



Cultures in Conflict

Visual Prompt: What do artifacts, such as the one shown above, tell you about a culture?

Unit Overview

“Until the lion has a voice, stories of safaris will always glorify the hunter.” To illustrate this African proverb, Chinua Achebe wrote the acclaimed novel *Things Fall Apart*, in which he provides a powerful voice for the Ibo, a community nearly silenced by European colonialism. In this unit, you will continue your exploration of culture by reading and studying Achebe’s novel. By immersing yourself in the culture and community of the Ibo people, you will analyze a complex

community, the institutions that enable it to function, the conflicting roles of its members, and the way in which it is affected by political and social change. Your opinions of the Ibo community’s response to change may be positive, negative, or mixed; however, like millions of others who have read the novel, you may find that the characters and community of *Things Fall Apart* remain with you long after your study is complete.

GOALS:

- To analyze cultural experiences reflected in a work of literature from outside the United States
- To analyze how complex characters in a novel develop and interact to advance a plot or theme
- To research to answer questions, explore complex ideas, and gather relevant information
- To present findings to an audience clearly and logically, making use of digital media
- To draw evidence from a literary text to support analysis and reflection

ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

- reliability
- validity
- plagiarism
- annotated bibliography

Literary Terms

- proverb
- folktale
- archetype
- epigraph
- motif
- foil
- characterization
- foreshadowing
- tragic hero
- hamartia
- irony
- dramatic irony
- verbal irony
- situational irony

Contents

Activities

3.1	Previewing the Unit	220
3.2	Proverbs and Folktales.....	221
3.3	Researching Context	223
	*Novel: <i>Things Fall Apart</i> , by Chinua Achebe	
3.4	Culture Wheel.....	225
	*Novel: <i>Things Fall Apart</i> , by Chinua Achebe	
3.5	Father and Son	228
	*Novel: <i>Things Fall Apart</i> , by Chinua Achebe (Chapters 1–4)	
3.6	Character in Conflict.....	231
	*Novel: <i>Things Fall Apart</i> , by Chinua Achebe (Chapters 1–4)	
3.7	Family Ties	233
	*Novel: <i>Things Fall Apart</i> , by Chinua Achebe (Chapters 5–6)	
3.8	Sacrificial Son	235
	*Novel: <i>Things Fall Apart</i> , by Chinua Achebe (Chapters 7–8)	
3.9	Cultural Change.....	239
	*Novel: <i>Things Fall Apart</i> , by Chinua Achebe (Chapter 9)	
Embedded Assessment 1: Researching and Comparing Pre- and Postcolonial Ibo Culture		241

Learning Targets

- Analyze folktales and proverbs to gain insight into the culture of a people.
- Determine an author’s purpose for including proverbs and folktales in a novel.

Preview

In this activity, you will prepare to read the novel *Things Fall Apart* by analyzing the proverbs and folktales of the Ibo and broader African culture.

Proverbs and Folktales

Proverbs and **folktales** are one part of a culture’s oral tradition. People share proverbs and folktales in order to express important stories, ideas, and beliefs about their culture.

1. As you read the novel *Things Fall Apart*, you will encounter many proverbs and folktales that illustrate the beliefs of the Ibo people. One memorable Ibo proverb is “Proverbs are the palm oil with which words are eaten.” Explain what you think this proverb means.

2. In small groups, read and discuss the following proverbs from the novel. Then explain each one in the graphic organizer.

Proverb	Explanation
If a child washes his hands, he could eat with kings.	
When the moon is shining, the cripple becomes hungry for a walk.	
Since men have learned to shoot without missing, [the bird] has learned to fly without perching.	
The clan was like a lizard. If it lost its tail it soon grew another.	
I cannot live on the bank of a river and wash my hands with spittle.	
A man who pays respect to the great paves the way for his own greatness.	

Check Your Understanding

What general truth believed by the Ibo culture is revealed through the proverb “If one finger brought oil it soiled the others”?

LEARNING STRATEGIES:

Think-Pair-Share, Word Wall, Graphic Organizer, Discussion Groups

Literary Terms

A **proverb** is a short saying about a general truth.
A **folktale** is a story without a known author that has been preserved through oral retellings.

My Notes

Proverbs and Folktales

My Notes

Literary Terms

An **archetype** is a pattern, symbol, image, or idea that recurs in literature.

3. In addition to proverbs, you will also encounter a number of folktales in the novel. Use the organizer below to record details about the folktales discussed in class. Then, either copy this organizer or create your own to record details about the folktales you find in *Things Fall Apart*, especially in Chapters 7, 9, 11, and 15.

Folktales	
Title	
Characters	
Setting	
Plot Summary	
Symbols and Archetypes	
Meaning of the Folktale	
Significance (reason for its retelling across generations and its inclusion in the novel)	

Check Your Understanding

- What connections can you make between the proverbs and the folktales?
- How can proverbs and folktales provide insight into a culture?
- How and why might an author use proverbs and folktales in a novel?

Writing to Sources: Explanatory Text

Explain how the proverbs and folktales you analyzed in this activity provide insight into the values of the cultures from which they come. Be sure to:

- Begin with a topic sentence summarizing your understanding of how the theme of proverbs and folktales can tell us about a culture's values.
- Include specific relevant details from the proverbs and folktales that tell you about the culture.
- Cite direct quotations and specific examples from the text. Introduce and punctuate all quotations correctly.

Learning Targets

- Gather, evaluate, and cite sources to answer questions about the historical, cultural, social, and geographical context of the novel.
- Use evidence from research to present findings to the class.

Preview

In this activity, you will conduct and present research that answers questions about the context of the novel *Things Fall Apart*.

Conducting Internet Research

1. When researching on the Internet, it is important to evaluate the **validity** and **reliability** of the information you find. Look at the authority of the information (e.g., was it written by experts?), as well as its objectivity. Refer to the following chart to evaluate Internet sources.

LEARNING STRATEGIES:
KWHL, Brainstorming,
Graphic Organizer

ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

A source has **reliability** if its information can be trusted and is of good quality.
A source that is truthful or accurate has **validity**.

Questions to Evaluate Internet Sources

The URL	<p>What is the website's domain?</p> <p>.com=a for-profit organization</p> <p>.gov, .mil, .us=a government site</p> <p>.edu=an educational institution</p> <p>.org=a nonprofit organization</p>
Sponsor	<p>What organization or group sponsors the website?</p> <p>Does the website provide information about the sponsor (often found in an "About Us" link)? If so, what information is provided?</p>
Timeliness	<p>When was the site created?</p> <p>When was the site last updated (usually posted on the top or bottom of the page)?</p>
Purpose	<p>What is the purpose of the site?</p> <p>Who is the target audience?</p> <p>Does the website present information or opinion?</p>
Author/Publisher	<p>Who publishes the website?</p> <p>What credentials does the author have?</p> <p>Is the person or group considered an authority on the topic? How do you know?</p>
Links	<p>Does the website provide links that work?</p> <p>Do the links go to authoritative sources?</p> <p>Are they objective or subjective?</p>

2. It is also important to avoid **plagiarism**. As you research, keep good notes about your sources and direct quotations so that you can cite them accurately. Note the URL of each site you view, as you may need to revisit the site to collect further information. Use note cards or a word processing program to record information.
3. With your group, brainstorm a list of possible questions about your assigned topic. Use your questions to guide your group's research. When conducting research, refer to what you have just learned about evaluating sources and avoiding plagiarism.

ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

Plagiarism is the act of using another person's words or ideas without giving credit.

Researching Context

My Notes

Presentations

- To prepare for your group’s presentation, use note cards to create an annotated outline that includes a thesis statement and key talking points to which you can refer.
- As you listen to your classmates’ presentations, fill in the following organizer with information about their topics.

Topic	Research Notes
Chinua Achebe	
Nigeria: History	
Nigeria: Geography and Agriculture	
British Colonialism and Nigeria	
Missionary Involvement in Africa	
Tribal Life	



INDEPENDENT READING LINK

Read and Research

Review the informational texts you have chosen. Use the Questions to Evaluate Sources to make sure you are using the most appropriate texts for your purpose. Replace any texts that do not seem to be reliable and valid.

Check Your Understanding

- What are some of the key elements of a valid and reliable Internet source?
- How did your research help provide a context for the novel?
- What new predictions can you make based on the class presentations?
- Compare and contrast the class presentations: What made some more engaging, informative, or effective than others?

Culture Wheel

3. Work with a group to review the Ibo words and their definitions below, and then place the words into the appropriate section of the Culture Wheel organizer that follows.

