

# ***Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe (Published by Anchor Books)**

Approved for use in Honors Communication Arts II

## **Summary**

*Things Fall Apart* is set in Umuofia, a tribal village in Nigeria in the late 1800's. The novel is divided into three parts: the rise of the main character to wealth and power, his family's exile to his motherland, and his difficult return at the end of seven years. Okonkwo, the tragic hero, endures and often conquers battles with his upbringing, his native culture, his status, and his pride in this uniquely structured piece of realistic fiction.

## **Connection to the Curriculum**

*Things Fall Apart* is an African book originally written in English. It presents a rich stylistic portrayal of the novel, using traditional Ibo terms, along with African maxims about life. This book offers a unique perspective for students in that the history is told from an Afro-centric perspective, which requires the reader to view the situations with the missionaries differently than they may have in previous history studies. The novel also encourages extended discussion of cultural diversity and tolerance of an individual's beliefs and tradition rather than immediate judgment and condemnation. *Things Fall Apart* also fosters discussion of gender roles in society. At first glance Achebe may seem to be biased toward the African men; there are, in fact, many times when he criticizes the male behavior and emphasizes what he sees as the important female traits in this culture. In summary, the novel is rich stylistically, culturally, and thematically.

## **Standards**

### **Course Objectives (Benchmarks)**

**Reading:** 1.4- The students comprehend a variety of texts.

**Literature:** 2.1-The students use literary concepts to interpret and respond to text. 2.2- The students understand the significance of literature and its contributions to various cultures.

**Writing:** 3.1- The students use writing as a tool for learning throughout the curriculum.

### **Possible Skills Taught (Indicators)**

#### **Reading:**

1.4.9- The student uses prior knowledge and content to make, revise, and confirm predictions.

1.4.11- The student uses information from the text to make inferences and draw conclusions.

1.4.17- The student analyzes and evaluates how an author's style and use of literary devices work together to achieve his purpose.

#### **Literature:**

2.1.1- The student identifies and describes different types of characters.

2.1.2- The student analyzes the historical, social, and cultural contextual aspects of the setting and its influence on characters and events in the story.

2.2.6- The student recognizes ways that literature from different cultures presents similar themes differently across the genres.

#### **Writing:**

3.1- The students write effectively for a variety of audiences, purposes, and contexts.

**A Note on the Text:** (The best way to evaluate and understand a novel is to personally read the book in its entirety.)

*Things Fall Apart, although heavily laden with sadness, is a striking cultural examination. