

Novel Series

Two wooden masks with horns, one on the left and one on the right, flanking the title. The masks are carved from dark wood and feature prominent, pointed horns. The faces are stylized with deep-set eyes and a serious expression.

Things Fall Apart

teacher resource

Things Fall Apart

Chinua Achebe

Curriculum Unit

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About the Cover

In *Things Fall Apart*, Chinua Achebe immerses readers in traditional Nigerian culture, which included ceremonial masks, and in the impact of English imperialism.

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Introduction

As a university student in Ibadan, Nigeria, Chinua Achebe studied a wide range of British literature but was shocked when he read several works that dealt with Africa, told from the sole perspective of the white colonizers. The result was *Things Fall Apart*, a seminal text in Anglophone African literature, in which Achebe set out to write the story of an Igbo village from the Igbo point of view.

In *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe creates a world made up of nine villages, each with individual customs as well as cultural traits shared by the entire district. Events occur that affect only one place, Umuofia, but ceremonies like marriages and festivals bring villages together in celebration. Fears of the supernatural world sometimes permeate life there, yet these people also have traditions that have developed over centuries, providing an ordered and cohesive society. Although occasional wars, murders, and brutality take place, the people of Umuofia are fully human and engaged in their day-to-day lives and relationships. They are not the stereotypical savages of colonialist literature.

The protagonist, Okonkwo, is a man of great strength and firm beliefs in the traditional ways of his society. He is obsessed with achievement and manhood because of the perceived weakness of both his father, the dreamer Unoka, and his son, the Christian convert Nwoye. His determination to rise in the eyes of his fellow villagers and never to show weakness is undermined by the encroachment of British influences, first in the form of Christian missionaries and then with the British District Commissioner's government. By avoiding both the stereotype of the noble savage and the British officials' viewpoint of the Igbo as primitive people, Achebe gives a realistic picture of Igbo life.

Teacher Notes

Chinua Achebe is a well-known Nigerian novelist whose work depicts both the traditional life of his people, the Igbo (pronounced EE-bo), and the impact of British colonialism on them. He was born in the town of Ogidi in 1930. After receiving a British-style education at the University of Ibadan, he taught briefly and worked for a broadcasting company in Lagos, the capital. Eventually, he became a professor of English at the University of Nigeria and director of two Nigerian publishing companies. In 1990, he was partially paralyzed in an automobile accident. Subsequently, he moved to the United States, where he had been offered a teaching position at Bard College. In 2009, he joined the faculty of Brown University.

One can tell from his novel that Achebe is well-acquainted with the everyday life of the people about whom he writes. One can also see his concern because the Nigerian way of life had changed and, without a chronicler, the traditional ways would be forever lost. The people to whom he introduces his readers have been living as they have lived for centuries, but suddenly British missionaries appear, bringing a new religion and a new type of education for the young. British government soon replaces the traditional way of settling disputes. The debilitating effect of foreign intrusion is clear in *Things Fall Apart* and in subsequent work by Achebe.

To achieve his ends, Achebe uses a traditional English literary form, the novel, but he makes it his own by interweaving Nigerian folktales, proverbs, and vocabulary. Students may have difficulty with the vocabulary at first. Point out to them that there is a glossary at the end of the novel which they may find helpful if they cannot guess the meaning of a word from its context. Achebe's style is not difficult, and the book can be read by middle schoolers, but it is more appropriate for older students because of his realistic depiction of the occasional brutality of life among the people of Umuofia.

Reading assignments for *Things Fall Apart* are as follows:

Chapters 1–3 in preparation for Lesson 2

Chapters 4–6 in preparation for Lesson 3

Chapters 7–8 in preparation for Lesson 4

Chapters 9–10 in preparation for Lesson 5

Chapters 11–12 in preparation for Lesson 6

Chapters 13–15 in preparation for Lesson 7

Chapters 16–19 in preparation for Lesson 8

Chapters 20–22 in preparation for Lesson 9

Chapters 23–25 in preparation for Lesson 10

Students begin a research assignment after Lesson 1. Information gathered in group research will be presented in Lesson 12.

Answers to handouts will vary unless otherwise indicated. Students may need additional paper to complete some handouts.

Lesson 1

Introducing Nigeria

Objectives

- To examine basic historical, geographic, and demographic information about Nigeria
- To begin research projects

Notes to the Teacher

The lesson begins with a Nigerian folktale, “The Flute.” Chinua Achebe wrote a version of this tale as a children’s book, which may be available from your library or an online bookseller. The story also appears in *Sharing Literature with Children: A Thematic Anthology* by Francelia Butler (Wave-land Press, 1989) and has been retold on several Internet sites. You can also begin with another Nigerian folktale if you prefer. Practice telling the story so that you narrate it from memory with dramatic expressiveness.

The story begins with a younger wife’s son, who has left his flute behind in the field after a day of planting yams. Despite his parents’ pleas, he returns to the field at night and encounters ghosts who tempt him to lie, offering him a gold flute, a silver flute, and his own beaten-up bamboo flute, which he chooses. They reward him with a gift, giving him a choice between two pots. He chooses the smaller one, winning their approbation, and takes it home to find it filled with treasures. His mother offers to share the treasures, but the older wife, jealous and greedy, sends her son to “lose” his flute. Confronted with the spirits, he chooses the gold flute and the larger pot. He returns home, and the mother and son lock themselves in their hut to open the pot. Instead of containing treasures, it is filled with all sorts of horrible diseases, a few of which escape into the world at large. Both the mother and the son are punished for their greed with death from the awful diseases.

Modern Nigeria is the result of complex factors: the interaction of multiple indigenous societies over millennia; the exploitation of the area by European nations for the slave trade; the subsequent occupation of the area by the British during the height of the imperialist competition between European countries for markets and resources in Africa; the drive for independence that transformed Africa in the 1960s; and the postcolonial policies of the new nation. The country is marked by a multiplicity of cultures: For example, over five hundred languages are spoken there. English, the language of the occupying colonial power for so long, is the only official language. (Chinua Achebe writes his books in English, not his native Igbo.)

The territory that became Nigeria was the location of a series of powerful kingdoms, of which the best known are probably the Benin and the Songhai Empires, good subjects for student research. Beginning in the fifteenth century, trade with a succession of Europeans (first the Portuguese, then the Dutch, French, and English) eventually exacerbated the existing domestic trade in slaves. Britain abolished slavery in its empire in the 1830s but continued to expand trade and influence in the area, and in 1901, Nigeria became a British protectorate. After World War II, the country moved away from colonial domination and in 1960 became an independent nation. The various ethnic groups, languages, customs, and religions (Muslim, Christian, and indigenous animist beliefs) have created tensions within the country since that time.

Before class, have ready the version of the folktale you wish to use, a map of Africa, and **Handouts 1** and **2**. Make enough copies of the Teacher Resource Page so that each student will have a research card. Plan research assignments before class: When is each due date? Who will be the members of student groups? What resources will they have available? What format should the reports use? (For example, PowerPoint, poster, oral report, booklet, etc.)

This lesson begins with your retelling of a Nigerian folktale, followed by a discussion of student hypotheses about the culture that created the story. A follow-up discussion broadens the topic to West Africa in general and ascertains students' prior knowledge. Students study a map to understand the cultural complexity of Nigeria today and to become familiar with the setting of the novel, the Igbo region of Nigeria. (Note: The older version of the name is *Ibo*, but *Igbo* is the preferred term among modern scholars.) Finally, students receive research assignments, approximate dates for presentations, and, if you wish, the rubric with which you will score the presentations. A sample can be found in Lesson 12. You may want to allocate a day or more to assist students with research.

Procedure

1. Tell students that you are going to begin class today with a folktale, "The Flute." Ask them to listen carefully and be prepared to discuss it afterwards. Distribute **Handout 1**, and briefly review the questions before you start the story.
2. Tell students the story. Ask them to work through the handout questions with a partner for a few minutes. Then have students share answers with the whole class.

Suggested Responses

1. The family consists of the father, several wives, and their children. Polygamy is clearly accepted in this society. Children are expected to obey their parents, but sometimes assert their own independence.

2. There is a clear demarcation between the safe human world of daylight and the dangerous world of spirits who come out at night and live in some ways that parallel human endeavors, e.g., planting ghost yams. The two worlds should never meet; humans should stay home at night.
 3. Greed is always wrong and will lead to disaster. One should share one's good fortune with others.
 4. The story explains the origins of diseases.
 5. Students may guess different origins, because the story contains archetypes and lessons which appear in many cultures. They may mention the Greek story of Pandora or others. Conclude the discussion by telling them, if they haven't already guessed, that this is a West African folktale.
3. Turn to a map of Africa in your classroom, or display one from the Internet. Tell students that this story is based on a folktale from Nigeria, and point out Nigeria on the map. Identify contiguous countries and main bodies of water. Ask students what they know about this area of Africa. (Most will be able to tell you that many American slaves came from there, but probably not too much else.)
 4. Distribute **Handout 2**, a cultural map of Nigeria. Tell students to study the map and then try to answer the questions. Then discuss their hypotheses, using the information in Notes to the Teacher. Be sure to include the multiple languages and religions of Nigeria, the British occupation of the area, the formation of the protectorate of Nigeria, and its subsequent independence. Tell students that at the end of this unit they will find out more about what is happening in Nigeria today.
 5. Distribute *Things Fall Apart*, and tell students that they will be reading a novel set in the Igbo section of Nigeria in the late 1800s, when British influence was growing.
 6. Explain to students that they will be doing research to learn more about Nigeria and will present their findings in reports at various times throughout the unit. Divide students into eight groups, and distribute research assignment cards from the Teacher Resource Page. Make sure that students know when they will have to present their findings. Give them the format you would like them to use for their reports. Explain that they will find information about their topics throughout the novel but that they need to do additional research for their presentations.
 7. Discuss your expectations for the presentations, and answer questions. Include your standards for guaranteeing accuracy, organization, eye contact, and voice quality. You may want to distribute copies of the rubric you will use to evaluate the presentations. See **Handout 16** in Lesson 12 for an example.