Glossary of Selected Ibo Words and Phrases*

agbala	woman; also used for a man who has taken no title
ani	Earth goddess
chi	personal god
efulefu	worthless man
egwugwu	masquerader who impersonates one of the ancestral spirits of the village
ekwe	type of drum made from wood
foo foo	food made from yams that serves a chief role in the annual Feast of the New Yam
ilo	the village green where assemblies for sports, discussions, and so on take place
iyi-uwa	a special kind of stone that forms the link between an ogbanje and the spirit world (Only if the iyi-uwa were discovered and destroyed would the child not die.)
jigida	string of waist beads worn by women
kola nut	food used to greet visitors and guests
kwenu	shout of approval and greeting
ilo	village playground
Ndichie	elders
obi	large living quarters of the head of the family
ochu	murder or manslaughter
ogbanje	changeling; a child who repeatedly dies and returns to its mother to be reborn
ogene	musical instrument; a kind of gong
osu	outcast (Having been dedicated to a god, the osu was taboo and not allowed to mix with the freeborn in any way.)
oye	one of the four market days
palm wine	fermented palm sap used for celebration and ceremony
udu	musical instrument; a type of drum made from pottery
yam	most valuable cash crop grown in the village

*Source: *Things Fall Apart*, Chinua Achebe (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1958).

LEARNING STRATEGIES:

Graphic Organizer, Double-Entry Journal

My Notes

Learning Targets

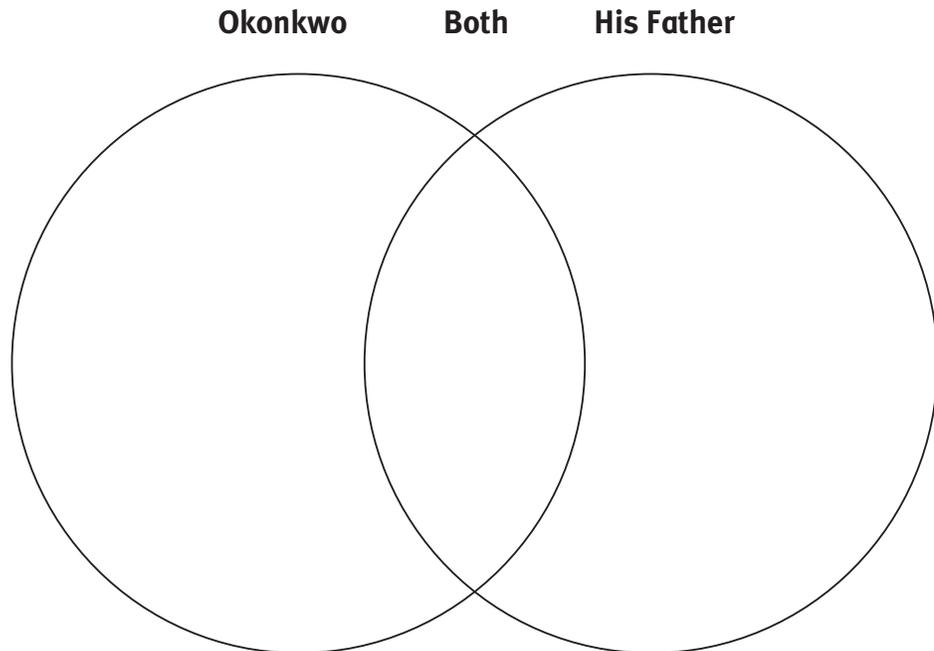
- Analyze how a complex character interacts with other characters.
- Analyze how a complex character’s motivation advances the plot.

Reading *Things Fall Apart*, Chapters 1–4

In the following activity, you will read Chapters 1–4 and use a Double-Entry Journal to record details from the text that illustrate Okonkwo’s character.

Comparing and Contrasting Characters

1. As you read, use the organizer below or create one of your own to compare and contrast Okonkwo and his father. Record facts and details about each.



2. Authors use **motifs** for many reasons in their writing, including establishing themes and moods. Achebe uses the motif of tensions between fathers and sons in his novel. Review the facts and details about Okonkwo and his father that you recorded. How do these similarities and differences create tension between the two? Explain how Okonkwo’s father serves as a **foil** to his son.

Literary Terms

A **motif** is a recurring image, symbol, theme, character type, or subject that becomes a unifying element in an artistic work.

A **foil** is a character whose traits contrast with and therefore highlight the traits of another.

Character in Conflict

My Notes

4. In preparation for completing the Writing to Sources: Argument, work with your group to reflect on the argument stimulus below. Use a Round Table Discussion graphic organizer to take notes from your discussion.

Writing to Sources: Argument

Take a position on the question: *Is it common for powerful leaders to have flawed characters? Why? How might this affect the community?* Write an argument essay to support your position and explain how it relates to Okonkwo's character.

Be sure to:

- State your claim in the beginning sentence.
- Use relevant evidence from the text and valid reasoning to support your claim.
- Provide a concluding statement that follows from the claim you have presented.

Family Ties

My Notes

Language and Writer's Craft: Compare/Contrast

In this unit, you have been comparing and contrasting Achebe's characterization, and you will write a compare/contrast essay for Embedded Assessment 1. In a compare/contrast essay, the way you organize ideas is an important part of communicating similarities and differences.

Recall that a **thesis** is a statement of your perspective or assessment of a topic. A compare/contrast thesis, therefore, must introduce your ideas about how the subjects of your essay are similar and different. Many compare/contrast thesis statements begin with words *like*, *although*, *whereas*, *even though*, or *while*. These words suggest that a contrast is to follow. Here is an example:

- Although Okonkwo and Unoka both are tall men, Unoka walks with a stoop, suggesting that he is burdened by the expectations of his tribe.

Another way to write a compare/contrast thesis statement is to focus on differences and similarities. For example, consider this thesis:

- A similarity between Okonkwo and Unoka is that both are tall men. Their differences, though, are more pronounced than their similarities.

The organization of your **body paragraphs** also helps you organize your ideas logically. You may choose to discuss one subject thoroughly in one paragraph and then turn to the other subject in the next paragraph, pointing out its similarities and differences. This structure is a good choice when the first subject is more familiar or provides a lens through which to view the other subject. Alternatively, you may discuss one point of comparison at a time, explaining how the subjects compare on that point before turning to another point of comparison. In this type of organization, each point of comparison is usually discussed in its own paragraph.

PRACTICE Use a graphic organizer such as a Venn diagram as a prewriting tool to help you compare and contrast two of Okonkwo's family relationships in response to the writing prompt below. Using your graphic organizer, decide if you will use a subject-by-subject or a point-by-point organizational structure. Explain your choice in your Reader/Writer Notebook.

Writing to Sources: Explanatory Text

How do Okonkwo's family relationships make him a sympathetic or an unsympathetic character? Be sure to:

- Write a thesis statement that compares and contrasts at least two relationships and explores their effect on characterization.
- Include supporting details and quotations from the novel.
- Use an effective organizational structure with transition words and phrases.

Sacrificial Son

Question	Page No.	Answer and Support
How has Nwoye changed, and what has caused the changes?		
Describe the arrival of the locusts. What is the reaction of the people of Umuofia?		
Do you think that Ikemefuna suspects that he is going to be killed? Why or why not?		
How does Okonkwo feel about Ikemefuna's death? How does Nwoye feel?		
Genesis 22:1–19 of the Bible presents the story of Abraham and Isaac. What similarities and differences are there in the sacrifices of Isaac and Ikemefuna? How does this incident illustrate the novel's father/son motif?		
How do you think the death of Ikemefuna will affect the relationship between Okonkwo and Nwoye?		
Okonkwo does not heed the advice of the old man, Ogbuefi Ezeudu. What consequences do you think there may be for his part in the death of Ikemefuna?		

Sacrificial Son

My Notes

Writing to Sources: Explanatory Text

Select one of the questions from the graphic organizer on the previous page as the basis for an analytical response. Be sure to:

- Include a clear thesis statement.
- Provide details and quotations from the text with meaningful commentary.
- Use a formal style and voice.

Cultural Change

Technology Tip

If you have access to a computer, you may want to capture researched information electronically. It will be available for reference and also to copy and paste quotations directly into your final document.

ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

Creating a bibliography or a Works Cited page is an important part of any research project. An **annotated bibliography** takes this process one step further by creating not only a list of sources used in research but also comments about each source.

