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Individual Learning Packet

Teaching Unit

Things Fall Apart

by Chinua Achebe

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Things Fall Apart

Terms and Definitions

Epigram - a short statement with a witty turn of thought or a wittily condensed expression.
Example: I can resist anything but temptation.

Eurocentric - a point of view revolving around the thoughts and values of European society.

Fable - a story that presents a moral or practical lesson. Generally, there are talking animals in fables. Example: *Aesop's Fables*.

Folklore - the traditions, beliefs, and customs of a people. Elizabethan audiences accepted and understood the folklore of fairies. Their knowledge of fairies was essential for them to enjoy the play.

Foreshadowing - the use of hints or clues in a story to suggest what action is to come. Foreshadowing is frequently used to create interest and build suspense.

Irony - a subtle, sometimes humorous perception of inconsistency in which the significance of a statement or event is changed by its content. For example: the firehouse burned down.

- *Dramatic irony* - the audience knows more about a character's situation than the character does, foreseeing an outcome contrary from the character's expectations. The character's statements have one meaning for the character and a different meaning for the reader, who knows more than the character.
- *Structural irony* - a naïve hero whose view of the world differs from the author's and reader's. Structural irony flatters the reader's intelligence at the expense of the hero.
- *Verbal irony* - a discrepancy between what is said and what is really meant; sarcasm. Example: calling a stupid man smart

Legend - a story which is only partly true about a real or made-up character; a fable. Legends usually include exaggerations and unusual events or circumstances. Example: Paul Bunyan changing the course of the Pecos River.

Metaphor - a comparison of two things that are basically dissimilar but are brought together in order to create a sharp image. Example: The moon, a haunting lantern, shone through the clouds.

Myth - a story, often told orally, which explains some natural phenomena in imaginative ways. A myth does not have any historical basis, unlike a legend. Myths usually contain supernatural occurrences or characters. Examples: Daedalus and Icarus, primitive creation myths.

Oral tradition - the transference of stories, songs, etc., from one generation to another or from one culture to another. Stories told orally are easily forgotten, and it is important that the storyteller frequently remind his listener about important character traits and events.

Personification - a figure of speech in which an object or animal is given human characteristics.
Example: The pig laughed all the way to the barn.

Protagonist - the central or main character in a story around which the plot centers. Example: Hester Prynne in *The Scarlet Letter*

Proverb - a short saying that states a basic truth about life. Example: He who hesitates is lost.

Simile - a comparison between two different things using either *like* or *as*. Example: I am as hungry as a horse.

Symbol - an object, person, or place that has a meaning in itself and that also stands for something larger than itself, usually an idea or concept; some concrete thing which represents an abstraction. Example: The sea could be symbolic for "the unknown;" since the sea is something which is physical and can be seen by the reader, but has elements which cannot be understood, it can be used *symbolically* to stand for the abstraction of "mystery," "obscurity," or "the unknown."

Theme - the central or dominant idea behind the story; the most important aspect that emerges from how the book treats its subject. Sometimes theme is easy to see, but, at other times, it may be more difficult. Theme is usually expressed indirectly, as an element the reader must figure out. It is a universal statement about humanity, rather than a simple statement dealing with plot or characters in the story. Themes are generally hinted at through different devices: a phrase or quotation that introduces the novel, a recurring element in the book, or an observation made that is reinforced through plot, dialogue, or characters. It must be emphasized that not all works of literature have themes in them.

In a story about a man who is diagnosed with cancer and, through medicine and will-power, returns to his former occupation, the theme might be: "real courage is demonstrated through internal bravery and perseverance." In a poem about a flower that grows, blooms, and dies, the theme might be: "youth fades and death comes to all."

Tragedy - a serious work, usually a novel, in which the main character experiences defeat.
brought about by a tragic flaw. Example: *Hamlet*.

Tragic flaw - the main defect of the protagonist in a tragedy. Example: Hamlet's failure to act causes his death.

Tragic hero - the main character in a tragedy; in order to fit the definition, the hero must have a tragic flaw, which causes his or her downfall. Examples: Hamlet's main character weakness is his indecision; Lear's is his pride.

Things Fall Apart

Objectives

By the end of this unit, the student will be able to:

1. point out examples of proverbs in the story and comment on how the Ibo people use these sayings to illustrate general truths about life.
2. recognize the fables in the novel and be able to state the moral lessons they convey.
3. discuss the drum as a symbol for the heart, strength, and power of the Ibo people.
4. define irony and cite incidents in the text of it in the following areas:
 - the white man's view and treatment of the Ibo people as primitive.
 - the nature of the protagonist's crimes.
5. define tragic flaw and discuss the extent to which Okonkwo could be viewed as a tragic hero.
6. comment on the significance of the title of this novel as it relates to the major theme in the novel.
7. discuss the religion of the Ibo people and identify the following:
 - agbala
 - egwugwu
 - chi
 - Chukwu
8. define legend and identify examples of legends in the story.
9. find examples of myths in the story and point out how they help the Ibo explain natural phenomena.
10. discuss oral tradition and its importance in a society without a written language.
11. summarize the complex social rules in the Ibo culture regarding marriage.

12. comment on the impact of the missionaries on
 - outcasts
 - women
 - the passing of traditions from father to son
 - the economy
 - the justice system
13. discuss the extent to which this novel is a tragedy for the individual as well as the society.
14. identify each of the following terms and state their importance in Ibo society: Evil Forest, Week of Peace, New Yam Festival.
15. discuss the role of women in Ibo society in respect to children, beauty, contribution to the economy, and rights both before and after marriage.
16. comment on the importance of physical prowess, titles, wives, yams, and chi on a man's status in the clan.
17. prove the existence of a court and justice system in Ibo society before the arrival of the missionaries by referring to incidents in the novel.
18. cite incidents from the novel to prove the following themes:
 - A proud man can accept failure if it applies to everyone and he does not fail alone.
 - It is important for men to bond together so they are strong enough to stand against an enemy from the outside.
19. point out the universal qualities this story possesses, despite the fact that this story is about a foreign culture from the past.
20. support or refute the thesis, by referring to incidents or comments from the text, that this novel is an anti-imperialist statement.
21. contrast the non-Eurocentric view in this novel with the Eurocentric point-of-view of books and movies detailing Western cultures.
22. discuss the possible reasons why critics view this novel as a classic of world literature.
23. define and cite examples from *Things Fall Apart* of the following literary terms:

• simile	• metaphor
• legend	• myth
• fable	• personification
• foreshadowing	• tragic flaw
• tragic hero	• protagonist

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Test

1. This novel can be interpreted as
 - A. being Eurocentric.
 - B. being anti-imperialistic.
 - C. being non-Eurocentric.
 - D. Both A and B
 - E. Both B and C

2. The Week of Peace is best described as
 - A. a week when the clan members must not engage in any violent acts, so they do not anger the earth goddess and the harvest will be good.
 - B. a week of great celebration where all of the old yams are thrown away and the new yams are eaten for the first time.
 - C. a week of celebrating before the marriage between two families, characterized by the sacrificing of two goats.
 - D. a week where neighboring villages come together to engage in wrestling matches and exchange stories.

3. What does the following passage from the novel best illustrate?
“The drums were still beating, persistent and unchanging. Their sound was no longer a separate thing from the living village.” (Pg. 44)
 - A. the importance of the drums to gather the villagers together before going to war.
 - B. the drums serving as a means of communication over a long distance between the tribes.
 - C. that the drums are a symbol for the strength and power of the Ibo people; they symbolize the heart of the people.
 - D. the skill the Ibo people have at making musical instruments.

