

Things fall apart

[Linguistics](#), [English](#)



Essay, English Topic: Things Fall Apart The colonial political think-tanks said the obvious that was expected of their mindset and strategy by portraying the Africans as savages and the so-called mission of the Europeans was to enlighten them. European historians and the literary giants followed suit and described Africa as a wild, dark and uncivilized continent. The characters in most of the novels highlighted the colonial stereotypes about Africans.

Chinua Achebe challenged this dominant model. With *Things Fall Apart* he introduced Africans to The Africans, besides the Europeans whose writings served the colonial vested interests. For the first time, an African intellectual and researcher was portraying the Igbo society from the nationalistic perspective. Realization dawned on the thinking Achebe that the untold story about the Africans must be told by an African writer, and not by the white-skinned historian or the novelist, through their colored glasses and biased pen. His mission was to prove the original beauty about complexity and sophistication of African society which the colonial power termed as the society of savages. The colonial powers had caused irreparable damage to country's social, cultural and political fabric. The historical clock had taken the full circle. The publication of the novel came as the warning shot to the colonial powers, when it saw the light of the day two years before Nigeria's independence and series novels on the subject of colonist racist claims and hailing African culture, history and society appeared on the scene. Achebe can be considered as the architect for launching the literary movement for the artistic and cultural renaissance of Nigeria and Africa and challenging the colonial-inspired, coated and opinionated literature that mocked at the profound African traditions. Achebe demonstrated how pen was mightier

than the sword.

By depicting the various facets of just one character, Okonkwo, Chinua Achebe informs us so much about the African Culture and lifestyles prevailing then, and their customs and traditions. The description of his physical strength is symbolic of the physical strength of the African tribal communities as a whole. His father was a lazy man, good for nothing and given to drinks. The nature and aptitude of Okonkwo was exactly opposite. And only an African author of the caliber of Achebe describes his traits in a befitting manner. The European writers would not have the writing skills to create a character like Okonkwo, because they are unable to gauge the depth of the inner world of the African tribal life. Describing the physical prowess of Okonkwo, Achebe writes, “ He was called the Cat because his back would never touch the earth. It was this man that Okonkwo threw in a fight which the old men agreed was one of the fiercest since the founder of their town engaged a spirit of the wild for seven days and seven nights.”(p. 3)Achebe cleverly articulates the familial tradition and mindset of the African tribes by stating that “ Age was respected among his people, but achievement was revered” (p. 8). The author is referring to the fame of Okonkwo and his achievement at the young age.

Achebe describes the family life of Okonkwo and how stern he was in controlling his wives and children. He had three wives and had built separate cottages for them. But he suffered psychologically, always reminded of the thought that he was the son of an unsuccessful father, not respected in his society for his wayward ways of borrowing from all and sundry, without thinking about the repayment options. Achebe describes his mental

condition thus: “ And so Okonkwo was ruled by one passion—to hate everything that his father Unoka had loved. One of those this was gentleness and another was idleness”. (p. 13) Achebe is never tired of providing the rare insights about the tribal life of Africa and he mentions one incident that would have resulted in war between two tribes owing to a murder incident. Negotiations were however conducted for peaceful settlements of the issue with honorable terms and conditions. His tribal chief sent Okonkwo as an emissary to broker peace which he successfully did. With this example Achebe proves the point that tribal people of Africa, though fierce in nature and known for their superstitions, were also practical men in the art of political and administrative governance and a war-like situation was amicably settled. The core issue articulated by the author is that African writers are eminently suited to write the history and cultural life of Africans, and not the biased and ill-informed European historians.

Works Cited

Achebe, Chinua. Things Fall Apart