

# Vianne vitug

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Vianne Vitug 5° Honors English 09 October 10, 2012 A Theme and Okonkwo

Things Fall Apart, a novel written by Chenua Achebe takes place in eastern Nigeria around the late 1800s. Achebe introduces Okonkwo, the protagonist of the novel and his ways of life. Okonkwo's experiences in the novel are illustrated by his role, motivations, conflicts, and their resolutions. Providing readers with the theme of " The fear of emotion can ruin the quality of life. "

Achebe portrays Okonkwo, the main character of the story in many ways. Okonkwo was a man of pride and diligence. He was well respected among his clansmen. Despite the many times he tried to convince himself to never show emotion and to always maintain a manly image, his actions said otherwise. In the novel, unlike the majority of the other characters, he was a round and static character. There may have been some side-stories, but in the end, everything eventually directed back to Okonkwo. The story revolves around him and if it was not for his character, the novel would be close to nothing and a book full of dullness. Okonkwo had motivations to keep him going and help sculpt his view of life. These motivations may have not been the best to guide him through his problems, but they were what he had to maintain the " balance" in his life. " Okonkwo's fear was greater than these... It was the fear of himself, lest he should be found to resemble his father. "

He had a strong drive to not become like his father, Unoka. Okonkwo believed that his father was not a " real" man therefore he had diverted anything that reminded him of his father. To be a real man, Okonkwo thought that you needed to be strong, dominant, and never show emotion. In Okonkwo's eyes, this is what a real man should be, and that is exactly what he had become. At one point in the story, he took part in killing his adopted

son, Ikemefuna although he was advised not to. According to Okonkwo, if he did not take part of the process, he would look too weak. Ikemefuna may have not been his real son, but it was evident that the two also shared a bond somewhat like that of a father and son. Okonkwo's mentality of not wanting to show emotion destroyed what could have resulted in an even greater bond between the two. This mentality of his is what pushes him to all the decisions he makes in life, may that be good or bad. The events redirect to how the fear of showing emotion can ruin the quality of life. Despite the image he tried so hard to maintain and achieve as a "real" man, Okonkwo was a very conflicted person. He had the desire to both show and not show emotion, and that was one of the biggest conflicts he had throughout the novel. For instance, when the priestess came and took his daughter Ezinma away to the caves, Ekwefi was not the only one who was worried and followed along. Okonkwo also followed along and that showed that he cared and does have emotions in him. He loves his daughter, but would rather not show any type of affection towards her. Also, going back to the time Ikemefuna was to be killed, in order not to be seen weak, his principles to take part in his adopted son's killing. He was greatly affected by it, and it showed that he did care, but as always, he chose to not show it. Okonkwo did not realize this, but his actions uncannily contradicted with what he wanted to be seen as. There was never a real resolution to this, but in a way you could imply that Okonkwo's suicide showed that he was just like his father. No matter what Okonkwo had done to avoid being seen as his father, his suicide does the complete opposite. By committing suicide, Okonkwo is seen as a weak person, a coward even, just like his father. Okonkwo was also

someone who resisted change, an external conflict in this case. When the missionaries came to the village, Okonkwo was still in exile. The missionaries were there to spread the teachings of Christianity and their arrival meant change to the village of Umuofia and the Igbo culture. In the beginning, Okonkwo did not care much. When he comes back from exile, the villagers were converting or have converted to Christianity his own son, Nwoye included. There were so many changes resulting in Igbo culture dying out and being replaced by another one. Okonkwo was not able to adapt to these changes, but soon realized that there was nothing he could do. For this conflict, there is no definite resolution either, but Okonkwo killing himself was a result to these changes. Because his impulse of not wanting to show emotion overshadowed him, his life's quality was undoubtedly ruined. In the end, it was Okonkwo himself that destroyed his own life because of what he strived to become. Okonkwo was a man of courage and versatility. Okonkwo's mindset led him to a point where he indeed was just like who he never wanted to be: his father. He had his principles he believed in till the very end. But life as we know it will never become dull, no matter how many times you turn the world upside down. It is full of emotions, obstacles, and more. That is how is; it is the quality of life.