

Things Fall Apart
Reading Journal

- Chapter 1:

Okonkwo, was a champion wrestler of the nine villages that strived to accomplish to better his father's "worthless" life.

Unako a village man has been accumulating a lot of debt with people all around the village. He was a wonderful musician that enjoyed playing the flute. When he died he had not acquired a decent title and was in enormous debt. Luckily this would not reflect onto his son Okonkwo.

Reaction: I thought that the beginning portrayed the characters as being more human and not just a component of a story. It shows the good and the bad fairly bluntly.

- Chapter 2:

The chapter started with a calling of all the young men from the Umuofia village to the market square in the morning. Okonkwo was left in wonder what it was. He thought that it could be war waging. It was a gathering to say that a neighboring village had murdered one of the wives in the Umuofia village,(their village). They sent a group to that village and asked if they would wage war or give Umuofia a young man and a virgin woman.

This chapter also laid some more insight into the mind of Okonkwo showing that he is a hard working, respected, successful man in the village. He has many yams, wives and children. He rules his household with a fierce hand that some saw as almost cruel but with intent in mind. These aspects were because of him trying to contemplate where his father failed. Things like laziness, lack of a good farm, barn and yams. He did so and it set him up from low beginnings to a high and respected point among his peers.

- Chapter 3:

In this chapter Unoka, had gone to the cave of the Oracle to consult with her. He had asked why his harvests were always poor even with his seemingly infinite toils with them. She told him that he did work but lazy work. While his peers set out far and wide to expand and improve their farms through cutting down wood for barns, tools, and homes, Unoka stayed at home and did the easy work.

Later many of the village folk met at the cave in the middle of Umuofia to consult with the oracle. During which Okonkwo asked for seed yams to plant from Nwakibie, a very prosperous man that lacked all but one of the highest titles. He did this because when his father died he had no yams. So Okonkwo had to fight for himself and accomplish the failures of his father.

- Chapter 4:

In this chapter it showed a bit more insight into the life of Okonkwo. In the first part it opened with Okonkwo at a village meeting for the next ancestral feast. During this time Okonkwo talked down to other members of the groups saying that that one of them is not a man due to his lack of titles.

During the time of this chapter it also talked about the young boy that Okonkwo adopted from the other village to avoid war. He was scared at first with his new family but soon joined in well with the other children of his household. The boy's name was Ikemefuna. Okonkwo took a liking to the kid but hardly showed it. Pretty soon the boy even started to call Okonkwo his father.

Okonkwo also broke the sacred week of peace by beating his wife. This may not seem like a big issue, but to break the peace to them is to dishonor the earth god and could cause in the poor harvest and death of the village.

- Chapter 5:

In this chapter it talked about the Feast of the New Yam. In this feast people far and wide gathered to eat with each other in celebration of the new harvest. They would throw away the yams of last year if they still had it, and wash and prepare dishes for the new year. The meal had gone wonderfully though Okonkwo didn't enjoy it because he would rather be working than sitting around.

Later though drums started to beat. This signaled the beginning of the wrestling match. Again people from all over would gather and compete against each other to best each other in wrestling. This is where Okonkwo loves and is at his peak, being the greatest wrestler in the nine villages. It is also the place where he won the love of his second wife.

- Chapter 6:

In chapter 6 the wrestling match had just began. Groups of three 15-16 year old boys gathered to set the scene for the later matches. Nobody expected it to be such a spectacle though, with one of the boys doing a move that had never been seen before. The boy's name was Maduka, the son of Obierika.

The drummers in this chapter were depicted as being possessed and playing with an intoxicating almost otherworldly tone. Then the actual matches started with the team leaders now ready to wrestle and throw the other. The matches were very even but in the end Okafo won and was heavily praised.

I think that in the next chapter, there will be a large event involving Okonkwo and the winner of the wrestling match.

- Chapter 7:

In Okonkwo's eyes, Nwoye was turning out to be a fine man. He was showing good signs of responsibility in that community with things like “grumbling about women”, take on masculine tasks. In this chapter it also mentioned the stories that Nwoye enjoyed listening to the stories that his mother would tell him opposed to the masculine stories of battle and wrestling that Okonkwo would tell him in his obi. So he began to reject his mother's stories in favor of his fathers because he knew that his father would like him to grow up to be a man.