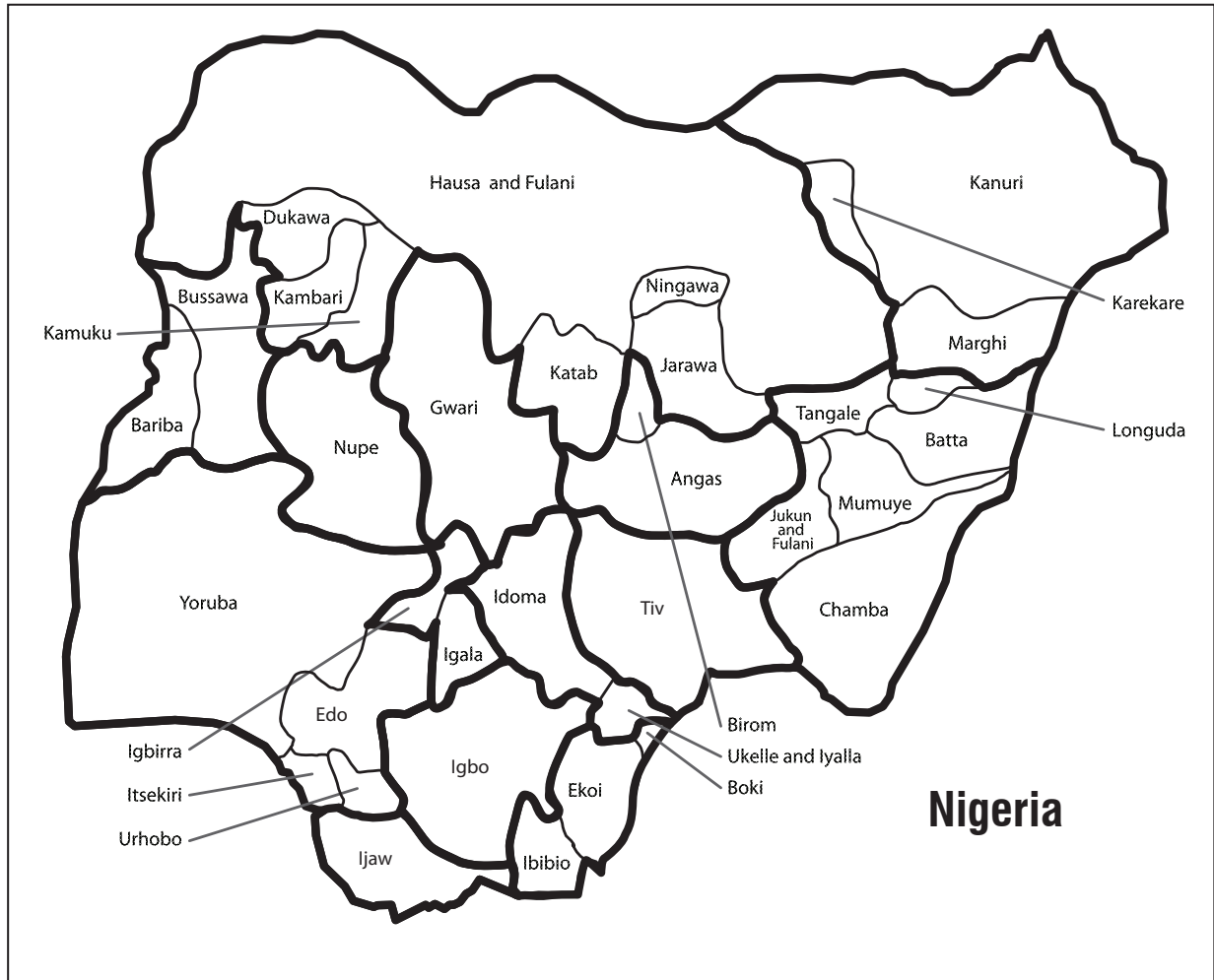
8. Assign students to read chapters 1 through 3 of *Things Fall Apart* for homework. Distribute two sticky notes or bookmarks to each student. Ask students to note questions, comments, and new vocabulary as they read.

Research Assignments

<p>Group 1 Topic: Traditional Nigerian housing Group members: Presentation date:</p>	<p>Group 2 Topic: Traditional Nigerian food Group members: Presentation date:</p>
<p>Group 3 Topic: The traditional Nigerian family Group members: Presentation date:</p>	<p>Group 4 Topic: Traditional Nigerian wedding customs Group members: Presentation date:</p>
<p>Group 5 Topic: Traditional Igbo religious beliefs Group members: Presentation date:</p>	<p>Group 6 Topic: Traditional Nigerian art Group members: Presentation date:</p>
<p>Group 7 Topic: The British occupation of Nigeria Group members: Presentation date:</p>	<p>Group 8 Topic: Current events in Nigeria Group members: Presentation date:</p>

Nigerian Cultures

Directions: Study the map, and answer the questions.



1. Locate the largest cultural groups: Hausa/Fulani, Igbo, and Yoruba.
2. How do you think so many ethnic and cultural groups became united in one country?
3. How does the existence of so many ethnic and cultural groups affect the future of a country?

Lesson 2

Okonkwo and Unoka

Objectives

- To meet the character Okonkwo
- To understand the literary terms *direct characterization*, *indirect characterization*, and *foil*

Notes to the Teacher

Chapters 1 through 3 provide background and information about the protagonist of *Things Fall Apart*, Okonkwo; they also introduce his father, Unoka, and his son, Nwoye. Okonkwo is the nineteenth-century Nigerian equivalent of today's workaholic: obsessed with gaining wealth, power, and reputation. His father, on the other hand, has no wealth and owes more money than he can ever pay, yet he enjoys life far more than does his son. Okonkwo views his father as a wastrel and an embarrassment. While the chapters offer only a glimpse of Nwoye, they show him as an unhappy child, badgered by Okonkwo to work harder out of fear that he will also turn out to be lazy. Chinua Achebe uses both direct and indirect characterization to limn these three figures. These characters provide an excellent opportunity to present or review the concept of foils in literature.

The lesson begins with a discussion of how we form an opinion about someone we have just met, and how that opinion can change over time. It introduces the literary terms *direct characterization* and *indirect characterization* and lets students distinguish between them. Students do an activity to review the characters of Okonkwo and his father and then discuss which clues are indirect and which are direct characterization. After a discussion of how the two men are foils to one another, students write journal entries about how they would feel growing up with one of these fathers; students discuss Nwoye. They conclude by generating a list of the qualities an ideal parent would need to have in the modern world.

Procedure

1. Ask the following questions:
 - When you first meet a new person, how do you form an opinion about what that person is like? (Most people note appearance, dress, manner of speech, friendly or unfriendly gestures, and comments by others about the person.)
 - How do you refine your ideas about the person over time? (People can engage in longer conversations and observe actions.)

2. Explain that authors use the same techniques to introduce the characters of their books, sometimes telling us about the characters' appearance, dress, and personality. Define this as *direct characterization*. Then explain that authors can also use *indirect characterization*, by simply letting us observe the characters in action. Tell students that they will be looking at character traits of one major character and one minor character in *Things Fall Apart*.
3. Put students in small groups, and distribute **Handout 3**. Ask students to sort the characteristics of Okonkwo and of his father. Then discuss the results.
4. Ask why there are so few traits that reflect both men (only use of proverbs and kola nuts, as well as height). Elicit that height is a physical characteristic passed down through genes; the other two are cultural phenomena shared by the group.
5. Explain to students that the information on the handout comes from the first three chapters of *Things Fall Apart*. Have students identify the traits in the handout as direct characterization or indirect characterization. Then discuss the advantages and disadvantages of each method.
6. Ask students for reasons the author might have had to make the two characters, father and son, so different. (The contrast makes the characters' traits more vivid; the father's traits provide motivation for the actions of the son, Okonkwo, who rejects his father's way of life and fears being unsuccessful.)
7. Explain that when two characters are developed in such a way that they contrast dramatically to highlight each other's traits, the author is creating *foils*. Point out that many of the earliest stories we hear as children gain some of their appeal from the use of foils. (For example, the meanness, vanity, and homeliness of Cinderella's stepsisters make Cinderella look more virtuous; the two lazy little pigs make the third look even more hardworking.) Ask students to list pairs of foils in films that they have seen recently and discuss some of the characteristics that are contrasted. Then ask how Okonkwo and Unoka are foils to each other. (Students should suggest parallel but opposite traits—for example, one is hardworking, while the other is lazy.)
8. Have students find several of the proverbs used by characters in these three chapters. Remind them that we, too, often use proverbs. State, "The apple doesn't fall far from the tree," and ask students to explain what this statement implies. (Children often resemble their parents in both physical appearance and personality.) Then ask the following questions:
 - Why are Okonkwo and Unoka so different? (Okonkwo has deliberately rejected Unoka's way of life.)

- Is Okonkwo an unqualified success? (In material things, he is, but he is still afraid of being unsuccessful.)
 - Was Unoka an unqualified failure? (No, he still had friends in spite of owing them money, and he seems to have been happy.)
9. Have students write in their journals in response to this prompt: If you could choose, would you rather have Okonkwo or Unoka as a father? Why? After about ten minutes of writing, have students discuss the advantages and disadvantages of growing up with each.
 10. Ask students to predict how Nwoye, Okonkwo's son, will get along with his father. (Answers will vary but should include the fact that Okonkwo constantly nags and beats his son for not working hard enough and that Nwoye at twelve is described in chapter 2 as "a sad-faced youth.")
 11. Tell student groups to discuss the qualities of an ideal parent in our contemporary society. List their suggestions, and allow them to discuss what they mean by these qualities and how they are related to the demands of contemporary life.
 12. Assign students to read chapters 4 through 6 for homework. Remind students of their research projects, and suggest that they glean information relating to their topic from the chapters as they read.

Character Traits

Directions: Listed below are character traits associated with Okonkwo or Unoka. Place an *O* by characteristics of the son, a *U* by traits of the father, and both letters for items that pertain to both characters.

- _____ 1. Brought honor to his village through winning a wrestling match
- _____ 2. Lazy, does not like to work hard
- _____ 3. Physically huge
- _____ 4. Severe-looking, bushy eyebrows
- _____ 5. Breaks kola nuts to start a visit
- _____ 6. Has no barns full of yams
- _____ 7. Has a stammer
- _____ 8. Buys palm-wine to treat his friends when he has money
- _____ 9. When frustrated, uses his fists instead of words
- _____ 10. Has no patience with unsuccessful men
- _____ 11. Very good flute player
- _____ 12. Has several barns full of yams
- _____ 13. Has no property of any value
- _____ 14. Uses proverbs to make a point
- _____ 15. Nags his son to work harder
- _____ 16. Wealthy farmer
- _____ 17. Loves to talk
- _____ 18. Has three wives and many children
- _____ 19. Strongly dislikes war

- _____ 20. Has taken two titles
- _____ 21. Remembers fondly the happy days of his childhood
- _____ 22. Great warrior
- _____ 23. Loves music and dance
- _____ 24. Very thin and slightly stooped
- _____ 25. Revered by his people for strength and courage
- _____ 26. Does not pay debts
- _____ 27. Sent to demand an ultimatum from neighboring village
- _____ 28. Tall in stature
- _____ 29. Coward in wartime
- _____ 30. Happiest when playing the flute with other musicians
- _____ 31. Hates gentleness
- _____ 32. Scolded by the Oracle for not farming well
- _____ 33. Hates idleness
- _____ 34. A debtor who owes money to neighbors
- _____ 35. Loves good fellowship
- _____ 36. Has no titles

Lesson 3

Life in Umuofia

Objectives

- To review the customs of daily life in Okonkwo's village
- To acknowledge similarities as well as differences in human societies

Notes to the Teacher

Chapters 4 through 6 introduce students to many aspects of daily and seasonal life in Igbo society.

Agriculture in Nigeria was and still is heavily dependent on seasonal weather. In southern Nigeria, the year-round temperature is hot because of closeness to the equator. There are four seasons: the long rainy season (March to July), the short dry season (August), the short rainy season (September to mid-October) and the long dry season (late October to March). After a "hungry season" in June and July, the New Yam Festival is celebrated in August with extensive feasting on yam dishes.