My Notes

Research Questions:

5. After writing research questions, assign a different question to each person in your group. As you research, create note cards to record the information that you will need to cite and evaluate your sources in an **annotated bibliography**. Include the following:
- citation: title, author, publisher, source type, date of publication or access
 - information: quotes, paraphrases, and summaries that answer your questions
 - evaluation: validity, reliability, and usefulness of the source

Narrative Writing Prompt

Consider the impact of Ikemefuna's time in Umuofia. On a separate sheet of paper, write a short narrative from the point of view of either Okonkwo or Nwoye that reveals Ikemefuna's influence on the community (his arrival, presence, death). Be sure to:

- Convey the character's voice and point of view.
- Include specific details from the novel.
- Reflect on the impact his character had on the community.



Independent Reading Checkpoint

Review your independent reading. What have you learned and observed about the ways in which colonists changed aspects of native cultures? Review any notes you made. How can you use what you have learned as you research and compare pre- and postcolonial Ibo culture? What comparisons and/or contrasts can you make between the colonization of other cultures and that of the Ibo culture?

Researching and Comparing Pre- and Postcolonial Ibo Culture

EMBEDDED
ASSESSMENT 1

ASSIGNMENT

Your assignment is to examine one aspect of tribal culture presented in *Things Fall Apart*, its significance to the Ibo community, and to compare and contrast how that cultural aspect changed from precolonial to postcolonial Nigeria. You will create a presentation that reflects your research.

Planning: Take time to plan, conduct, and record your research.

- What research questions will help you compare and contrast one aspect of pre- and postcolonial Ibo culture?
- How will you find and incorporate textual evidence of your cultural aspect from the novel *Things Fall Apart*?
- How will you record your research in an annotated bibliography?

Creating and Rehearsing: Collaborate with your group to create and prepare a presentation with visual support.

- How will you select the most interesting and relevant facts and details to include in your presentation?
- How will you organize your presentation to compare and contrast Ibo culture before and after the colonial period?
- How could you use a presentation tool such as PowerPoint or Prezi to incorporate audio and visual components into your presentation?
- How will you choose relevant images and write appropriate captions to engage your audience?
- How will you divide the speaking responsibilities and transition between speakers?
- How will you use the scoring guide to revise and provide feedback on your own and others' presentations as you rehearse?

Presenting and Listening: Rehearse to deliver a smooth presentation; prepare to listen and respond to other presentations.

- What are the effective speaking and listening techniques you will need to use to engage your audience?
- During your peers' presentations, how will you organize your notes on the subject of each presentation?

Reflection

As you read the rest of *Things Fall Apart*, consider the following:

- What generalizations can you make about the impact of colonialism on native cultures?
- Which aspects of Ibo culture do you think were negatively affected by colonialism? Positively?

Researching and Comparing Pre- and Postcolonial Ibo Culture

SCORING GUIDE

Scoring Criteria	Exemplary	Proficient	Emerging	Incomplete
Ideas	<p>The presentation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> communicates findings and evidence clearly, concisely, and logically uses well-researched, accurate, and relevant facts, details, and examples demonstrates a deep understanding of the subject. 	<p>The presentation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> communicates findings and evidence uses mostly accurate and relevant facts, details, and examples demonstrates an adequate understanding of the subject. 	<p>The presentation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> communicates insufficient findings and evidence uses inaccurate, irrelevant, or insufficient facts, details, and examples demonstrates lack of understanding of the subject. 	<p>The presentation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> communicates insufficient findings and/or no evidence uses few or no facts, details, and examples demonstrates lack of understanding of the subject.
Structure	<p>The presentation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> introduces the topic in an engaging manner, uses smooth transitions, and provides a thoughtful conclusion thoroughly analyzes the topic through compare/contrast makes strategic use of digital media to integrate multiple sources of information. 	<p>The presentation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> introduces the topic, uses transitions, and provides a conclusion analyzes the topic through compare/contrast makes use of digital media to integrate multiple sources of information. 	<p>The presentation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> lacks an introduction, transitions, and/or a conclusion does not analyze the topic through compare/contrast makes some use of digital media but may not effectively integrate multiple sources of information. 	<p>The presentation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> lacks an introduction, transitions, and/or a conclusion does not analyze the topic through compare/contrast does not use digital media and/or multiple sources of information.
Use of Language	<p>The presentation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> demonstrates effective oral communication skills (eye contact, pacing, command of formal English) uses precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to manage the complexity of the topic includes a complete annotated bibliography with correct citations, summaries, and source evaluations. 	<p>The presentation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> demonstrates adequate oral communication skills (eye contact, pacing, command of formal English) uses some precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to manage the topic includes an annotated bibliography with citations, summaries, and source evaluations. 	<p>The presentation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> lacks effective oral communication skills (eye contact, pacing, command of formal English) uses inappropriate language and/or vocabulary for the topic lacks an annotated bibliography and/or provides incorrect citations, summaries, and source evaluations. 	<p>The presentation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> lacks effective oral communication skills (eye contact, pacing, command of formal English) uses inappropriate language and no domain-specific vocabulary lacks any type of bibliography and does not provide citations, summaries, or source evaluations.

Previewing Embedded Assessment 2 and Creating a Tableau

ACTIVITY
3.10

Learning Targets

- Identify and analyze the knowledge and skills needed to complete Embedded Assessment 2 successfully.
- Reflect on concepts, Essential Questions, and vocabulary.
- Analyze the roles and relationships of characters.

Making Connections

In the first part of this unit, you have been reading the novel *Things Fall Apart* and analyzing how a writer develops a story and its characters. In this last half of the unit, you will continue reading the novel and will also read informational texts to help you set the context for the novel and learn more about its author in preparation for writing a literary analysis essay.

Essential Questions

Based on your understanding from the first part of the unit, how would you answer the Essential Questions now?

1. How might a culture change when it encounters new ideas and members?
2. How can an author use a fictional character to make a statement about culture?

Developing Vocabulary

Think about the Academic Vocabulary and Literary Terms you have studied so far in this unit. Which words or terms can you now move to a new category on a QHT chart? Which could you now teach to others that you were unfamiliar with at the beginning of the unit?

Unpacking Embedded Assessment 2

Read the assignment for Embedded Assessment 2: Writing a Literary Analysis of a Novel.

Your assignment is to write an analytical essay about *Things Fall Apart* in which you examine a character's response to the cultural collision caused by the introduction of Western ideas into Ibo culture. In your essay, analyze how the collision challenges the character's sense of identity and explain how his response shapes the meaning of the work as a whole.

In your own words, summarize what you will need to know to complete this assessment successfully. With your class, create a graphic organizer to represent the skills and knowledge you will need to complete the tasks identified in the Embedded Assessment.

LEARNING STRATEGIES:
Skimming/Scanning,
Summarizing, Close Reading,
Role Playing

My Notes



INDEPENDENT READING LINK

Read and Connect

In this part of the unit, you will continue reading *Things Fall Apart* with a focus on the ways that Ibo culture changes. For your independent reading, you might choose novels, plays, or poetry from colonial or postcolonial nations (for example, India, Southeast Asian nations, South American nations, or African nations). Establish if the text was written during or after colonization. Look for ways in which the characters respond to colonization or to life after colonization.

Previewing Embedded Assessment 2 and Creating a Tableau

WORD CONNECTIONS

Etymology

Tableau is a French word meaning “a graphic description or representation.” Unlike English words that usually form a plural by adding an “s” or “es,” the plural of *tableau* is *tableaux*.

GRAMMAR & USAGE

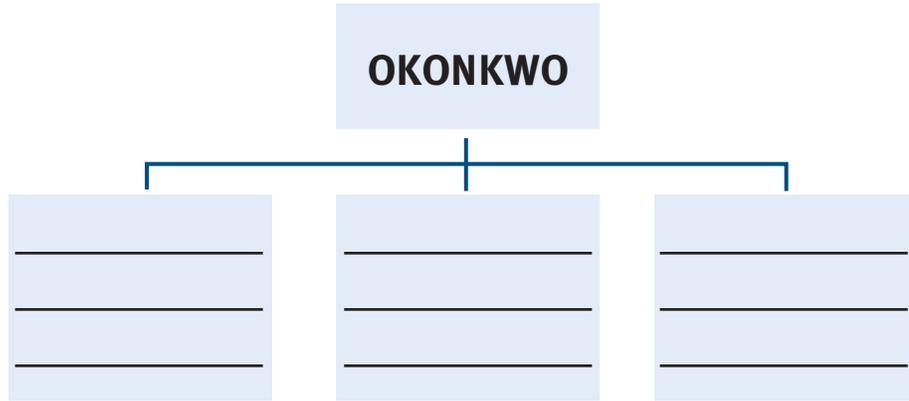
Reciprocal Pronouns

Note the reciprocal pronoun *one another* in the next-to-last line of the second bullet point. There are two reciprocal pronouns: *one another* and *each other*. Use *each other* with two people or comparisons; use *one another* with three or more.