4. This story can be called a tragedy because
 - A. it is a story of the disastrous downfall of Okonkwo.
 - B. it is the story of the destruction of the ancient Ibo customs and way of life.
 - C. the white missionaries do not come in time to save Ikemefuna.
 - D. Both A and B
 - E. A, B, and C

5. The story of the Earth and the Sky and how the Sky withheld rain for seven years is
 - A. a legend because it is part of the oral tradition and presents an account of an historical event from the village ancestors.
 - B. is a myth because it is a story handed down by oral tradition, features non-human characters, and explains the origin of rain.
 - C. a fable because it teaches the lesson that vultures cannot be trusted.
 - D. a proverb because it is very short and tries to convey the truth about the origin of rain.
6. Okonkwo's tragic flaw is
 - A. his cruel nature and inability to express his feelings with his family.
 - B. his pride and fear of appearing weak.
 - C. his violent temper, which results in Ikemefuna's death.
 - D. his poor relationship with his son, Nwoye.
7. In the marriage rituals a bride price is determined by
 - A. a wrestling match between villages.
 - B. passing a basket of broomsticks back and forth between families, each adding and subtracting sticks until the final number of sticks in the baskets represents the number of bags of cowries in the bride price.
 - C. the beauty of the bride and the wealth of her father; the more wealth the father has, the more cowries in the bride price.
 - D. the mother of the bride, since marriage is mostly a woman's ceremony.
8. The nine egwugwu of the clan
 - A. are really men from the village masquerading as one of the nine ancestral spirits of the clan.
 - B. serve as the judge and jury in the village court system, deciding both domestic and land disputes.
 - C. are feared by the women of the clan, who run away when one is present.
 - D. Both A and B
 - E. A, B, and C
9. One of the major themes of this novel is
 - A. the Ibo people must learn to accept strangers into their world or be destroyed.
 - B. people need to stand together to protect their customs and traditions from being destroyed by outside influences.
 - C. it is wrong to give in to despair and commit suicide.
 - D. violence is to be avoided under all circumstances.
10. The first Ibo woman joins the white church
 - A. to escape her abusive husband.
 - B. because she is unable to have children and is an outcast in Ibo society.
 - C. to save her unborn twins from being left in the Evil Forest to die.
 - D. because she likes the hymns sung at the white church.
 - E. Both A and D

11. The clan does not kill the white missionaries, even though they do not want missionaries living in the Evil Forest because
 - A. it is against the law of the clan to kill any clan member, even the outcasts who have joined the white man's church.
 - B. they hoped the spirits in the evil forest would scare the whites away.
 - C. they are worried about killing a white man because white soldiers will come with their guns and wipe out the village, just as they did at the village of the Abame clan.
 - D. Both A and B
 - E. A, B, and C
12. Okonkwo is a cruel man, yet he demonstrates his affection for his family by
 - A. building a large house so he can eat dinner with all of his wives.
 - B. staying with Ezinma's mother at the Abgala shrine the night the priestess Chielo takes Ezinma from her mother's hut.
 - C. accepting his son's decision to join the white church.
 - D. Both A and B
 - E. A, B, and C
13. Mr. Brown does not like the Ibo's religion because
 - A. they make sacrifices to smaller gods instead of only worshipping the main god, Chukwu.
 - B. Chukwu has many wives.
 - C. the masks of the egwugwu frighten the women and the children.
 - D. Both A and B
 - E. A, B, and C
14. Okonkwo commits suicide because
 - A. he kills a clan member and does not want to be hanged by the white man's court.
 - B. he knows the ancient traditions of his clan are gone and so it no longer matters how he dies.
 - C. if he continues to fight the white man, eventually he will be fighting his own son.
 - D. Both A and B
 - E. A, B, and C
15. Okonkwo's father
 - A. abandons his son when Okonkwo is a young boy.
 - B. only holds one title.
 - C. kills Okonkwo's mother in a fit of temper.
 - D. does not have many yams and is no good at growing them.
 - E. A, B, and C

16. It is ironic that the clan members will not cut down Okonkwo's body because
- A. Okonkwo was the only one to act against the white man to protect their customs, yet their customs prohibit them from touching the body of a man who commits suicide.
 - B. even after his death, the clan members are afraid of the white man's power and refuse to bury Okonkwo until the white government sees his body and is assured that he is indeed dead.
 - C. Okonkwo was never afraid of death or killing. He possessed five skulls taken in battle. It is ironic that now his own friends will not touch his body.
 - D. they cannot touch him without his son present, but his son has joined the white missionaries.
17. A man's chi is defined as
- A. his relationship with the earth goddess, which determines his worth as a farmer.
 - B. his fate in the world predetermined at birth.
 - C. his personal god.
 - D. his ability to plant and harvest yams.
18. With which custom of the clan does Obierika disagree?
- A. A man should be punished for a "female crime."
 - B. A man needs more than one wife.
 - C. Kola nuts are served to visitors.
 - D. The practice of obtaining titles makes one a great man in the clan.
19. An Ibo man gets a message from the gods at the Agbala shrine by
- A. bringing yams to the priestess, who then proclaims the will of the gods.
 - B. crawling on his belly through the small entrance to the shrine and listening to the priestess proclaim the will of the gods.
 - C. sending his first wife to see the priestess, who tends the fire in the cave.
 - D. praying to his personal god or chi.
20. Which of the following incidents from the story is justified by the following proverb?
"As the elders said, if one finger brought oil it soiled the others." (Pg. 125)
- A. Okonkwo's banishment for accidentally killing a clan member.
 - B. why the palm tree tapping is done by inexperienced young men.
 - C. why the women only get enough yams from her husband for one meal at a time.
 - D. the custom of the husband eating one dish prepared by each wife.

Essays

(Answer any two.)

1. Support or refute the following statement with incidents from the novel. When Okonkwo kills the messenger sent to stop the meeting, it is “too little, too late” for the Ibo people.
2. Describe the ways a man gained status in the Ibo society before the white missionaries appeared and why, after their arrival, the traditional symbols of status lose their value.
3. Cite incidents from the story to comment on how the ancient Ibo culture treated women in the following areas:
 - spousal abuse
 - importance of children
 - choice of a husband
 - contribution to the economy
4. Read the following passage from the novel and discuss the significance of the title of this story.

“Does the white man understand our custom 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. _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.” (Pg. 176)

Things Fall Apart

Test

Answer Key

1.	E	6.	B	11.	E	16.	A
2.	A	7.	B	12.	B	17.	C
3.	C	8.	E	13.	A	18.	A
4.	D	9.	B	14.	B	19.	B
5.	B	10.	C	15.	D	20.	A

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Questions for Discussion and Essay

1. Define oral tradition. What is the difference between a fable, a myth, and a legend?
2. Comment on the general truth being taught by the following proverb. How does Okonkwo illustrate the value of this proverb in his life?
“As our people say, a man who pays respect to the great paves the way for his own greatness.” (Pg. 19)
3. How does Obierika feel about “female crimes” and twins?
4. Compare Okonkwo’s life to his father’s. Which one do you think lives a happier life in the following areas: wealth, respect of his neighbors, happiness, and position with his ancestors?
5. In what sense does the Ibo culture show its approval or disapproval of spousal abuse?
6. Why do the people of the Abame village kill the white man on the bicycle?
7. What is the significance of the beating drums in the first two sections? Why do you think there is no mention of drums in the third part of the book?
8. In what ways do Ibo women have the right to decide who they are going to marry?
9. Define tragic flaw. What is Okonkwo’s tragic flaw? Does the Ibo society also have a tragic flaw?
10. List three examples of Okonkwo’s cruel personality and relate how he justifies his behavior in each case.
11. Who are the egwugwu and what function do they fill in Ibo society?
12. Support or refute this statement: The system of justice provided by the white man is much worse than the system of justice already available to the Ibo people.
13. Define each of the following religious terms: oracle, agbala, Chukwu, and chi.
14. How does Ikemefuna’s death impact Nwoye’s relationship with his father? Had Ikemefuna lived, do you think Nwoye would have joined the white church?
15. Why does Okonkwo wish his daughter, Ezinma, had been born a boy?