The New Yam Festival is similar to other harvest festivals, demanding rituals and personal preparations. The cam wood painting that Chinua Achebe describes was primarily done by women, using dye from a particular shrub. It was a group activity, with the women taking turns painting designs on one another from head to toe with small iron tools or pointed wooden sticks. The designs would last about a week before beginning to wear off. If your students are interested, they can read more about this custom in *Among the Ibos of Nigeria* by George Thomas Basden. This book, written not long after the period described in *Things Fall Apart*, also includes information about many other customs described by Achebe.

Chapter 5 mentions *foo-foo*, which is a staple dish of boiled, peeled, and mashed yams, served in a big ball. Traditionally, a small ball of *foo-foo* is broken off, indented with the thumb, and used to scoop up stew. Plantains, cassava, and other starches may be used for *foo-foo* as well. If you would like to try cooking *foo-foo* for your classes, there are many recipes available on the Internet for it and other Nigerian foods.

Okonkwo's treatment of the women in his family is disturbing. He beats Ojiugo, his youngest wife, for not coming home on time to fix her dish for his meal; he beats his second wife, Ekwefi, for cutting some leaves from a banana tree and even shoots at her for talking back to him. None of the wives have the courage to defend themselves and, in fact, they seem to see his behavior as unfortunate but within social norms. Okonkwo is criticized for beating Ojiugo, not because of his action, but because it occurred during the Week of Peace.

According to the Igbo tradition, the *chi*, or guardian spirit, is given to a man at birth by Chukwu, the most important god. With a positive *chi*, a man will always succeed; if his *chi* says no, he will inevitably fail, but the Igbo allow for the reality of human will. As the proverb cited at the beginning of chapter 4 says, “When a man says yes his *chi* says yes also.”

In traditional Igbo culture, wrestling was a very important cultural activity. It frequently conferred status, as it did with Okonkwo when he defeated the Cat. It could be used to settle arguments or to choose among suitors for a popular girl. The village would gather around a circular wrestling area, watching a series of bouts with wrestlers grouped according to experience. Judges would stop a match if it appeared there would be no winner because the wrestlers were evenly matched. If a wrestler was thrown with his back to the ground or his feet off the ground, he was defeated.

Before the lesson, write the following topics at the top of seven sheets of newsprint, and post them on the wall where students can access them: Week of Peace, New Yam Festival, food and cooking, agriculture, family, religious and spiritual beliefs, and wrestling. You will also need at least seven markers, as well as copies of **Handouts 4** and **5** for each student.

During this lesson, students review what they have learned about life in Umuofia by means of a gallery walk, moving from one newsprint poster to the next and listing information they recall from the first six chapters of the novel. After a whole-group discussion of their findings and an opportunity to take notes, students discuss differences between Umuofia and their own town or city. They create written hypotheses about what it would be like to trade places with someone from Umuofia. Finally, they discuss the difficulties of moving to a radically different society and the fundamental human needs that underlie the cultural differences.

Procedure

1. Explain to students that they are going to review what they have learned about Igbo society by having a gallery walk. Divide students into seven groups, and give each group a marker. Position each group in front of one of the sheets of newsprint, and ask students to brainstorm everything that they remember about the topic. Have them write their ideas on the newsprint.
2. After a few minutes, ask the groups to move clockwise to the next sheet and try to record additional information. Continue this process until you feel that they have written sufficient information on the topics, and then have them sit down.
3. Move from sheet to sheet, discussing the information students have found and supplementing it with information in Notes to the Teacher. Newsprint posters should include the following information:
 - a. The Week of Peace is a sacred week in which there should be no violence and no work done. It occurs the week before yams are

- planted and honors the earth goddess. The man who dishonors it may ruin the crop for the whole village.
- b. Before the New Yam Festival, the Igbo throw out all old yams left over from the previous year. There are offerings of new yams in thanksgiving to the gods, then feasting with huge amounts of food. Village women adorn themselves with cam wood drawings and shave elaborate patterns into their children's hair.
 - c. Crops mentioned include yams, melons, beans, maize, and green vegetables. Cooking is done by women over live fire; each woman usually feeds her own children and prepares one dish at each meal for her husband. A chicken is killed, cleaned, and cooked by the same person; water must be carried by children in pots.
 - d. After the Week of Peace, villagers cut the bush; they dry and burn it to clear new ground; they plant small seed yams in mounds after rains begin. Small plants rest on wreaths of sisal leaves and have to be staked and weeded; maize, beans, and melons are planted between yams; yams grow all during the rainy season and are then harvested.
 - e. Families are polygamous, with each wife and her children in a separate hut. A hostage could become like an adopted son. Women are subject to violence if they displease their husbands.
 - f. The people believe in gods, including Ani, the earth goddess; they also believe in ancestral spirits. They fear the spirits of the dead and believe in the *chi*, a personal spirit unique to each person. There are rituals in honor of the gods for the New Yam Festival. Okonkwo has to atone to the gods for breaking the Week of Peace.
 - g. Wrestling is announced by drums, and wrestlers compete on teams; young wrestlers of fifteen or sixteen years of age wrestle first. Finally, the leaders of the teams, who are the best wrestlers, compete. Winning wrestlers are celebrated by the villagers.
4. Distribute **Handout 4**. Give students time to record their findings on the handout.
 5. Point out that so far in the discussion the class has focused on things that are part of traditional culture. Explain to students that many of these customs in Nigeria went back hundreds and even thousands of years. Ask whether the customs seem very different from the culture of the society the school is in. Start a discussion asking students to describe the differences they see between what they have learned about traditional Igbo culture and their own. Give them time to develop the contrasts between their world and that of Umuofia. Encourage them to consider topics such as holidays, sources of food, the modern American family, religious beliefs, and sports.

6. Ask students to hypothesize about what would happen if someone from one of these societies was suddenly dropped into the other.
7. Distribute **Handout 5**, and give students time to complete it. Then discuss with the class which would be harder—to move from a modern society to a traditional one, or to come from a traditional one to today's world.
8. Challenge students to find similarities between Umuofia and their own world. (Students might consider the following: similarities between the New Yam Festival and our Thanksgiving; the need for adequate nutrition; the importance of family in child-rearing; the continuance of strong religious belief among many modern people; the excitement of sports events.) Stress that although many aspects of culture are different, there are still basic drives of human nature for safety, comfort, companionship, status, etc., which are shared by both groups.
9. Assign students to read chapters 7 and 8 for homework.

Living in Umuofia

Directions: Record what you have learned about life in the village of Umuofia.

Subject	Textual Information
Week of Peace	
New Yam Festival	
Food and cooking	

Subject	Textual Information
Agriculture	
Family	
Religious and spiritual beliefs	
Wrestling	

Lesson 4

The Killing of Ikemefuna

Objectives

- To review the key events of chapters 7 and 8
- To participate in a mock trial of Okonkwo for the killing of Ikemefuna

Notes to the Teacher

Students will probably be intrigued by the locust harvest in chapter 7. Locusts are eaten in many places in the world, so much so that the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations has provided some recipes on its FAQ page about locusts (<http://www.fao.org/ag/locusts/en/info/info/faq/>); your students may particularly enjoy the photo of a locust taco. There are other recipes at various places on the Internet. This is a good opportunity to generate a discussion on world hunger and point out that many people do not have the food choices that we have.

Cowries or cowry shells were used as money in West Africa; in fact, cowries were shipped from areas where they were abundant to England and then reshipped to West Africa to fund the slave trade. Shells could be used in place of coins and also had value as ornaments. You might consider buying some cowries, which are cheap today and sold by the pound on Amazon and other Internet sites, for use as prizes for the winning team in the competition. (Of course, each member of the losing team should receive at least one shell as a souvenir.)

This lesson requires an extended time period. Before the final activity, arrange the room like a courtroom, with a place for the judge in the front of the room, tables for the defense attorney and prosecutor, a chair for a witness, and a jury area. Label each area so that students can quickly see who is who. Meet with the judge and the attorneys to be sure that they understand their roles.

The first activity is a quiz game to review the events of chapters 7 and 8 and to clarify any questions that students have. The rest of the period involves a mock trial of Okonkwo for the killing of Ikemefuna. You will want to conclude with a discussion of Okonkwo's guilt or innocence under our system of criminal laws, under Umuofia's laws, and under any broader principles of justice students may wish to consider.

Procedure

1. Divide the class into two teams. Distribute one set of questions on the Teacher Resource Page to each team. Allow the teams a few minutes to discuss the correct answers to the questions among themselves. Then

set up a competition in which each team has the opportunity to ask the other team questions, in the order indicated by the question numbers. You should function as judge and scorekeeper and clarify anything that students do not seem to understand well.

Suggested Responses

Team 1

1. Ikemefuna influences Nwoye to spend more time with his father and makes him feel more grown-up so that he takes on more men's chores.
2. After the harvest, the men and boys put a fresh cover of palm branches and leaves on outer walls to prepare for the next rainy season.
3. The message is that the Oracle of the Hills and the Caves has declared that Ikemefuna must be killed. Okonkwo lies, telling Ikemefuna that he is to go home the next day.
4. When Ikemefuna fears his mother to be dead, he sings a song and tries not to "kill" her by landing on his left foot. Ironically, he is the one about to die.
5. Nwoye feels limp after he learns of the killing. He shows his sensitivity by his reaction. He cannot be cruel like his father or like the people who let twins die in the forest.
6. By the laws of the village, a man of title cannot climb his own palm trees to tap them.

Team 2

1. Okonkwo tells masculine stories of violence, bloodshed, and war, such as the time he took his first human head. Nwoye prefers the traditional folktales of his mother and the other women.
2. The people liked the locusts as food, roasting them in clay pots and spreading them out in the sun to become brittle. They eat them with solid palm oil.
3. The men dress as if they are going to a special celebration. They take their goatskin bags and their machetes and make Ikemefuna carry a pot of wine.
4. Okonkwo strikes the last blow to look strong. He still fears being like his father.
5. This shows that killing someone he loved was not easy, but he interpreted it as weakness rather than human kindness. Obierika says that he displeased the Earth by being there.
6. A bride-price is the amount of wealth paid by the husband's family to the wife's family. The bride-price was settled by adding and removing broomsticks from a bundle.

2. Announce the winning team, and provide rewards.
3. Tell students that they will now prepare for a murder trial, the trial of Okonkwo for the death of Ikemefuna. Distribute **Handout 6** to each student. Have students review the roles of people who are normally present at a criminal trial: the accused, the judge, the jury, the defense attorney, the prosecutor, and witnesses. Review the order of events in a criminal trial.
4. Appoint class members to play the roles of Okonkwo, the judge, and the attorneys; for witnesses, cast students as Ogbuefi Ezeudu, Obierika, Nwoye, and two of the men who went with Okonkwo but did not strike Ikemefuna; the remaining students may serve as jurors. Give students time to review their roles, and give attorneys time to plan their presentations, decide which witnesses to call, and prepare questions to ask.
5. Arrange the classroom like a courtroom. Show students where to sit for their assigned roles. Begin the trial, and let it play out.
6. After the trial, ask students whether they have changed their opinion of Okonkwo, and give them time to discuss. Encourage students to explore the concepts of moral absolutism and cultural relativism. Point out that the decision to kill Ikemefuna did not come from Okonkwo.
7. Assign students to read chapters 9 and 10 for homework. In addition, have each student locate a picture of an Igbo mask on the Internet and print it out. If for any reason this is not feasible, print out pictures of a dozen masks in preparation for the next lesson.

