
"Things Fall Apart" Novel Analysis

The Author and His Times:

The author of the book *Things Fall Apart* is Chinua Achebe, and he was born on November 16, 1930 and died on March 21, 2013. Chinua has a unique perspective on the book because he is from Nigeria, the central location that the book takes place. Given that the author is from where the book takes place, it gives the reader a unique background knowledge that some of what happens in this novel could be based upon real experiences that the author had. Additionally, the author used real events that happened to influence certain parts of the novel. Chinua was able to capture such an authentic feel in this novel by using real events that happened in the world to inspire his writing. In the early 19th century British people came to Nigeria to establish government and religion. Chinua was able to gain inspiration from this event and show the perspective of the Nigerian people. By using a real event he is able to portray a more realistic perspective because he could talk to people who experienced the event themselves which can give the novel a more authentic feel. A more specific example of the real world influences Chinua used is the slaughtering of the village of Abame. He used the village of Abame to symbolize a real event where people in a Nigerian village named Ahiara were killed by the British in retaliation to the Ahiara people killing someone from Britain. He also gained influence from his family. According to a biography from *Encyclopedia of World Biography* it is stated that Chinua's parents were influenced by the British to abandon their traditional values and switch to Christianity just like most characters in the book. It is said that Chinua was inspired by other artistic and literary African authors because like them he believed that artistic and literary works should be about the problems of society.

Form, Structure, and Plot:

The novel *Things Fall Apart* is structured in three parts. The first and longest part which spans from chapters 1-13 is about Okonkwo's life and his tribe's traditions before his exile. The second part which is shorter than the first but longer than the third which spans from chapter 14-19 is about Okonkwo's life in exile. The third and shortest part which spans from chapter 20-25 is about the change in the village of Umuofia after the arrival of Christianity.

The author of this book tells this story through the present he doesn't use flashback or dream sequences only reflections of the past to give the reader an insight on how life has changed from when the ancestors lived to now. The author tells the story in the chronological order that it happens only once does he go out of order to explain Ezinma's *iyi-uwa* and how it was destroyed. He uses symbolism to show that the people of Umuofia see the deeper meaning in everything they believe that all things could be a symbol of something bigger. Chinua also uses imagery to express the beauty that can be shown through nature and the ancient rituals and customs. He uses techniques to add depth to the novel to create a complex plot where anything could change in the plot at any time. Through the ten years this book takes place it can be seen the differences between the beginning and the end of the book. It can be seen that the village that Okonkwo once saw as the manliest village has now turned into what he would call a village run by women and men of weakness. You can also see the difference in Okonkwo, he was one of the most honorable men in all nine villages but he died in the most dishonorable way possible

according to the tribe.

Point of View:

The novel *Things Fall Apart* is written in a third person omniscient point of view. Chinua knows how every person feels throughout the novel and he is able to put us in the shoes of every person in the novel. In addition to be all knowing, he tells the entire story in the present giving the reader the ability to see how a character reacts to an event as it is happening in real time. He keeps his point of view consistent through the entire novel. He is speaking in third person omniscient at every point in the novel. This book benefits more from a third person point of view than a first because with so many events that happen in this novel and so many people being involved in every event it is important to know what every character is thinking instead of just one character.

Character:

In *Things Fall Apart* most of the major characters like Okonkwo, Nwoye, and Ezinma are round characters because of how in depth the author describes all of them. Characters like Unoka and most of the gods are flat characters due to the lack of detail that they are described with. All of the characters except one is a static character. That character is Nwoye, and he shows he is a dynamic character because he changed everything about himself when he discovered Christianity. Most of the characters can be seen as believable people that could live in the real world partly because of how they are introduced in the book. The author reveals each character in a way that flows with how events in the real world would happen he doesn't just spring characters up out of nowhere he adds them into a part of the book where they would be needed in a real life scenario. This book has around 21 characters that are talked about with some detail however most of these characters are just simple characters who don't play a major role in the book. These minor characters are used in the story to advance the plot and to help or hinder the main characters in their main goal.

The main character and protagonist of this novel is Okonkwo, which means boy born on Nkwo. He is around 30 years old and a strong, proud, and traditional warrior who follows the customs that the ancestors have brought before his time. He is very well built and large with a face that makes him always have a serious look on it. He is a strict and stubborn man whose main driving force and function in the novel is to be nothing like his weak, effeminate father. One major quote that sums up Okonkwo is "An Umuofia man does not refuse a call," he said. "He may refuse to do what he is asked; he does not refuse to be asked". This quote shows how rigid he is in tradition and his pride of being a part of Umuofia.

