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Book Review: Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart

The novel concerned in this book review is a novel by Chinua Achebe entitled Things Fall Apart. The novel's main character is a man named Okonkwo; at the beginning of the novel, the protagonist is portrayed as a strong man, capable of doing good things for his village and his people (Achebe).

However, the protagonist is living in his father's shadow, as his father often borrowed money from those in the village with the complete inability to pay it back. In his attempt to seem strong, Okonkwo participates in the killing of a young boy who views him as a father figure; after the death of the boy, things begin to go wrong for Okonkwo, and he is sent into exile (Achebe).

Once he returns from exile, he is confronted with the presence of colonialism in his village; he and others react violently against this colonial presence, eventually burning down a Christian church. At the end of the novel,

Okonkwo hangs himself rather than be tried in the colonial court (Achebe).

The protagonist, Okonkwo, is the primary focus of the novel. However, the boy named Ikemefuna that Okonkwo participates in killing is also a key character in the story, as his death is the impetus for all action. In addition, Okonkwo's lazy son, Nwoye, is designed to be a character foil against his father's strength and stubbornness. Finally, the white characters, including the Reverend and Mr. Brown, are key players in the story, as they are the ultimate reason for Okonkwo's death.

Achebe's writing style is very poetic. He does not hold tightly to traditional conventions, but the resulting text is one that flows like poetry while keeping the reader engaged in the story. Achebe gives the reader a feeling as well as an image, as exemplified in this quote: " And at last the locusts did descend.

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They settled on every tree and on every blade of grass; they settled on the roofs and covered the bare ground. Mighty tree branches broke away under them, and the whole country became the brown-earth color of the vast, hungry swarm" (Achebe). The reader gets a clear picture of the scene, but also a feeling of desolation and of impending doom because of the locusts. The novel's diction is beautiful, and certainly one of its strengths. If it has weaknesses, the weaknesses of the novel lie in the shallow, almost caricature-like nature of the characters. Rather than developing full characters, the characters are stylized, almost symbolic in nature. Overall, this is an excellent novel that deals with some complex themes, particularly the themes of colonialism and gender. Without a keen understanding of history and the issues of colonialism, the reader may miss some of the details that make this novel so excellent. Even today, the lessons and the impacts of the novel can be felt; it is a timeless book, and one that should continue to be part of any classic collection.

Works cited

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