

Comparison esaay on things fall apart essay



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After I finished reading *Things Fall Apart*, my mind was left pondering certain aspects of the book. The major issue that continued to nag at my thoughts was the relationship between the main character Okonkwo and his son Nwoye. We see through the book that these two characters, with their vastly different character traits, can never seem to get along. But is the conflict between parent and child something exclusive to the Ibo culture? I don't believe so, as even in our day in age and culture we still face the same conflicts, like that of Okonkwo and Nwoye's.

From the start of the book we can already comprehend the conflict between Okonkwo and Nwoye. It starts with simplicity, in that Okonkwo is merely concerned that his son is seeming weaker than he himself appeared at that young age. Yet as the book progresses we begin to see how serious the conflict is from one character to another. In some chapters we are given hope that the relationship will be mended, like when Ikemefuna comes to live in the family's household and begins to positively influence Nwoye in Okonkwo's eyes. But this moment of hope is cut short due to Okonkwo killing Ikemefuna, which leads Nwoye to fear his father because if Okonkwo was willing to kill a child who he was very fond of, what would stop Okonkwo from killing Nwoye? This leads to a major lack of trust. For many chapters we just continue to see how little Okonkwo respects his son, especially when Okonkwo watches his best friend's son become a star wrestler when his own son is still listening to bedtime stories.

The relationship continues to grow worse and worse until missionaries come to the clan and Nwoye makes a life changing decision of converting from the Ibo culture over to Christianity, which of course leads Okonkwo to disowning

him and a great sense of shame. The relationship between Okonkwo and Nwoye can essentially be boiled down to the proverb included in the text, which basically states that roaring fire can only produce ash. This proverb basically stands to mean that when Okonkwo is as fierce as he is, Nwoye cannot be expected to be the same. While reading about the relationship between Okonkwo and Nwoye I found it humorous that I was actually reminded of the eighties blockbuster hit " The Breakfast Club. " I made the connection mainly because one of the major themes in the novel are transitions from old to new and how this takes a toll on the relationship between Okonkwo and Nwoye, like the parents and offspring of the characters in " The Breakfast Club.

The main thing this novel and the eighties hit have in common is the fact that parents will never understand the youth of the world, which of course leads to conflict. Of course the major difference between the conflicts portrayed in the novel compared to the book would be that in " The Breakfast Club" we are dealing with issues like a child being used as a weapon in the fight of divorce. Whereas in the novel we see a relationship that is living in a time when if a certain tribe member says someone is to be killed, then they are killed no questions. We see that when Nwoye converts to Christianity it is not accepted and must lead to Okonkwo disowning his son simply because they do not share the same beliefs.

I feel in some parts of the book that Okonkwo should just love Nwoye because he is his son, regardless of their different beliefs, but because Okonkwo needs to portray himself as strong this could not happen. I found this connection an interesting one, yet surprisingly accurate. The conflict

between parent and child is something that occurs everywhere, any time. It is not exclusive to the Ibo culture. I was also surprised to find myself in understanding to the relationship conflict between Okonkwo and Nwoye, simply because I have always had a tainted relationship with my father as well.

Although the relationship with my father differs from that of Okonkwo and Nwoye because the conflict was caused through actions rather than built upon a disagreement in beliefs, I can still relate. In many ways I feel like this book is about relating to the reader, like even though I'm an American girl and not a boy from an African culture taking place more than a century ago, I still feel connected because of the basic fact that parents will not always have these perfect relationships with their offspring. I feel as though the reason the author put so much detail into the conflicted relationship between Okonkwo and Nwoye is because he knew it is something that regardless of where you are coming from, everyone can always relate to. Furthermore the fact that Achebe can make anyone feel connected to these people who are totally different from themselves is exceptional. Overall I am glad I got the chance to read Things Fall Apart, not only because my understanding of past African culture grew substantially, but because I got to read about this detailed father-son relationship. The relationship portrayed in the book is one of those things that I can understand as a child and one day I'll be able to understand as a parent.

I think the fact that Achebe's great work is able to branch out to all sorts of readers is truly a mark of success as an author, especially when working with an issue that can often be thought of as boring to many. Although we didn't

get a great sense of closure at the end of the novel between Okonkwo and Nwoye (due to Okonkwo hanging himself) I think there was still a marvelous ending. This ending is good because it doesn't leave us with a fairy tale ending, but something that is realistic, which in turn ends up being beautiful. Reading of the very much conflicted relationship between Okonkwo and Nwoye was truly so interesting.