

Things fall apart: egwugwu mask

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



The Egwugwu were a significant part of not only Umuofia, but the Iboculture as a whole. They represented the spiritual ancestors of Umuofia. They were similar to the “ justice system” of today. The Egwugwu were seen as wise and ultimately the most respectable members of the clan.

They would review a case of the people and agree on a ruling they felt was “ just”. For example, Achebe writes about the Egwugwu judging the case of Uzowulu and his constantly abused wife from page 88 to 94. Even though there were some people who did not agree with the decisions of the Egwugwu, they never dared to speak out against them.

Achebe tells the reader the origin of the Egwugwu when writing “...the spirits of the ancestors...emerged from the earth. The Egwugwu house...faced the forest, away from the crowd, who saw only its back with the many-colored patterns and drawings done by specially chosen women” on page 88. This explains the reader the secrecy and importance of the Egwugwu. They were so sacred that the house they came from couldn't even face the rest of Umuofia.

For my project, I created a mask similar to the one Achebe describes on page 90. This spirit is portrayed to “[have a] springy walk. He looked terrible with the smoked raffia body, a huge wooden face painted white except for the round hollow eyes and the charred teeth that were as big as man's fingers.” (Achebe 90).

I have added clay shaped as teeth to my mask to represent the “ charred teeth” (Achebe 90). Additionally, I was unable to find horns as Achebe also tells us the spirit has, so I have added feathers instead. This mask would be

used anytime the Egwugwu is out in public. The spirits are unable to remove these masks because doing so would be “murder” (Achebe 186). Also, I have added scorings to the mask to show the detailed markings carved into actual tribal masks.