Questions about Chapters 7 and 8

Questions about Chapters 7 and 8

Team 1

1. What influence did Ikemefuna have on Nwoye?
2. How did the boys help their father during the days after the harvest?
3. What message did Ogbuefi Ezeudu bring? How did Okonkwo explain the trip to Ikemefuna?
4. What typical child's game did Ikemefuna play when he feared his mother was dead? Why were his fears ironic?
5. How did Nwoye react to Ikemefuna's death? How was he different from his father and the other men?
6. Why couldn't Obierika and Okonkwo tap their own palm trees?

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Questions about Chapters 7 and 8

Team 2

1. What kind of stories did Okonkwo tell the boys? What stories did Nwoye prefer?
2. Why were the people happy to see the locusts come? How did they use them?
3. Describe the appearance of the men on their way to the execution. What did they carry?
4. Why did Okonkwo strike the last blow? Where did this fear originate?
5. What did Okonkwo's illness tell about him? What was Obierika's reaction?
6. What is a bride-price? How did the two families settle the bride-price?

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Trial by Jury

Directions: Be sure you understand the roles and events in a trial. Then prepare for your role in the trial of Okonkwo.

In a murder trial, the following people are essential:

- The accused
- The prosecutor
- The defense attorney
- Witnesses for the prosecution
- Witnesses for the defense
- The judge
- The jury

The order of events in a criminal trial is as follows:

1. Opening statement by the prosecutor
2. Opening statement by the defense attorney
3. The prosecutor's calling and examination of each prosecution witness, followed by the defense attorney's cross-examination
4. The defense attorney's calling and examination of each witness for the defense, followed by the prosecutor's cross-examination
5. Closing statement by the prosecutor
6. Closing statement by the defense attorney
7. Judge's instructions to the jury
8. Jury deliberation
9. Announcement of jury verdict

Lesson 5

The Women of Umuofia

Objectives

- To understand the animism which was the basis for Igbo spiritual life
- To evaluate the position of women in traditional Igbo society

Notes to the Teacher

This lesson gives students an opportunity to synthesize what they have previously learned about Igbo beliefs with new information introduced in chapters 9 and 10. They learn about Igbo explanations for miscarriages and infant mortality (*ogbanje*) and observe the administration of justice by village leaders representing ancestral spirits or *egwugwu*. These sacred figures wear masks and costumes fashioned of wood, raffia (leaves from a type of palm tree), and other local materials.

Superb and authentic photographs of masks and other Igbo artifacts can be found on the Internet. See, for example, images in the G. I. Jones collection at Southern Illinois University and in the holdings of the Smithsonian Institution. Private dealers often advertise on the Internet as well, but authenticity may vary. Note that in Lesson 4 students were asked to find and print images of Igbo masks. At least a dozen pictures are needed for procedure 1.

The story of the legal case before the *egwugwu* brings up the issue of domestic violence. Students will recall that Okonkwo beat his wives and children when he was angry and that he even shot at one of them who displeased him. The case involves a woman who has been beaten daily by her husband. This is an opportunity for students to discuss this issue in Igbo culture, but it is important to remember that violence against women and children is still a problem in our own contemporary society.

The United Nations Charter was signed in San Francisco in 1945. Article 1 of the Charter states that a primary goal of the organization is to “achieve international co-operation . . . in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion.” Since then, the UN has undertaken many programs to promote women’s equality. The year 1975 was the International Year of the Woman, and March 8 is celebrated annually as International Women’s Day. Other organizations also work for equality for women. The Peace Corps, for example, has many programs

aimed at empowerment of women and girls. The Foundation for International Community Assistance (FINCA) uses microfinance loans to promote the welfare of women and therefore of their children. You may want to use this lesson to develop a student service learning project.

The lesson begins with a review and synthesis of the Igbo belief system that Chinua Achebe has woven throughout the first ten chapters of the book, culminating in a discussion of the trial by the *egwugwu*, the ancestral spirits, in chapter 10. Since this case involves both marriage and domestic violence, the lesson then moves to an analysis of the position of women in Igbo society. Finally, students learn about the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and consider how its implementation would have changed traditional Igbo culture.

Procedure

1. Direct students to tape their printouts of Igbo masks around the room, and then give students time to walk around to survey the masks. Ask students to note their observations, including both the physical characteristics of the masks and the emotional response to them. Allow time for discussion.
2. Divide students into five groups, and assign each group to skim one of these chapters: 3, 4, 5, 6, or 7. Tell them to look for any information they can glean about the religious and spiritual beliefs of the Igbo. Give them a few minutes to work, and then have them report to the class on their findings.

Suggested Responses

- There is an Oracle of the Hills and the Caves named Agbala. The Oracle is attended by a priestess who expresses the Oracle's will. People come to the Oracle's cave to ask advice and even to consult a deceased relative.
- Each person has a *chi*, which is personal deity or guardian spirit. There is a great goddess of the Earth, who can choose good or poor harvests for the Igbo. In her honor, there is a Week of Peace before planting. Unburied bodies become evil spirits who seek to do harm to the living.
- Ani is the Earth goddess and goddess of all fertility. The New Yam Festival is held in her honor.
- The silk-cotton tree in the center of the village is sacred. Young women go there to pray for children because the spirits of good children are supposed to live in the tree.
- The Oracle has the power of life and death and has pronounced the death sentence for Ikemefuna. Twins are considered evil and are left in the forest to die.

3. Ask students the following questions:
 - What do we learn about Igbo beliefs in the spirit world from chapter 9, the story of Ezinma's illness? (*Ogbanje* are wicked children who die and then reenter their mother's wombs to be reborn.)
 - How did Okagbue free Ezinma from being an *ogbanje*? (He dug up a pebble wrapped in a rag, which he said was her connection to the *ogbanje* world.)

Point out to students that when Ezinma is sick with a fever (*iba*), Okonkwo is practical and takes action; he immediately goes out to gather leaves, grasses, and bark with which to brew medicine for Ezinma to inhale.

4. Tell students that chapter 10 also mixes the world of belief and the real world of Igbo society. Review the events of the chapter through the following questions:
 - What is the purpose of the masks worn by the *egwugwu* in Umuofia? (The masks disguise the wearer as one of the ancestral spirits; there is one *egwugwu* for each of the nine villages.)
 - Who actually wears the mask? (Leading men of the village are the masked figures.)
 - What else did they wear? (Costumes consist of raffia.)
 - Does anyone know who they are? (Okonkwo's wife has suspicions but prefers to maintain belief.)
 - How do the other villagers, particularly women and children, respond to the *egwugwu*? (They are fearful.)
 - Why do the *egwugwu* wear these costumes? (Answers will vary. Students may suggest that they keep belief in ancestral deities alive, give power to the leading men of the village, and assist in the administration of justice.)
5. Have students summarize the case the *egwugwu* must hear. (The plaintiff, Uzowulu, complains that his brothers-in-law have beaten him and taken his wife and children; he wants his bride-price returned. The wife's brothers respond that Uzowulu has beaten her every day of the marriage, even causing a miscarriage.) Ask the following questions:
 - What is the decision of the *egwugwu*? (Uzowulu should bring a pot of wine and beg his wife to return; the brothers should then let their sister return to her husband.)
 - Do you agree with this decision? (Answers will vary. Encourage students to think about the issue in terms of the traditional Igbo culture, not their own contemporary one.)
6. Distribute **Handout 7**, and give students time to work in pairs or small groups to complete it.

Suggested Responses

1. *Betrothal*—Arrangements for marriage are made by the families. The man's family pays the woman's family a negotiated bride-price. In *Things Fall Apart*, the bride-price is paid in cowries. The families' relationship continues after the marriage; Okonkwo always invites his wife's family for the New Yam Festival. Women are considered ready for marriage by the age of sixteen. Chapters 5 and 8 are helpful.
2. *Marriage*—Igbo men often practice polygamy. A wife is not allowed to question her husband's decisions. Each wife has her own hut and raises her own children until the boys are old enough to spend more time with their father. Wives may help each other occasionally. See chapter 2.
3. *Duties*—Women are responsible for preparing food for their husbands, caring for their children, growing crops, and raising domestic animals such as chickens. Work is very difficult during planting season. See chapter 2.
4. *Children*—Children are expected to perform chores such as carrying water, helping with cooking, and serving their father's meals. Girls are supposed to learn proper manners such as how to sit like a woman. Boys are not allowed to show weakness, as a woman might. If a woman has twins, they are considered evil and abandoned in the forest. Children often die young. A woman with three sons is honored; a woman with no children is pitiable. See chapters 5–9.
5. *Status*—Women do not participate in village meetings or even look into the *egwugwu* house. A man with no titles is insulted by calling him a woman. Priestesses are the exception to the generally low status of women; they have high status and can even criticize the men of the village. See chapters 2, 3, 4, and 10.
6. *Domestic violence*—Okonkwo beats his wives and children when they displease him. Sometimes beatings of wives by husbands are frequent. Okonkwo even shoots at one of his wives. When Okonkwo hears the drums, he “trembled with the desire to conquer and subdue. It was like the desire for woman.” See chapters 4, 5, and 10.
7. Ask students their reaction to how women are treated in traditional Igbo society. Is Igbo society unique? Is modern society completely different? Allow students time to discuss the topic, and then distribute **Handout 8**. Have students read the document and answer the questions. Encourage students to explain their reasoning for items 4 and 5.

Suggested Responses

1. Women should have the right to vote, to run for political office, and to participate in associations to improve public life (Article 8).
 2. Women should have the right to choose a marriage partner freely, the right to have an equal say in the spacing of children, and equal rights in the care of those children (Article 16).
 3. Human rights are addressed throughout the document, but particularly in Article 5.
 4. Discussion may include the difficulty of changing long-established cultural patterns.
 5. Students may suggest spreading modern ideas through technology, even in remote areas.
8. Assign students to read chapters 11 and 12 for homework.

Women in Umuofia

Directions: Fill in the chart with information you have learned about the life of women in Igbo society as Chinua Achebe portrays it in *Things Fall Apart*. Include textual evidence for your ideas.

Topic	Evidence
1. Betrothal	
2. Marriage	
3. Duties	

Topic	Evidence
4. Children	
5. Status	
6. Domestic violence	

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Lesson 6

African Folktales and Proverbs

Objectives

- To become familiar with several African folktales and proverbs
- To interpret African proverbs in the light of personal experiences

Notes to the Teacher

Lesson 1 began with a folktale to illuminate several aspects of Igbo life. This lesson focuses on two elements of folklore—the folktale and the proverb. Folktales seem to have an intrinsic interest for students. African folktales, like those of other regions, serve many purposes. In the novel, storytelling provides entertainment in a pre-literate, pre-electronic society. The stories also provide explanations for observable natural phenomena. They reflect the culture of the originating society and thus enable children to absorb cultural values as they mature. Chinua Achebe uses a number of folktales in *Things Fall Apart* to familiarize his readers with Igbo culture and to give us insights into the Igbo value system.

If you wish to go into this topic with students in more depth, bring in several books of African folktales, such as *African Folktales* by Roger Abrahams, *Favorite African Folktales* by Nelson Mandela, or *West African Folk-Tales* by William H. Barker. The children’s section of the local library should have many picture books of African folktales, including the Anansi tales, and high school students usually respond surprisingly well to picture books read aloud.

