

What is africa argumentative essay example

[Parts of the World](#), [Africa](#)



As the saying goes, the ocean is blue because it reflects off the ocean; the descriptions of Africa are as many as the people who describe it. Many people describe Africa in different ways and to a large extent, they all give something akin the correct description. However, Africa is a great area with different people and cultures, thus it can never be described a single thing. The different people living in Africa claim different origins which justify the reasons why it cannot be described as a single unit. It is claimed that civilization in Africa came during colonization by the Europeans, but the colonizers came from different countries in the west and each colonizer had a different means of “civilizing” their colonies. This gives another reason why Africa can never be one unit. The belief that Africa can be described as a single unit is fallacious, because each country has its own ways of life that are unique from other countries in the continent.

In John and Jean Comaroff’s writings on Africa and colonialism, the writers explore some basic questions of social science, culture and consciousness, looking into the sort of history and human agency that characterizes Africa. The writers try to explain how human differences are constructed, transformed, institutionalized and at times resisted by other people. They try to show the traditional aspects of social history, and how they have been signified, remade and forgotten in the human worlds. The traditional and the modern social sciences are the main causes of divisions in Africa and it difficult to see the continent as a single unit. Some societies believe in their own traditions while other communities believe that the African cultures should be abolished and replaced with the modern western cultures. This comes out clearly in one of Ngugi Thiongo’s novels: *The River Between*.

According to Ngugi wa Thiongo's book, *The River Between*, there was a lot of confusion among the people after the coming of colonialists and missionaries into Africa. They did not know whether to convert to Christianity (following the preaching by the missionaries) or to remain with their traditional cultures. This brought disagreements even in the households. In the book, the two sisters, Muthoni and Nyambura, cannot agree on which direction to take. Muthoni decides to rebel against her father, who was a Christian, and get circumcised. On the other hand, Nyambura, the elder of the two, is ready to follow her parent's wish, something Muthoni comes out against. This is a clear indication that Christianity and African tradition could not blend together.

In the same book, Waiyaki is a highly respected young man in the village, because he has acquired the "white man's education". Though he is brought up in the village, he joins a missionary school for intermediate education. Waiyaki is also confused if it is right to teach the boys in the village, as this is seen as contaminating them. This is the same dilemma which faces Nyambura, who is confused on which culture to follow (between the western and the traditional culture). According to her, after observing Waiyaki, the happiest people in the community are those who practice both the traditional and western cultures together.

It is impossible to talk about African societies without talking about the west because after colonization, all cultures were changed. The lifestyles of people changed significantly. Before colonization, for example, most African people had no clothes, they covered themselves with animal skins but colonialists introduced clothes. The Africans had their own gods who they

worshipped before the coming of Europeans. With the coming of missionaries like described in Ngugi wa Thiongo's book, Africans were introduced to Christianity. This changed African religions from the different gods, worshipped by the people, to believing in one God. Currently, the gospel has reached all the parts of the world, especially the African continent, and most of the people have converted to Christianity. Joshua preaches in the community and many people come to get converted. Christianity condemns some African cultures like female circumcision referring to them as pagan rites. However, the African societies continue to practice the rite, meaning that not all of them have accepted to change from the traditional beliefs to adopt the western culture.

Traditionally, there was informal education in Africa. The boys were taught by the old men what they were supposed to do. They were taught their roles in the society and also taught the skills to carry out the activities that were assigned to men. The girls were taught by their mothers and by the old women. They were also taught what the society expected them to do, and the different skills which were necessary for them. The children were taught at home, and the learning was verbal and through actions since they did not know how to write. In *The River Between*, Ngugi wa Thiong'o paints a picture of formal education commencing with the coming of missionaries. Waiyaki and other young people attended Siriana Missionary School, which had been built by the missionaries.

In the beginning, people in the society did want to hear about the school. Waiyaki was seen as a potential means of contaminating the other boys by teaching them he had learned in school. However, towards the end of the

book, many children start going to school. Traditionally, Africans did not know anything to do with hospitals. They had their own medicine men, and magicians, who they visited when sick. With the coming of missionaries, hospitals were built. In *The River Between*, after Muthoni's wound gets worse after circumcision, she is taken to Siriana missionary hospital. The missionaries constructed hospitals which replaced the traditional medicines. Another thing to note in the book is that, there are traditional leaders who lead the communities. Different communities are ruled differently according to the cultures of the people. After colonization, the whole continent adopts the western ruling system, whereby every country is ruled by one president and has a constitution which applies equally to all the citizens of the country despite their different cultures.

In *The River Between*, Ngugi tries to portray Africa as a continent which is in a transition stage from traditional ways to modern civilization. Ngugi first shows Africa as a continent full of traditions and cultures; rites like circumcision are highly valued, and a lot of conflicts occur when missionaries try to abolish them. He also shows Africa as a rich place and full of inheritance. The two villages, Kameno and Makuyu, are separated by a river called Honia, which never dries up the whole year. The river is associated with many positive things as its name also means cure. The legends of a seer, a magician and a warrior, are intertwined in the children of the tribes that reside there, and those who reside there are greatly unaffected by the outside world. Contrary to the belief in the popular media, Ngugi portrays Africa as a place of peaceful people.