16. What is the importance of the kola nut, chalk, and palm wine in Ibo society?
17. How does Okonkwo violate the rules of the Week of Peace? What is his punishment?
18. Why do the women look forward to the New Yam Festival?
19. Discuss the significance of the title of the novel to Okonkwo's life and the Ibo society as a whole.
20. Define the term *eurocentric* and point out why this novel is considered non-Eurocentric.
21. Point out how the action of this novel grows out of its setting and compare and/or contrast this development to the relationship between setting and action in some other work with which you are familiar.
22. Support the thesis that this is an anti-imperialist novel.
23. What is there about this novel that gives it a universality? Consider a comment made by the author in which he says that both a white college student from Boston and James Baldwin, a noted African-American writer, told him that the protagonist reminded the two of their fathers.
24. Why do you suppose that this work is considered a classic of world literature?

Things Fall Apart

Notes

This novel vividly presents a picture of life in the Ibo society in Nigeria at the end of the nineteenth century. Chinua Achebe, one of the best known African writers of modern times, traces the life of one Ibo man, Okonkwo. The Ibo people pass down their history from generation to generation through proverbs, fables, legends, and myths. Expertly, Achebe weaves these stories into the telling of Okonkwo's tragic story.

Achebe illustrates how the arrival of white missionaries to the villages of the Ibo people disrupts the ancient traditions and inflicts humiliations on the Ibo people. It is this clash of cultures and values, between the Christian colonizers and the traditional culture of the Ibo people with the subsequent deterioration of the traditional culture, that is at the heart of this novel. Curiously, Achebe's anti-colonialist novel, published in 1959, was written in English, the language of the imperialist. You may want to consider why Achebe chose to do this.

All references come from the Anchor edition of *Things Fall Apart*, published 1994.

The instances in this book of violence, male domination, and sexuality are all depicted briefly and in ways that integrate these topics into the narrative appropriately.

Things Fall Apart

Study Guide Teacher's Copy

PART ONE

Chapter One

Vocabulary

improvident – rash, careless

kite – bird of prey

impending – upcoming

plaintive – sad

prowess – strength

harmattan – a hot, dry wind

1. List four physical characteristics that separate Okonkwo's appearance from that of the other men in his village.

He is tall, has a wide nose, breathes very heavily, and walks with a spring to his step.

2. How did Okonkwo bring honor to his village as a young man? What other achievements make him an important man?

As a young man, he won a wrestling match with the champion, Amalinze the Cat. Later he becomes a wealthy farmer, has three wives, takes two titles, and proves himself in tribal wars. We see at this point that courage and proving oneself relates to the importance of masculine identity.

3. Why does Okonkwo have no patience with his own father, Unoka? What good qualities does Unoka have that his son fails to appreciate?

His father is lazy and a debtor. He can barely feed his family, and he takes no titles in the community.

Unoka has the capacity to enjoy life and must be pleasant to be around, since so many people let him borrow money from them.

4. Find an example of a proverb in this first chapter.

Answers may vary.

Example: "He always said whenever he saw a dead man's mouth he saw the folly of not eating what one had in one's lifetime." (Pg. 4) "Our elders say that the sun will shine on those who stand before it shines on those who kneel under them." (Pg. 8)

5. Locate a simile on the first page and explain it.

"Okonwo was as slippery as a fish in water." (Pg. 3) It indicates that he could not be held by his opponent, like a fish cannot be grabbed when it is wet.

Chapter Two

Vocabulary

discerned – figured out
imperious – domineering
emissary – ambassador
capricious – impulsive

1. What is the general truth stated in the following proverb : "When the moon is shining the cripple becomes hungry for a walk"? (Pg. 10)

The children are permitted to play outside when there is a full moon. If it is dark, they must be quiet for fear of disturbing evil spirits.

2. How does Okonkwo reaffirm his greatness as a warrior to the people of his village?

He has five human heads taken in battle. On social occasions, he drinks palm-wine from the first human head.

3. What is the "normal course of action" when a member of a neighboring clan murders one of the Ibo?

The Ibo send an ultimatum offering the other clan the choice between war and paying compensation in the form of a young man and a female virgin.

4. How does the Oracle of the Hills and the Caves prevent the powerful Umuofia from going to war with their neighbors?

The Umuofia believe if the Oracle does not accept their reasons for wanting to go to war, they will be defeated. Since the Oracle would never approve a "fight of blame" where the Umuofia people are at fault, the Umuofia compensate the Ibo clan by sending them a young man and a female virgin.

5. Why does Okonkwo behave as a cruel man when, “perhaps down in his heart Okonkwo is not a cruel man”? (Pg. 13)

His deepest fear is that he will resemble his father. He hates everything about his father and refuses to openly demonstrate any weak behavior, such as gentleness or love.

6. Briefly describe the physical layout of Okonkwo’s compound.

His hut or obi is behind the gate. Each of his three wives has her own hut in a semi-circle behind his. There is a barn for the yams, a shed for the goats, a place for chickens attached to each woman’s hut, and a shrine near the barn where Okonkwo worships.

7. What does the reader know about Ikemefuna’s fate by the end of the second chapter? What literary term is employed?

He does not understand why he was taken from his home. He is going to stay with Okonkwo’s wife and will be there for three years. “The lad’s name was Ikemefuna, whose sad story is still told in Umuofia unto this day.” (Pg. 12) The sentence indicates that something bad will occur to him. The literary term is foreshadowing.

Chapter Three

Vocabulary

tendrils – threads

contemptible – horrible

dregs – the worst parts

malicious – evil

1. Describe the entrance to the shrine called Agbala. How does a worshipper get a message from the gods? What is a chi?

The shrine is entered through a small hole at the side of the hill. A man must crawl on his belly to enter. A priestess stands by the sacred fire and proclaims the will of the god. Chi is a man’s personal god.

2. What proverb does Okonkwo use to compliment Nwakibie?

“As our people say, a man who pays respect to the great paves the way for his own greatness.” (Pg. 19)

3. Describe the custom of wine sharing presented in this chapter.

Before asking his favor, Okonkwo brings Nwakibie wine. Okonkwo is the first to taste his wine. Then the group drinks, beginning with the eldest man. After everyone has had several horns full, Nwakibie sends for his wives. The first wife drinks, followed by each of the other wives in the proper order.

4. Find a proverb describing why the palm-wine tapper gives up his trade, a proverb Okonkwo uses to convince Nwakibie to give him some yams, and a proverb Nwakibie uses to explain why he is stingy with his yams.

*“A toad does not run in the daytime for nothing.” (Pg. 20) “The lizard that jumped from the high iroko tree to the ground said he would praise himself if no one else did.” (Pg. 21)
“Eneke the bird says that since men have learned to shoot without missing, he has learned to fly without perching.” (Pg. 22)*

5. State a general theme for this story using the piece of wisdom about failure that Unoka offers his son. Why does Okonkwo not listen to his father’s words?