My Notes

Reflecting on Character Relationships

3. Use the following graphic organizer to begin Okonkwo’s family tree. Write in the names of three of his relatives, adding details about each.



4. Meet with a small group to compare notes. Add additional boxes and details to represent other relatives explored by your group.

Creating an Ibo Tableau

5. Work with your group members to create a tableau (a freeze-frame snapshot) of characters from *Things Fall Apart*.

- Begin by writing the name of each character on its own index card and giving each group member a character card.
- Review the basic facts about your character. Write a short statement that your character will give. The statement should begin with “I am ...”; then state your character’s name and reveal an interesting fact about that character. Just as the characters’ positions in the tableau will explain their relationships with one another, try to let the lines you write and the way you deliver them reveal your character’s attitude and personality.
- Work with your group to decide where each character should stand, how he or she should pose, and where he or she should be positioned in relation to others. Be prepared to present your tableau to the class. You and fellow characters should strike the pose and then step out of the freeze-frame one at a time to deliver your lines.

Check Your Understanding

What aspects of Ibo culture are highlighted in your family tree and tableau?

Ibo Norms and Values

My Notes

2. Work with a partner to compose several universal questions on the topic of the norms and values of the Ibo culture. Write the following questions. Use them to explore the concept of cultural norms and values in your discussion group.

Language and Writer's Craft: Using Precise Language and Domain-Specific Vocabulary

When describing another culture, it is especially important to use **precise language** to avoid generalizing, stereotyping, or unintentionally offending your reader.

For example, consider this sentence about the Ibo people:

They honor their elders in a way that we do not.

Framing the Ibo as *they* and the culture of the writer as *we* is a generalization that makes the Ibo seem different or “other.”

Here is a better way to write the sentence, replacing the imprecise pronouns *they* and *we* with specific references to the culture or ethnic group under discussion:

The Ibo people honor their elders in a way that may seem unusual to Americans.

Another way to make your writing stronger is to use **domain-specific vocabulary** to describe the subject. Domain-specific vocabulary words are terms associated with a narrow topic or field, rather than general terms you might see more often.

Think about how you could make the following sentence more precise using domain-specific vocabulary:

When Okonkwo visits the clan elder at home, he brings offerings of food and drink to show his respect.

For example, you could revise the sentence this way:

When Okonkwo visits the clan elder in his obi, he brings offerings of kola nut and palm wine to show his respect.

The words *obi*, *kola nut*, and *palm wine* refer to specific aspects of Ibo culture.

LEARNING STRATEGIES:
RAFT, Oral Reading, Graphic Organizer

My Notes

Learning Targets

- Analyze how complex characters react to events in a plot.
- Write a narrative to explore a character’s voice.

Reading *Things Fall Apart*, Chapter 11–12

In this activity, you will read Chapters 11–12 and use the RAFT strategy to create a narrative in the voice of a character from the novel.

Revisiting Folktales in Chapter 11

1. Go back to the graphic organizer that you used to analyze folktales in Activity 3.2. Re-create it in your Reader/Writer Notebook and add notes analyzing Ekwefi’s story about the Tortoise at the beginning of Chapter 11. What do you think is the purpose of this folktale in Ibo culture: What moral or lesson does it teach?

2. What do you think is Achebe’s purpose in including this story in the novel?

Making Inferences in Chapter 12

3. As you reread the first three pages of Chapter 12, take notes in the following space to record textual evidence showing how Okonkwo, Ekwefi, and Ezinma are acting in response to the events of the previous evening. What inferences can you make from their thoughts, words, and actions?

Okonkwo

Ekwefi

Ezinma



**INDEPENDENT
READING LINK**

Read and Connect

Choose two or three characters and a chunk of reading from one of your independent reading texts. Take notes to record how the characters act in response to an important event. How are their responses similar and different? Share your observations with a group.

Learning Targets

- Understand and apply the concept of a tragic hero to Okonkwo.
- Write to explain the degree to which Okonkwo is a tragic hero.

Reading *Things Fall Apart*, Chapter 15

In this activity, you will reread Chapters 1–15 and apply Aristotle’s definition of a tragic hero to Okonkwo.

Tragic Hero

1. A hero is not always a **tragic hero**. Read Aristotle’s classical definition of a tragic hero, analyzed in the first column of the following table. Then complete the chart by providing examples from Okonkwo’s life as well as the lives of other characters from literature or film.

Aristotle’s Definition of a Tragic Hero	Examples of Okonkwo’s Heroic Behavior	Examples of Heroic Behavior from Books/Film
He has a mixture of good and bad in his personality.		
He has a fatal flaw, or <i>hamartia</i> , which leads to his downfall.		
He usually goes on a journey or participates in a quest.		
He has a large capacity for suffering.		
His downfall is often preceded by self-realization.		

LEARNING STRATEGIES:
Graphic Organizer, Drafting

My Notes

Literary Terms

A **tragic hero** is a central character who is usually of high or noble birth and demonstrates a “fatal flaw.” The tragic hero’s fatal flaw is **hamartia**, an ingrained character trait that causes the hero to make decisions leading to his or her death or downfall.

Learning Targets

- Analyze how key plot events develop a theme related to cultural conflict.
- Cite thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly and to draw evidence from the text.

LEARNING STRATEGIES:
Socratic Seminar, Graphic Organizer, Discussion Groups

Reading *Things Fall Apart*, Chapters 16–19

In this activity, you will read Chapters 16–19 and analyze the beginning of the cultural conflict between the Ibo and the Westerners who are newly arrived.

Predicting Cultural Conflicts

1. In Chapter 15, Uchendu says, “The world has no end, and what is good among one people is an abomination with others.”

Part 2 of *Things Fall Apart* introduces the cultural conflict when white men come into contact with the Ibo. Predict what aspects of each culture might appear as an “abomination” to the other.

My Notes

Key Events in Chapters 15–19

2. Chapters 15–19 span six years in the life of Okonkwo and his village. Record key events and explain their significance on the following chart.

Key Events of Chapter	Why Events Are Important
Chapter 15—second year of exile	
Chapter 16—fourth year of exile	
Chapter 17	
Chapter 18—last year of exile	
Chapter 19	

Colliding Cultures

My Notes

Socratic Seminar

3. Work with a partner to select three to five key events. List them in the following space. For each event, write an interpretive or universal question that will help you explore the conflicting cultures in Part 2 of *Things Fall Apart*. You will use these questions as you participate in a **Socratic Seminar**.

Event 1:

Event 2:

Event 3:

Event 4:

Event 5:

Writing to Sources: Explanatory Text

After you participate in a Socratic Seminar about cultural conflict in *Things Fall Apart*, choose one of the events discussed and explore its significance in a timed response. Be sure to:

- Discuss how the event develops a theme related to cultural conflict.
- Use precise vocabulary and an academic voice.
- Cite textual evidence to support your interpretation.

Learning Targets

- Analyze how different characters and conflicts advance the plot.
- Make connections to the cultural misunderstandings in the novel.

Reading *Things Fall Apart*, Chapters 20–22

In this activity, you will read Chapters 20–22 and make connections to the cultural misunderstandings between the Ibo and the missionaries in the novel.

Things Fall Apart

1. Read the following excerpt from Chapter 20 of *Things Fall Apart*. Underline or highlight statements that illuminate the misunderstandings between the Ibo and the missionaries.

Does the white man understand our customs about land?

How can he when he does not even speak our tongue? But he says that our customs are bad; and our own brothers who have taken up his religion also say that our customs are bad. How do you think we can fight when our own brothers have turned against us? The white man is very clever. He came quietly and peaceably with his religion. We were amused at his foolishness and allowed him to stay. Now he has won our brothers, and our clan can no longer act like one. He has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart.

2. With a partner, choose one of the statements and decide whether or not Obierika’s assessment of the situation is accurate. Find textual evidence from the novel to support or refute the statement.

Mr. Brown and Mr. Smith

3. Use the following chart to compare and contrast the two missionaries, Mr. Brown and Mr. Smith. Record what each says and does, along with their attitudes and beliefs. Continue on a separate page if needed.