Another main character of this novel is Nwoye, which means a mother's pride. A twelve year old boy that is lazy, caring, and lost in the world. He is a compassionate person which his father interprets as weakness and his main goal in life is to find himself and where in the world he truly belongs. A quote that shows how Nwoye has changed is when asked about his father in chapter 16 he responds "I don't know, he is not my father." This quote shows that since his father did not accept him he left and is willing to fend on his own showing how brave he has become by standing up to his father. Another main character is Ezinma, which means true beauty. Ezinma is Okonkwo's beautiful, masculine, and brave teen daughter. When she is in exile she fully developed her beauty and is highly sought after by suitors She has a masculine

outlook on life and knows how to please her father. Her main purpose in this novel is to break the curse and live a healthy and adventurous life. While talking with Obierika in chapter 8 Okonkwo praises Enzima and how if she was a boy she'd be the perfect son. This quote shows how she is very unique and not like any of the other women in the village.

Finally, there is the main character that is Mr. Brown. He was the first white missionary to come to Umuofia and he was a patient, kind, and understanding man. He is an older man who was open-minded and willing to make an effort to understand and cooperate with Umuofia. His purpose in the novel was to spread religion through the world in a peaceful manor. A line from the book that sums up his character is ,“Whenever Mr. Brown went to that village he spent long hours with Akunna in his obi talking through an interpreter about religion. Either of them succeeded in converting the other but they learned more about their different beliefs(21 5-18).” This quote shows how he was very understanding towards the villagers and was open to hearing new ideas.

Setting:

This novel occurs in Nigeria in the 19th century around the time the British people came to spread religion in Nigeria. The environment is described as one with a lot of open land for farms and dirt paths connecting everything as well as thick forests on the edges of the villages. The author uses the setting to portray the atmosphere of a productive village centered around farming and yams. The setting is used to symbolize what happens before and after the British came. The setting is important because of how open and simple it is the reader is able to more clearly see the changes the British people caused.

Diction:

The diction used in Things Fall Apart is colloquial. Throughout the book the author uses words that are only used in certain specific parts of Nigeria. For example he uses words like iyi-uwa, Umuofia, and ogbanje words only used in certain parts of Nigeria. The author uses imagery in this book to show the complexities in certain traditions and rituals performed in the novel. The author does not use much irony or metaphors he talks as if he was a normal person that is a part of the village in the novel. Most of the language used is short and concise because it is culture with not much arts and flair it is just a simple farming village where most people don't talk that much. The diction is used to show the respect that is given to people who hold titles. For example, Okonkwo is commanding when talking to his wives and children but when talking with village elders he talks to them with a sense of respect for them. There is not much dialogue involved because most people keep to themselves and the dialogue used is the same as the narrator's dialogue and it is the same as the dialogue used between different characters.

Concrete Detail/Imagery:

The author of this novel uses many concrete details to appeal to the reader's senses and to make the reader feel like they're in the novel. When you are reading you can hear the distinct crack of a kola nut being opened, and you can smell and almost taste the delicious yam foo-foo steaming in the pot, as well as almost being able to feel the crowd around as if you were at the wrestling match yourself. The author is so specific when describing events like this because he wants to give the readers a deep and detailed look inside the many rituals and things that make

this culture as unique as it is. In addition to appealing to the other senses the author uses imagery to appeal to the most important sense vision. An example of imagery is when the narrator says, "Okonkwo's wives had scrubbed the walls and the huts with red earth until they reflected light. They had drawn patterns on them in white, yellow and dark green". He uses this form of imagery to show the depth and uniqueness of this Nigerian culture.

Symbolism:

The novel, Things Fall Apart is very symbolic. However, it is not allegorical because the author presents the information directly with no hidden meaning, only symbolism is used to provide a deeper meaning. The village uses many totems or items that symbolize gods or ancestral figures. For example, Mr. Brown says how they worship a block of wood as a god but Akunna says, "It is indeed a piece of wood. The tree from which it came was made by Chukwu, as indeed all minor gods were." This shows how the people uses symbols to represent their beliefs. In addition they use symbolism to describe certain characteristics of a person. For example, Okonkwo is called "Roaring Flame," which is used to symbolize he is very masculine as well as a hothead. Another example of symbolism being used is the arrival of the locusts in chapter 7. The locusts come and they destroy the crops and bring about darkness they are used to symbolize to coming of the British, because the British come and destroy Umuofia's religion and they bring darkness with them. The author uses the symbolism to further elaborate of the clans culture.

Figurative Language (Tropes):

In addition to imagery and symbolism, the author uses figurative language to express his points. The figurative language in this novel is used to further compare certain characteristics beyond just a basic comparison. However, figurative language is not used that often due to the novel being very concise and direct. The effect that it has on this novel is not that large due to the style of writing that is used the book could still function well without figurative language.