A proud man can accept failure if it applies to everyone and he does not fail alone.

Okonkwo does not listen because he has lost all patience with his father.

6. List the crops that the women are responsible for in the Ibo clan.

The women plant coco-yams, beans, and cassava. Yam is a man’s crop.

Chapter Four

Vocabulary

brusqueness – rudeness

benevolent – kind

plait – hair braid

repentant – sorry

valediction – leaving

deftly – skillfully

arduous – difficult

poignant – moving or touching

1. Comment on the general truth Okonkwo learns from the following Ibo proverb:
“When a man says yes his chi says yes also. Okonkwo said yes very strongly; so his chi agreed.” (Pg. 27)

Okonkwo's strength of will contributes to achievements in the clan. A man's personal god is influenced by the level of his ambition.

2. What are Ikemefuna's special skills that make him popular with Nwoye?

He is lively, can make flutes from grass, knows the names of the birds, can set animal traps, and knows which trees make the best bows. He also knows many folk tales.

3. What is the importance of the Week of Peace to the Ibo clan? In the past, how did the clan punish a man for breaking the peace? What is Okonkwo's punishment?

The Week of Peace is a week when the clan members must not engage in any violent acts. If they do, the priest of the earth goddess, Ezeani, will punish the entire clan by ruining their harvest. In the past, a man who broke the peace was dragged through the city until dead. As his punishment for breaking the peace by beating his wife, Okonkwo must bring to the shrine of Ani one hen, a she-goat, a length of cloth, and a hundred cowries.

4. What sentence in this chapter indicates that Nwoye's life is greatly influenced by Ikemefuna's presence in their household?

“Nwoye remembered their period very vividly till the end of his life.” (Pg. 34) The period he remembers is the time he spent with Ikemefuna.

Chapter Five

Vocabulary

reveled – celebrated

tentative – not fully worked out

pottage – soup or stew

calabashes – gourds

1. Why is Ani the most important deity in the lives of the Ibo people? What is the New Yam Festival?

Ani is the earth goddess and the source of fertility. She judges morality and conduct and is in contact with the dead, who are buried in the earth.

The New Yam Festival is held once a year before the start of the harvest. All of the old yams are discarded. Some of the new yams are offered to the gods before any can be eaten by the clan.

2. What story is always told at the New Yam Festival? Why is it an example of a legend?

The story of the man who could not see his relative because the foo-foo is too high is always told at the New Yam Festival.

It is a legend because it is passed down by oral tradition from one generation to another and concerns a possible historical person.

3. In what ways do you think Okonkwo's second wife both respects and dislikes her husband?

Answers will vary.

Example: She respects him because many years ago, she left her first husband to marry Okonkwo. She was attracted to him because of his strength in wrestling. She demonstrates another view of her husband when he beats her and she retaliates by accusing him of being a terrible hunter.

4. What is the purpose of the drums beating the day of the New Yam Festival? What might these drums symbolize?

The drums begin beating at noon on the festival day, so everyone knows there will be wrestling after the sun goes.

The drums beat like a human heart, symbolizing the strength of the Ibo customs on the lives of its people.

5. What does Okonkwo say to criticize his daughter Ezinma, even though he really is fond of her? Why do you think he is so harsh?

He tells her to sit like a lady with her feet stretched straight in front of her. She tries to continue a conversation with her father until her half-sister reminds him not to talk because the pepper may go down the wrong way. He tells Ezinma that she should have more sense like her sister.

He may be harsh with her because he is afraid to express love and does not wish to appear weak.

Chapter Six

Vocabulary

grandees – rulers

taut – tight

disembodied – without a body

fronds – leaves of plants like ferns and palm trees

prophesied – predicted the future

1. How do the drums reflect the emotions of the crowds at the wrestling match?

When the match begins, the people are very excited and the “drums rose to a frenzy.” (Pg. 47) The people begin to relax and talk after the drums stop for a rest. The tension in the spectators rises again when the drums start.

2. Why do you think Ezinma’s mother says to the priestess “Perhaps she has come to stay”? (Pg. 48)

She does not think her daughter will die as a child, but will mature into an adult.

3. Prove the following statement with incidents from the story: Physical strength is greatly admired by the Ibo people.

The people carry the victorious wrestler on their shoulders after the match. He is a hero to the people because of his strength and skill.

Chapter Seven

Vocabulary

feign – fake

rebuked – scolded

harbinger – omen of the future

copiously – a great deal of

amiss – wrong

tendrils – thin, new growth on a plant

wily – clever, sneaky

espied – saw

1. How is Nwoye changed after Ikemefuna's arrival?

He is more masculine and spends less time with his mother. Okonkwo believes this change is due to Ikemefuna's influence.

2. Why do you think Nwoye's mother tells the story about the Earth and the Sky? Why is this story considered a myth? What is Nwoye's dilemma?

She tells Nwoye the story so the boy may learn the value of violence and bloodshed. The story is a myth because it explains the source of rain.

Nwoye knows he should want to hear masculine stories of violence, but he has a preference for his mother's.

3. What advice does Ezeudu give to Okonkwo regarding Ikemefuna's death?

Ikemefuna is going to be killed by the clan. Ezeudu tells Okonkwo not to participate in the killing because the boy thinks of him as his father.

4. Why does Okonkwo kill Ikemefuna? How does this action also destroy his relationship with his son Nwoye?

He kills Ikemefuna because he is afraid that if he does not, the men in the village will think he is weak.

Nwoye feels empty, as he did when he heard the sound of a baby crying in the forest. It was the custom of the people to put twins in pots and leave them in the forest to die. He does not believe in either killing Ikemefuna or the twins. Nwoye is not like his father and probably will continue to grow apart from him after Ikemefuna's death.

5. Find a metaphor in this chapter.

Answers may vary. Example: "Where are the young suckers that will grow when the old banana tree dies?" (Pg. 66)

Chapter Eight

Vocabulary

coiffure – hairdo

snuff – tobacco

succulent – full and firm

1. How does Okonkwo feel about his role in Ikemefuna's death?

Okonkwo does not eat for three days. He feels terrible about the boy's death, but also despises himself for feeling terrible, being weak, and acting like a woman.

2. What do we learn about the role of women in the Ibo society by the death of Ogbuefi Ndulue?

If a man consults his wife about a decision, he is considered to be weak. In addition, if a man and wife die at the same time, the wife must be buried first. The drums can then sound for the husband's funeral.

3. Why is Obierika sometimes sorry he has the title of *ozo*?

A man with the title "ozo" is not permitted to tap the palm trees. He thinks it is a shame that he must sit by and watch the young inexperienced men kill his trees because they do not know how to properly tap them.

4. What general truth is found in the following proverb?

"When mother-cow is chewing grass its young ones watch its mouth." (Pgs. 70-71)

A woman's child inherits her intelligence and energy.

5. How is Akueke's bride price settled? Find a proverb explaining the negotiating process.

The bride price is decided by passing back and forth a basket of short broomsticks. Akueke's father first puts 30 sticks in the basket. The bridegroom passes it back with fifteen. They finally settle on twenty broomsticks, which translates into 20 bags of cowries.

"If I fall down for you and you fall down for me, it is play." (Pg. 73)

6. What do the Ibo people think about white men in general? What other evidence has there been in the story proving the existence of white men in Nigeria?

*They compare whites to lepers and think they have no toes.
Okonkwo has a gun, which must have come from the white men.*

Chapter Nine

Vocabulary

specious – false

agility – skill

devoid – minus or empty

manifest – made clear

audacity - boldness

wont – accustomed

1. What is an ogbanje? How does Okonkwo deal with it? What does the medicine man do to ensure Ezinma does not return to the spirit world?