Later the locusts came. They are said by the elders to come every year for seven years and then disappear to a far land for an entire lifetime. When the locusts came everybody rejoiced. The locusts were good to eat as well. The day after, men came to Okonkwo's home and told Ikemefuna that he would go home. But that was a lie, Okonkwo on the other hand was told that they were going to kill Ikemefuna.

They walked for quite some time until they stopped. A man struck Ikemefuna with their machete. Ikemefuna stumbled to Okonkwo out of fear. Okonkwo struck him down out of fear of being seen as weak.

Later that night when Okonkwo arrived home Nwoye immediately knew that Okonkwo had killed Ikemefuna. Nwoye “snapped”. He felt the same way as he did when he heard a child crying in the forest and thought that it may have been infant twins abandoned to die there.

I think this event will come back to haunt Okonkwo later and he will regret this decision and effect his decision making later and the way people look at him.

- Chapter 8:

In this chapter Okonkwo lamented his decision to kill Ikemefuna. He spent many nights sitting in his obi refusing to eat or drink. He was finally convinced to eat and drink something by his daughter, Ezinma whom he wished was born a male because she had the spirit of one. After he went and discussed the events that have happened over the last couple of days with his good friend, Ofoedu.

It also mentioned that white men, one in particular pass through the area quite often. They are described as not having toes because they can't be seen. But this is just due to the shoes that they wear.

- Chapter 9:

In this chapter we were mostly informed about the troubles of Ekwefi one of the wives of Okonkwo. She was a woman that had had 10 children and 9 of them died. This was thought to be because of ogbanje, and evil spirit that when dead would return to the mothers whom to be born just to die again. They called

a medicine man who said after the death of the 9th child to do certain things to prevent the evil child from coming back

When Ekwefi had finally had her 10th child, she was very worried that this one would die too. But this one didn't she lived on for many years, until the current day. Still a child, Ezinma , Ekwefi's 10th child, had now gotten sick yet again. Even after extensive trials to stop such things.

The chapter ended with Ekwefi using herbal medicines to attempt to cure Ezinma.

I don't know what this could lead up to. It doesn't seem to have an extremely vital part in the book

- Chapter 10:

In this chapter the village gathered around in the village ilo. This was the beginning of a ritual involving spirits of the villages and particularly the spirit of the evil forest, the one called evil forest. These spirits were called egwugwu. When the gathered the villagers would ask question and have disputes settled. This was the bulk of the chapter.

I do not know what this would have in relevance to the rest of the story. It seemed like just another part of life in the villages.

- Chapter 11

In this chapter Enzima had been taken away in the middle of the night by one of Ekwefi's friends from the market. Chielo, the priestess of Agbala told Okonkwo that she needed to take the child and would return her safely soon.

When Chielo and Enzima left into the darkness of night, Ekwefi soon followed even though being told not to by the priestess.

Ekwefi thought that she was taking Enzima to the sacred cave where the gods and potion maker was. But after a long time of running and following Chielo she found herself at a safe distance watching as Chielo consulted with people of a neighboring village and then took off. Chielo ran fast chanting her gods names until she arrived at the entrance to the sacred cave. This is where Ekwefi waited for a cry from her daughter and then storm into the cave to protect her with her life. Then Okonkwo showed up and told her to go back and he would wait there.

I thought that Okonkwo following and telling Ekwefi to go back to get rest and he would stay was very brave of him. Considering the circumstances, that he would be disrespecting the gods at the cave by being there uninvited. It showed

that Okonkwo still infact cared about his family deeply despite being a ruler of his compound with an iron fist.

I believe that this will help strengthen Okonkwo and lead him to be a better man and to move past him killing his son more.

- Chapter 12:

In this chapter there was a celebration of the daughter of Okonkwo's friend having a thing called an uri. A uri is a celebration that takes place when the largest part of the bridal price has been paid. In the chapter many members of the village and other villages came to join the celebration and cook the meal. This took lots of people. As it was said in the book hundreds of mortar and pestles were at work and lots of fofo was being made.

