



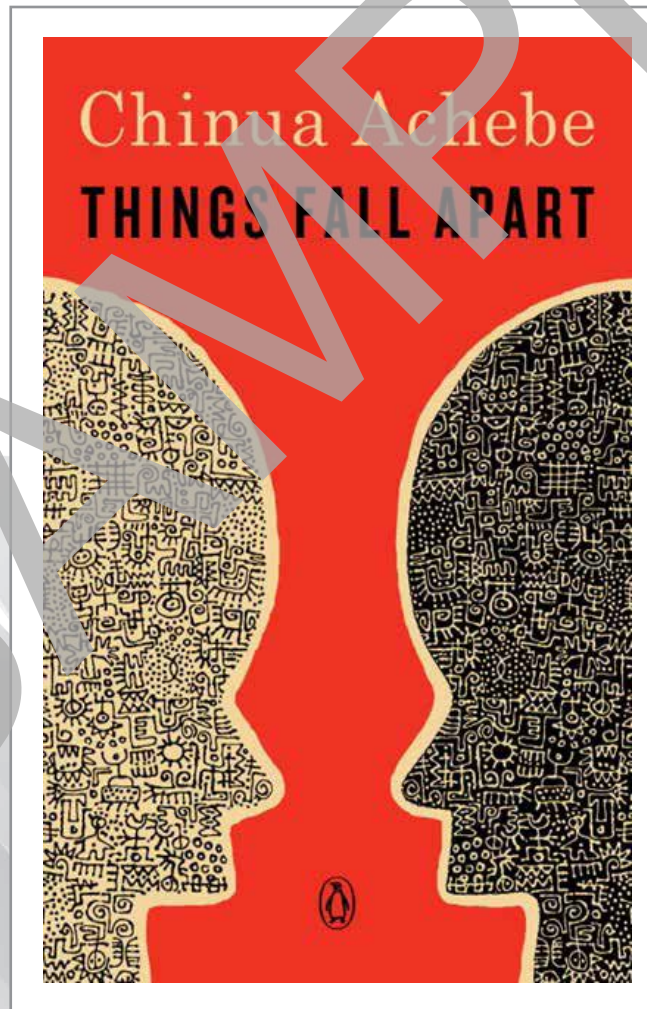
TEACHER GUIDE

GRADES 9-12

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

Things Fall Apart

Chinua Achebe



READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT

Things Fall Apart

Chinua Achebe

TEACHER GUIDE

NOTE:

The trade book edition of the novel used to prepare this guide is found in the Novel Units catalog and on the Novel Units website. Using other editions may have varied page references.

Please note: We have assigned Interest Levels based on our knowledge of the themes and ideas of the books included in the Novel Units sets, however, please assess the appropriateness of this novel or trade book for the age level and maturity of your students prior to reading with them. You know your students best!

ISBN 978-1-50204-254-5

Copyright infringement is a violation of Federal Law.

© 2020 by Novel Units, Inc., St. Louis, MO. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, translated, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any way or by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise) without prior written permission from Novel Units, Inc.

Reproduction of any part of this publication for an entire school or for a school system, by for-profit institutions and tutoring centers, or for commercial sale is strictly prohibited.

Novel Units is a registered trademark of Conn Education.

Printed in the United States of America.

To order, contact your
local school supply store, or:

Toll-Free Fax: 877.716.7272

Phone: 888.650.4224

3901 Union Blvd., Suite 155

St. Louis, MO 63115

sales@novelunits.com

novelunits.com

Table of Contents

Summary	3
About the Author	3
Background Information	4
Initiating Activities	5
Anticipation Guide, Viewing, Pre-reading Discussion, Response Journal, Brainstorming, Role Play, Geography, Literary Analysis, Writing	
Some Ideas for Vocabulary Study	8
Chapter-by-Chapter	10
Discussion Questions, Vocabulary, Writing Ideas, Activities	
Post-reading Questions	30
Post-reading Extension Activities	31
Assessment	36

Summary of *Things Fall Apart*

Things Fall Apart tells the story of Okonkwo, an Ibo tribesman living in the late 1800s in what is now Nigeria. After triumphing over his father's legacy of failure to become one of the most respected war heroes in his village, Okonkwo's stubborn pride in his reputation causes his eventual downfall. When British missionaries and government officials arrive to "civilize the savages," and clan members begin to abandon the old traditions of their barbaric religion in favor of Christianity and European-style commerce, Okonkwo is unable to adjust. While other clan leaders simply watch "things fall apart," Okonkwo makes one last bold move to rally a rebellion against the British intruders by beheading one of their court messengers with his machete. When none of his fellow clansmen follow his lead, Okonkwo hangs himself, a disgraceful act in the Ibo tradition. Untouchable by his own people, Okonkwo must be cut down and buried by the British. While his friends shake their heads in sad resignation, the District Commissioner muses that Okonkwo's story will make an interesting paragraph in the book the Commissioner is writing about his experiences among the savages.