Waiyaki, who has been described as a special young man from his childhood,

separates the two fighting boys (Kamau and Kinuthia). He separates them and listens to their conflict, which has erupted into a fight. After hearing both of them, he settles their dispute and soon they stop fighting. Although he was younger than both boys, he manages to separate them. Waiyaki is a symbol of the peace in Africa. Through Waiyaki, Ngugi shows that Africa can solve its problems peacefully. Nonetheless, Ngugi has also succeeded in showing that Africa is not one, there are many differences.

The two ridges, Kamemo and Makuyu show the differences in the African continent. The river Honia shows that there is a gap somewhere between the African people. They are not united and they have ideological differences when Christianity is introduced by the missionaries. Some people convert into Christianity, while others resist it vehemently. Despite this rift, Ngugi sees Africa moving in the right direction. He believes that the changes in Africa are positive. From his book, he believes that Kenya will gain independence from the British colonialism. Under the British, Kenyans suffer a lot, and Ngugi believes that Kenya will gain independence, and all the suffering will come to an end. He also believes that Africans will adopt the “good” western cultures. From his book, it is clear that Africans are getting civilized. Schools like Siriana are coming up and Africans are beginning to get education. People have also agreed to convert into Christianity, and are moving from worshipping the traditional gods to reading the Bible and believing in one God.

Joshua, a preacher who succeeds in converting many people in the community from their traditional beliefs to Christianity, also sees Africa moving in the right direction in terms of health since people have started

going to hospitals instead of using medicine-men. For instance, after Muthoni's wound gets worse following her circumcision, she is taken to Siriana missionary hospital, which is a show of civilization. Ngugi admits that Africans are getting civilized for their own good, and with time, Africa will be counted as one of the civilized continents in the world.

In his work, Ngugi aims to correct the Western literature on Africa. He succeeds in doing this by offsetting the perspective of the western writers like Joseph Conrad in his book *Heart of Darkness*. Ngugi's literature fits in the category of contemporary African fiction that was started by Amos Tutuola in his book *Palm Wine Drunkard* and also in the book *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe. From his books, it is very easy to conclude that Ngugi wants to see Africa changing to be a better living place for its people. He wants to see Africa free from the tortures and suffering, which are a result of colonization. He also wants to see Africans getting civilized and doing away with the dangerous practices like female circumcision. He wants to see Africans developing positive changes like starting education, Christianity and hospitals. The main challenge to these changes is ideological differences among the African people. The people are not united, and there are people who support the changes while others resist them. Nyambura is another character who is trying to settle between the traditional and the modern cultures.

Ngugi's works has similar philosophical ideologies to Tabitha Kanogo's *Squatters and the Roots of Mau Mau*.

In her book, *Squatters and the Roots of Mau Mau*, the author tries to explain the origin of a group called Mau Mau which is fighting for independence in

Kenya. Though the exact origin of the group is not well known, it rose between 1945 and 1947. One of the reasons why the group was started was because of the differences which existed among the people living in Kenya. The white people lived in the fertile areas in the highlands (with large pieces of land), while the Africans were pushed to be squatters where they are congested and without enough food. These differences existed in many African countries colonized by the Europeans. It is worth noting that these social differences have existed in Africa, even after colonization. There are very rich people and extremely poor people, and this makes it impossible to address Africa as one since these groups have different activities and lifestyles.

In the early days, Africans were not civilized. They lived according to their cultures until the wave of colonization swept through the continent. Colonization made a great impact on all the parts of Africa making the western culture undistinguishable from the traditional cultures. This simply means that currently, it is meaningless to talk about the African societies without talking about the influence of the west. Although most African societies resisted colonization, they ended up absorbing a lot from the western cultures. Altogether, the several African countries cannot be viewed as a single unit.

For instance, different countries in Africa speak different languages as their national languages. There are countries which speak English, French and Spanish depending on the country which colonized them. Different languages are a show of different people. Furthermore, Africa plays host different ethnicities and races. For example, countries like South Africa have

both the black and white races of people living here. In the Eastern Africa, the blacks and the Asians coexist peacefully. Though the different people live together, each of them, to a great extent, retains their cultures and practices and this makes Africa not to be a single unit due to the different practices of different races of people.

For many years, some people have erroneously believed that Africa could be described as a single unit. However, the reality is that Africa is a large continent, with people of diverse cultures and different ethnicities.

Anthropologists who have written scholarly works on Africa know this for sure, but policy makers and people outside Africa rely on popular media to make opinions about the continent. Contrary to the belief in the popular media that Africa is a “dark continent” with all kinds of evils, from the perspective of writers such as Ngugi wa Thiong’o, the advent of Christianity in Africa brought some light to the continent as seen in his book *The River Between*. The first missionaries and colonists contributed to the enlightenment of people in Africa by building schools, as well as hospitals. The gradual social changes which have occurred over the years are encouraging, and the people are optimistic of a better future. Altogether, the idea of seeing Africa as a single thing is misleading, and the sooner people realize this, the better.

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