

Things fall apart essay

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



Things Fall Apart Essay Chinua Achebe's " Things Fall Apart" leads the reader to reflect on his own traditions, society and religion, and examine the revolution of the Ibo culture into today's Western culture. Close analysis of this books reveals that Achebe is working using a parallelism system- he is reflecting today's society in the complex form of Ibo culture. The book discusses the struggle in Umuofia between change and tradition, which is a question often pondered by those today. Those who do question what is traditional are often shunned in both cultures. While these cultures may contrast and appear to be wildly different, they both share the same message: Conform to what is standard, with regards to traditions, society, and religion, or else risk being alienated. The social class system today, in comparison to Ibo culture, is arranged differently, but the principles remain the same. Although we no longer formally have " ranks", it can be argued that the same system remains today, sans the names. In a way, Western culture appears to be more cowardly than Ibo culture in regards to this. In Ibo culture, ranks are not something they are ashamed of. They embrace the fact that they have a solid social class system. In modern times, society likes to pretend that everyone is free to be how they are, when in reality, it is just the same, but hiding behind the notion that there are no labels. The principles are similar; if a person is born into a certain family, that is the class that they must spend their lives struggling to break free of, with little or virtually no way to escape. While reading " Things Fall Apart", at first thought, the reader might think that the Ibo social system is harsh and severe, but with closer examination, is it evident that really, Western culture is the same. Traditions are something that are quite different today, and

have revolved from an entirely different beginning. Festivals like The New Yam Festival, similar to today's Thanksgiving, had family as a central focus. Thanksgiving today seems to be more commercialized, and less about spending time with loved ones. Another tradition in the Ibo culture is marriage, and bride prices. The bride's family would traditionally pay the groom's family for taking her in. In Western culture, it is often the bride and her family who finance the whole wedding. The whole concept of the women belonging to her father, and being "given" away is still obviously evident in today's culture. Achebe's book causes the reader to think of this system, and how it is degrading to women. The idea of tradition is big in the Ibo culture. Following tradition is expected, and those who break these bounds are punished by others and the gods. This is similar in society today. Those who do not want to take a traditional route are looked down upon, for example, a girl asking a boy to marry her. Society would call this wrong, but why is it wrong? No one quite knows why things are traditional; all they know is the difference between the pre-determined right and wrong. Religion is a very important matter for most people and most religious groups. Catholics, Mormons, Buddhists, and many others are very serious about their faith. One simply does not make religious based jokes. In Ibo culture, religion is the very core and centre of their existence. Everyday, people are followed by their personal gods, and make sacrifices to their gods. Everything they do, is in a sense, for their religion. They are willing to throw away their children, all because their gods disapprove of twins. Religion is something that, no matter what time era, will always remain important to people. The issue, however, that Achebe is trying to address, is not about merely religion. It

relates back the tradition of religion. If a man's father is so dedicated to a religion he would die for it; but the man himself is not sure of that religion, then the man is disrespecting those of seniority to him. This itself, of course, causes the reader to reflect upon this mirror image today. Faith has taken such an extreme, that is considered wrong and immoral to not honour a religion that one did not even choose himself. In some religions, people are even shunned for life for choosing a different pathway. The underlying question is about why we are so protective over our religions, when we are lenient in letting our family be differently than us in other ways. Tradition religion is huge. In Ibo culture, a father would be horrified to be " crowding round their ancestral shrine waiting in vain for days, and his children the while praying to the white man's god. " Religion, then and now, is more of a case of pride. A man is scared of seeming not able to control his family, and therefore appearing weak. Religion is important to people because it a symbol of what they believe in, but throughout the ages, the underlying principle of religion still remains. We live in a society where it takes a drastic change to force us to change our ways. This is seen in our attitude towards nature. Nature went from being completely valued in the late 1800's (the time of the Ibo), to becoming almost irrelevant. Only did the big shock of global warming bring us back to thinking about nature again. In the Ibo culture, nature is such a valuable asset, it is considered to be a gift sent by the gods. They believe that nature is so beautiful, that the gods must control it. Nature is so important to them that they believe that " the future of the people of Umuofia is decided by the vicissitudes of nature. " Their whole culture is eendent on nature, and therefore, they treat it with utter and

complete respect. They believe that they have to treat nature well for it to grant them a good growing season. Today, in the “now” generation, people are only concerned about what will affect them now. In the Ibo culture, this type of attitude towards nature would not happen, simply, because of respect. Respect yourself, respect your gods, respect nature. Those three principles underline Ibo culture. Nature ties in with crops, and crops are very important to the Ibo people, so important that when his crop was not successful, “One man tied his cloth to a tree branch and hanged himself.” This level of deep respect and dedication towards nature causes the reader to reevaluate today’s attitude towards nature. Many people treat nature as unimportant and irrelevant, and this shows the contrast between the Ibo and today’s culture. “Things Fall Apart” by Chinua Achebe causes the reader to consider prevalent issues in Western culture today, especially directed towards society, traditions, nature and religion. Both cultures struggle to find the balance between new and old, and as a result it is easy to see the flaws in our systems. While reflecting upon Western culture, the reader sees that problems have not changed through the years, we still have the same issues. “Things Fall Apart” causes reflection, and reflection can lead to change.