Mr. Brown	Mr. Smith

LEARNING STRATEGIES:
Skimming/Scanning, Graphic Organizer, Rereading

GRAMMAR & USAGE Complex Sentences

Writers use complex sentences to create an interesting style. A **complex sentence** contains an independent clause and at least one subordinate clause. Think about how clauses work in these two sentences: “He knew *that he had lost his place* (noun clause) among the nine masked spirits *who administered justice in the clan* (adjective clause).” “How do you think we can fight *when our own brothers have turned against us* (adverb clause)?” What other examples can you find from the text?

My Notes

Cultural Misunderstandings

Cultural Misunderstandings

4. Work with group members to consider why someone from another culture might think the practices or beliefs listed in the following chart are strange. Add at least one more cultural aspect to the organizer along with your response.

Cultural Practice or Belief	Why Someone from Another Culture Might Find the Practice or Belief Strange
In the novel <i>The Poisonwood Bible</i> , an African man comes to America and is shocked to find out that Americans use the bathroom <i>in</i> their house and not outside, away from the home.	
Many Americans adorn their bodies with different types of tattoos and piercing.	

My Notes

5. Identify Ibo beliefs and practices in *Things Fall Apart* that differ from those of modern Americans. Contrast them in the following chart.

Ibo Belief or Practice	Modern American Belief or Practice
Twins are considered evil and abandoned in the Evil Forest.	Twins are usually welcomed and cared for by their families.



INDEPENDENT READING LINK

Read and Respond

From the texts you have read independently, choose one main character and analyze the beliefs and practices of that character's culture. Create a chart like the one you used in this activity. Compare the beliefs or practices of the culture with those of modern Americans. Share your observations with a peer.

Check Your Understanding

- Can one culture be “right” and another culture “wrong”? Explain.
- How did the two missionaries respond differently to cultural misunderstandings?

My Notes

Poetry

Prayer to the Masks

by Léopold Sédar Senghor



Masks! Masks!
Black mask red mask, you white-and-black masks
Masks of the four points from which the spirit blows
In silence I salute you!

5 Nor you the least, the Lion-headed Ancestor

You guard this place forbidden to all laughter of women, to all smiles that fade
You **distill** this air of eternity in which I breathe the air of my Fathers.
Masks of unmasked faces, stripped of the marks of illness and the lines of age
You who have **fashioned** this portrait, this my face bent over the altar of
white paper

10 In your own **image**, hear me!

The Africa of the empires is dying, see, the agony of a pitiful princess
And Europe too where we are joined by the navel.
Fix your unchanging eyes upon your children, who are given orders
Who give away their lives like the poor their last clothes.

15 Let us report present at the rebirth of the World

Like the yeast which white flour needs.
For who would teach rhythm to a dead world of machines and guns?
Who would give the cry of joy to wake the dead and the **bereaved** at dawn?
Say, who would give back the memory of life to the man whose hopes are smashed?

20 They call us men of coffee cotton oil

They call us men of death.
We are the men of the dance, whose feet draw new strength pounding the
hardened earth.

distill: purify

fashioned: created or shaped

image: visual representation

bereaved: people who have
suffered the death of a loved one



WORD CONNECTIONS

Roots and Affixes

Anarchy contains the root *arch*, from the Greek word *archos*, meaning “leader.” This root also appears in *architect*, *patriarch*, *archangel*, and *monarchy*. The prefix *an-* means “not” or “without.”

gyre: spiral that expands as it goes up

mere: absolute

anarchy: lawlessness

tide: water-like ebb or flow of something

intensity: extreme feeling

image: mental picture

My Notes

vexed: agitated or troubled

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Winner of the 1923 Nobel Prize for Literature, William Butler Yeats (1865–1939) produced some of the most enduring poems written in English in the twentieth century. Despite living in Ireland during decades of great political and religious upheaval, Yeats’s poems are marked by a deep mysticism, specific symbolism, and universal emotions.

Poetry

The Second Coming

by William Butler Yeats

Turning and turning in the widening **gyre**

The falcon cannot hear the falconer;

Things fall apart; the center cannot hold;

Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,

5 The blood-dimmed **tide** is loosed, and everywhere

The ceremony of innocence is drowned;

The best lack all conviction, while the worst

Are full of passionate **intensity**.

Surely some revelation is at hand;

10 Surely the Second Coming is at hand;

The Second Coming! Hardly are those words out

When a vast **image** out of *Spiritus Mundi*¹

Troubles my sight: somewhere in sands of the desert

A shape with lion body and the head of a man,

15 A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,

Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it

Reel shadows of the indignant desert birds.

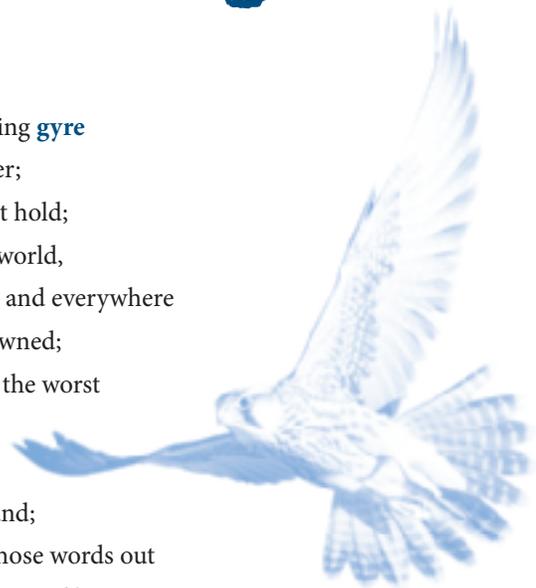
The darkness drops again; but now I know

That twenty centuries of stony sleep

20 Were **vexed** to nightmare by a rocking cradle,

And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,

Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?



¹ *Spiritus Mundi*, Latin for “world spirit,” a collective, universal soul that contains the memories of all time and inspires poets.

A Letter to the District Commissioner

LEARNING STRATEGIES:
Discussion Groups, Drafting

Literary Terms

Irony is a literary device that exploits a reader's expectations. Irony occurs when what is expected turns out to be quite different from what actually happens. **Dramatic irony** occurs when the reader or audience knows more about the circumstances or future events in a story than the characters within it. **Verbal irony** occurs when a speaker or narrator says one thing while meaning the opposite. **Situational irony** occurs when an event contradicts the expectations of the characters or the reader.

My Notes

Learning Targets

- Analyze the use of irony in the novel.
- Write to explain the negative effects of cultural misunderstanding.

Reading *Things Fall Apart*, Chapter 23–25

In this activity, you will read Chapters 23–25 and analyze the author's use of **irony**.

Irony

1. Consider the following three summarized events from the novel. What kind of irony does each represent? Explain.

Event 1: At the end of Chapter 15, Okonkwo tells his good friend Obierka that he doesn't know how to thank him enough for tending his yam crop while Okonkwo is in exile. Obierka tells Okonkwo to kill himself.

Event 2: Okonkwo's greatest fear is that he will appear weak and feminine. He appears to have little respect for women. Yet his favorite child, the one with whom he has the closest bond and understanding, is his daughter Ezinma.

Event 3: In Chapter 7, when Ikemefuna thinks he is journeying with the clansmen to the home of his birth, he is worried about whether his mother is alive, but otherwise feels safe. The reader knows that he is actually about to be killed.

2. With a partner, review Chapters 23–25, looking for textual evidence of different kinds of irony. List and explain at least two examples:

Example 1:

Example 2:

Language Checkpoint: Using Noun Agreement

Learning Targets

- Understand how to create noun agreement in sentences.
- Revise writing to create noun agreement.

Using Noun Agreement

Writers have to pay attention to a few types of agreement to ensure that they are communicating their ideas clearly. For example, pronouns need to agree in number and gender with the nouns they are replacing, and present-tense verbs must agree with their subjects.

In some sentences, nouns have to agree with other nouns for the sentence to make sense. Look at the example from *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe:

The Commissioner and his men followed, their firearms held at the ready. He had warned Obierika that if he and his men played any monkey tricks they would be shot.

In these sentences, the narrator refers to *the Commissioner and his men*, each of whom has a gun. Since the subject *the Commissioner and his men* is plural, the phrase *their firearms* is also plural. In other words, the nouns agree in number. In longer, more complex sentences where the nouns are far apart, it is especially important to pay attention to nouns to make sure they agree when necessary.

1. Look at the following sentences, and identify the nouns that do not agree in number. How would you revise each sentence so that the nouns agree?

