

Things fall apart sparknotes

[Literature](#), [Novel](#)



Chapters One–Three 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 One 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.

Summary: Chapter Two 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. Summary: Chapter Three 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: "the 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 actions or silence were called for.

Chapters Four–Six Summary:

Chapter Four 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 Five 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 Six 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. Chapters Seven–Eight Summary: Chapter Seven " 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 Eight 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." Chapters Nine–Eleven Summary: Chapter Nine 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 that 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