

# Question 1's answer:

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Question 1's Answer: Disintegration of Igbo society is central to Things Fall Apart; the idea of collapse, on both an individual and social level, is one of the novel's central images. This image also gives the book its title. The Christians arrive and bring division to the Igbo. One of their first victims is Okonkwo's family. The new faith divides father from son, and the Christians seek to attack the very heart of Igbo belief; such an attack also attacks the core of Igbo culture, as the tribe's religious beliefs are absolutely integral to all other aspects of life. Not coincidentally, the first converts are people who stand to profit from a change in the social order. They are people who have no title in the tribe, and thus have nothing to lose.

Question 2's Answer: This is of course a central issue for the entire story as the novel charts an African society rich in its own history, culture and religion and then observes how this disintegrates when Christianity and the foreign culture that accompanies it is injected into the scenario. Imperialism is basically presented as a clash of two civilisations in this novel, with the weaker of the two finally surrendering. Of course, a central element of imperialism is the way in which the white man assumes a natural sense of superiority and clearly believes that everything associated with the indigenous natives is "bad." Consider how Okonkwo answers Obierika's question about whether the white man understands their beliefs about land: "How can he when he does not even speak our tongue? But he says that our customs are bad; and our own brothers who have taken up his religion also say that our customs bad." Imperialism is expressed through this natural sense of superiority and the way in which it is attached to the various tribal beliefs and practices of Ibo culture. Imperialism in the novel is associated with everything that is white

being good and everything that is not being " bad" or backward. Question 3's Answer: Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* portrays Africa, particularly the Ibo society, right before the arrival of the white man. *Things Fall Apart* analyzes the destruction of African culture by the appearance of the white man in terms of the destruction of the bonds between individuals and their society. Achebe, who teaches us a great deal about Ibo society and translates Ibo myth and proverbs, also explains the role of women in pre-colonial Africa. In *Things Fall Apart*, the reader follows the trials and tribulations of Okonkwo, a tragic hero whose tragic flaw includes the fact that " his whole life was dominated by fear, the fear of failure and weakness." (16) For Okonkwo, his father Unoka embodied the epitome of failure and weakness. Okonkwo was taunted as a child by other children when they called Unoka agbala. Agbala could either mean a man who had taken no title or " woman." Okonkwo hated anything weak or frail, and his descriptions of his tribe and the members of his family show that in Ibo society anything strong was likened to man and anything weak to woman. Because Nwoye, his son by his first wife, reminds Okonkwo of his father Unoka he describes him as woman-like. After hearing of Nwoye's conversion to the Christianity, Okonkwo ponders how he, " a flaming fire could have begotten a son like Nwoye, degenerate and effeminate" (143)? On the other hand, his daughter Ezinma " should have been a boy." (61) He favored her the most out of all of his children, yet " if Ezinma had been a boy [he] would have been happier." (63) After killing Ikemefuna, Okonkwo, who cannot understand why he is so distraught, asks himself, " When did you become a shivering old woman?" (62) When his fellows look as if they are not going to

fight against the intruding missionaries, Okonkwo remembers the " days when men were men." (184) In keeping with the Ibo view of female nature, they allowed wife beating. The novel describes two instances when Okonkwo beats his second wife, once when she did not come home to make his meal. He beat her severely and was punished but only because he beat her during the Week of Peace. He beat her again when she referred to him as one of those " guns that never shot." When a severe case of wife beating comes before the egwugwu, he found in favor of the wife., but at the end of the trial a man wondered " why such a trifle should come before the egwugwu." (89) Achebe shows that the Ibo nonetheless assign important roles to women. For instance, women painted the houses of the egwugwu (84). Furthermore, the first wife of a man in the Ibo society is paid some respect. This deference is illustrated by the palm wine ceremony at Nwakibie's obi . Anasi, Nwakibie's first wife, had not yet arrived and " the others [other wives] could not drink before her" (22). The importance of woman's role appears when Okonkwo is exiled to his motherland. His uncle, Uchendu, noticing Okonkwo's distress, eloquently explains how Okonkwo should view his exile: " A man belongs to his fatherland when things are good and life is sweet. But when there is sorrow and bitterness he finds refuge in his motherland." A man has both joy and sorrow in his life and when the bad times come his " mother" is always there to comfort him. Thus comes the saying " Mother is Supreme".

Question 4's Answer: A tragedy is defined as a story where the protagonist is unsuccessful. At the end of " Things Fall Apart", the protagonist, Okwonkwo kills himself because he cannot adapt to the changes in the Igbo people. He resents Christianity and the white man. However, in death, Okwonkwo

becomes a hero and actually brings back some of the traditional Igbo ways. They will not bury his body because he committed suicide and they make sacrifices to cleanse the land desecrated by the suicide. His friend, Obierika exclaims that Okwonkwo was one of the greatest men of his tribe and it was the white man who drove him to kill himself. So, by killing himself, Okwonkwo brings back some of his people's traditions and makes them aware of the dark side of the white people. Okwonkwo is a tragic figure but his death brings back the very things he died for.

Question 5's Answer: One argument for suggesting that the Ibo culture is uncivilized would be the way that they have various taboos against such groups of people as twins and other outcasts of society. These are of course among the first converts to join Christianity because of the way that they are able to rise in status and importance in European culture. However, we must be very careful in the way we read such information, for Achebe is clear to describe European culture as a culture that gives more prestige to some than to others. Ibo culture is not therefore presented as being "uncivilized," it is just presented as being a culture like any other, which, in spite of its differences to European culture, is similar in the way that it gives status and prestige to some and makes others outcasts.