

Okonkwo character analysis



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

To help you, my dear clan, learn the importance of not letting your personal flaws be the reason for your downfall, I must tell you about our former clansman, Okonkwo. I watched as his weaknesses and pride brought him down to the point of suicide, which is the escape of cowards. He killed himself because he felt like he had nothing left to live for. Instead of facing a new, changed life in Umuofia, he escaped by taking his own. Before his downward spiral, Okonkwo was known as a self-determined and hard-working man who worked hard to earn many titles amongst our clan.

Listen as I explain Okonkwo's character. Okonkwo's father was Unoka, who was loved by all amongst the clan. " He was tall but very thin and had a slight stoop. He wore a haggard and mournful look except when he was drinking or playing on his flute" (4). Unoka was lazy and had many debts that he didn't pay off yet he was loved. Okonkwo grew up observing his dad's mettle through life by living off others. " But Unoka was such a man that he always succeeded in borrowing more, and piling up debts" (5).

Okonkwo watched his father be pitied because he couldn't feed his wives or children. At his death, Unoka had no titles and he was still greatly in debt. " Any wonder then that his son Okonkwo was ashamed of him? " (7) Due to his father's example, Okonkwo knew he wanted to achieve great things and he was determined he would become the opposite of his father. This aspect of Okonkwo's character leads him to success. Okonkwo succeeded materially in our clan. One particular point of recognition happened when he fought Amanlize the Cat.

Amanlize the Cat had not been defeated in seven years, and so when Okonkwo defeated him at the young age of eighteen he became well known

throughout our nine villages. Okonkwo continued to grow into a great man. “ He was tall and huge, and his bushy eyebrows and wide nose gave him a very severe look.... When he walked his heels hardly touched the ground and he seemed to walk on springs” (3). With his hard work he earned three wives, found financial security, ran a successful yam farm, produced multiple children, built several huts, and received many titles.

Unfortunately, as sometimes happens with great men, Okonkwo had flaws. He had a temper, no self-control, he was over confident, and he beat his poor wives. His most serious flaw was his pride. Just as he'd hoped, Okonkwo became the total opposite of his dad who had been a lazy debtor. His dad had also been a peace loving and kind man who was loved by all in our villages and Okonkwo could not say the same. An instance where Okonkwo let his pride cloud his judgment is when he participated in the killing of Ikemefuna, a boy he was raising as his own son. Okonkwo thought of Ikemefuna as the perfect son.

Okonkwo liked that his biological son Nwoye and Ikemefuna were getting along because he was afraid of Nwoye's lack of manliness. Okonkwo felt that Nwoye hanging around Ikemefuna would make him more of a man. Trouble arose when the Oracle in his village decided that Ikemefuna had to die because he was interfering with Okonkwo and his oldest son, Nwoye's, relationship. Okonkwo was warned in advanced not to participate in the killing of Ikemefuna, but he did anyway because he was afraid of what the other men in the tribe would think of him if he didn't participate.

Okonkwo was too worried that he would be viewed as weak. His pride drove him to help kill a boy he loved as a son and this greatly harmed his

relationship with Nwoye. Okonkwo was also too worried about Nwoye becoming “womanly” like his father, Unoka, and he didn’t realize how he was hurting his family with his violent and stubborn nature. Later on there was an instance when Okonkwo’s carelessness leads him to accidentally kill a woman from our village.

The custom in our village is to exile a man for seven years for such a crime and therefore Okonkwo went to his mother’s village, Mbanta. As the elders said, if one finger brought oil it soiled the others” (106). After seven long years of exile in his mother’s village, Okonkwo returned to his village eager to start his life by building more huts and showing his wealth. When Okonkwo came back to Umuofia he expected his wealth to place him in the same circumstances as before his exile. “The clan had undergone such profound change during his exile that it was barely recognizable” (150). You see, the missionaries had come into the church and attracted many of our people to it.

This changed our clan remarkable with all the new people. “He knew that he had lost his place among the nine masked spirits who administered justice in the clan” (140). In addition to the new religion that is to this day so different and odd to us, they built a government. In his pride, Okonkwo figured that he could go to war with the new white people, but this turned out to be harder than he expected. Once he went to war he kept being defeated and eventually Okonkwo’s anger got the best of him and he actually killed another man. It was useless.

Okonkwo’s machete descended twice and the man’s head lay beside his uniformed body” (168). Okonkwo felt worthless, like his life meant nothing

any more. Instead of facing the new changes in his clan, he went the cowardly way out through suicide. This man of our clan who had worked hard to become great in order to overcome the shame from his childhood and who had built wealth in our village allowed his pride to be his ruin. What Okonkwo did to end his own life was incredibly selfish and he took the coward's way out.

He killed others in his violent temper, he killed a boy who was like a son to him, and in the end, he killed himself. The only last noble thing Okonkwo did was try and stand up to fight and save our clan from being taken over by the white people. Okonkwo was a fighter and a warrior, but in the end everything he worked for was meaningless. Heed my warnings. Learn from your past to improve your future, but don't allow your past to cloud your judgment and make you too prideful about your own negative qualities.