

Born this way



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Okonkwo was a hero in Ibo society, initially, because of his devotion to tradition and religion. He was a hero, also, because of his unbreakable resolve, his ambition to be great, and his hard work ethic. Okonkwo's fall from hero status is a microcosm of the Ibo society's loss of values which made it an esteemed society. Both Okonkwo and the Ibo society itself abandoned their traditions, religious beliefs, and lost their positions of strength.

Okonkwo was a hero in the Ibo society because; he was devoted to tradition, religion, and the rules.

Okonkwo stood firm against the religious and political orders that the Europeans brought to Umuofia. Even though Okonkwo said that he was doing what was best for his society, he also was fearful of the change to a new culture and a new tradition that would change his high stature in the society, “[a]n abominable religion has settled among you. A man can now leave his father and his brothers. He can curse gods of his fathers and his ancestors, like a hunter's dog that suddenly goes mad and turns on his master. I fear for you; I fear for you the clan” (Achebe 124).

This was problematic for Okonkwo because his sense of his own worth was dependent upon how the society judged him. Okonkwo was a hero because of his unbreakable resolve, his ambition to be great and his hard work ethic, “[h]e had a slight stammer and whenever he was angry and could not get his words out quickly enough, he would use his fists had no patience with unsuccessful men. ” (Achebe 5). Okonkwo's behavior was the result of having a father who was poor, soft, and did not claim any title in his life time.

Okonkwo struggled not to become a weak and lazy man like his father. He believed that he had to be strong, hard working, and become well respected by his village but, he was afraid of failure. Okonkwo took on opposite beliefs such as being wealthy, brave and anything else that would not make him look like an agabla, or feminine. Okonkwo's life began to fall apart after three incidents; first when he killed Ikemefuma, who was someone who lived with him and was like a son to him but he did it because he wanted to appear to be brave.

Next, he was exiled from the clan for seven years. Okonkwo knew that he lost his standing in the Ibo society because of his exile. Okonkwo's awareness of his lost of stature in the Ibo society was conveyed by the narrator when he said, " he had lost the chance to lead his warlike clan against the new religion, which, he was told, had gained ground. [h]e had lost the years in which he might have taken the highest titles in the land" (Achebe 121). His ambitions of being rich and powerful became obsolete, because of his exile.

His final downfall was when Nwoye, his oldest and favorite son, converted to Christianity. This deeply depressed Okonkwo because he had not only high hopes for Nwoye, but he was his heir. Being robbed of a position of strength and not being able to resist change was the downfall of the Ibo culture. As soon as the white people came to Umuofia everything that the tribe had once stood for was slowly becoming obsolete, " Now he has won out brothers, and our clan can no longer act like one. He has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart" (Achebe 125).

Okonkwo felt betrayed by the members of the tribe whom he had once seen as great warrior like men. Okonkwo believed that if he had not been exiled he would have prevented people from converting to Christianity. He was also disappointed in the behavior of his clan members. “ Okonkwo was deeply grieved. And it was not just a personal grief. He mourned for the clan, which he saw breaking up and falling apart and he mourned for the warlike men of Umuofia, who had unaccountably become soft like women” (Achebe 129). The clan members that he knew and remembered would have driven out the white men long ago.

Okonkwo’s feelings of disappointment of the new society that had taken over Umuofia, lost of esteem, lost of cultural identity, guilt and disappointment in his clan members led him to commit suicide. Okonkwo started out with everything he wanted, barns filled with yams, wives, children, being a warrior, and a well-respected, hardworking member of the society. He had a plan for his life but the plan fell apart. He lost the traditions that he loved and cherished. He viewed the white missionaries as a threat to the way he wanted his life to be in his society.

He was not flexible and did not want to change. Despite his self assessment, Okonkwo actually does adhere to his values. The Ibo culture has changed; but Okonkwo, while he was exiled (or maybe because he was exiled) does not take on the culture values of European society. He could have only become accepted in the changed culture if he, himself, had accepted the new culture, and changed himself. This change was not a change that Okonkwo wanted to evolve into. He believed that he was born that way and

could not and would not change his beliefs. He did it the way he wanted to and ended his life.