Achebe’s story about how the tortoise broke his shell is a classic one which entertains, explains observed natural phenomena, and teaches an important lesson about a highly prized personal trait—generosity. If you wish to expand the ideas presented in procedure 2, you might use a pair of stories by Mike Tidwell: “I Had a Hero” and “Ilunga’s Harvest.” Both can be found at the Peace Corps Web site and demonstrate the importance of sharing among the people of Congo. Similarly, you can expand the lesson with additional proverbs. Many collections are available on the Internet. Before the lesson, be sure that you locate the stories and proverbs in the novel and mark them for easy access.

The lesson begins with several stories that are familiar to students and asks them to think about the messages, both positive and negative, which are conveyed as subtexts to the narratives. Then students examine several of the folktales that Achebe incorporated into his narrative. The second

part of the lesson deals with proverbs. First, students work together to discuss several proverbs spoken by characters in the novel; then they examine additional African proverbs and explain their meaning. Finally, students write individual journal entries in which they reflect on the applicability of these proverbs to their own experience.

Procedure

1. Tell students the story of “The Three Little Pigs.” Ask them why the story has lasted so long in our culture and has been passed from generation to generation. (It has entertainment value, but it also teaches children that there is a penalty for laziness and a reward for hard work.) Then ask students to retell briefly the stories of Snow White and Sleeping Beauty. Why do feminists dislike these stories? (They send the message that women are passive and must be rescued by men.) Point out that, for better or worse, childhood stories can influence adult values. Hold a brief discussion about the values implicit in the favorite stories they heard, read, or watched on television as children.
2. Ask students to review and then retell the story of how Tortoise broke his shell in chapter 11. Ask the following questions:
 - How did the Igbo use these stories for entertainment? (Mothers and children told such stories to pass the evenings together in their huts. Nwoye remembered these stories fondly, and Ezinma was learning to tell her own.)
 - Does this story teach a lesson as well? (Yes, the Tortoise is punished for his greed in not sharing the food with the birds. The lesson is that an individual should be generous.)
 - What does Okonkwo think of these stories? (He thinks that they are women’s stories only and that men’s stories of war and bloodshed are preferable.)
 - Do you agree with Okonkwo, or do these stories have value for men as well?
3. Review the other stories included up to this point in the book (the story of Vulture bringing rain to earth in chapter 7; mosquito and the ear in chapter 9).
4. Read an African folktale to the class, and ask students to judge its value as entertainment and as a teaching tool. Many are available on the Internet.
5. Point out that, in addition to folktales, Achebe often uses proverbs from the Igbo. Remind students that, in chapter 1, Achebe tells us that the Igbo people prize good conversation and that “proverbs are the palm-oil with which words are eaten.” Ask them to explain this proverb about proverbs. (Proverbs are an important way of communicating truth, even if indirectly.)

6. Distribute **Handout 9**. Ask students to look up the context of the proverbs and explain what each one means.

Suggested Responses

1. When the moon is bright, everyone, even someone who seldom leaves home, wants to go out to enjoy it.
 2. There must be a reason for an abrupt change in someone's behavior. This is a rough equivalent to our proverb, "Where there's smoke, there's fire."
 3. Sometimes wealthy or powerful people forget their humble beginnings.
 4. A mother would never do anything to harm her child. (Thus the Earth would never give Okonkwo a task for which she would then punish him.)
 5. Negotiation and compromise are good ways to achieve one's goal.
7. Distribute **Handout 10**. Ask students to work in pairs to discuss the meaning of the African proverbs and to brainstorm practical applications.

Suggested Responses

1. If you don't aim high enough, you won't realize you haven't achieved much.
 2. Violence and war harm innocent bystanders more than the combatants.
 3. Greater problems distract us from lesser ones.
 4. Having a bad experience will make one fearful of repeating it. The proverb is similar to a familiar one, "Once bitten, twice shy."
 5. No one antagonizes someone in power unless a handy escape route is available.
 6. We learn from overcoming difficulties.
 7. Small steps can achieve great ends.
8. Have students select one of the quotes discussed in class and write a journal entry on how their own experiences either support or contradict the quote. Remind students to use specific examples and short narratives to develop their answers.
 9. Assign students to read chapters 13 through 15 for homework.

Proverbs from the Novel

Directions: Read the following proverbs, locate each one in the novel, and then explain what each one means.

1. “When the moon is shining the cripple becomes hungry for a walk” (chapter 2).
2. “A toad does not run in the daytime for nothing” (chapter 3).
3. “Looking at a king’s mouth, one would think he never sucked at his mother’s breast” (chapter 4).
4. “A child’s fingers are not scalded by a piece of hot yam which its mother puts into its palm” (chapter 8).
5. “As the dog said, ‘If I fall down for you and you fall down for me, it is play’” (chapter 8).

African Proverbs

Directions: Read the following African proverbs, and explain their meaning in your own words.

1. A bird that flies from the ground onto an anthill does not know that it is still on the ground.
2. When the elephants fight, it is the grass that suffers.
3. When the bush is on fire, the antelope ceases to fear the hunter's bullet.
4. A person once bitten by a snake will be scared by an old rope.
5. The mouse that makes jest of a cat has already seen a hole nearby.
6. Smooth seas do not make skillful sailors.
7. A little rain each day will fill the rivers to overflowing.

Lesson 7

The Warrior in Exile

Objectives

- To understand the significance of gender in Igbo society
- To define *foreshadowing* and to make predictions about future events

Notes to the Teacher

Students have already discussed the position and roles of women in Igbo society in Lesson 5. This lesson extends the understanding of gender throughout Igbo society. It also gives students the opportunity to reflect on gender stereotyping in our own society. Make sure students understand the difference between sex (biological manifestations of maleness and femaleness) and gender (role expectations, customs, and functions of men and women). In the United States, perhaps due to a persistent strain of Puritanism in our culture, the word *gender* is often used when the word *sex* would be more appropriate.

During the course of the lesson, students consider the impact of exile on refugees. To prepare for this discussion and answer their questions, you should consult resources such as the United Nations Commission on Refugees, the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, Amnesty International, and the Human Rights Education Associates, all of which have Web sites with up-to-date information about refugees. Point out to students that many immigrants, even if they came voluntarily to a new country, experience some of the same emotions as refugees.

The lesson begins with a handout that is designed to encourage discussion about gender roles in the United States. After that, students review the many indications of gender typing in Igbo society and realize that Okonkwo is especially strict in his views of gender. Students then discuss the causes and nature of Okonkwo's exile, his depression, and the visit from Obierika that brings ominous news about a neighboring village.

Procedure

1. Distribute **Handout 11**, and ask students to complete it. When they have finished, ask students to explain their choices. Discuss with them the extent to which our society categorizes people by gender. When do we start to define gender roles? (It often starts at birth, including the color of nursery blankets in the hospital, the purchase of baby clothing, and the selection of toys.) Encourage students who argue that children should be allowed to play with whatever toy they like, regardless of gender expectations.

2. Ask students to think about the Igbo society in *Things Fall Apart*. To what extent is that society genderized? Students should discuss such points as these:
 - Crops—Yams are for male cultivation; boys must be educated in how to prepare seed yams; women are responsible for other crops.
 - Stories—Folktales are for women and children; Okonkwo thinks men should tell stories of war and triumphs.
 - Marriage—Men are dominant; women are submissive.
 - Limitations—Only men are allowed to go to the *egwugwu* house; women must avoid it.
 - Work—The types of work are determined by gender.
 - Crimes—Even crimes are categorized by gender. Okonkwo's killing of Ezeudu's sixteen-year-old son is considered a female crime because it was unintentional; a deliberate murder would be a male crime.
 - Terms—A man who is seen as soft or who has taken no title is called a woman (*agbala*).
3. Ask students why Okonkwo seems particularly aware of gender. (Much of what Okonkwo is resulted from his attitude toward his father. He views his father as shiftless and not a true man; he beats his son when the latter seems to favor women's stories.) Point out the irony that Okonkwo is now condemned for a female crime and his punishment is at the hands of a female deity, the Earth.
4. Ask the following questions:
 - Why does Okonkwo go to his mother's village, Mbanta? (He has few choices; he is exiled for a period of seven years from Umuofia.)
 - How is he received by his relatives there? (They welcome him and give him a plot of land to build a compound, fields to grow crops, and seed yams.)
 - What does this say about the importance of family among the Igbo? (Family members have an obligation to help each other in time of need.)
 - What happened to Okonkwo's home in Umuofia? (It was destroyed, along with all the possessions he could not carry with him or store with Obierika.)
 - Why is his life destroyed because of an accidental death? (There is a concept of collective guilt. To allow Okonkwo to remain unpunished would call down the wrath of the Earth on the entire village. Note the similarity of this belief with that of the Puritans who first settled New England.)

5. Ask students to name a place in the world today from which many people have become exiles. Discuss with them what emotions such exiles must feel (fear, anger, resentment, homesickness, worry for their children's safety and future). Ask students whether they think Okonkwo feels the same way. (Yes, he is depressed.) Then ask about how his uncle tries to handle this. Read Uchendu's speech at the end of chapter 14, and discuss it with students.
 - What main points is Uchendu trying to make? (The motherland is the place of refuge for people in trouble; Okonkwo's despair might offend the dead; he has suffered less than Uchendu himself, but Uchendu is not giving up on life.)
 - Why doesn't Okonkwo know the answers? (He has spent his whole life denying and denigrating the feminine; he clearly doesn't understand Uchendu's belief that "Mother is Supreme.")
6. Discuss Obierika's visit to Okonkwo.
 - Why does Obierika come? (Obierika wants to pay Okonkwo in cowries for the yams he left behind in Obierika's barn.)
 - What does this action tell you about Obierika? (He is a good and trustworthy friend.)
 - What news does he bring? (The village of Abame has been destroyed. A white man came on an "iron horse"—a bicycle—and was killed by the men of the village. Three more whites arrived, guessed what had happened, and then came back with enough men to destroy the village.)
7. Define the term *foreshadowing* (a hint of what is going to happen in the future). Ask students to hypothesize what the coming of the whites and the destruction of Abame may foreshadow. (The spread of Europeans into Nigeria will affect the Igbo way of life.) How do students think Okonkwo will handle such developments?
8. Assign students to read chapters 16 through 19 for homework.

A Shopping List for the Holidays

Directions: Imagine that you are going shopping for holiday presents. Your goal is to purchase gifts for young siblings or cousins. Which of the following would be appropriate for a boy, a girl, or either one? Mark each gift as *M* for masculine, *F* for feminine, or *B* for both. Be prepared to explain your choices.