Towards the end of the chapter the celebration had begun and people were giving gifts to the bride. Okonkwo gave two chickens as his gift. Overall the chapter showed that the village was prosperous. Okonkwo was showing that he had little thought of his actions from before with his adopted son.

- Chapter 13

In this chapter it talked about funeral of Okonkwo's friend and high ranking clansmen. It started out with cannons and messages sent across the villages telling of his passing.

At the funeral an egwugwu showed up to consult with the deceased person. He spoke some words at his grave, then the ceremony continued. Towards the end of this chapter during the ceremony Okonkwo's gun had exploded and shot a piece of metal into a boys heart killing him. This accident was unintentional but the price Okonkwo would pay would be dear. He would leave his home and village and go to a far off land, not able to return for a full seven years. This was the wrath of the earth goddess. His house farm and walls were all burned down by his fellow man. He knew that the people doing it were only doing because they had to, and that they still valued Okonkwo as a friend knowing that what he did was unintentional.

I think that these events are going to lead up to the part where the Ibo and Europeans meet up.

- Chapter 14

In this chapter it describes the events that took place when Okonkwo arrived at his motherland. He was well greeted by the people there, and

especially old man named Uchendu. Uchendu asked Okonkwo why he was there but Okonkwo decided to only tell part of the story and save the rest for later that day. After a wedding that had happened that same day Okonkwo was addressed by Uchendu asking why he was there. He asked quite philosophical questions that Okonkwo claimed to not know the answer to. The chapter ended in a final question as to why Okonkwo was so dampened and depressed. Uchendu said that to be sad and feel comforting in his motherland would displease the dead. And so he finished by telling Okonkwo to basically get over himself because he is not the most unfortunate person and should be grateful for what he still has.

I think these events may lead to Okonkwo getting used to his situation and making a decent new life for himself.

- Chapter 15:

In this chapter we learned that a white man had come to one of the clans, specifically Abame. The white man came so the people asked the oracle. They saw him as a threat so they killed him and tied his “metal horse” to their sacred tree so that it would not get away. Later more men came, they saw the “metal horse” and left. They then came back with many people following them, they surrounded the market place of the clan and shot everybody there.

This is significant because it is the first major encounter that the book has portrayed between the people of Umuofia and white men. I think that this is leading up to the first encounter of white men with Okonkwo in particular.

- Chapter 16:

In this chapter men came to the village Mbanta. The men were missionaries sent to the clan to convert people to christianity. The priestess called them the excrement of the clan and most people didn't take them seriously. The men arrived at Mbanta and preached christianity to the people. Okonkwo's son Nwoye had converted to the new religion. Not because of the religion itself but a song that the Missionaries sang. It spoke of men sitting in the dark and moving to the light of God. This spoke to the deep questions that Nwoye asked.

I think that the contents of this chapter are leading up to a major event that will be bad for the people of Umuofia. Like the old religion becoming obsolete, or people being taken away as slaves.

- Chapter 17:

In this chapter the rulers of the village gave the missionaries a plot of land in the evil forest. They all thought that they would die from the evils of the forest within 4

days, but none of them did. As more time passed more and more people began to convert to the religion, amazed by the powers of the white man's god to protect them from death in the forest. Pretty soon Nwoye opened up to the religion and decided to finally go to the church. Okonkwo was furious and pondered on his misfortune that night, but didn't find answers to his questions. Then right at the end he remembered that people referred to him as the Roaring Flame. And with that he thought, "Living fire begets cold, impotent ash."

I think that this chapter is leading up to Okonkwo doing something drastic to stop this converting in Umuofia. I believe that he may go so far as to even murder one of the missionaries to stop the spread of the religion.

- Chapter 18:

In this chapter The Christian church in the group had expanded to become almost a small community. The church had grown strong with the conferment of outcasts of the village. They had said that the outcasts were as welcome as anybody else and that they would be saved. Then one of the christians had killed a python. A sacred python one that was extremely important to the way of life in the village. It was such an unspeakable act that nobody knew what to do. SO the console grouped together and decided to not take forcible action, but to cut them off from the village and its assets. The words of the rulers of the village were that they should not get between the gods and the christians. They do not fight the gods wars out of fear of possible getting struck by them.