Ogbanje is an evil child, who, after death, refuses to stay dead. It keeps coming back in its mother's womb as another child. Okonkwo goes to two different medicine men to get rid of the Obganje.

The medicine man makes Ezinma dig up her iyi-uwa, a special stone that links the Ogbanje with the spirit world. If it is taken away from Ezinma, she will live and not return to the spirit world.

2. What lesson is taught by the fable about the snake lizard and his mother?

Green vegetables shrink when they cook.

3. What evidence is there that male children are important to Ibo women?

After the birth of three sons in a row, Okonkwo slaughters a goat for his first wife and they have a celebration.

Chapter Ten

Vocabulary

communal – in a community

pandemonium – uproar, confusion

quavering – shaking

esoteric – only known by a few; confidential

approbation – criticism

faggots – sticks

trifle – small amount

1. Who are the egwugwu? Why are there nine of them?

There are nine egwugwu, one for each village in the clan. One man from each village masquerades as one of the nine ancestral spirits of the village. The women are afraid of the egwugwu. The egwugwu are the judge and jury for the community trials.

2. What is the decision of the egwugwu in the case of Uzowulu and his runaway wife?

Uzowulu must offer his in-laws some wine so they will return his wife. He is reminded that it is not manly to beat a woman too much.

3. Support or refute the following statement: It is not a crime for a man to beat his wife in this society.

At the end of the chapter, one elder questions why the egwugwu are listening to this case: "I don't know why such a trifle should come before the egwugwu." (Pg. 94)

Chapter Eleven

Vocabulary

impenetrably – cannot be entered

forsook – left, abandoned

lest – unless

incipient – beginning to exist

orator – speaker

plumage – a bird's feathers

luxuriant – thick, heavy vegetation

1. What is the moral lesson taught by the fable of the tortoise?

A man who makes trouble for another is also making it for himself.

2. Support or refute the following statement: Ekwefi is very brave to follow Chielo after the priestess takes Ezinma from her home in the middle of the night.

It is brave for Ekwefi to follow Chielo because to do so is to disobey the priestess, who told her to stay behind. It is also very dark and dangerous for Ekwefi to be outside alone. Once along the way, Chielo stops to tell whoever is following her to stop or face the punishment of Agbala. Despite the warning, Ekwefi continues to follow.

3. Why do you think Okonkwo comes to the shrine? How does Ekwefi feel about his presence there?

*He is worried about his daughter and wife.
Ekwefi is happy to see her husband and grateful for his strength, the main reason she married him.*

Chapter Twelve

Vocabulary

tethered – tied to

prominent – noticeable; important

1. Find an example of a legend in this chapter.

One example of a legend is the story about the man who took a goat to market tied to the end of a long tether. The goat is replaced by a log at the end of the tether without the man's knowledge. He is laughed at by the people in the market for dragging a heavy log.

2. Briefly describe how the Ibo women solve the problem of a cow trespassing in a neighbor's crops.

All of the women of the village who are not ill go together to catch the cow and collect a penalty from the cow's owner.

3. List the steps the bride's family follows for her uri ceremony.

*The women prepare food, slaughtering two goats.
Two pots of wine arrive from the in-laws for the women to use in cooking.
The ground in front of the hut is swept clean.
The in-laws arrive, each with a pot of wine on their head.
The host presents kola nuts to the in-laws and proclaims friendship between the two families.
The women come out to shake hands and greet the visitors.
The men speak of each other's accomplishments.
The women then begin to dance. The bride comes last with a rooster in her right hand.
The bride goes home with the in-laws for seven market weeks.*

Chapter Thirteen

Vocabulary

lamentation – noise associated with grief

raffia – plant material

tumult – commotion; ruckus

brand – torch

brandishing – holding

1. Why do you think a “cold shiver ran down Okonkwo’s back as he remembered the last time the old man” Ezeudu visited him? (Pg. 121)

Ezeudu visited Okonkwo just before Ikemefuna was killed. He warned Okonkwo not to participate in the boy’s death because it would offend mother earth. Okonkwo shivers because the old man’s death may be a sign mother earth is unhappy, and Okonkwo may have to pay a price for killing Ikemefuna.

2. Briefly describe the funeral of the great warrior, Ezeudu. How does a warrior become one of the “lords” of the clan?

The drums beat, guns are fired, and the male clan members are in a frenzy, jumping and cutting down anything they see. Sometimes the egwugwu appear from the underworld and speak. A warrior is buried after dark by the light of a glowing brand.

A “lord” of the clan is someone who has four titles.

3. Why must Okonkwo leave the clan?

He accidentally kills the son of the dead warrior. It is a crime to kill a clan member.

4. A tragic flaw is a defect of character which brings about the downfall of the protagonist. What do you think is Okonkwo’s tragic flaw?

He kills Ikemefuna because he is worried about looking weak like his father. His pride and inability to break with the strict traditions of the clan for fear of appearing weak, even when his heart tells him to, will ultimately be his downfall.

5. What is ironic about the fact that Okonkwo’s crime is considered a “female” crime?

Okonkwo is always worried about appearing weak or female. The crime he commits is considered female because the killing is done by accident. Okonkwo must leave his home because of a “female” crime.

6. With what customs of the clan does Obierika not agree?

Obierika cannot think of a reason why a man should be banished for an accident. He also does not understand why innocent twin children are left in the forest to die.

7. How does the following proverb explain the harsh punishment given to Okonkwo?
“As the elders said, if one finger brought oil it soiled the others.” (Pg. 125)

It is important to obey all of the rules of the clan, or the entire community will suffer. It is a rule that no one kills another clan member. There can be no exceptions, or the entire system will be destroyed.

PART TWO

Chapter Fourteen

Vocabulary

sisal – plant material like rattan

mirthless – joyless

1. Why does Okonkwo sit in a “silent half-sleep”? (Pg. 131)

He is starting all over again, without the strength of youth. Most of his life, he worked to become one of the lords of the clan, but now that is impossible. He realizes his chi is not made for great things.

2. Briefly describe the final isa-ifi marriage ceremony.

Holding a hen in her right hand, the bride sits in a circle of her female relatives. She is asked to confess any other relationships truthfully, or she will die in childbirth. After the questions, the hen is killed, and the bride goes to her new husband’s hut.

3. Why is a woman brought back to her kinsmen to be buried?

A mother is there to protect her children, just as the homeland of a warrior’s mother is there to protect the warrior. When Okonkwo needs a refuge, he returns to his mother’s homeland.

Chapter Fifteen

Vocabulary

ominous – threatening, menacing

abomination – disgust; something horrible

1. Why does the Abame clan kill the white man?

The oracle told them that he would “break their clan and spread destruction among them.” (Pg. 138) In addition, other white men were on their way.

2. What evidence is there in this chapter that the clans do not understand the white man’s way of life?

They tie the bicycle (iron horse) to a tree thinking it might move on its own. They do not understand the simplest tools of the white man and have no comprehension of the white man’s power to destroy the clans.

3. Support or refute the following statement: The white men do not want to know anything about the clan’s culture because they think it is inherently inferior and not worth learning about.

The white men kill the Abames with no explanation about the killing of the first white man. The whites slaughter the clan when it is helpless and defenseless. Whole families are killed indiscriminately; it is like exterminating rodents.