About the Author

Born in 1930 in Ogidi, Eastern Nigeria, Chinua Achebe graduated from University College, Ibadan (now the University of Ibadan). He is one of Nigeria's most important writers. His novels analyze the effects of European colonization on Africa and particularly on the Ibo tribe of the southeastern portion of Nigeria.

Things Fall Apart (1958) tells of the arrival of European colonists and missionaries in the late 1800s. In subsequent novels, Achebe depicts the struggles of Africans to win back their independence. These novels include *No Longer At Ease* (1960)—considered a sequel to *Things Fall Apart*—*Arrow of God* (1964), *A Man of the People* (1966), and *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987).

Other writings include two volumes of poetry—*Beware, Soul Brother* and *Christmas in Biafra*; a collection of short stories—*Girls At War and Other Stories*; collected essays—*Hopes and Impediments* and *The Trouble with Nigeria*; and a children's book, *How the Leopard Got His Claws*.

Achebe has taught at the university level in Africa and in the United States, where he is now a professor at Bard College in New York. A recipient of numerous honors and awards, Achebe is a major contributor to world literature.

Discussion Questions • Vocabulary Writing Ideas • Activities

Chapters 1-3, pp. 7-27

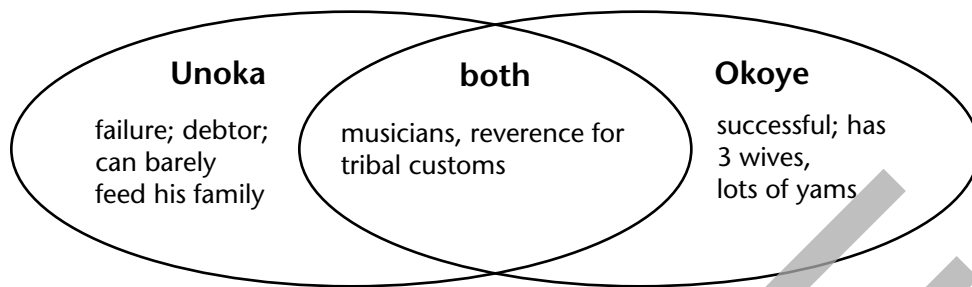
Summary: Okonkwo, an Ibo tribesman living in the nine-village area of Africa known as Umuofia, has worked very hard to become a success, but he is still dominated by his fear of becoming like his failed father and often treats people harshly. Ikemefuna, a boy from Mbaino, was given to Umuofia as a peace offering, and is being raised by one of Okonkwo's three wives.

Vocabulary

harmattan 3	improvident 4	cowries 4	haggard 4
kites 5	kola nut 6	ancestral 6	impending 6
plaintive 6	proverbs 7	prowess 8	revered 8
overtone 9	sinister 9	uncanny 9	vibrant 10
trill 10	orator 10	ultimatum 11	imperious 12
emissary 12	capricious 13	malevolent 13	incipient 13
prosperity 14	priestess 16	machete 17	abomination 18
contemptible 18	sisal 23	luxuriant 24	inflexible 24

Discussion Questions

1. How did Okonkwo become famous even beyond the nine villages of Umuofia? (*He threw the wrestler, Amalinze.*) What do you think their fight was like? Do "good fighters" in your neighborhood enjoy any special treatment or privileges? Why do you suppose Okonkwo's neighbors and family put up with his fiery temper?
2. What words does Achebe use to describe Unoka? (*improvident, haggard, a debtor, mournful, a failure, a loafer*) What made Unoka happy? (*He liked to drink, play music, have his friends around.*) Do people who party too much and who don't repay their debts usually end up as Unoka did?
3. What do Unoka and Okoye have in common? In what ways are they different? (*Use a graphic like the following on the board or overhead.*)