I think that this is building up a substantial, almost cult`ure war. It seems that the differing religions are constantly at each other's necks.

- Chapter 19:

In this chapter it was the last of seven long years of Okonkwo's exile from Umuofia. He had gathered his fellow kinsmen in a very large feast to thank them for their hospitality. He had sent money to his friend Obierika to build an boi for them to stay in when they arrived back at the village.

This was mostly the entire chapter, not too much of importance happened. There wasn't too much on Christianity. I think that when Okonkwo gets back to Umuofia he will find that things have changed greatly and that Christianity may have also sunk its roots into the village.

- Chapter 20:

In this chapter Okonkwo had arrived back at Umuofia, and as I predicted, many things had in fact changed. The Christians had set up a church and a place of law there. People of even high title had joined the ranks of the white man. The Christians had deemed the ways of the people to be unsuitable. Many of the old

customs had become unlawful to the white men and those who had done those “crimes” had been taken to judgment before the law holders of the Christians. Even people with as much as two titles have been put in jail, and others even to death.

Umuofia had in fact changed a lot and Okonkwo was disgusted at it. I think that Okonkwo will attempt to get others to help him drive out this new invasive culture and it will either end very badly for them or very well.

- Chapter 21:

In this chapter Mr. Brown and the head priest of the python cult had been shown to frequently meet in the obi of the priest. They would talk of one and others religion, and attempt to convince the other of the validity of their movement. As expected they got almost nowhere, but did learn much about the others way of life. They in particular talked about the wooden carvings of the god, Chukwu, or “supreme”. Mr. Brown acknowledged that it is just a piece of wood. But it was also argued that, “yes it is piece of wood, but the wood came from the makings of Chukwu.” There was dispute over this that got nowhere.

Mr. Brown then, built schools, and hospitals, which soon spread around the neighboring villages. At first many people were reluctant to go to these places of learning, sending only their slaves and lazy sons. Soon though the idea spread and people of all ages began to take part in learning at these places. These changes had angered Okonkwo and he mourned for the loss of the warrior like culture that had once thrived in the village.

In this chapter there appeared to be more and more grief growing on the village, and specifically Okonkwo. The old ways were changing and not in a good way in his eyes. I feel like in the next chapter Okonkwo won't do anything but will just mope, because of the events that have been happening in the village.

- Chapter 22:

In this chapter a new christian had taken the place of Mr. Brown because Mr. Brown's health had taken a turn for the worse. The new priest had a harsher attitude and preferred a smaller group of devoted christians that a large number of “false followers”.

It also happened that one of the clansmen that had adopted the new religion strongly was named Enoch. And when the annual celebration of the earth deity had fallen on a sunday. On this day Enoch had knocked the mask off of one of the Egwugwu in public. This is considered one of the worst crimes a man could

possibly commit in the village because it was like killing the ancestors of the village.

The church that Mr. Smith had been using was now burned to the ground along with Enoch's compound for the crime. Nobody was killed but the punishment was great.

I believe that in the next chapter the white men will as expected take great offense to these actions and maybe even try to kill off the whole village, like the other village. I do think that Okonkwo may take action and the end of the village may be at hand.

- Chapter 23:

The actions of the last chapter had pleased Okonkwo, making it seem to him that his village had not in fact lost all of their warrior nature. A few days after the events that had just happened Mr. Smith sent for the leaders of the village to gather with them to have a meeting about what to do. There were 6 men, one of them being Okonkwo. The men came to the meeting fully armed. They sat their bags and weapons on the ground and sat to discuss the events of the previous week. When they had begun to talk the 6 men had been handcuffed and brought before the "justice" system of the Christians.

Unless 250 bags of Cowries were to be paid the 6 men that had been captured would be punished greatly, even hanged. So the people of Umuofia gathered to get the cowries and the price was paid. The prisoners were released.

In this chapter I think that justice was served unfairly to the people of Umuofia. The act of knocking the mask off one of their spirits was I think fittingly paid in full, but the Christians had not seen this as so. So in taking the 6 leaders of the clan and beating them I think that it will play a key role in the coming chapter. I have a feeling that Okonkwo will want revenge and do something drastic in turn for what had been done to him.