4. What moral lesson is taught by the fable of the mother kite and her daughter?

- “There is nothing to fear from someone who shouts”
- “Never kill a man who says nothing.” (Pg. 140)

5. Find a proverb about a newly married man.

“Never make an early morning appointment with a man who has just married a new wife.” (Pg. 141)

Chapter Sixteen

Vocabulary

enthralled – spellbound

callow – immature

evangelists – Christian preachers

benevolently – kindly

1. Why is Nwoye interested in the missionaries?

He is captivated by the poetry of the religion. He is unhappy with his own religion because of Ikemefuna's death and the killing of newborn twins.

2. What is Okonkwo's opinion of the white religion? Is there anything about the missionaries that the Ibo people like?

Okonkwo thinks they are mad. Missionaries say there is only one God, but then they say he has a son and no wife.

The people enjoy the hymns.

Chapter Seventeen

Vocabulary

fetishes – objects of worship

miscreant – villain; evildoer

effeminate – behaving like a woman

impotent – lacking power

1. Why do the Mbanta people begin to believe the white man's religion has great power? How long do they wait for the Evil Forest to do its work?

Whites build their church in the Evil Forest. The people give them this land so they will be driven out by the evil spirits. The white men are not driven out, so they must have a very powerful religion.

They wait seven market weeks or twenty eight days.

2. How does the Ibo superstition about the birth of twins compel the first native woman to join the white man's church?

The native woman has given birth to twins in the past. Her people left the twins to die in the Evil Forest because twins are evil spirits. She joins the white church because she is pregnant again and wants to keep her babies this time.

3. How does Okonkwo react when he is told his son is attending the white man's church?

Okonkwo becomes violent and hits him with a big stick.

4. Why is Okonkwo terrified that his other children will join Nwoye in the white man's church?

Okonkwo believes that after he dies, he will wait for his children to worship him at his ancestral shrine; there will be no worshippers, though, because his children will all belong to the white man's church.

5. What name does Okonkwo's clan call him? How does this name help him to understand how he, a strong man, could father such a weak son?

He is called "Roaring Flame" because of his strength and quick temper. He thinks he is like the fire in his hut: "Living fire begets cold, impotent ash." (Pg. 153)

Chapter Eighteen

Vocabulary

caste – group in society

wavering – shaking

adherents – believers

atonement – amends

blasphemous – sacrilegious

ostracize – to exile

derision – mockery, disrespect

1. Who are the osu? How do they cause trouble for the new white church?

The osu are outcasts of the clan. They are forced to grow their hair long and are excluded from the village life. When the osu decide to join the white church, the other converts object, saying they are not worthy to be followers of Christ. The church leader, Mr. Kiaga, disagrees and lets them join, so long as they shave off their long hair.

2. Who triggers a new conflict between the clan and the white church? What does Okonkwo want to do to solve it? What does he think of the clan's final solution?

One of the osu kills a sacred python. Okonkwo wants to take a stick and break the man's head. The clan decides to ostracize the members of the white church from all clan places, such as access to water, red-earth, and chalk. Okonkwo thinks they are a "womanly clan" because of their lack of violent action.

3. Why does the clan ultimately relent on their sanctions against the members of the white church?

The man who killed the python dies. The clan believes the gods take his life to punish him for killing the python. Since the gods are fighting their own battles, the clan decides to stop molesting the Christians.

Chapter Nineteen

Vocabulary

tuber – edible root

wherewithal – ability

1. Find a proverb in this chapter explaining why men are superior to animals.

*“An animal rubs its itching flank against a tree, a man asks his kinsman to scratch him.”
(Pg. 165)*

2. What overall message or theme for this story is stated at the end of this chapter by one of the elders in the clan?

It is important for people to bond together so they are strong enough to stand against the intrusion of outsiders.

PART THREE

Chapter Twenty

Vocabulary

irreparable – cannot be repaired

resilient – flexible

arrogant – a feeling of superiority

1. In what ways does Ezinma demonstrate her loyalty to her father?

She does not marry in his motherland, even though she is beautiful and has many offers. She decides to wait and marry in Umuofia because she knows it will please her father. She also persuades her half-sister to wait and marry in Umuofia.

2. How has the church strengthened its position in Umuofia during Okonkwo's absence?

Many new members have joined the church, including men with titles. They cut the title anklet and throw it away. The white men start a new government and build a court and a prison.

3. Who are the kotma? Why are they corrupt?

The kotma are court messengers who wear ash-colored shorts. They beat the prisoners and increase the amount of the fines imposed by the white government, so they can keep part of it for themselves.

4. When Okonkwo returns home he wants to stand against the white man and force him out of the community. Obierika says it is too late because, "He has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart." (Pg. 176) What has fallen apart, and why does Obierika think it is useless to fight the white men?

The white man has lured many of the clan's members into church and government. The clan members now have power and money. They do not want to go back to the old ways and customs. Even if the clan is successful in driving out the white man, their own clan members will go for soldiers to destroy the clan. The white man has divided the people by destroying their customs. They are divided, and their way of life is falling apart.

5. What was the attitude of the white men who came to Umuofia regarding the language and culture of the people?

The white men did not understand that the Umuofia people already had a government and a religion that worked for the people. The missionaries did not take the time to learn about the Ibo's complex society, methods of justice, marriage rites, or religious beliefs.

Chapter Twenty-One

Vocabulary

dispensation – exemption

akin – similar to

expedient – the means to an end

singlets – undershirts

zeal - enthusiasm

1. How is Mr. Brown different from the white missionary in Okonkwo's motherland? What does he do to encourage the clan to send their children to his school?

Mr. Brown is different from the other missionaries because he takes the time to learn about the Ibo's religion and culture. He encourages them to go to school so they will not find themselves governed by people outside their clan. He convinces them that the men who can read and write will be the future rulers.

2. The God Chukwu is identified in this chapter. In what way is he similar to Mr. Brown's God? Why does Mr. Brown object to the way the people worship their god?

Chukwu is similar to Mr. Brown's God because he is the one supreme god who made heaven and earth. Mr. Brown objects to the smaller gods the people worship and thinks they spend too much time sacrificing to them instead of praying to the one true God. He also disagrees with the idea that the people are afraid of Chukwu. To Mr. Brown, God is merciful, not fearful.

3. Why is Okonkwo's return home not as successful as he had hoped?

Other than attention from his beautiful daughters, the people of Umuofia do not show much interest in his return. He cannot initiate his sons into the ozo society because it is the wrong year for the initiation. The people are also more interested in the new trading stores, new religion, and new government brought by the whites.

Chapter Twenty-Two

Vocabulary

idolatrous – excessive devotion

clamoring – making loud noises

amulet – a charm

wan – pale

guttural – from the throat

1. In what way is Mr. Smith responsible for Enoch's crime of unmasking an egwugwu?

Mr. Smith is overzealous in forcing the rules of his religion on the people of the clan. His attitude of intolerance encourages the overzealous converts such as Enoch. Enoch follows Mr. Smith's example of condemning the clan's ceremonies and unmasks an egwugwu.

2. What does Mr. Smith wisely do to avoid being killed?

He offers no physical resistance to the band of egwugwu.

3. Support the following statement: The act of burning the white church is "too little, too late" to save the tribe from destruction.

The church has already broken the power the clan's religion had to control the people. This break is demonstrated by Enoch's willingness to unmask an egwugwu—something that has NEVER happened before. The band of egwugwu tries to repair the damage by burning the church, but too many of their own people have already broken with traditions for their actions to have any lasting effect.

Chapter Twenty-Three

Vocabulary

palaver – talk

sullen – sad, gloomy

sonorous – deep sound

1. How does the District Commissioner violate the rights of the leaders of Umuofia, even under white man's law? How is this an example of irony?

