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***Things Fall Apart***

PAP Study Guide Part One

*Answer the questions and the JOURNAL*

*on a separate piece of paper. Do all annotations in your book.*

**Annotations for Part 1**:

* Proverbs: These are an important part of the African culture in the book. Note them and be sure you are able to explain them.
* Characterization of Okonkwo: Note good and bad character traits.
* Traditions/beliefs: Note the importance of these.

**Chapter One**

1. Reread the first sentence of the novel. What purposes does this sentence serve?

2. Explain the use of figurative devices in the following line:

*Amalinze was a wily craftsman, but Okonkwo was as slippery as a fish in water* (3).

3. What is the rhetorical effect used in the following line: *The drums beat and the flutes sang and the spectators held their breath* (3). What effect does it create?

4. Describe Okonkwo. Why does Achebe use animal imagery to describe him?

5. How does Okonkwo’s impression of his father shape Okonkwo’s character? How does he act as a result of his father’s reputation?

6. Explain the importance of the following line: *Among the Ibo the art of conversation is regarded very highly, and proverbs are the palm-oil with which words are eaten* (7).

**Chapter Two**

7. How do the people feel about night? How do they eliminate or deal with fear?

8. Explain the meaning of the following saying: *When the moon is shining the cripple becomes hungry for a walk* (10).

9. How does Okonkwo feel about war? Why do you think he feels this way?

10. Explain the purpose of the following line as it relates to characterization: *On great occasions such as the funeral of a village celebrity he drank his palm-wine from his first human head* (10). Why would Achebe mention such an act in this novel?

11. How does Umuofia choose to settle the dispute? Why do they make this decision? Provide textual evidence to support your answer.

12. Why does the reader suspect that something is going to happen with Ikemefuna and Okonkwo?

13. How would Okonkwo’s rule of his household be interpreted in Western culture? How does Achebe want the reader to feel about Okonkwo?

14. Achebe informs the reader that there is a word that means both “woman” and “a man who had taken no title.” Why does he share this information with the reader?

15. Is Okonkwo’s description of Nwoye accurate? How do we know?

16. Reread the exchange between Okonkwo and his “most senior” wife. How does Okonkwo treat her? What does it demonstrate about the role of gender within the Ibo community?

**Chapter Three**

17. What effect does Achebe achieve with his repetition of the phrase “they came” in the second paragraph?

18. Why might it be unusual that a woman is the one who serves and can see Agbala?

19. When Okonkwo’s father visits the oracle, what does he learn?

20. What is a *chi*? How is it important in the story?

21. Why is Unoka left to die in the Evil Forest?

22. Reread the first part of this chapter and the last paragraph before the break. Why does Achebe begin and end this section with the same information? What is he repeating?

23. What does Nwakibie mean when he says, *You will have what is good for you and I will have what is good for me. Let the kite perch and let the eagle perch too. If one says no to the other, let his wing break* (19)?

24. What is the meaning of the following: “...an old woman is always uneasy when dry bones are mentioned in a proverb”? How does this relate to Okonkwo?

25. Why does Nwakibie agree to let Okonkwo use his yams for share-cropping?

**Chapter Four**

26. How was Okonkwo able to achieve such a high rank within the tribe when his father died a penniless man? How is this different from colonial-era European culture?

27. What suggestion is there that Okonkwo will evolve into a tragic hero?

28. Why is the old man’s rebuke significant?

29. The text mentions the chi again as it relates to Okonkwo’s success. How strong a determiner is the chi assumed to be?

30. Describe Ikemefuna. How does he fit into the family structure?

31. What is significant about Okwonko’s breaking the peace during the Week of Peace? What does this action indicate about Okonkwo?

32. In this chapter, what does the reader learn about the customs of the Ibo and the customs of other neighboring clans? How might this be important in the story?

33. Why does Achebe end this chapter by relating the nature of the relationship between Ikemefuna and Nwoye?

**Chapter Five**

34. Achebe begins Chapter Five by describing the Feast of the New Yam. What does the reader learn about Umuofian culture through this description?

35. Why does Okonkwo become angry before the New Yam Festival? Was his anger directed in the right place? Why or why not?

36. For what reason does Achebe repeat the word “beautiful” when describing the way the women decorate their bodies and cut their children’s hair into patterns?

37. What is Ekwefi’s favorite part of the festival? Why?

38. What type of relationship has Ikemefuna developed with Okonkwo’s family? Cite an instance in this chapter that demonstrates this relationship.

39. What is the significance of the metaphor (44) Achebe uses to describe the drums and their relationship to the village? Comment on the last line of the chapter.

**Chapter Six**

40. What do Okonkwo’s springing to his feet and then sitting immediately imply?

41. EXPLAIN (do not just rephrase it) the literary device Achebe uses in the following line: *The air, which had been stretched taut with excitement, relaxed again* (48).

42. Who is Chielo?

(Don’t forget the journal on the next page!)

**JOURNAL:** Reflect on the conflict and the characters of the novel thus far. What is/are the basic conflict(s)? What do you think of the main characters, Okonkwo and Nwoye, so far? Focus on their character traits and how the characters contribute to the conflict. Your response should be 5-6 good, thoughtful sentences.