- Chapter 24:

The morning after Okonkwo had been released from imprisonment, a gathering of the villagers was going on at the market. Many people fully armed and ready to fight had showed up. The excitement and sheer amount of people made Okonkwo happy. It was said that if a grain of sand was thrown in the air, it would not even find its way back to the ground there were so many people.

Coming around the corner were a few messengers from the church. They had come to ask the people to stop this gathering. The very act of an outsider like this commanding them to stop what they do and have been doing angered

Okonkwo to his breaking point. He struck at the messenger with his machete several times, killing him. He allowed the rest to flee, and wiped his machete in the sand.

I don't know what will happen in the next chapter. Perhaps Okonkwo will be taken to the court again.

- Chapter 25:

Okonkwo killed himself. The commissioner of the white man's government there had come to Okonkwo's compound and asked for him. He was not there only a group of his friends. They led them behind his compound where he had hanged himself. They asked the outsiders to cut him down and bury him because they could not touch the body. It was their custom. The white men did so and the chapter ended.

I was not expecting Okonkwo to end his life. I thought that he would flee or do something else but nothing so drastic, that he himself had said was a disgrace.

1: How does Achebe depict Igbo culture?

In *Things Fall Apart* I believe that Achebe depicted Igbo culture in a very good way. He goes very in depth into the way of life of the people there. Achebe does a very nice job at telling how the culture works there, like the social ladder. He doesn't often directly tell what the culture is like, but instead has characters in the book express it through dialog. I also believe that he was trying to be fairly neutral and depict how things actually were without any kind of biases.

2: How does he depict the Christian missionaries?

I think that in the book, the Christian missionaries are at first depicted as being harmless, and mainly just a nuisance like a cockroach. As the book progressed the missionaries seemed to be growing in strength until they finally had lots of power in the area. They at this point were shown as being cruel, tyrannical, and power hungry. It again seemed to have shown them in a way that seemed honest and accurately.

3: What does the novel say about newness versus tradition?

In *Things Fall Apart* I think that the newness that the missionaries are trying to push into the Igbo culture is unwanted. The Igbo culture seems to be as it has been for quite some time. When the Christian missionaries come into the book, they attempt to convert many of the people and modernize the region. Achebe appears to have show the modernization to be almost evil. Bringing European justice where it is not wanted, modern education, and medicine,

though not resented is a bit disliked by a many of the Igbo people purely for being from the missionaries.

4: What does it say about the individual versus society?

There is a strong influence in the book with individualism. For example Okonkwo is a very strong independent character in the book. He would rather rule his home and farm his land without the aid of others, with exceptions of his family. This is most likely due to the over dependence that his father had on others. This idea of taking matters into your own hands is an important one through the book. I believe that as the book goes on though the people start to loose their individualism and start to function more as a group. Whether that be to stop the spread of the White man in the area, or to spread christianity.

5: Why does it end with Mr. Smith's plans to write a book entitled *The Pacification of the Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger*?

I think that at the end of the book when Mr. Smith says that he is going to write that book it is making a reference to all the other books that have been published by europeans and not in the perspective of the other people. I think he will write about how great the europeans were by saving the Africans from the primitive lifestyle that they had.

Point of View Assessment: *Things Fall Apart*, Chinua Achebe

READING LITERATURE: Point of View - Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

1. 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.
2. Analyze a case in which grasping point of view requires distinguishing what is directly stated in a text from what is really meant (e.g., satire, sarcasm, irony, or understatement).

Questions:

1. How does Achebe depict Igbo culture?
2. How does he depict the christian missionaries?
3. What does the novel say about newness versus tradition?
4. What does it say about the individual versus society?
5. Why does it end with Mr. Smith's plans to write a book entitled *The Pacification of the Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger*?

Options:

1. Answer the five questions, one paragraph each.
2. Answer one question in depth.
3. Explain another point of view in the novel, in depth.

Due Date: Share reading journal and point of view writing with Mr. Lewis by Monday June 6, 2016.