- _____ 1. a cell phone
- _____ 2. a doll
- _____ 3. a fire truck
- _____ 4. a football helmet
- _____ 5. a laptop
- _____ 6. a pink t-shirt
- _____ 7. a soccer ball
- _____ 8. a toy stove
- _____ 9. a toy toolbox
- _____ 10. a toy train
- _____ 11. a toy unicorn
- _____ 12. a vase of flowers
- _____ 13. blue jeans
- _____ 14. a stuffed animal
- _____ 15. a harmonica

Lesson 8

The Arrival of the Christians

Objectives

- To trace how the people of Mbanta respond to the missionaries
- To predict Okonkwo's reaction to the church in Umuofia

Notes to the Teacher

Although Christianity was first introduced into Nigeria by Augustinian and Capuchin monks coming with slave traders from Portugal in the fifteenth century, it did not spread far until the late nineteenth century. After the abolition of slavery, British merchants expanded into the interior of the country, and, in 1886, the Royal Niger Company was chartered. In 1900, the British government established a protectorate which lasted until independence in 1960. As British economic and political control spread, so did the efforts of various missionary groups; they were more successful in southern Nigeria than in the north, which was heavily Islamic. Today, Nigeria is about 50 percent Muslim and 40 percent Christian; about 10 percent of the population still retain the indigenous beliefs portrayed in the novel.

In chapters 16 through 19, Chinua Achebe illustrates the coming of the missionaries to Mbanta in the waning years of Okonkwo's exile. The missionaries are mocked by most of the village, but their message has an appeal to the outcasts, the men without title, and the woman who has borne multiple sets of twins. It also attracts Okonkwo's son, Nwoye, who has been repulsed by the ritual murder of his close friend and foster brother, Ikemefuna, by his father's harshness, and by the practice of abandoning twins in the Evil Forest. Until the arrival of the missionaries, he saw no alternative, but now he chooses to leave his father and convert.

The lesson begins with a review of the status of twins in the culture, using information from chapter 7. Students then trace the progress made by the missionaries in disseminating their message and attracting members from the lower echelons of the Igbo society. Finally, students consider Okonkwo's reaction in the light of what they know about his temperament and beliefs, and they theorize about what might occur when Okonkwo ends his exile and returns to his own village of Umuofia.

Procedure

1. Write the word *twins* on the board. Ask students to describe how twins are regarded in modern society. (They are valued in the same way as other children, sometimes even more, and are often dressed in matching clothing.) Then ask the following questions:
 - How were twins regarded in traditional Igbo society? (They were an abomination. In the novel, twin infants are immediately taken to the Evil Forest and abandoned to die, and their mother has to go through a purification ritual.)
 - Does anyone object to this? (Both Nwoye and Obierika feel uncomfortable with this practice.)
 - Have there been any other killings because of religion? (Ikemefuna was killed because of an order from the Oracle of the Hill and the Caves in chapter 7.)
 - How do Obierika and Nwoye feel about his death? (Obierika refuses to participate. Nwoye experiences it as a crushing blow.)
2. Distribute **Handout 12**, and work through it with students to help them understand how the missionaries made inroads into the community.

Suggested Responses

1. When the missionaries arrive, everyone is curious, especially about the white man. They make fun of the preacher's interpreter and ask about his "horse" (bicycle).
2. People are very excited by the missionaries' intent to live in the village.
3. The Igbo cannot understand how a god can have a son without a wife and think the idea of the Trinity is madness.
4. Cheerful evangelical hymns appeal to the people.
5. The elders give the missionaries permission to build in the Evil Forest, thinking that will be the death of them.
6. The people are surprised that the missionaries have survived and begin to think that they might have a powerful fetish. A few converts join the church.
7. More converts come, including Nneka, who has borne four sets of twins (all of whom have been killed), and Nwoye, who asks to go to the mission school in Umuofia.
8. Mbanta doesn't care about the twins, since they are still in the Evil Forest.
9. Men of Mbanta beat the converts, but they cannot kill them, since they are still members of the clan. Killing a clan member would be punished by exile.

10. This causes division within the church, but when missionaries hold firm, the church members relent. Almost all the *osu* join.
 11. Many, including Okonkwo, want war, but the elders decide to let the gods fight for themselves. The man who killed the python dies within a day, so they feel that the god acted. They decide to ostracize the Christians and even prevent the women from getting water.
3. Ask the following questions:
 - How does Okonkwo feel about the new religion? (He despises it.)
 - How does he feel about his son converting? (He is disgusted.)
 4. Ask students to predict what will happen when Okonkwo ends his exile and brings his family back to Umuofia. (Answers will vary, but students should recognize the possibility of violence on Okonkwo's part, especially since he will feel ashamed because of his son's conversion. Students should also consider the possibility of retribution based on the information that there is a new government supporting the missionaries.)
 5. Assign students to read chapters 20 through 22 for homework.

The Church at Mbanta

Directions: Fill in the chart. Use it as a basis for discussion of how the missionaries were able to build a church at Mbanta.

Missionaries' Actions	Mbanta's Reaction
1. One white and five African missionaries arrive in Mbanta and preach.	
2. The missionaries declare their intent to live in the village.	
3. The missionaries preach about Jesus and the Trinity.	
4. The missionaries sing hymns.	
5. The missionaries ask for land to build a church.	

Missionaries' Actions	Mbanta's Reaction
6. The missionaries build their church.	
7. The missionaries survive for seven market weeks, the longest the people think possible.	
8. The missionaries start rescuing twins from the bush.	
9. Converts threaten to burn the shrines of the Mbanta gods.	
10. The missionaries welcome the <i>osu</i> (outcasts) into the church.	
11. The <i>osu</i> convert kills the royal python.	

Lesson 9

A Gathering Storm

Objectives

- To analyze the effect a change in missionaries has on the relationship between traditionalists and Christians in Umuofia
- To understand the potential impact of the new British government in Nigeria

Notes to the Teacher

The focus of this lesson is on the crisis in the religious conflict in Umuofia. Delayed by the overtures of Mr. Brown to the Umuofia leaders and his tact and restraint, the crisis comes to a head when the ailing missionary is replaced by the more rigid and doctrinaire Mr. Smith. The result is an open confrontation and the destruction of the Christian church. Students living in a society that accommodates both a variety of religions and atheism will have little firsthand experience with violence over religion, but the opening of the lesson reminds them that it occurs frequently. You might bring to their attention a number of instances from the last century, including the Catholic/Protestant clashes in Ireland, the Palestinian/Israeli standoff, the rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan, the hostility between Hindus and Muslims that led to the separation of India and Pakistan, and the mutual attacks between Sunnis and Shiites in Iraq, to name a few instances.

The history of Nigeria's close involvement with Western nations begins with the slave trade in the seventeenth century, when European traders set up coastal stations to barter goods for human chattel. The British passed legislation in 1831 to outlaw slavery throughout the empire; it took effect two years later. Merchants then focused on obtaining other goods from Nigeria, including palm oil and timber. In 1886, the Royal Niger Company was chartered; fourteen years later, the British government consolidated its hold and in 1914 declared that Nigeria was officially its colony and protectorate. Western influence, particularly with respect to religion and education, grew more rapidly in the southern part of Nigeria than in the Muslim-dominated north. After World War II, Nigerians began an independence movement, and the country became fully independent in 1960.

In the first part of the lesson, students consider the propensity of human societies toward religious conflict. They review the early years of Christianity in Umuofia. Then, using a comparison/contrast chart, they consider how the different personalities of the two missionaries—Mr. Brown and Mr. Smith—affect the level of acceptance that Christianity finds. Finally, they discuss Okonkwo's attitude toward the Christians.

Procedure

1. Ask students to suggest times and places in history or in the present when religious differences led to violent clashes. (See Notes to the Teacher.) Ask students why these conflicts occurred and whether such clashes could have been avoided.
2. Review briefly the events of previous chapters which show the early stages of Christianity in Nigeria.
 - How is Christianity first introduced into Umuofia and the neighboring towns? (Mr. Brown, a British missionary, and a group of native African missionaries come to preach and sing.)
 - How are they received at first? (The people receive them with mockery and grudging permission to build in the Evil Forest.)
 - How do they win converts? (The missionaries fail to succumb in the Evil Forest; they accept the outcasts, and they save twins who would otherwise have died.)
3. Distribute **Handout 13**. Arrange students in pairs, and ask them to fill out the handout using information from the reading assignment. Then have a general class discussion about their answers.

Suggested Responses

1. Brown is calm, friendly, and respectful of Igbo beliefs. He tries to rein in zealotry and extremism among his followers.
Smith is prone to conflict and antagonizes the people of Umuofia.
2. Brown is curious about Igbo religion and discusses it with the great men of the village, looking for commonalities. He is also firm about his own beliefs.
Smith condemns Mr. Brown's methods of accommodating the indigenous customs and beliefs. He wants religious purity on his own terms.
3. Brown builds a church first, then a school and hospital. He paves the way for other churches and schools in neighboring villages. Gradually, he attracts many converts.
Smith has no new accomplishments. He suspends a convert for allowing her husband to mutilate the body of their dead child as an *ogbanje*.
4. Brown has a good degree of success in winning acceptance, particularly through the schools he founded.
Smith essentially destroys the relative peace between the traditional believers and the converts; he encourages Enoch and hides the zealot after the unmasking of one of the *egwugwu*. This results in the total destruction of the church that Mr. Brown built.

4. Ask students whether the clash that led to the destruction of the church was inevitable. (Answers will vary.) Point out that, in Nigeria today, about 40 percent of the people are Christian and only 10 percent now follow the indigenous beliefs. The remaining 50 percent are Muslim, mainly in the north.
5. Ask the following questions:
 - What is happening with Okonkwo during this period? What were his losses from his exile? (He lost his position among the *egwugwu*, his position as a war leader, and the allegiance of his oldest son.)
 - What are Okonkwo's plans? (He wants to rebuild his compound and barn, to replant his fields, to use his daughters' beauty to attract husbands, and to raise his remaining four sons in the traditional ways of the clan.)
 - Do you think he will be successful? (Answers will vary, but it seems that forces much bigger than Okonkwo are at work.)
6. Discuss with the class the implications of the establishment of a new British government, using information from Notes to the Teacher. Have students review the information in the last few pages of chapter 20, and then discuss the following topics.
 - Who are the representatives of the government in Umuofia and the other villages? (Court messengers function as government representatives.)
 - How are they received by the people? (They are hated because they are foreigners and because they are arrogant.)
 - How do Okonkwo and Obierika feel about the new government? (They are resentful and see it as ignorant because it neither understands traditional ways nor speaks the Igbo language. They also suspect that government officials are corrupt and are taking bribes that influence decisions.)
7. Assign students to finish the novel for homework to see how the clash between Okonkwo's traditional values and those of the British government is resolved.

One Mission, Two Men

Directions: Review the words and actions of Mr. Brown and Mr. Smith, the missionaries who build and run a church in Umuofia. Use the chart to compare and contrast them. Be sure to provide evidence for your answers.

Topic	Mr. Brown	Mr. Smith
1. Relationship with the villagers		
2. Attitude toward the indigenous religion		
3. Accomplishments		
4. Degree of success		

Lesson 10

The Death of Okonkwo

Objectives

- To understand the conflicting attitudes of the British and the Igbo people with respect to the burning of the church and the arrest of the village leaders
- To understand Chinua Achebe's motives in writing *Things Fall Apart*

Notes to the Teacher

Students are probably familiar with the concept of the *tragic hero* (a character, usually noble in some way, who falls from a position of power to suffer defeat and even death). If students have read classical tragedies, remind them of Greek tragedies like *Oedipus* or *Antigone*, in which the protagonists are largely doomed by fate. In Shakespearean tragedy, the protagonist is usually doomed by a flaw in his character, called a *tragic flaw*, such as Macbeth's ambition, Lear's susceptibility to flattery, or Othello's jealousy. Students are asked in this lesson to consider whether or not Okonkwo is a tragic hero.

