

Lit 312: World Literature

Essay I – Due March 13

4 pages

I

Write a 4 page essay about Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* with a focus on the character of Ikemefuna. This character is illustrative of some of the advanced character of the tribe as well as some of its mad logic as far as the oracle goes. He has a profound affect on the character of Nwoye, and at least temporarily, on Okonkwo. His brief stay among Okonkwo's people showed him to be a person whose character might achieve the elusive balance that many other characters lack. Focusing on one or two attributes or issues surrounding Ikemefuna, discuss the ways that Achebe uses him as a character to illuminate central concerns in the novel.

II.

Ekwefi and Ezinma are mentioned only briefly, if at all, by ~~other~~ critics of the text, and when referred to, are examined only in relation to Okonkwo's actions or motivations. Analyze these characters according to their self perceptions, as well as societal awareness of them as women, wives, mothers and daughters. Explore how the relationships between these women reveals not only alliances between mothers and their offspring, but also alliances between comrades in arms.

III.

Okonkwo is one of the more memorable figures in modern literature. In many ways this is not because he typifies the attributes of a man of Umuofia, but because he is different from so many of his tribesmen. In fact, there are ways where his makeup seems akin to a typical European hero: he is driven by the father/son conflict, is a victim of his pride, and often acts outside of the consensus of his people. Write an essay that examines Okonkwo in the context of some of these issues. It may be useful to include some of the ways his own fellows view his actions throughout the novel. In your presentation of Okonkwo, propose what it is that Achebe is trying to achieve through this character.

IV

At first glance, the role of women in Chinua Achebe's "Things Fall Apart" may appear to be unfairly limited in terms of their authority and power. Yet, "Mother is Supreme." Examine the role of women both in family and in African patriarchal society: literally, spiritually and symbolically.

V

The central concern of Chinua Achebe in his novel *Things Fall Apart* is that of balance, or moderation. "Let the kite perch, and let the eagle perch too" is the proverb that reflects balance. There is also an acknowledgement of cultural relativism: "we say he is foolish because he does not know our ways, and perhaps he says we are foolish because we do not know his." Despite

recognition of the need for balance and of differences, there is a fatal clash of cultures when religious practices come up against each other.

Write an essay that discusses the possibilities for a coexistence of the Igbo tribal practices and the new culture of Christianity. Is the eventual “falling apart” of the original culture inevitable when the new ways arise within the clans? What aspects of the belief systems make this inevitable? If, on the other hand, you feel that it might have been possible for both the kite and eagle to perch, so to speak, how might that have come to be? What kinds of events or ways of thinking (that might have been avoided) led to the falling apart of things?

VI.. Create your own topic