

# Things fall apart by chinua achebe summary and analysis part 1: chapter 12 summar...

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Things Fall Apart By Chinua Achebe Summary and Analysis Part 1: Chapter 12 Summary After Chielo took Ezinma away, Okonkwo was not able to sleep. He made several trips to the cave before he finally found and joined Ekwefi waiting outside the cave. When Chielo came out of Agbala's cave with Ezinma in the early morning hours, she ignored Okonkwo and Ekwefi and carried the sleeping Ezinma home to her bed, with the girl's parents following behind. On the following day, the village celebrates the next event in the marriage of the daughter of Obierika, Okonkwo's friend. The uri is a ritual in which the suitor presents palm-oil to everyone in the bride's immediate family, her relatives, and her extended group of kinsmen. For this ceremony, primarily a woman's ritual, the bride's mother is expected to prepare food for the whole village with the help of other women. Ekwefi is exhausted after the preceding night's events. She delays going to the celebration until Ezinma wakes and eats her breakfast. Okonkwo's other wives and children proceed to Obierika's compound; the youngest wife promises to return to prepare Okonkwo's afternoon meal. Obierika is slaughtering two goats for the soup and is admiring another goat that was bought in a neighboring village as a gift to the in-laws. He and the other men discuss the magic of medicine used in the other village that draws people to the market and helps rob some of them. While the women are preparing for the feast, they hear a cry in the distance, revealing that a cow is loose. Leaving a few women to tend the cooking, the rest go find the cow and drive it back to its owner, who must pay a heavy fine. The women check among themselves to be sure that every available woman has participated in rounding up the cow. The palm-wine ceremony begins in the afternoon as

soon as everyone gathers and begins to drink the first-delivered wine. When the new in-laws arrive, they present Obierika's family with fifty pots of wine, a very respectable number. The uri festivities continue into the night and end with much singing and dancing. Analysis This chapter further contributes to the understanding of several tribal customs and beliefs: the uri ceremony, which illustrates the phase of the marriage process following the agreement on bride-price (Chapter 8); the belief in supernatural powers to attract people to a market and even to help rob them; the law that requires villagers to control and corral their animals or else pay a penalty; and the custom that requires all available women to chase an escaped cow home. These descriptions follow the events of the preceding chapter and illustrate the strength of the villagers' beliefs in the earth goddess and her powers, even when she requires the near abduction of a child. Yet, in most of the traditional events, the less than complete, blind obedience to a law or custom by some men and women suggests several strong, individual personalities. For example, Ekwefi is certainly one of the less-traditionally constrained women, and Obierika represents men who question some traditions and rituals. Sexual activity is a subtle part of courtship and marriage rituals. The chant at the end of the celebration, "when I hold her waist beads / She pretends not to know," suggests that sexual anticipation is an enjoyable game for women as well as for men. In the preceding chapter, Okonkwo's protective, manly presence in the darkness by the cave triggers Ekwefi's fond memories of her first wedding night, when he "carried her into his bed and . . . began to feel around her waist for the loose end of her cloth." Glossary umunna the extended family and kinsmen. a great medicine

a supernatural power or magic that may take the shape of a person. In the Umuike market, the medicine assumes the shape of an old woman with a beckoning, magical fan. yam pottage a watery gruel made of yams.

Summary In the dead of night, the sound of a drum and a cannon announce the death of Ezeudu, an important man in the village. Okonkwo shivers when he remembers that Ezeudu had warned him against playing a part in the killing of Ikemefuna. Everyone in the village gathers for the funeral ceremony of a warrior who had achieved three titles in his lifetime, a rare accomplishment. During the ceremony, men dance, fire off guns, and dash about in a frenzy of wailing for the loss of Ezeudu. Periodically, the egwugwu spirits appear from the underworld, including a one-handed spirit who dances and brings a message for the dead Ezeudu. Before the burial, the dancing, drumming, and gunshots become increasingly intense. Suddenly an agonized cry and shouts of horror are followed by silence. Ezeudu's sixteen-year-old son is found dead in a pool of blood in the midst of the crowd. When Okonkwo fired his gun, it exploded and a piece of iron pierced the boy's heart. In the history of Umuofia, such an accident has never occurred. Okonkwo's accidental killing of a clansman is a crime against the earth goddess, and he knows that he and his family must leave Umuofia for seven years. As his wives and children cry bitterly, they hurriedly pack their most valuable belongings into head loads to be carried as they prepare to flee before morning to Mbanta, the village of his mother. Friends move Okonkwo's yams to Obierika's compound for storage. After the family's departure the next morning, a group of village men, carrying out the traditional justice prescribed by the earth goddess, invade Okonkwo's

compound and destroy his barn, houses, and animals. Okonkwo's friend Obierika mourns his departure and wonders why Okonkwo should be punished so severely for an accident. Again, Obierika ponders the old traditions, remembering his own twin children who were abandoned in the forest because of tribal tradition. Analysis In the literary tradition of the tragic hero, Okonkwo's undoing continues with his accidental killing of Ezeudu's son. Early in the chapter, Achebe foreshadows the event with Okonkwo's memory of Ezeudu's warning about not killing Ikemefuna. The author builds dramatic tension by describing an increasingly frenzied scene of dancing, leaping, shouting, drumming, and the firing of guns, as well as the frightening appearance of the egwugwu. The action climaxes with an explosion of gunfire and then comes to a stop with the phrase " All was silent." Achebe emphasizes the gravity of Okonkwo's crime by saying that in Umuofia " nothing like this had ever happened." As in Chapter 8, Obierika quietly questions clan traditions – this time, the tradition demanding that Okonkwo be banished for seven years because of an accidental killing. He also questions the tribal abandonment of twins, remembering his own innocent children left to die in the forest. The chapter includes several intimations of impending doom for the clan and its traditions. Achebe ends the chapter dramatically with the proverb, " If one finger brought oil, it soiled the others," suggesting that Okonkwo's crime may lead to the ultimate downfall of Umuofia itself. Glossary Go-di-di-go-go-di-go. Di-go-go-di-go the sound of drumbeats on the ekwe, or drums. esoteric intended for or understood by only a chosen few, as an inner group of disciples or initiates (said of ideas, literature, and so). raffia 1) a palm tree of Madagascar, with

large, pinnate leaves. 2) fiber from its leaves, used as string or woven into baskets, hats, and so on. Mbanta The name means small town and is where Okonkwo's mother comes from, his motherland, beyond the borders of Mbaino (Ikemefuna's original home).