Achebe became familiar with the Western literary tradition when he was a student at University College in Ibadan, where he read such colonialist works on Africa as Joyce Cary's *Mister Johnson* and Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. He felt that books such as these fail to present the true story of the African people. This observation prompted him to write *Things Fall Apart*, an attempt to "re-story" people who were dispossessed by imperialist powers. He borrowed the Western literary form of the novel but incorporated Nigerian proverbs, stories, philosophy, religious belief, customs, and vocabulary to make it a truer picture of his people.

Procedure

1. Ask students what a sting operation is. (A sting operation involves deception by law enforcement to catch a criminal.) Ask for examples of sting operations (underage police cadet trying to buy liquor, undercover policeman posing as a hit man, police officer posing as a young person online to catch a child molester). Discuss whether the British government was justified in using a sting operation to catch the leaders of Umuofia. (Answers will vary. Students may suggest that there is no evidence presented that the leaders were the culprits; others may feel that the trick probably saved lives, since the alternative, to arrest them in the village, might have taken innocent lives.)

2. Divide students into three groups, and distribute **Handout 14**. Assign a scenario to each group, and allow students time to plan their presentations within their groups, and present the results. After each presentation, give students in the other two groups the opportunity to respond and ask questions.
3. Ask students the following questions:
 - Why did Okonkwo commit suicide?
 - Do you see any validity in his decision to end his life, or do you think this was a foolish mistake?

Encourage students to express varying opinions as long as they support them.

4. Review with students the concept of the tragic hero, and ask them about great examples of tragedy they have previously studied. Ask them to decide whether this term can be applied to Okonkwo. (He does have a position of power within the village, with his titles, wealth, family, and reputation. He is an exceptional person and a village hero. He has a great fear of being seen as weak, and he tends to act without thinking.)
5. Point out that the novel illustrates the conflict-filled interaction of the cultures of British imperialism and Nigerian traditionalism. Achebe integrates Nigerian elements in his novel, which is essentially a European form of literature. Ask students to identify some of these elements. (Answers should include proverbs, folktales, vocabulary, setting, religious beliefs, food, and customs.) Then ask students how they think this novel differs from those written by British novelists who set their stories in Africa. (British novels are generally from the perspective of the ruling group and often are disdainful toward indigenous people. They often fail to understand the culture of the indigenous people described in the books.)
6. Read aloud the last paragraph of the book. Ask this question: To what extent is this paragraph an example of irony?

Suggested Responses

- The British Commissioner fails to realize why Okonkwo has committed suicide and instead thinks that he himself has handled the whole incident well.
- While the Commissioner is going to “write a whole chapter on him . . . [or perhaps] a reasonable paragraph,” Achebe has just written a whole book.
- The Commissioner thinks he has brought civilization and law, when the African people had their own civilization and law before he ever arrived.

- The title of his book is ironic, since these people were at peace and did not need pacification before the British arrived. The people are not primitive when viewed from the inside, as Achebe allows us to do.
7. Ask students to hypothesize why Achebe ended his book this way. (He wanted readers to become skeptical of books written by authors from imperialist countries about the countries they conquered.)

Taking a Closer Look

Directions: Create an impromptu skit based on one of the following scenarios. Choose classmates to represent particular roles, and decide what positions those characters will take.

1. You are the British Commissioner and his men, disturbed that the natives have dared to burn the church. You are planning what must be done to put the proper fear into the people of Umuofia so that they will never commit such a crime again. You also want to keep other villages from attacking churches in their areas. The natives must learn that they are now subordinate to British law, established in Nigeria in the name of Queen Victoria. Remember your attitude toward these people and your feelings about the righteousness of your cause.
2. You are the villagers who have just been told that your leaders were not given a chance to have a hearing with the Commissioner after all. Instead, they have been taken as prisoners, and now your village has been told to pay a fine of two hundred and fifty bags of cowries, a huge sum. What are your alternatives? What do you think your imprisoned leaders would want you to do? Discuss your plan of action.
3. You are the men of the village who have just discovered Okonkwo's body. What reason do you think he had to commit suicide? How do you feel about his death? What will be the implications of his suicide for his family and for the village as a whole? What are your feelings about the power and attitude of the British officials? Is it best to submit to British rule or to fight back?

Lesson 11

The Power of Allusions

Objectives

- To understand the title of the novel as an allusion to “The Second Coming” by William Butler Yeats
- To create an original poem using an allusion to a famous poem or to the novel

Notes to the Teacher

Allusions in literature can often deepen and enrich an author’s work and add to its meaning. One type of allusion involves borrowing a well-known phrase from one literary work for use as the title for another. Thus, Ernest Hemingway used a line from one of John Donne’s Meditations, “never send to know for whom the bells tolls,” to create the title of his novel of the Spanish Civil War. Maya Angelou titled the first volume of her autobiography using the line “I know why the caged bird sings” from Paul Lawrence Dunbar’s poem “Sympathy.” Lorraine Hansberry’s *A Raisin in the Sun* draws its title from Langston Hughes’s poem “Dream Deferred.” Knowledgeable readers recognize the allusion and understand the theme or insight the author intends to introduce by its use.

Before the lesson, assemble a collection of well-known poems that students can understand and use as sources of allusions. You may want to use poems your students have studied previously. Have enough copies of poems so that each student group will have a set to share among themselves; there should be three or four more poems in each set than you have students in the group so that each student will have a choice.

This lesson focuses on the title of the novel and its provenance in William Butler Yeats’s poem “The Second Coming.” Students read and analyze the poem to understand its relevance to the novel. They then use a well-known poem as a source of a title for an original poem that is connected thematically.

Procedure

1. Ask students to define *plagiarism* (copying the work of another and claiming it as one’s own). Explain that writers occasionally borrow well-known images or phrases from other authors’ work to use in their own. (See Notes to the Teacher.) This is not considered plagiarism because the phrases are recognizable and educated readers will

recognize the source. Such borrowing is one type of allusion. Define *allusion* as a reference to a person, place, or thing from history, mythology, art, or literature.

2. Distribute **Handout 15**. Read the poem aloud once, and then have students read it again silently. Have students work in pairs to answer the questions at the end of the poem.

Suggested Responses

1. The term usually refers to the apocalyptic return of Christ at the end of the world.
 2. The poem includes the idea of “revelation” at hand; the Book of Revelation contains predictions about the end of the world; the rocking cradle and the allusion to Bethlehem suggest the first coming of Christ.
 3. A falcon spins in a gyre or spiral, so out of control that it cannot hear its master; a “blood-dimmed tide” drowns innocence; a sphinx moves slowly, beginning to awaken; there are darkness and nightmares. The sphinx is an allusion to ancient Egypt, and the tide may be a reference to the plagues in Genesis.
 4. Taken together, the images suggest a world in which order has broken down, and unspecified evils may be loosed against civilization.
 5. Europe was devastated by World War I, which came to an end just a few years before the poem was written. Millions were killed, millions more injured; the economy and infrastructure were largely destroyed. Communism successfully overthrew the Russian government. Communist-led unrest in the form of strikes and protests led to violence in Germany. Yeats foresaw an end to the world order.
 6. The destruction and unrest in Europe because of war could be analogous to the threat of destruction of traditional African societies brought on by the increased British influence and control in Nigeria and elsewhere.
3. Divide the class into groups, and give each group a set of poems to look through. Explain that you wish each student to select a line or phrase from a well-known poem and use it as a title and inspiration for an original poem. If they prefer, students may choose a line or phrase from *Things Fall Apart* as the source of their title. Remind students that the poems do not have to rhyme and that the chosen phrase may be used within the poem as well.

4. Disperse the groups, and give students time to write their poems individually. Then reassemble the groups, and give them time to read and comment on each other's poems. Ask each group to select its own poet laureate (best poet) to read his or her poem aloud to the class, identify the source of the title, and explain how the allusion inspired the poem.
5. Assign each student to recopy his or her poem and draw a picture, create a collage, or incorporate a computer graphic to accompany it. Display completed illustrations.

Lesson 12

Student Presentations

Objectives

- To present research on traditional and modern Nigeria
- To evaluate research groups

Notes to the Teacher

This lesson may take several days as students present their reports. Some of the information conveyed in the research reports will be familiar to the class simply from reading *Things Fall Apart*. Encourage student audience members to listen carefully for new information and to ask questions at the end of the presentations. Be sure that any necessary technology is working and that student presenters know how to use it. If students are doing poster presentations, give audience members the opportunity to view the posters up close during a gallery walk after the presentations are finished. For other formats, you may wish to adapt the rubric provided in **Handout 16**.

Begin this lesson by reviewing the categories in which you will be evaluating the presentations. Then student groups present their work and answer questions. Finally, students have the opportunity to evaluate themselves and group members. This last evaluation should be factored into whatever grade you give for the presentation; students resent others who coast during cooperative learning projects, and this gives them a chance to provide feedback on who worked really hard without overtly complaining about group members who have not fully accepted their responsibilities. The lesson concludes with a discussion about the long-range consequences of British colonialism in Nigeria.

Procedure

1. Distribute **Handout 16**, and review with students the rubric you are going to use for the groups' presentations. Explain that students will also have an opportunity to evaluate themselves and their teams after the presentations are complete. Tell them that you will consider both assessments in determining a final grade for each student.
2. Have students give their presentations, and allow time for your own questions and questions from the student audience. Complete the rubric immediately after each group has presented information.

3. Distribute **Handout 17**, and have students complete the self-evaluation individually with the same degree of privacy you would use for a test.
4. Ask the following questions:
 - How much did your group learn about Igbo culture from the novel *Things Fall Apart*?
 - How much did you have to rely on outside research?
 - Why did Chinua Achebe include so much on Igbo culture in his book? (He wanted to give outsiders an opportunity to understand Igbo society from within.)
5. Point out that British rule in Nigeria came to an end in 1960. Ask this question: To what extent are the current events in Nigeria a result of the British occupation? (English is the official language; many resources were exploited by England; as with other countries claimed by imperialist Europe, the path to an independent civilian government has been difficult.)
6. Ask students whether Achebe's theme—that traditional society was severely damaged by British influences—is prophetic or pessimistic. (The novel does not idealize traditional Igbo culture. It does show the harm that can come when nations exert control without understanding.)

Group Presentation Rubric

Directions: Use the following criteria for evaluation.

