

# Comparing and contrasting heart of darkness and things fall apart

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



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

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----- February 1, 2013 Viewing Africa From Two Sides Of A Coin. There aren't many novels about the true face of Africa on bookshelves, especially not novels written by an author who knows Africa best during the time of its pre-colonial period. Things Fall Apart is a novel worth reading because it's eye opener for those with not-very-positive stereotypes of the continent. In fact, it has been said that Things Fall Apart was written as a response to another novel, TheHeart of Darkness.

This is because in the latter novel, Africa was viewed in a darker light compared to the former novel. Thus, it's natural that there will be differences and similarities between the two novels. However, assuming that Things Fall Apart being written as a response to The Heart of Darkness is a fact; there will be more differences than similarities among the two novels, especially in terms of its author, point of view, and the perception of the novel towards Africa and how the Africans treated in the novels. One of the aspects in which the two novels have more differences than similarities is the author.

In terms of the author, The Heart of Darkness was written by Joseph Conrad, a non-African. He wrote the novel in Europe in 1902. This was during the Victorian Era under the rule of Queen Victoria. Apparently, in Europe, the African continent was viewed as a dark continent. This is perhaps due to the fact that it was compared to Europe itself where everything is civilized and familiar to them whereas Africa was a place of mystery and the unknown. On the other hand, Things Fall Apart was written by Chinua Achebe, an African

who wrote this novel much later than Joseph Conrad, which was back in 1958.

This novel was written in Africa but published in England, unlike *The Heart of Darkness* which was written and published in the same continent. In addition, it was written during the pre-colonial period before they gained independence. Unlike Joseph Conrad who was a foreigner to Africa, Chinua Achebe knew his country as well as he knew himself, thus, he gave Africa and its people more life and made their personalities and culture equally as significant and vibrant as those around the world. Furthermore, there weren't any use of comparison of the continent to other continents.

The comparisons used in *Things Fall Apart* were normal comparisons between individuals and local villages. Another aspect in which we can compare and contrast the two novels is the point of view in which they were written. *The Heart of Darkness* was written in the first-person point of view, through Marlow's eyes. A rather unique style of writing that Conrad used for *The Heart of Darkness* was that the novel was written as a double story with a first-person narration within a first-person narration.

The frame-narrator is used to describe Marlow's narration of his own story while the other first-person narrator is Marlow himself, depicting his adventure in the Congo. Unlike a typical first-person style, Marlow's first-person narration is directed not towards the reader but to the men on the boat on the Thames. The frame-narrator on the other hand is narrating for the reader, the outer audience. It seemed like Conrad was reading aloud

Marlow's travel log. *Things Fall Apart* on the other hand was written in the third-person point of view.

Instead of writing through the eyes of an African, the story of *Things Fall Apart* was written through the author's eyes, as if he's writing his observations of Okonkwo and the Igbo people. *Things Fall Apart* was written just like a typical story book which contained small interrelated stories, especially in the first part of the book. It was written in a way that depicted a progressive day-to-day basis of the people of Okonkwo's family and his village. Besides that, the perception and treatment of Africa and its inhabitants are very different between the two novels.

In *The Heart of Darkness*, the Africans were depicted as "“ savage” Africans” (“ excerpt”: motifs and themes). They were treated like animals and slaves. In fact, the African slaves were described as soulless, as if they were empty shells used to work for the Europeans, "... They passed me within six inches, without a glance, with that complete deathlike indifference of unhappy savages. " Even the Congo River was depicted as winding, dark and treacherous, compared to the Thames River which was depicted as a place of light, clear and unclouded.

In *Things Fall Apart*, however, Africa and its people were depicted as full of vigor and life. The people of Umuofia were hardworking people who worked on their farms with passion and purpose. They also have a sense of pride and honor. For example, the people of Umuofia will only attack another village only if it was by the order of the Oracle or they will be punished. This can be proven by an extract from the novel: "...never went to war unless its case

was clear and just and was accepted as such by its Oracle...the Oracle had forbidden Umuofia to wage a war.

If the clan had disobeyed the Oracle, they would have been beaten...never fight...a fight of blame" (12). Even the environment seemed to be alive. There were changes in weather, farming and harvesting seasons and even the season where the locusts came. When comparing and contrasting these two novels, a few similarities can be identified. First of all, they are similar in the way that they were written about Africa in the author's respective perspectives. They neither relied on external sources nor let them influence their writing style and context of their writing.

Another similarity is that they both showed effects of the colonization of the Europeans on the local community though they were introduced at different times in each novel. Colonization effects include loss of the African culture and principles and also a change in lifestyle of the local community. The hierarchy of the local community was also disturbed. In both novels, Africans who were supposed to be highly regarded were degraded to mere followers or slaves. The similarities identified are somewhat superficial similarities because despite having similar aspects, at a closer look, these similarities also express differences.

In conclusion, there are more differences than similarities between these two novels. This is perhaps as expected because these two novels were written by two different people of different nationalities, backgrounds and perspectives. Furthermore, they were written in two different time periods. We cannot and should not judge which of these two novels is better. We

should see these two novels as equals in terms of information sources because by reading, understanding and comparing these two novels, we get a better understanding of Africa from both sides of a coin.

Thus, our perspective and knowledge of Africa is now broader and based on this, we can see Africa in a different light. Whether we see it in a better or worse light is entirely up to us to decide. However, at the very least, we have established the arguments about Africa to aid our judgment. Works Cited

Achebe, Chinua. *Things Fall Apart*. New Delhi: Allied Publishers, 2010. Excerpt from Joseph Conrad's *The Heart of Darkness*. Date of access: 31 January 2013. Comparing and Contrasting the Novel, Heart of Darkness. "123HelpMe. com. 23 Feb 2013 . " Ibo Religion in Things Fall Apart". Religion-Culture-and-Stories. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution Share-Alike 3. 0 License. Date of access: 30 January 2013. " The Art of Narration in Heart of Darkness". Introduction to Heart of Darkness. Date of access: 23 February 2013. < http://home. roadrunner. com/~jhartzog/heartofdarknessintro. html>