	
EXPLANATION: what does this reflect?			EXPLANATION: what does this reflect?	

Motifs in *Things Fall Apart*

Chi			Animal & Nature Imagery	
Definition:				
EXAMPLE:	PAGE		EXAMPLE	PAGE
1. Proverb:	Ch. 4		1. Tortoise:	
EXPLANATION: what does this reflect?			EXPLANATION: what does this reflect?	
2. Clan Belief:	Ch. 14		2. Sacred Python:	
EXPLANATION: what does this reflect?			EXPLANATION: what does this reflect?	
3. Okonkwo's Chi:			3. Locusts	
EXPLANATION: what does this reflect?			EXPLANATION: what does this reflect?	
4. Okonkwo's Chi:				
EXPLANATION: what does this reflect?				

Symbols in *Things Fall Apart*

FIRE			YAMS/ KOLA NUTS	
EXAMPLE	PAGE		EXAMPLE	PAGE
1. Okonkwo's Nickname (Roaring Flame):			1. Yams	
EXPLANATION: what does this reflect?			EXPLANATION: what does this reflect?	
2. Okonkwo's Inner Fire:			2. Yams	
EXPLANATION: what does this reflect?			EXPLANATION: what does this reflect?	
3. Burning of Okonkwo's Compound:			3. Kola Nut	
EXPLANATION: what does this reflect?			EXPLANATION: what does this reflect?	
			4. Kola Nut	
			EXPLANATION: what does this reflect?	