

Compare and contrast okonkwo and unoka essay sample



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Things fall apart, written by Chinua Achebe, has a proverb like this: When the mother-cow is chewing grass its young ones watch its mouth. The proverb shows that a child will have his behavior like his parents. However, when the child does not respect the parents, he will rebel and do everything opposite to his parents. For instance in this same novel, Okonkwo has showed no respect for his father, Unoka, who is a failure. Hence, he does his best to behave and act nothing like his father, which lead to the contrast between Okonkwo and Unoka in their characters.

Firstly, let us consider their childhoods. We can see from Unokas memory: He would remember his own childhood, how he had often wandered around looking for a kite sailing leisurely, as soon as he found one he would sing with his whole being, welcoming it back from its long, long journey. The words wandered, sailing leisurely, sing and welcoming show us that Unoka has a happy and carefree childhood. He has much free time and does not have to worry about anything.

On the other hand, at a very early age when Okonkwo was striving desperately to build a barn through share-cropping, he was also fending for his fathers house. The words very early, striving desperately, fending for show that Okonkwo has to work when he is very young, when the others are living an easy life, he has to take care of his parents and his siblings in desperate. The difference in the childhood had led Okonkwo and Unoka into possessing different backgrounds.

Although having a comfortable childhood, Unoka becomes a failure.

According to the Igbos culture, a successful man has to have titles and many

wives and barns full of yams. Throughout the story, we see that he only has one wife and when Unoka died he had taken no title at all and he was heavily in debt. Moreover, He was poor and his wife and children had barely enough to eat, which implied Unoka is incapable of taking care of his family, the task considered the most important for the father of a family. Because of his failure, Unoka is not respected by anyone, even his sons friend called him agbala. Meanwhile, though Okonkwo starts with his bare hand Okonkwo does not have the start in life which many young men usually have, he inherits neither a barn nor a title, nor even a young wife, he has achieved great success.

Since his father is a failure, he does not leave him anything but Okonkwo was a wealthy farmer and had two barns full of yams, and had just married his third wife. To crown it all he had taken two titles and had shown incredible prowess in two inter-tribal wars. Okonkwo has all it takes to be a successful man: two barns full of yams, three wives, and two titles. Okonkwo is considered the greatest warrior and is respected by the whole clan. Okonkwo was chosen by the nine villages to carry a message of war to their enemies and they treated him like a King. In the wrestling match, Okonkwo is among the elders and grandees although he is young.

The reason for the success and the failure of the two people is due to the different in their personality when they grow up. Having an easy childhood makes Unoka become lazy. In his day, he was lazy and improvident and was quite incapable of thinking about tomorrow. This shows that Unoka does not care about the future; he just wants to enjoy his happy day. When he goes to consult the Oracle, the priestess has told him: You, Unoka, are known in all

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the clan for the weakness of your matchet and your hoe. When your neighbours go out with their axe to cut down virgin forests, you sow your yams on exhausted farms that take no labour to clear; you stay at home and offer sacrifices to a reluctant soil. Go home and work like a man The words exhausted farms, no labour and reluctant soil indicate that Unoka is indolent. He does not try to offer better conditions for his farm. He just works as if he is forced to do so. Moreover, the phrase Go home and work like a man and weakness of your matchet and your hoe implies Unoka is lazy and he does not have enough strength to grow yams, the king of crops.

Okonkwo, on the contrary, has to work hard since childhood. During the planting season Okonkwo worked daily on his farms from cock-crow until the chickens went to roost. This shows that he works with enthusiastic and he hardly becomes exhausted. He had told Nwakibie: I am not afraid of work and he really does. Okonkwo had begun to sow with the first rains; he watched the sky all day for signs of rain-clouds and lay wake all night; he had tried to protect them by making rings of thick sisal leaves and he changed them every day and prayed. all day, all night and everyday shows his determination and perseverance in order to save the yams. In addition, when it is the Feast of the New Yam, it says that he was always uncomfortable sitting around for days waiting for a feast or getting over it, he would be much happier working on his farm. This proves his joy to work.

Although Unoka is being lazy, he still has something that Okonkwo does not have, gentleness, a feminine trait that Okonkwo hates. This can be seen from his despite war. Unoka was never happy when it came to wars. He was in fact a coward and could not bear the sight of blood. We can see that he is <https://assignbuster.com/compare-and-contrast-okonkwo-and-unoka-essay-sample/>

a gentle man as he hate to see blood, because when there is blood there must be injured people. He cannot be happy about wars because they bring death to the clan. Another piece of evidence for his gentleness is that he consoles Okonkwo. Unoka said: Do not despair. I know you will not despair. You have a manly and a proud heart. A proud heart can survive a general failure because such a failure does not prick its pride. Unoka knows Okonkwo has a proud and manly heart, which cannot bear the failure easily, so he tries to make him feel better. However, Okonkwo does not appreciate his gentle courage.