Category	Excellent	Very Good	Satisfactory	Needs Improvement
Content	All content is accurate, with no factual errors or important omissions.	Most of the content seems accurate, although there are one or two inaccuracies.	Some information is accurate, but a knowledgeable listener is distracted by inaccuracies.	Content is confusing to the listener or contains many errors.
Organization	Organization is clear and logical. The material is arranged in a meaningful order.	Research is organized in a mostly logical order, although there may be some minor information that seems out of place.	Some information is arranged logically, but some important information seems randomly arranged.	There does not seem to be any logical organization underlying the presentation.
Graphics	Graphics and photos are attractive, appropriately sized, and thematically relevant to the topic. There are sufficient graphics and photos to convey necessary information.	Some graphics are not visually appealing, but all photos are appropriately sized and relevant.	A few graphics and photos are visually unappealing or irrelevant to the topic.	There are not enough graphics or photos to add meaning to the presentation, or graphics and photos are illegible or irrelevant.
Text	Text is carefully planned for readability, with no misspellings or grammatical mistakes.	Text may have one or two misspellings but has been carefully planned for readability.	Text may have one or two misspellings or one or two grammatical mistakes but is otherwise legible and relevant.	Text has frequent grammar and spelling mistakes or is tedious to read.
Delivery	Speaker(s) maintained good eye contact, spoke clearly in grammatically correct language, and maintained appropriate volume and pace. Speaker(s) used notes but did not read directly from them.	Presentation was grammatically correct. Speaker(s) relied a little too heavily on notes but maintained good eye contact. Speaker(s) had minor issues with volume or pace.	Speaker(s) relied a little too heavily on notes but maintained good eye contact. Presentation was occasionally grammatically incorrect. Speaker(s) had some issues with volume and pace.	Speaker(s) read notes almost word for word, paid little attention to volume and pace, or used grammatically incorrect language. Speaker(s) had little eye contact with audience.

Total Score _____

Comments

Test: *Things Fall Apart*

Part A.

Directions: Match the character with the speech he or she might have given.

- | | |
|--|----------------------------|
| _____ 1. As a great wrestler, I earned the respect of the people of Umuofia. | a. Unoka |
| _____ 2. Although women were relatively powerless in Igbo society, when I spoke, the people listened. | b. Nwoye |
| _____ 3. My father really appreciated me, and my mother loved me so much that she followed me through the night for miles when the priestess took me away. | c. Ikemefuna |
| _____ 4. I was always a good wife to Okonkwo, even though I did not raise any sons for him. | d. Mr. Smith |
| _____ 5. I was saddened to have to leave my new church because my health was failing. | e. Obierika |
| _____ 6. Although I never had the money to repay my loans from my friends, my friends still liked me, and I liked them. | f. The priestess of Agbala |
| _____ 7. Although Okonkwo did some mistaken and foolish things, he was a good friend, and I tried to support him in his troubles. | g. Mr. Brown |
| _____ 8. The world is a battlefield in which the children of light are locked in mortal combat with the sons of darkness. | h. Okonkwo |
| _____ 9. I truly believed that I was going home to my mother until the moment death befell me. | i. Ezinma |
| _____ 10. My father never really thought very much of me, but then I hated some of the things that he did too. | j. Ekwefi |

Part B.

Directions: Choose the best answers.

- _____ 1. Okonkwo proves his prowess as a wrestler by defeating
- Obierika.
 - his own father.
 - Amalinze the Cat.
 - a wrestler sent by the Oracle.
- _____ 2. Mbaino must send two villagers to Umuofia because
- a woman from Umuofia was killed there.
 - the people of Umuofia take an annual tribute similar to the Greek story of the Minotaur.
 - their fighter lost the wrestling match with Okonkwo.
 - it is a regular form of taxation to support the tribal government.

-
- _____ 3. When Ikemefuna comes to live in Umuofia,
- he nearly dies of loneliness for his home village.
 - he falls in love with Ezinma.
 - he serves as foster brother to Okonkwo's son.
 - he runs away and is recaptured and beaten.
- _____ 4. Okonkwo disregards his friend's advice by
- trading his third wife for a younger one.
 - slaughtering more goats than he needs.
 - burning down Ikemefuna's hut for spite.
 - participating in a ritual murder.
- _____ 5. Okonkwo's wives
- get along pretty well together.
 - are competing for his affection in sneaky ways.
 - let their children tease the other wives' children.
 - nag him all the time.
- _____ 6. When the women and children in the village see the *egwugwu*, they generally experience a feeling of
- fear.
 - jealousy.
 - delight.
 - rage.
- _____ 7. When a husband and wife are feuding, they can ask for a resolution of the problem from
- the king of the village.
 - the chief missionary.
 - the ancestral spirits.
 - the District Commissioner.
- _____ 8. Some people of Umuofia were attracted to Christianity because
- it seemed less harsh than the tribal religion.
 - they saw it as a way to make money.
 - it was a way for them to leave the home village and travel.
 - they saw the Christian Church as a very prestigious way to worship after the chief men had joined.
-

- _____ 9. Abame was wiped out because of
- a plague of locusts.
 - a marauding band of Igbo warriors.
 - a mysterious illness brought by the Christians.
 - the murder of a white man.
- _____ 10. When Okonkwo thinks that “Living fire begets cold, impotent ash,” he is really thinking about
- his tribal religion after the coming of Christianity.
 - his burned-out home.
 - his son.
 - the ashes of the ceremonial fire on which the first yams of the harvest were cooked.
- _____ 11. Okonkwo must go into exile because of
- an accidental death.
 - his contagious illness.
 - the fact that his son had taken his place among the elders.
 - his quick temper.
- _____ 12. After his return from exile, Okonkwo is
- less respected and wealthy than he was before.
 - more respected and wealthy than he was before.
 - a broken man, older than his years.
 - furious at the people who sent him into exile.
- _____ 13. Okonkwo commits suicide because
- he has killed the messenger, knows he will be punished, and cannot live in a world dominated by the white man’s law.
 - his son has rejected him publicly before the tribe.
 - his first wife has revealed all his secrets to the *egwugwu*.
 - the tribal council orders him to do so.
- _____ 14. The white man’s expansion into Nigeria is commonly known as
- expatriatism.
 - dogmatism.
 - imperialism.
 - socialism.

- _____ 15. The District Commissioner sees the natives of Nigeria as
- primitive.
 - impossible to defeat.
 - sympathetic to the British cause.
 - easy converts to Christianity.

Part C.

Directions: Write one or two good, full, complete sentences to answer each of these questions.

1. What is kola used for in Igbo society?
2. Where does the title of this book come from, and what does it mean?
3. How does a man achieve a high status in Igbo society?
4. What are cowries used for?
5. Describe a typical diet in an Igbo household, and explain who does the cooking.
6. Explain what the Igbo believe about the *chi*.
7. Explain what the Igbo believe about the *egwugwu*.
8. Explain what the Igbo believe about the *ogbanje*.
9. What are two meanings of the term *Evil Forest* in the novel? Why is each one significant?
10. What are three changes that come over the villages after the white men arrive?
11. What is the role of women in this traditional society?
12. Who is the exception to question 11? Why?

Part D.

Directions: Respond to the following prompt in a well-developed, multiple-paragraph essay.

We have all had to make decisions in our lives. These decisions can be either good or bad and can affect both us and people we know. Select one character in *Things Fall Apart* who makes either a good decision or a bad decision. Identify that decision, tell how it affects the character, and say whether you think the decision is a good one or a bad one. Consider how it affects other characters in positive or negative ways. Be sure to discuss the rationale for and consequences of that decision.

Answer Key

Part A.

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. h | 6. a |
| 2. f | 7. e |
| 3. i | 8. d |
| 4. j | 9. c |
| 5. g | 10. b |

Part B.

- | | | |
|------|-------|-------|
| 1. c | 6. a | 11. a |
| 2. a | 7. c | 12. a |
| 3. c | 8. a | 13. a |
| 4. d | 9. d | 14. c |
| 5. a | 10. c | 15. a |

Part C.

- A kola nut is broken as a symbol of hospitality when friends visit one another. It is also used at the beginning of ceremonies such as weddings and funerals.
- The title of the book comes from William Butler Yeats's poem, "The Second Coming," and it means that civilization is falling apart.
- A man takes titles, which are marked by an anklet. Titles are a reflection of his wealth and power.
- Cowries are used for currency. In the book, they pay for a bride's dowry and for a fine for burning down the church.
- Traditional meals are made by a man's wives, all of whom prepare a dish for their husband. A typical meal would consist of pounded yam and a soup or stew.
- The *chi* is a personal or guardian spirit. If the *chi* says yes, a man will be successful.
- The *egwugwu* are the ancestral spirits, impersonated by the leading men of the village. They make decisions to settle conflicts when they arise.
- An *ogbanje* is believed to be a child which is born, dies, and returns to its mother's womb to repeat the cycle again and again. Its body may be mutilated to discourage it from returning.
- One meaning of *Evil Forest* is the land where twins are abandoned and corpses of those who die from strange diseases are left. It is given to the missionaries to build their church. Another meaning is the name of one of the *egwugwu*.
- A growing number of Igbo are converting to Christianity and attend the Christian church. Schools and hospitals have been established. A new government which the Igbo see as corrupt is now in power.
- Women are generally subservient to their husbands, preparing their food and raising their children. They are not allowed to speak back to their husbands and may even be victims of domestic violence if the husband is like Okonkwo.
- Ezinma is the exception, because Okonkwo sees her as having the spirit and courage of a boy.

Part D.

Answers will vary. Essays should answer the prompt fully, use evidence from the novel to support ideas, and be written with correct spelling and grammar.

Additional Resources

On Chinua Achebe

Carroll, David. *Chinua Achebe*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1980.

Ezenwa-Ohaeto. *Chinua Achebe: A Biography*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997.

Innes, C. L. *Chinua Achebe*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

On *Things Fall Apart*

Bloom, Harold, ed. *Critical Interpretations: Chinua Achebe's "Things Fall Apart."* Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, 2002.

Gikandi, Simon, ed. *Reading Chinua Achebe: Language and Ideology in Fiction*. Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann, 1991.

Innes, C. L., and Bernth Lindfors. *Critical Perspectives on Chinua Achebe*. Washington, D.C.: Three Continents Press, 1978.

Iyasere, Solomon O., ed. *Understanding "Things Fall Apart": Selected Essays and Criticism*. Troy, N.Y.: The Whitston Publishing Company, 1998.

Other Books by Chinua Achebe

Arrow of God

No Longer at Ease

A Man of the People

Girls at War and Other Stories

Anthills of the Savannah

Hopes and Impediments

Collected Poems

Children's Books

How the Leopard Got His Claws

Chike and the River

Other Important Nigerian Writers

Buchi Emecheta

Ben Okri

Wole Soyinka

Things Fall Apart

ISBN 978-1-56077-959-9

Entire Unit

- | | |
|------------|---|
| RL.9-10.1 | Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text. |
| RL.9-10.2 | Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text. |
| RL.9-10.3 | Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme. |
| RL.9-10.5 | Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it (e.g., parallel plots), and manipulate time (e.g., pacing, flashbacks) create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise. |
| RL.9-10.6 | Analyze a particular point of view or cultural experience reflected in a work of literature from outside the United States, drawing on a wide reading of world literature. |
| RL.11-12.1 | Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain. |
| RL.11-12.2 | Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text. |
| RL.11-12.3 | Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed). |
| RL.11-12.5 | Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text (e.g., the choice of where to begin or end a story, the choice to provide a comedic or tragic resolution) contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact. |

RL.11-12.6

Analyze a case in which grasping a point of view requires distinguishing what is directly stated in a text from what is really meant (e.g., satire, sarcasm, irony, or understatement).

Source

Common Core State Standards (Washington, D.C.: National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010)



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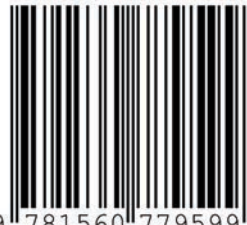
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