4. Why did Okoye come to see Unoka? (*He wanted him to repay a debt of 200 cowries.*) Why did Unoka say, "...the sun will shine on those who stand before it shines on those who kneel under them"? (*He was telling Okoye he considered his big debts more important than this small one to Okoye.*) Do you think Okoye was angry with Unoka?
5. How was Okonkwo able to become wealthy and famous when his father owed so much to everyone? (*Each man is judged as an individual, on the basis of his own achievements.*)
6. Judging from the last few sentences of Chapter 1, how important do you think Ikemefuna will be in this story? What do the words "doomed" and "ill-fated" tell you?
7. How do you feel about Okonkwo's war triumphs—and his "wineglass" for special occasions? Do you think he would have minded being sent off to war again? Do most soldiers have no fear of war?
8. What important news does Ogbuefi Ezeugo bring the 10,000 men in the marketplace—and what action is taken? (*Ezeugo explains that an Umuofian woman has been murdered by someone in Mbaino. Mbaino was given a choice of going to war or giving up a young man and woman. The latter option was chosen, and Okonkwo went to Mbaino to get the boy and girl.*)
9. What magical source of "war medicine" makes other clans fear the power of Umuofia? (*The source is an old woman with one leg.*) Who does Umuofia always consult before deciding to wage war? (*the Oracle of the Hills and Caves*)
10. What happened to the girl from Mbaino? (*She was given to Ogbuefi Udo to replace his murdered wife.*) Do you suppose Udo was satisfied with the "replacement"? How do you imagine the girl feels? What happened to the boy, Ikemefuna? (*He was sent to live with Okonkwo's family.*) How does he feel about his new home? (*He is afraid, confused, lonely.*)

-
11. What was the Oracle's explanation for Unoka's failing crops? (*The priestess, who interpreted Agbala's messages, said that Unoka was physically weak and lazy.*) How did his "bad chi" follow him to his death? (*He became ill with swelling and was taken to the Evil Forest to die alone.*) What do you imagine his final days were like?
 12. What is Okonkwo's greatest fear? (*that he will be like his father*) He tells Nwakibie he is different from other young men. How? (*Okonkwo says he is not afraid of hard work.*) What does Nwakibie get in return for giving Okonkwo the seed yams? (*two-thirds of the harvest*)
 13. How do drought and flood in our country affect farmers? consumers? What help is available? How did Okonkwo find a positive side to the sad harvest? (*He knew if he could survive that year, he could survive anything.*)

Prediction: Will Ikemefuna be treated as a son or as a slave by Okonkwo and his family?

Supplementary Activities

Author's Craft

Achebe tells us that members of the clan often talk in **proverbs**, "the palm oil with which words are eaten."

Ask: What does this metaphor about proverbs tell you about the **reason** the Ibo use them? (It is easier to say something difficult or unpleasant by using a proverb, which allows you to say it indirectly.)

Have students find and analyze examples of proverbs in Chapters 1-3. (e.g., page 6, "He who brings kola brings life;" page 8, "If a child washed his hands he could eat with kings;" page 10, "When the moon is shining the cripple becomes hungry for a walk;" page 19, "A man who pays respect to the great paves the way for his own greatness.")

Writing Activities

1. Choose a proverb you've heard your "elders" use. Identify a situation involving you in which they might use the proverb. Explain the "message" behind the proverb.
2. Unoka makes a distinction between *general* and *individual* failure. Give an example of each type in your world. Do you agree with Unoka that general failure is easier to survive? Why or why not?

Research

“Yam, the king of crops, was a man’s crop” (page 23). Find out more about the type of yams grown in Africa. How are they like/unlike the sweet potatoes and yams grown in the United States? What are some good reasons for eating yams? What are some ways to prepare them?

Chapters 4-6, pp. 28-56

Summary: Ikemefuna begins to feel like part of Okonkwo’s family. Okonkwo is punished by the earth goddess for beating one of his wives during the Week of Peace. Okonkwo berates his gentle son, Nwoye, for the way he cuts yams for planting, and shoots his gun at Ekwefi, his second wife, whom he has just beaten for cutting some leaves from a banana tree. There is a feast and a wrestling match.

Vocabulary

brusqueness 26	contradicted 26	kindred 26	communal 28
plait 29	ordained 30	repentant 31	valediction 32
disquieting 33	dynamism 34	arduous 34	calabashes 36
reveled 38	tentative 38	pottage 43	grandees 46
bouts 47	disembodied 50		

Discussion Questions

1. What did the oldest man at the kindred meeting mean when he said “those whose palm kernels were cracked for them by a benevolent spirit should not forget to be humble”? (*He meant that Okonkwo happened to have good luck and success, but that didn’t give him the right to act superior.*) Do you think Okonkwo was “just lucky”? (*He had worked hard to overcome his misfortune.*) How did Okonkwo use “the power of positive thinking”? (*He said “yes” and his chi said yes; i. e., he believed in himself.*)
2. How did Ikemefuna adjust to his new home? (*He was fearful and homesick at first, but Nwoye and Nwoye’s mother were kind and this helped him.*) How did Okonkwo treat Ikemefuna? (*He treated him “with a heavy hand” but was inwardly fond of him.*) Do you think Ikemefuna could tell that Okonkwo really liked him?
3. How did Okonkwo get in trouble with Ezeani? (*Okonkwo beat one of his wives, Ojiugo, during the Week of Peace, when it was unheard of to beat anyone.*) Do