He does not let them tell their side of the story. They are tricked into coming to see him, thinking the Commissioner is going to listen to their side of the story. Instead, he has them handcuffed and thrown into jail. He tells them they must pay a fine before they can be released.

The incident is ironic because the Commissioner violates the law by not listening to the leaders, but tells them he is doing it to bring them law so they will be happy.

2. What indignities are the prisoners subjected to by their jailers?

Their heads are shaved, they are not given any water, and they are forbidden to go outside to relieve themselves. The messengers come into the cell and beat them.

3. Why does the village decide to pay the fine for the men?

They are told that unless the fine is paid immediately, the men will be taken to Umuru and hung.

Chapter Twenty-Four

1. What does Okonkwo plan to do if the clan decides not to go to war with the whites?

He plans to take action, even if he is alone.

2. Why does Okonkwo kill the messenger?

The messenger is there to try to stop the meeting. Okonkwo wants the clan to vote on war, so he cannot let the meeting be stopped.

3. How does Okonkwo know the clan will not decide to go to war?

They allow the other messengers to escape and back away in fright.

Chapter Twenty-Five

Vocabulary

infuriating – irritating

superfluous – unnecessary

resolute – strong willed

desecrated – ruined

enthralled – spellbound

callow – immature

1. In what way is it ironic that Obierika and the other clan members will not touch Okonkwo's body?

The clan is unwilling to fight to keep their customs and religion safe from the white man. Only Okonkwo has the courage to act. Yet, they refuse to touch his body because he violates their custom by killing himself. In the end, he believes the life he fought for is gone, so it does not matter how he dies.

2. To what extent may Okonkwo's death be viewed as a tragedy?

The death is a tragedy in that we see the disastrous downfall of a noble protagonist because of a tragic flaw. In the end of this story, Okonkwo kills himself, a dishonorable death for a warrior.

3. What is the tragedy of the Ibo people which is implicit in the last paragraph?

The Commissioner's view that Okonkwo's people are primitive, and in need of pacification, signals the death of the Ibo's ancient culture.

The story presents the Ibo culture as rich in government, religion, agriculture, and justice. It is a complex society, only inferior to the white society because of its lack of technology. All of this history is invisible to the Commissioner, and the people are labeled as primitive and needing pacification. They are grossly misjudged, and their ancient traditions are misunderstood and cruelly destroyed.

Things Fall Apart

Study Guide Student Copy

PART ONE

Chapter One

Vocabulary

improvident – rash, careless

kite – bird of prey

impending – upcoming

plaintive – sad

prowess – strength

harmattan – a hot, dry wind

1. List four physical characteristics that separate Okonkwo's appearance from that of the other men in his village.
2. How did Okonkwo bring honor to his village as a young man? What other achievements make him an important man?
3. Why does Okonkwo have no patience with his own father, Unoka? What good qualities does Unoka have that his son fails to appreciate?
4. Find an example of a proverb in this first chapter.
5. Locate a simile on the first page and explain it.

Chapter Two

Vocabulary

discerned – figured out
imperious – domineering
emissary – ambassador
capricious – impulsive

1. What is the general truth stated in the following proverb : “When the moon is shining the cripple becomes hungry for a walk”? (Pg. 10)
2. How does Okonkwo reaffirm his greatness as a warrior to the people of his village?
3. What is the “normal course of action” when a member of a neighboring clan murders one of the Ibo?
4. How does the Oracle of the Hills and the Caves prevent the powerful Umuofia from going to war with their neighbors?
5. Why does Okonkwo behave as a cruel man when, “perhaps down in his heart Okonkwo is not a cruel man”? (Pg. 13)
6. Briefly describe the physical layout of Okonkwo’s compound.
7. What does the reader know about Ikemefuna’s fate by the end of the second chapter? What literary term is employed?

Chapter Three

Vocabulary

tendrils – threads

contemptible – horrible

dregs – the worst parts

malicious – evil

1. Describe the entrance to the shrine called Agbala. How does a worshipper get a message from the gods? What is a chi?
2. What proverb does Okonkwo use to compliment Nwakibie?
3. Describe the custom of wine sharing presented in this chapter.
4. Find a proverb describing why the palm-wine tapper gives up his trade, a proverb Okonkwo uses to convince Nwakibie to give him some yams, and a proverb Nwakibie uses to explain why he is stingy with his yams.
5. State a general theme for this story using the piece of wisdom about failure that Unoka offers his son. Why does Okonkwo not listen to his father's words?
6. List the crops that the women are responsible for in the Ibo clan.

Chapter Four

Vocabulary

brusqueness – rudeness

benevolent – kind

plait – hair braid

repentant – sorry

valediction – leaving

deftly – – skillfully

arduous – difficult

poignant – moving or touching

1. Comment on the general truth Okonkwo learns from the following Ibo proverb:
“When a man says yes his chi says yes also. Okonkwo said yes very strongly; so his chi agreed.” (Pg. 27)

2. What are Ikemefuna’s special skills that make him popular with Nwoye?

3. What is the importance of the Week of Peace to the Ibo clan? In the past, how did the clan punish a man for breaking the peace? What is Okonkwo’s punishment?

4. What sentence in this chapter indicates that Nyoye’s life is greatly influenced by Ikemefuna’s presence in their household?

Chapter Five

Vocabulary

reveled – celebrated

tentative – not fully worked out

pottage – soup or stew

calabashes – gourds

1. Why is Ani the most important deity in the lives of the Ibo people? What is the New Yam Festival?

2. What story is always told at the New Yam Festival? Why is it an example of a legend?

3. In what ways do you think Okonkwo's second wife both respects and dislikes her husband?

4. What is the purpose of the drums beating the day of the New Yam Festival? What might these drums symbolize?

5. What does Okonkwo say to criticize his daughter Ezinma, even though he really is fond of her? Why do you think he is so harsh?

Chapter Seven

Vocabulary

feign – fake

rebuked – scolded

harbinger – omen of the future

copiously – a great deal of

amiss – wrong

tendrils – thin, new growth on a plant

wily – clever, sneaky

espied – saw

1. How is Nwoye changed after Ikemefuna's arrival?
2. Why do you think Nwoye's mother tells the story about the Earth and the Sky? Why is this story considered a myth? What is Nwoye's dilemma?
3. What advice does Ezeudu give to Okonkwo regarding Ikemefuna's death?
4. Why does Okonkwo kill Ikemefuna? How does this action also destroy his relationship with his son Nwoye?
5. Find a metaphor in this chapter.

Chapter Eight

Vocabulary

coiffure – hairdo

snuff – tobacco

succulent – full and firm

1. How does Okonkwo feel about his role in Ikemefuna's death?
2. What do we learn about the role of women in the Ibo society by the death of Ogbuefi Ndulue?
3. Why is Obierika sometimes sorry he has the title of *ozo*?
4. What general truth is found in the following proverb?
“When mother-cow is chewing grass its young ones watch its mouth.” (Pgs. 70-71)
5. How is Akueke's bride price settled? Find a proverb explaining the negotiating process.
6. What do the Ibo people think about white men in general? What other evidence has there been in the story proving the existence of white men in Nigeria?

Chapter Nine

Vocabulary

specious – false

agility – skill

devoid – minus or empty

manifest – made clear

audacity - boldness

wont – accustomed

1. What is an ogbanje? How does Okonkwo deal with it? What does the medicine man do to ensure Ezinma does not return to the spirit world?
2. What lesson is taught by the fable about the snake lizard and his mother?
3. What evidence is there that male children are important to Ibo women?