**Chapter Seven**

43. How does Okonkwo feel about Ikemefuna and the relationship that he has developed with his Nwoye?

44. How does Okonkwo define manliness?

45. Why does Achebe spend so much time setting up the dichotomy (contrast) between Okonkwo and Nwoye?

46. Achebe includes one of the stories that Nwoye likes to hear his mother tell. Why does this story appear here?

47. What type of imagery does Achebe use to describe the arrival of the locusts? What is significant about this passage? Achebe describes the arrival as follows:

*At first, a fairly small swarm came. They were the harbingers sent to survey the land. And then appeared on the horizon a slowly-moving mass like a boundless sheet of black cloud drifting towards Umuofia. Soon it covered half the sky and the solid mass was now broken by tiny eyes of light like shining star dust. It was a tremendous sight, full of power and beauty.*

48. Why do the village elders decide that Ikemefuna is to be killed?

49. How does the clan strike an apparent harmony between the will of the Community and the needs of the Individual?

50. Why does Okonkwo dress to go with the men who are taking Ikemefuna instead of staying removed from the business as he is told?

51. How does Achebe change the setting to complement what is happening in the story?

52. What two themes have been identified by the end of Chapter 7?

**Chapter Eight**

53. What does the reader learn about Okonkwo from the following passage:

*Okonkwo did not taste any food for two days after the death of Ikemefuna. He drank palm-wine from morning till night, and his eyes were red and fierce like the eyes of a rat when it was caught by the tail and dashed against the floor* (63)*.*

54. Again Okonkwo mentions that Ezinma should have been a boy. Why is it important that he mentions this at this point in the story?

55. How does the reader know that Okonkwo is worried, not only about the future of his family, but also the future of the village?

56. What does Obierika believe about Okonkwo’s decision to help carry out Ikemefuna’s death? What might this foreshadow?

57. Achebe spends some time developing the story of Ozoemena and Ndulue. What is the purpose of this story? What does it illustrate about the differences in the way of thinking between Okonkwo and Obierika, but also about the village as a whole?

58. How could the following statement function as foreshadowing in the novel?

*Okonkwo was not a man of thought but of action.*

59. How does this chapter establish that things are changing within the village?

60. How are white people introduced in this chapter? What is the tone of the chapter at the time they are introduced?

**Chapter Nine**

61. What is an *ogbanje* and how does it relate to Ezinma’s illness?

62. How does Okonkwo’s helplessness manifest itself?

**Chapter Ten**

63. Read the following lines:

*It was clear from the way the crowd stood or sat that the ceremony was for men. There were many women, but they looked on from the fringe like outsiders* (87).

What does this excerpt suggest about the role of women? What is significant about the placement of this passage relative to what has come immediately before, and what will come immediately after?

64. Explain the irony of the trial in this chapter. Is justice served in the egwugwu’s judgment? How does the case brought before the egwugwu parallel Okonkwo’s life?

**Chapter Eleven**

65. Often, the setting is not just “where the story happens,” but a geographical, historical, social, economic, or philosophical setting. Achebe begins this chapter with a description of the night. The reader learns earlier in the novel the significance the night has for people. What purpose does the setting serve at the beginning of this chapter?

66. How does the story of the tortoise and the birds relate to colonialism?

67. Why does Chielo visit Okonkwo and Ekwefi?

68. How does Achebe maintain the tone of the chapter and the significance of Chielo’s power when the priestess reaches the circular ring of hills? How might a western reader interpret this section?

69. Who joins Ekwefi at the cave, and how does this contribute to his character development? Does this conflict with what we know about this character thus far?

70. How does Ekwefi’s decision to follow Chielo contradict Okonkwo’s ideas about femininity and masculinity?

**Chapter Twelve**

71. Analyze Okonkwo’s feelings about what happened with Chielo. How is his response different from the way that Ekwefi views the situation?

72. On what type of ceremony does this chapter focus? How is this ceremony different from the other ceremonies that have been discussed in the book?

**Chapter Thirteen**

73. What happens that causes the cannons to boom? What does Okonkwo remember in relation to this event?

74. Why does Achebe include a funeral ceremony at this point in the novel?

75. How is the accidental killing punished by Okwonko’s clan? How does Okonkwo face his punishment? How do the village elders handle his punishment?

76. How does Obierika react to the punishment? Why do you think he reacts this way? What does he resolve after his contemplation? How does this resolution advance one of the themes of the novel?

77. How might the village interpret Okonkwo’s role in the death? What had Obierka warned Okonkwo about his role in Ikemefuna’s death?

78. How does Achebe create dramatic tension in this chapter? What purpose does the shooting serve?

79. Explain the irony in Okonkwo’s having to return to the motherland and that he committed the “female” crime.

80. What might Obierika’s final statement foreshadow?

*As the elders said, if one finger brought oil it soiled the others.*

**JOURNAL:** Reflect on how the conflict is progressing? What additional conflicts have been introduced? How is Okonkwo developing? Nwoye is not in this section much. Why do suppose that is?