Noun Agreement	
Before Revision	After Revision
Mr. Brown believed all of the people he encountered deserved to become a follower of his teachings.	Mr. Brown believed all of the people he encountered deserved to become <u>followers</u> of his teachings.
All of the men in the obi had presented Ibe with a horn to fill with the palm drink.	
Both her parents, who had hoped she would find a husband worthy of her beauty, shook their head in disbelief when she rejected the suitor.	
Chinua Achebe and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie both became well-known by worldwide audiences as a Nigerian novelist.	

2. Discuss your revisions with a partner. How did you decide which nouns needed to change?

Revising

Read the following student letter, paying close attention to singular and plural nouns. Annotate the paragraph to show how you would revise it to ensure noun agreement.

Dear District Commissioner,

While I understand your goals of bringing Christianity and a unified government to the peoples of the Niger, this is not a goal you should be pursuing. You may be misunderstanding some key aspects of the Ibo culture. The Ibo people are both civilized and thoughtful, a quality that you seem to overlook. They are not weak people, nor are they savages. Okonkwo and his clan, like Obeirika and Okika, are tribesmen who believe they must use their knowledge and skills as a warrior to protect the tribe, even if it means going against their brothers. They do so as protection. You told them you “‘have brought a peaceful administration’” to their people in order that they “‘may be happy.’” However, soldiers pointing a gun at their head is not peaceful.

Your violence brought unhappiness, division, and fear to the people living here. Perhaps if you had looked upon them with openness and approached them with kindness, a strategy that you and your men never seem to employ, you would see they have a deep understanding of the land around them. The many rules that they follow, all of which have foundations in their understanding of life in the region, were created for a specific reason and help bring order to their society.

All of the people in this region should let their opinion be heard. The people here have the right to become a participant in their future, not just a passive observer of the changes you are trying to impose. I hope you and your men, many of whom have a sincere interest in making life better for people here, will open your mind to these ideas.

With kind regards,

Mariana Okri

Check Your Understanding

Imagine you were helping the writer of the preceding letter to understand noun agreement. How would you help her identify sentences where nouns need to agree? How would you explain the revisions needed to create noun agreement?

Add an item to your Editor’s Checklist reminding yourself to check your writing for noun agreement.

Practice

Reread the letter to the District Commissioner you wrote in Activity 3.19 explaining the misunderstanding with the Ibo people. You have already had to consider tone and voice. Now revise the letter by checking for noun agreement. Be sure to:

- Verify that corresponding nouns match in number when required.
- Look for words such as *all*, *each*, and *both* to make sure that the related nouns agree in number.

LEARNING STRATEGIES:

Discussion Groups,
Metacognitive Markers,
Note-taking

My Notes

Learning Targets

- Make connections between the author's life and literary work.
- Analyze Achebe's purpose for writing the novel.

Preview

In the following activity, you will read and analyze an interview with Chinua Achebe to determine the author's purpose for writing the novel.

Setting a Purpose for Reading

- As you read the interview, use metacognitive markers as follows to mark the text:
 - ! something that surprises you
 - * something you can comment on: an opinion or connection
 - ? something you have a question about or do not understand
- Circle unknown words and phrases. Try to determine the meaning of the words by using context clues, word part, or a dictionary.

Interview

AN AFRICAN VOICE

Chinua Achebe, the author of one of the enduring works of modern African literature, sees postcolonial cultures taking shape story by story.

by Katie Bacon

Chunk 1

1 Chinua Achebe's **emergence** as "the founding father of African literature ... in the English language," in the words of the Harvard University philosopher K. Anthony Appiah, could very well be traced to his encounter in the early fifties with Joyce Cary's novel *Mister Johnson*, set in Achebe's native Nigeria. Achebe read it while studying at the University College in Idaban during the last years of British colonial rule, and in a curriculum full of Shakespeare, Coleridge, and Wordsworth, *Mister Johnson* stood out as one of the few books about Africa. *Time* magazine had recently declared *Mister Johnson* the "best book ever written about Africa," but Achebe and his classmates had quite a different reaction. The students saw the Nigerian hero as an "embarrassing nitwit." *Mister Johnson*, Achebe writes, "open[ed] my eyes to the fact that my home was under attack and that my home was not merely a house or a town but, more importantly, an awakening story."

emergence: process of becoming known

2 In 1958, Achebe responded with his own novel about Nigeria, *Things Fall Apart*, which was one of the first books to tell the story of European **colonization** from an African perspective. (It has since become a **classic**, published in fifty languages around the world.) *Things Fall Apart* marked a turning point for African authors, who in the fifties and sixties began to take back the narrative of the so-called “dark continent.”

3 Achebe depicts his gradual **realization** that *Mister Johnson* was just one in a long line of books written by Westerners that presented Africans to the world in a way that Africans didn’t agree with or recognize, and he examines the “process of ‘re-storying’ peoples who had been knocked silent by all kinds of **dispossession**.” He ends with a hope for the twenty-first century—that this “re-storying” will continue and will eventually result in a “balance of stories among the world’s peoples.”

4 Achebe encourages writers from the Third World to stay where they are and write about their own countries, as a way to help achieve this balance. Yet he himself has lived in the United States for the past ten years—a reluctant exile. In 1990, Achebe was in a car accident in Nigeria, and was paralyzed from the waist down. While recuperating in a London hospital, he received a call from Leon Botstein, the president of Bard College, offering him a teaching job and a house built for his needs. Achebe thought he would be at Bard, a small school in a quiet corner of the Hudson River Valley, for only a year or two, but the political situation in Nigeria kept worsening. During the military dictatorship of General Sani Abacha, who ruled from 1993 to 1998, much of Nigeria’s wealth—the country has extensive oil fields—went into the pocket of its leader, and public infrastructure that had been quite good, like hospitals and roads, withered. In 1999, Olusegan Obasanjo became Nigeria’s first democratically elected President since 1983, and the situation in Nigeria is improving, albeit slowly and shakily. Achebe is watching from afar, waiting for his country to rebuild itself enough for him to return.

5 Achebe, who is sixty-nine, has written five novels, including *Arrow of God* (1964) and *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987), five books of nonfiction, and several collections of short stories and poems. Achebe spoke recently with *Atlantic Unbound*’s Katie Bacon at his home in Annandale-on-Hudson, in New York.

QUESTION 1

Chunk 2

6 You have been called the progenitor of the modern African novel, and *Things Fall Apart* has **maintained its resonance** in the decades since it was written. Have you been surprised by the effect the book has had?

7 Was I surprised? Yes, at the beginning. There was no African literature as we know it today. And so I had no idea when I was writing *Things Fall Apart* whether it would even be accepted or published. All of this was new—there was nothing by which I could gauge how it was going to be received.

8 But, of course, something doesn’t continue to surprise you every day. After a while I began to understand why the book had resonance. I began to understand my history even better. It wasn’t as if when I wrote it I was an expert in the history of the world. I was a very young man. I knew I had a story, but how it fit into the story of the world—I really had no sense of that. Its meaning for my Igbo people was clear to me, but I didn’t know how other people elsewhere would respond to it. Did it have

colonization: establishment of colonies

classic: work that is considered a masterpiece

realization: understanding

dispossession: loss of land or property

GRAMMAR & USAGE

Dash

Writers use a dash to indicate a break in their thoughts. The dash may mean “in other words,” it may be used to emphasize or clarify ideas, or it may set off parenthetical information. Notice how Bacon uses a dash in this sentence: “Yet he himself has lived in the United States for the past ten years—a reluctant exile.” Bacon wants to emphasize that Achebe’s choice to live in the United States is not ideal. Now consider this sentence: “[M]uch of Nigeria’s wealth—the country has extensive oil fields—went into the pocket of its leader.” What function do the dashes perform here?

maintained: continued

resonance: the ability to create an emotional response



WORD CONNECTIONS

Etymology

Progenitor is a Latin word meaning “ancestor; the founder of a family.” Today, we sometimes use it to describe someone who is the first to think of or do something.

The Author's Perspective

My Notes

any meaning or resonance for them? I realized that it did when, to give you just one example, the whole class of a girls' college in South Korea wrote to me, and each one expressed an opinion about the book. And then I learned something, which was that they had a history that was similar to the story of *Things Fall Apart*—the history of colonization. This I didn't know before. Their colonizer was Japan. So these people across the waters were able to relate to the story of dispossession in Africa. People from different parts of the world can respond to the same story, if it says something to them about their own history and their own experience.