Chapter Ten

Vocabulary

communal – in a community

pandemonium – uproar, confusion

quavering – shaking

esoteric – only known by a few; confidential

approbation – criticism

faggots – sticks

trifle – small amount

1. Who are the egwugwu? Why are there nine of them?
2. What is the decision of the egwugwu in the case of Uzowulu and his runaway wife?
3. Support or refute the following statement: It is not a crime for a man to beat his wife in this society.

Chapter Eleven

Vocabulary

impenetrably – cannot be entered

forsook – left, abandoned

lest – unless

incipient – beginning to exist

orator – speaker

plumage – a bird's feathers

luxuriant – thick, heavy vegetation

1. What is the moral lesson taught by the fable of the tortoise?
2. Support or refute the following statement: Ekwefi is very brave to follow Chielo after the priestess takes Ezinma from her home in the middle of the night.
3. Why do you think Okonkwo comes to the shrine? How does Ekwefi feel about his presence there?

Chapter Twelve

Vocabulary

tethered – tied to

prominent – noticeable; important

1. Find an example of a legend in this chapter.
2. Briefly describe how the Ibo women solve the problem of a cow trespassing in a neighbor's crops.
3. List the steps the bride's family follows for her uri ceremony.

Chapter Thirteen

Vocabulary

lamentation – noise associated with grief

raffia – plant material

tumult – commotion; ruckus

brand – torch

brandishing – holding

1. Why do you think a “cold shiver ran down Okonkwo’s back as he remembered the last time the old man” Ezeudu visited him? (Pg. 121)
2. Briefly describe the funeral of the great warrior, Ezeudu. How does a warrior become one of the “lords” of the clan?
3. Why must Okonkwo leave the clan?
4. A tragic flaw is a defect of character which brings about the downfall of the protagonist. What do you think is Okonkwo’s tragic flaw?
5. What is ironic about the fact that Okonkwo’s crime is considered a “female” crime?
6. With what customs of the clan does Obierika not agree?
7. How does the following proverb explain the harsh punishment given to Okonkwo?
“As the elders said, if one finger brought oil it soiled the others.” (Pg. 125)

PART TWO

Chapter Fourteen

Vocabulary

sisal – plant material like rattan

mirthless – joyless

1. Why does Okonkwo sit in a “silent half-sleep”? (Pg. 131)
2. Briefly describe the final isa-ifi marriage ceremony.
3. Why is a woman brought back to her kinsmen to be buried?

Chapter Fifteen

Vocabulary

ominous – threatening, menacing

abomination – disgust; something horrible

1. Why does the Abame clan kill the white man?

2. What evidence is there in this chapter that the clans do not understand the white man's way of life?

3. Support or refute the following statement: The white men do not want to know anything about the clan's culture because they think it is inherently inferior and not worth learning about.

4. What moral lesson is taught by the fable of the mother kite and her daughter?

5. Find a proverb about a newly married man.

Chapter Sixteen

Vocabulary

enthralled – spellbound

callow – immature

evangelists – Christian preachers

benevolently – kindly

1. Why is Nwoye interested in the missionaries?
2. What is Okonkwo's opinion of the white religion? Is there anything about the missionaries that the Ibo people like?

Chapter Seventeen

Vocabulary

fetishes – objects of worship

miscreant – villain; evildoer

effeminate – behaving like a woman

impotent – lacking power

1. Why do the Mbanta people begin to believe the white man's religion has great power? How long do they wait for the Evil Forest to do its work?
2. How does the Ibo superstition about the birth of twins compel the first native woman to join the white man's church?
3. How does Okonkwo react when he is told his son is attending the white man's church?
4. Why is Okonkwo terrified that his other children will join Nwoye in the white man's church?
5. What name does Okonkwo's clan call him? How does this name help him to understand how he, a strong man, could father such a weak son?

Chapter Eighteen

Vocabulary

caste – group in society

wavering – shaking

adherents – believers

atonement – amends

blasphemous – sacrilegious

ostracize – to exile

derision – mockery, disrespect

1. Who are the osu? How do they cause trouble for the new white church?
2. Who triggers a new conflict between the clan and the white church? What does Okonkwo want to do to solve it? What does he think of the clan's final solution?
3. Why does the clan ultimately relent on their sanctions against the members of the white church?

Chapter Nineteen

Vocabulary

tuber – edible root

wherewithal – ability

1. Find a proverb in this chapter explaining why men are superior to animals.
2. What overall message or theme for this story is stated at the end of this chapter by one of the elders in the clan?

PART THREE

Chapter Twenty

Vocabulary

irreparable – cannot be repaired

resilient – flexible

arrogant – a feeling of superiority

1. In what ways does Ezinma demonstrate her loyalty to her father?

2. How has the church strengthened its position in Umuofia during Okonkwo's absence?

3. Who are the kotma? Why are they corrupt?

4. When Okonkwo returns home he wants to stand against the white man and force him out of the community. Obierika says it is too late because, "He has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart." (Pg. 176) What has fallen apart, and why does Obierika think it is useless to fight the white men?

5. What was the attitude of the white men who came to Umuofia regarding the language and culture of the people?

Chapter Twenty-One

Vocabulary

dispensation – exemption

akin – similar to

expedient – the means to an end

singlets – undershirts

zeal - enthusiasm

1. How is Mr. Brown different from the white missionary in Okonkwo's motherland? What does he do to encourage the clan to send their children to his school?
2. The God Chukwu is identified in this chapter. In what way is he similar to Mr. Brown's God? Why does Mr. Brown object to the way the people worship their god?
3. Why is Okonkwo's return home not as successful as he had hoped?

Chapter Twenty-Two

Vocabulary

idolatrous – excessive devotion

clamoring – making loud noises

amulet – a charm

wan – pale

guttural – from the throat

1. In what way is Mr. Smith responsible for Enoch's crime of unmasking an egwugwu?
2. What does Mr. Smith wisely do to avoid being killed?
3. Support the following statement: The act of burning the white church is "too little, too late" to save the tribe from destruction.

Chapter Twenty-Three

Vocabulary

palaver – talk

sullen – sad, gloomy

sonorous – deep sound

1. How does the District Commissioner violate the rights of the leaders of Umuofia, even under white man's law? How is this an example of irony?
2. What indignities are the prisoners subjected to by their jailers?
3. Why does the village decide to pay the fine for the men?

Chapter Twenty-Four

1. What does Okonkwo plan to do if the clan decides not to go to war with the whites?
2. Why does Okonkwo kill the messenger?
3. How does Okonkwo know the clan will not decide to go to war?

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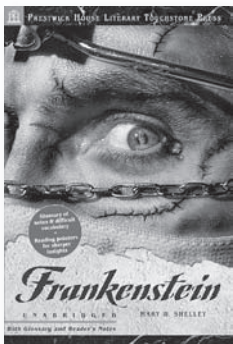
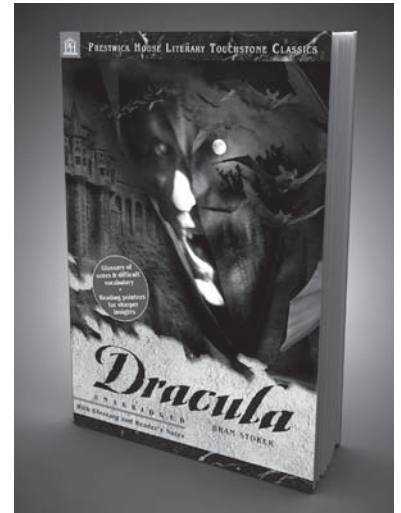
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