Despite the fact that deep inside him, Okonkwo is gentle but outwardly, he is violent. He is not afraid of war and he can stand the sight of blood. In Umuofias latest war he was the first to bring home a human head. That was his fifth head; and he was not an old man yet. The fifth human head indicates he has already killed five men, showing his prowess in war and fighting. Okonkwo ruled his household with a heavy hand, suggests forcefulness, and physical control he has over his family. For instance, when his youngest wife fails to cook dinner for him because she comes to a friends house to plait her hair, Okonkwo beats her very heavily. The other evidence is the author always uses words like thundered, roared, threatened, shouted and so on to shows Okonkwos bad-temper and violence and the fear with which Okonkwo uses to rule his household.

However, we notice that sometimes Okonkwo is caring just like his father. This is shown when Ekwefi goes to Okonkwos obi and tells him Ezinma is in danger. Okonkwo sprang from his bed, pushed back the bolt on his door and ran into Ekwefis hut. sprang suggests that he gets out of the

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bed immediately, ran shows that he wants to get there as fast as possible, which imply his worry for Ezinma. He is gentle because he tells Ikemefuna that he is going home, in which the real reason is that he is about to be killed and before that Okonkwo sat still for a very long time supporting his chin in his palms. The sentence indicates he has to reconsider many times how to break this news to Ikemefuna. The other clue for Okonkwos gentleness is when Ekwefi follows the priestess, he has gone with his machet to the shrine. It was only on his fourth trip that he had found Ekwefi, and by then he had become gravely worried. His fourth trip and gravely worried show he has gone to find Ekwefi four times, which suggests his great anxiety and care for Ekwefi. From the similarity, we can see that both Okonkwo and Unoka have passion for something.

Unoka loves almost everything. He loves music. Unoka would play with the village musicians, his face beaming with blessedness and peace. Beaming with blessedness and peace, reveals his passion for music, Unoka is content and calm when it comes to music. Unoka loved the good fare and the good fellowship, and he loved this season of the year, when the rains had stopped and the sun rose every morning with dazzling beauty. He loved the first kite that returned with the dry season, and the children who sang songs of welcome to them. This illustrates his love for good things and peace as well as his carefree and easy-going life.

Okonkwo is also fond of a few things. He is enthusiastic when it comes to wrestling. Okonkwo cleared his throat and moved his feet to the beat of the drums. It filled him with fire as it had always done from his youth. He

trembled with the desire to conquer and subdue. It was like the desire for
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woman. The words fire, desire, trembled prove he is overwhelmed with the thinking of wrestling. When the match becomes thrilling, Okonkwo sprang to his feet and quickly sat down again. This shows he is energetic and devoted to the match. Okonkwo is also fond of Ikemefuna and Ezinma, though his fondness only showed on very rare occasions. This implies the difference between Okonkwo and his father. Unoka expresses his feeling openly, but Okonkwo only shows it rarely.

Having different childhood, different background, different personality, nevertheless, Okonkwo and Unoka result in having one thing in common which is they are both bad father although in different ways. Okonkwo did not have the start in life which many young men usually had. He did not inherit a barn from his father. He neither inherited a barn nor a title, nor even a young wife indicates Unokas failure to provide for his family and give Okonkwo some inheritance which other young men should have show his irresponsibility. However, Unoka is a good father when he encourages Okonkwo to get over difficulties which I have elaborated above.

On the other hand, Okonkwo is a responsible father. He works hard in order to provide the best for his family. Although he is violent, Okonkwo has said I am worried about Nwoye. A bowl of pounded yams can throw him in a wrestling match. His two younger brothers are more promising. This implies his worry for the future of his sons, though it also shows his fear of his son become a failure like his father. Nonetheless, it is this fear that makes Okonkwo a bad father. When he thinks he see the incipient laziness in his son, Nwoye, he sought to correct his son by constant nagging and bearing; when he see Nwoye likes womens stories, he rebuked him and beat him. The <https://assignbuster.com/compare-and-contrast-okonkwo-and-unoka-essay-sample/>

words nagging, bearing, rebuked and beat points out that he wants to destroy all the feminine traits in Nwoye. This makes Nwoye has an unhappy childhood.

In conclusion, Things fall apart has illustrated Unoka a foil for Okonkwo. Okonkwo is successful, hardworking and violent, while Unoka is a failure, lazy and gentle. It is because of Unokas failure that causes Okonkwo to possess a personality very different from him, he was possessed by the fear of his fathers contemptible life and shameful death. However, Unoka is not all bad and Okonkwo is not all different from his father. The fear of resemble his father has controlled the way he behaves, but deep inside him, he is gentle and fragile.