QUESTION 2

9 It seems that people from places that haven't experienced colonization in the same way have also responded to the story.

10 There are different forms of dispossession, many, many ways in which people are deprived or subjected to all kinds of victimization—it doesn't have to be colonization. Once you allow yourself to identify with the people in a story, then you might begin to see yourself in that story even if on the surface it's far removed from your situation. This is what I try to tell my students: this is one great thing that literature can do—it can make us identify with situations and people far away. If it does that, it's a miracle. I tell my students, it's not difficult to identify with somebody like yourself, somebody next door who looks like you. What's more difficult is to identify with someone you don't see, who's very far away, who's a different color, who eats a different kind of food. When you begin to do that then literature is really performing its wonders.

QUESTION 3

Chunk 3

11 A character in *Things Fall Apart* remarks that the white man “has put a knife on the things that held us together, and we have fallen apart.” Are those things still severed, or have the wounds begun to heal?

12 What I was referring to there, or what the speaker in the novel was thinking about, was the upsetting of a society, the disturbing of a social order. The society of Umuofia, the village in *Things Fall Apart*, was totally disrupted by the coming of the European government, missionary Christianity, and so on. That was not a temporary disturbance; it was a once and for all alteration of their society. To give you the example of Nigeria, where the novel is set, the Igbo people had organized themselves in small units, in small towns and villages, each self-governed. With the coming of the British, Igbo land as a whole was **incorporated** into a totally different **polity**, to be called Nigeria, with a whole lot of other people with whom the Igbo people had not had direct contact before. The result of that was not something from which you could recover, really. You had to learn a totally new reality, and accommodate yourself to the demands of this new reality, which is the state called Nigeria. Various nationalities, each of which had its own independent life, were forced by the British to live with people of different customs and habits and priorities and religions. And then at independence, fifty years later, they were suddenly on their own again. They began all over again to learn the rules of independence. The problems that Nigeria is having today could be seen as resulting from this effort that was **initiated** by colonial rule to create a new nation. There's nothing to indicate whether it will fail or succeed. It all depends.

severed: split or separated

incorporated: introduced into as part of the whole

polity: politically organized unit

initiated: started or introduced

13 One might hear someone say, How long will it take these people to get their act together? It's going to take a very, very long time, because it's really been a whole series of interruptions and disturbances, one step forward and two or three back. It has not been easy. One always wishes it had been easier. We've compounded things by our own mistakes, but it doesn't really help to pretend that we've had an easy task.

QUESTION 4

Chunk 4

14 In *Home and Exile*, you talk about the negative ways in which British authors such as Joseph Conrad and Joyce Cary portrayed Africans over the centuries. What purpose did that portrayal serve?

15 It was really a straightforward case of setting us up, as it were. The last four or five hundred years of European contact with Africa produced a body of literature that presented Africa in a very bad light and Africans in very **lurid** terms. The reason for this had to do with the need to **justify** the slave trade and slavery. The cruelties of this trade gradually began to trouble many people in Europe. Some people began to question it. But it was a profitable business, and so those who were engaged in it began to defend it—a **lobby** of people supporting it, justifying it, and excusing it. It was difficult to excuse and justify, and so the steps that were taken to justify it were rather extreme. You had people saying, for instance, that these people weren't really human, they're not like us. Or, that the slave trade was in fact a good thing for them, because the **alternative** to it was more brutal by far.

16 And therefore, describing this fate that the Africans would have had back home became the **motive** for the literature that was created about Africa. Even after the slave trade was abolished, in the nineteenth century, something like this literature continued, to serve the new imperialistic needs of Europe in relation to Africa. This continued until the Africans themselves, in the middle of the twentieth century, took into their own hands the telling of their story.

QUESTION 5

17 And that's what started with *Things Fall Apart* and other books written by Africans around the 1950s.

18 Yes, that's what it turned out to be. It was not actually clear to us at the time what we were doing. We were simply writing our story. But the bigger story of how these various accounts tie in, one with the other, is only now becoming clear. We realize and recognize that it's not just colonized people whose stories have been **suppressed**, but a whole range of people across the globe who have not spoken. It's not because they don't have something to say, it simply has to do with the division of power, because storytelling has to do with power. Those who win tell the story; those who are defeated are not heard. But that has to change. It's in the interest of everybody, including the winners, to know that there's another story. If you only hear one side of the story, you have no understanding at all.

My Notes

lurid: sensational or shocking
justify: support or defend

lobby: a group that tries to influence people in authority

alternative: other choice

motive: driving purpose

suppressed: kept from being known or published

The Author's Perspective

globalization: worldwide integration and development

absorption: soaking up

My Notes

extreme: severe

claim: take ownership of

skewed: biased; distorted

concentration: focus of attention

QUESTION 6

Chunk 5

19 Do you see this balance of stories as likely to emerge in this era of globalization and the exporting of American culture?

20 That's a real problem. The mindless **absorption** of American ideas, culture, and behavior around the world is not going to help this balance of stories, and it's not going to help the world, either. People are limiting themselves to one view of the world that comes from somewhere else. That's something that we have to battle with as we go along, both as writers and as citizens, because it's not just in the literary or artistic arena that this is going to show itself. I think one can say this limiting isn't going to be very healthy for the societies that abandon themselves.

QUESTION 7

21 In an *Atlantic Unbound* interview this past winter Nadine Gordimer said, "English is used by my fellow writers, blacks, who have been the most **extreme** victims of colonialism. They use it even though they have African languages to choose from. I think that once you've mastered a language it's your own. It can be used against you, but you can free yourself and use it as black writers do—you can **claim** it and use it." Do you agree with her?

22 Yes, I definitely do. English is something you spend your lifetime acquiring, so it would be foolish not to use it. Also, in the logic of colonization and decolonization it is actually a very powerful weapon in the fight to regain what was yours. English was the language of colonization itself. It is not simply something you use because you have it anyway; it is something which you can actively claim to use as an effective weapon, as a counterargument to colonization.

QUESTION 8

Chunk 6

23 There are those who say that media coverage of Africa is one-sided—that it focuses on the famines, social unrest, and political violence, and leaves out coverage of the organizations and countries that are working. Do you agree? If so, what effect does this **skewed** coverage have? Is it a continuation of the anti-Africa British literature you talk about in *Home and Exile*?

24 Yes, I do agree. I think the result has been to create a fatigue, whether it's charity fatigue or fatigue toward being good to people who are less fortunate. I think that's a pity. The reason for this **concentration** on the failings of Africans is the same as what we've been talking about—this tradition of bad news, or portraying Africa as a place that is different from the rest of the world, a place where humanity is really not recognizable. When people hear the word *Africa*, they have come to expect certain images to follow. If you see a good house in Lagos, Nigeria, it doesn't quite fit the picture you have in your head, because you are looking for the slum—that is what the world expects journalists covering a city in Africa to come back with.

25 Now, if you are covering America, you are not focusing on slums every day of your life. You see a slum once in a while, maybe you talk about it, but the rest of the time you are talking about other things. It is that ability to see the **complexity** of a place that the world doesn't seem to be able to take to Africa, because of this baggage of centuries of reporting about Africa. The result is the world doesn't really know Africa. If you are an African or you live in Africa, this stands out very clearly to you, you are constantly being bombarded with bad news, and you know that there is good news in many places. This doesn't mean that the bad news doesn't exist, that's not what I'm saying. But it exists alongside other things. Africa is not simple—people want to simplify it. Africa is very complex. Very bad things go on—they should be covered—but there are also some good things.

26 This is something that comes with this imbalance of power that we've been talking about. The people who **consume** the news that comes back from the rest of the world are probably not really interested in hearing about something that is working. Those who have the ability to send crews out to bring back the news are in a position to determine what the image of the various places should be, because they have the resources to do it. Now, an African country doesn't have a television crew coming to America, for instance, and picking up the disastrous news. So America sends out wonderful images of its success, power, energy, and politics, and the world is bombarded in a very **partial** way by good news about the powerful and bad news about the less powerful.

QUESTION 9

27 You mentioned that literature was used to justify slavery and imperialism. What is this negative coverage of Africa being used to justify now?

28 It's going to be used to justify inaction, which is what this fatigue is all about. Why bother about Africa? Nothing works there, or nothing ever will work. There is a small minority of people who think that way, and they may be pushing this attitude. But even if nobody was pushing it, it would simply happen by itself. This is a case of sheer inertia, something that has been happening for a long time just goes on happening, unless something stops it. It becomes a habit of mind.

