

Things fall apart fear analysis

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How a person is like on the outside may be a completely different on the inside.

In the novel *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe, most of the characters were influenced by fear, especially the protagonist. The main character, Okonkwo, was a man with short temper. He was obsessed with the idea of masculinity and manliness, a successful man crowned with two titles. His crops provided an abundant amount of sustenance and he had a prosperous household with three wives. In addition to that.

“ he was a man of action, a man of war” (page 8).

For numerous of times he had demonstrated his bravery in battles, having captured human heads with his bare hands and defeating Amalinze the Cat, an undefeated wrestler for seven years. He shows no signs of a coward and exudes nothing but manliness. Despite all of his personal achievements and inadequacy, beneath the mask he wears in front of his kinsmen, Okonkwo's fear runs deep. It is “ not external but (lies) deep within himself” (page 10).

In the patriarchal society, age was respected among the people of the Igbo society, but accomplishments were highly revered. Strength and courage determined honor and respect, and not being able to measure up is his constant fear. Okonkwo's “ fear of failure and of weakness” (page 10) are portrayed throughout the novel. His fears affected with not only his relationships and bonds that he shares with others, but it blinded him from his morality and virtues as a human being. Okonkwo's father, Unoka, was the ultimate source of Okonkwo's fear of failure. Unoka was a passive man with little ambition.

He did not have any titles to prove his manhood and was heavily in debt when he died.

He was scorned by other individuals in his tribe, and because of his father, Okonkwo was teased by other children when he was young. As a result, Okonkwo deeply “resented his father’s failure and weakness” (page 10). His father was an embarrassment to him; therefore he was determined to become the exact opposite of his father, hating everything that his father loved, especially gentleness and idleness. Not wanting to become like his father, Okonkwo earned his status and respect through determination and hard work.

He worked devotedly on his farms during planting seasons, and with fear of failure driving his life, he “ruled his household with a heavy hand” (page 10).

All of his wives and young children feared of his fiery temper. When his youngest wife accidentally forgot to cook supper and went to plait her hair at another villager’s house, Okonkwo had beaten her brutally. The moment he saw a slight reflection of his father through his oldest son, Nwoye, Okonkwo was afraid of how his child would grow up to be like unoka. By all means, he sought to correct him through constant nagging and harsh beating.

He has never shown any signs of affection towards Nwoye or his other children and wives. In Okonkwo’s eyes, Nwoye appeared to be lazy and incompetent. It reminded him of his father and resembling his father is the last thing that Okonkwo would want to do. Another scenario when Okonkwo displayed his fear of failure was when he was in exile. For most of the days, if

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not all, he worried about how he would rebuild and restore the success he once had and the respect he earned. DeTore he was sent to exile along with the rest of his family.

The moment that he left, his houses and compounds were abolished, his animals were slaughtered, and his barn was destroyed.

He planned and thought much about his future when he was living in his motherland. He had two beautiful daughters that captured the eyes of many young men and prosperous middle-aged villagers that came to marry her. He also had sons whom he planned to send to the ozo society, in hope of them becoming successful men with titles, who could take over his place after he is gone. Okonkwo and his family worked hard to plant a new farm in order to survive.

In addition to fear of failure, Okonkwo was haunted by fear of being weak. This fear drove him to rashness.

In the early chapters of the novel, Ikemefuna, a young lad who was sacrificed to the village of Umuofia, joined Okonkwo's family. Although Okonkwo is very fond of him, he must follow the deed of the Oracle of the Hills and Caves, which have proclaimed the young boy to be dead. During the moment when he heard Ikemefuna's cry, " ' My father, they have killed me! ' as he ran towards him. Dazed with fear, Okonkwo drew his machete and cut him down.

He was afraid of being thought weak" (page 53). His fear of weakness was exposed through his ignorance of Ikemefuna's desperate cry.

How the society thought of him was more important than his adopted son. When children turn to their parents for help, it is rare that they would be ignored. Rather, parents would be running to the feet of their children to ensure that they are not in danger. Okonkwo, however, mercilessly slashed and killed the innocent child merely at the thought of the opinions of others. His fear of weakness overpowered his conscience and humane morality as a guardian.

Okonkwo's fear of being weak was also illustrated through his inability of expressing his inner emotions.

Due to the fact how he thinks anything loving and tender was a sign of weakness, he was not able to fully express how his true feelings with others around him. For instance, his most favored child in the novel happens to be his daughter, Ezinma. Despite how she is his favorite child, Ezinma, in the end, was still a girl. The closest tender thing Okonkwo could do to express how he feels about her was to keep wishing and thinking that “ she should have been a boy’ (page 55).

Out of all of his children, Ezinma was the only child that understood her father's every moods. She had all the traits that he looks for in a son.

However, living in the patriarchal society of the Igbo culture, Okonkwo strictly adhered to the specific gender roles and that prevented him from displaying his affection to his daughter. In the novel, Okonkwo resisted change. It would be a weakness to him if he had abandoned his beliefs and subdued to the ways of the foreigners.

A major issue that occurred in the novel was how missionaries invaded the village of Umuofia and altered the cultural beliefs of the Igbo society. By introducing Christianity to the villagers, soon, people, especially the younger generations, lost the roots of their traditional customs.

However, among the few that did not converted was Okonkwo. He was one of the few leaders that wanted to revolt against the missionaries and the ways of the white men. In spite of their desire to restore the society to the way it was like before, the number of converts and followers of the missionaries was too great in value.

And with his fear of weakness, Okonkwo remained standing by his cultural traditions, which ultimately led to his tragic death. Towards the end of the novel, Obierika told the District Commissioner, "I drove [Okonkwo] to kill himself; and now he will be buried like a dog" (page 179).

Although one may argue about that statement, it was Okonkwo who drove himself to his own death. It was his fear of appearing weak that triggered his idea of killing himself. No one told Okonkwo that he should commit suicide; it was the decision he decided to make.

Not only was Okonkwo dominated by fear, but the whole village of Umuofia was influenced by fear. With the missionaries' encouragements of why they should convert and how if the young generations do not learn the ways of the white men, soon they will be conquered and dominated by other civilizations.

Fear is inevitable. Despite how strong a person may appear to be, beneath the mask of what they are perceived to be by others, there lie the aspects that the person do not want to reveal to the world, some of which may be their fears and weaknesses.

Fear comes in a variety and is able to greatly impact on an individual, as it had to Okonkwo. It is different for everyone, for the lifestyle that they live may have influence them. For example, toddlers may fear their parents due to their style of strict discipline. Teenagers, on the other hand, may be feared of not fitting in with the rest of the society.

The insecurities of their appearance or personality may triggered them to feel isolated and not accepted by other individuals in school or the community.

As a result, they may become shy and introverted, being judgemental about the opinions of others, similar to how Okonkwo worries about how the society thought of him. Parents may fear for their children's health, and whether or not they are surrounded by positive influences, similar to how Ekwefi is always cautious and worried of her only child's health. And when her daughter was taken by priestess Chielo, she was not able to relax. Overall, fear is something that everyone has, even if it lies deep within themselves.