

Intro to Lit: *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe
February - March 2025

This is the first novel we will read in this class. We will begin by reviewing information about both the author and the text and continue through book considering the questions on the reverse of this calendar. After we read, we will study some literary criticism of the book, and then you will write a critical literary analysis of a component of the book. Happy Reading! Your final lit analysis for *Things Fall Apart* will be due Tuesday, March 3, 2024.

Vocabulary: Clan ... Colonization ... Assimilation ... Acculturation ... Missionary Work ... Post-colonialism

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
²⁴ read interview and obituary for Wednesday Interview with Achebe (listen) Analysis #1 DUE	²⁵ Slides: Vocabulary (word scrolls) Padlet: Colonialism	²⁶ Discuss interview and obituary (assigned Monday) HW: Read Yeats "The Second Coming" and answer questions Discuss poem/Listen to John Green	²⁷ Read chapter 1 assign partner journals	²⁸ Read 1 - 5 for Monday Agree – Disagree: Questions of morality
³ Discuss 1 - 5 Read 6-9 for Tuesday Lit Analysis topics	⁴ Discuss chapters 6 – 9 Conversations	⁵ Read chapters 10 – 13 partner journals Agree – Disagree: Questions of morality	⁶ Discuss 10 - 13 Affinity Mapping Read chapters 14 - 19	⁷ QUIZ Discuss 14 – 19 Exchange partner journals Body Bio
¹⁰ Discuss potential essay topics/ Assign Lit Analysis #2 Discuss chapters 20 – 23 Read 24 – 25 Body Bio partner journals	¹¹ Discuss ending of book Body Bio work time Essay Exam – due Friday	¹² HW: Read Quayson article & Find additional literary criticism/discussion of book Questions of Morality	¹³ Cubing/Body Bio DUE Partner Journals DUE Lit Analysis Due March 21 (We will be reading <i>Raisin in the Sun</i> in class so you can work on the paper outside of class)	¹⁴ Lit Analysis/ conferencing Essay Exam due
¹⁷ Begin <i>Raisin in the Sun</i>	¹⁸	¹⁹	²⁰	²¹ ESSAYS DUE on google classroom by midnight NO CLASS

Questions to Guide Reading

1. Traditional societies are often thought to be generally free of internal conflicts about values, and to be fixed and essentially unchanging over time. What aspects of the society depicted in *Things Fall Apart* might resist those assumptions?
2. When Europeans arrive in Okonkwo's village, one result is a new kind of government and a new kind of law. How do the new legal and governmental practices and institutions differ from those that preceded them? Are the changes good, bad, or something more complicated, and why?
3. Okonkwo's self-understanding is deeply bound up with his need to affirm and protect what he thinks of as his "manliness." What are the main features of Okonkwo's view of masculinity, and how does his view relate to that of other important characters in the novel?
4. What should we make of the role of women in the novel? Are the female characters just dispensable appendages of the male characters in the story?
5. Stories and storytelling play a central role in the novel. What are some of the most important aspects of that role, for instance, in the preservation of social customs, and the shaping of individual identities?
6. Okonkwo's friend Obierika is described as "a man who thought about things" (p. 125). What does Obierika think about, and how does that reflection ultimately put him at odds with Okonkwo?
7. An epic hero, like Odysseus, is typically set apart from other characters by his capacity to endure many trials and tests. A tragic hero, like Hamlet or Oedipus, is typically a man brought down by an insuperable conflict, or through his own weakness. Is Okonkwo an epic hero, a tragic hero, or is he a hero at all?
8. It is said of Okonkwo at one point that "Clearly his personal god or chi was not made for great things. A man could not rise beyond the destiny of his chi. The saying of the elders was not true—that if a man said yea his chi also affirmed. He said nay despite his own affirmation" (p. 131). How should we understand the roles of fate and individual responsibility in the novel in light of the role that the Ibo notion of chi plays throughout the story?
9. In "English and the African Writer," Achebe writes that his work represents "a new voice coming out of Africa, speaking of African experience in a world-wide language." What features of the novel embody this to make the world depicted in the novel accessible to a broad audience?
10. An important assumption in the novel is the close connection between an individual's action and the communal fate of all. Okonkwo is told by the priest of the earth goddess Ani, "The evil you have done can ruin the whole clan" (p. 30). Does this explain why, even as strong willed as he is, that Okonkwo accepts without question the communal sanctions prescribed for his misdeeds?

Page numbers cited here are from the Cornell University Edition of *Things Fall Apart*.