QUESTION 10

Chunk 7

29 Has living here changed the way you think about Nigeria?

30 It must have, but this is not something you can weigh and measure. I've been struck, for instance, by the impressive way that political transition is managed in America. Nobody living here can miss that if you come from a place like Nigeria which is unable so far to manage political **transitions** in peace. I wish Nigeria would learn to do this. There are other things, of course, where you wish Americans would learn from Nigerians: the value of people as people, the almost complete absence of race as a factor in thought, in government. That's something that I really wish for America, because no day passes here without some racial **factor** coming up somewhere, which is a major burden on this country.

complexity: complicated nature

My Notes

consume: take in and use

partial: biased



WORD CONNECTIONS

Content Connections

Achebe applies the term *inertia* to society to indicate its unwillingness to change. The term comes from science, where it relates to matter and movement. Inertia is the tendency of an object to resist any change in its state of motion unless acted upon by an outside force. For example, if at rest, an object needs a push in order to move.

transition: change from one stage to the next

factor: element

The Author's Perspective

My Notes

thesis: proposition

by default: automatically, as the only choice

QUESTION 11

31 Could you talk about your dream, expressed in *Home and Exile*, of a “universal civilization”—a civilization that some believe we’ve achieved and others think we haven’t?

32 What the universal civilization I dream about would be, I really don’t know, but I know what it is not. It is not what is being presented today, which is clearly just European and American. A universal civilization is something that we will create. If we accept the **thesis** that it is desirable to do, then we will go and work on it and talk about it. We have not really talked about it. All those who are saying it’s there are really suggesting that it’s there **by default**—they are saying to us, let’s stop at this point and call what we have a universal civilization. I don’t think we want to swindle ourselves in that way; I think if we want a universal civilization, we should work to bring it about. And when it appears, I think we will know, because it will be different from anything we have now.

33 There may be cultures that may sadly have to go, because no one is rooting for them, but we should make the effort to prevent this. We have to hold this conversation, which is a conversation of stories, a conversation of languages, and see what happens.

Second Read

- Reread the interview to answer these text-dependent questions.
- Write any additional questions you have about the text in your Reader/Writer Notebook.

1. **Key Ideas and Details:** What notable contrast did Achebe recognize between *Time* magazine’s assessment of Joyce Cary’s novel *Mister Johnson* and his own assessment of the work?

2. **Craft and Structure:** Reread the third paragraph of this interview. What is the author’s purpose in discussing the book *Mister Johnson* before discussing Achebe’s novel *Things Fall Apart*? How does this purpose help you understand Achebe’s own purpose for writing his novel?

The Author's Perspective

My Notes

7. **Key Ideas and Details:** According to Achebe, what is the relationship between storytelling and power? How does storytelling contribute to our understanding of the world?

8. **Knowledge and Ideas:** What claim does Achebe make about mastering the English language? Do you think that he gives enough evidence to prove this claim is valid?

9. **Key Ideas and Details:** How does Achebe contrast the media coverage of Africa with the coverage of places like America? What conclusion does he draw from the contrast?

10. **Knowledge and Ideas:** Achebe states that a “universal civilization” may be possible to achieve. He asserts, “A universal civilization will be something we will create.” Do you think that Achebe provides a sufficiently clear definition of “universal civilization” and how it may be achieved to prove his assertion?

The Author's Perspective

Technology Tip

Although the grammar check feature of most word processing programs can check for subject-verb agreement, most cannot detect agreement between nouns. Don't rely on grammar check for agreement between nouns.

My Notes

Writing to Sources: Explanatory Text

Consider the Essential Question for this unit: "How can an author use a fictional character to make a statement about culture?" Write an essay explaining your answer to this question. Be sure to:

- Begin with a clear statement of your idea.
- Use evidence from the novel and from the interview to develop and support your response.
- Use transition words to link your main ideas and clarify the relationships between them.
- Check your essay for subject-verb agreement.



Independent Reading Checkpoint

Review your independent reading. What have you learned about the colonial or postcolonial nation(s) that were described in your texts? Did the characters respond to colonization in ways you expected or didn't expect? Review any idea notes you made. How can you use what you have learned as you read additional literature from colonial or postcolonial nations?

ASSIGNMENT

Your assignment is to write an analytical essay about *Things Fall Apart* in which you examine a character's response to the cultural collision caused by the introduction of Western ideas into Ibo culture. In your essay, analyze how the collision challenges the character's sense of identity, and explain how his or her response shapes the meaning of the work as a whole.

Planning and Prewriting: Take time to make a plan for your essay.

- Which characters had a strong positive or negative response to the cultural collision in the novel, and which one will you choose?
- What was this character's sense of identity before encountering Western influence?
- What was this character's response to the new culture: What did he or she do, think, or say; how did he or she interact with others; how did his or her role and/or perspective shift?
- What were the consequences of this character's response and his or her willingness or unwillingness to change?
- What statement about culture is the author making through this fictional character, and how can you include this in your thesis?
- What textual support can you find for your thesis?
- How can you use an outline to plan the structure of your essay?

Drafting and Revising: Compose your literary analysis essay.

- How will you introduce your topic, organize your ideas, and provide a thoughtful conclusion?
- How will you integrate textual evidence including direct quotes from the novel?
- How will you be sure to use precise language and academic voice?
- How can you experiment with syntax and use a variety of sentence structures and transitions?

Editing and Publishing: Prepare a final draft for publication.

- How will you proofread and edit your essay for proper conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, spelling, grammar and usage?
- What tools are available for you to further polish and refine your work, such as a dictionary, thesaurus, spell-check, or grammar check?
- How can the Scoring Guide help you evaluate how well you have met the requirements of the assignment?

Reflection

After completing this Embedded Assessment, think about how you went about accomplishing this task, and respond to the following:

- How did your research on pre- and postcolonial Ibo culture help you understand your character's reaction to the cultural collision?
- Why is it important to read literature written from the perspective of a culture other than your own?

Technology Tip

To practice and improve your keyboarding skills, use a word-processing program to write your draft and prepare a final version for publication.

Writing a Literary Analysis Essay

SCORING GUIDE

Scoring Criteria	Exemplary	Proficient	Emerging	Incomplete
Ideas	<p>The essay</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> thoroughly examines a character's response to the cultural collision in the novel clearly and accurately analyzes characterization, theme, and author's purpose develops the topic with smooth integration of relevant textual evidence, including details, quotations, and examples. 	<p>The essay</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> examines a character's response to the cultural collision in the novel adequately analyzes characterization, theme, and author's purpose develops the topic with sufficient textual evidence, including details, quotations, and examples. 	<p>The essay</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> incompletely examines a character's response to the cultural collision in the novel provides insufficient analysis of characterization, theme, or author's purpose provides insufficient textual evidence, including details, quotations, and examples. 	<p>The essay</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> does not examine a character's response to the cultural collision in the novel lacks analysis of characterization, theme, or author's purpose provides little or no textual evidence, including details, quotations, and examples.
Structure	<p>The essay</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses an effective organizational strategy that follows a logical progression of ideas introduces the topic engagingly, links supporting ideas, and provides a thoughtful conclusion uses appropriate and varied transitions. 	<p>The essay</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses an adequate organizational strategy that contains a logical progression of ideas introduces the topic, links supporting ideas, and provides a conclusion uses some varied transitions. 	<p>The essay</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses an inconsistent or flawed organizational structure lacks an introduction to the topic, links between supporting ideas, and/or a conclusion uses weak, repetitive, or insufficient transitions. 	<p>The essay</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> does not use an obvious organizational structure lacks an introduction to the topic, links between supporting ideas, and/or a conclusion uses no transitions.
Use of Language	<p>The essay</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses precise language and variety of sentence structures maintains an academic voice and objective tone demonstrates consistent command of conventions (grammar, usage, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling). 	<p>The essay</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses some precise language and variety of sentence structures generally maintains an academic voice and objective tone demonstrates adequate command of conventions; may have some errors in grammar, usage, capitalization, punctuation, or spelling that do not interfere with meaning. 	<p>The essay</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses vague or inappropriate language and flawed or simplistic sentence structures lacks an academic voice and objective tone demonstrates partial or insufficient command of conventions; errors in grammar, usage, capitalization, punctuation, or spelling interfere with meaning. 	<p>The essay</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses inappropriate language and only simple sentences lacks an academic voice and objective tone demonstrates little command of conventions; significant errors in grammar, usage, capitalization, punctuation, or spelling interfere with meaning.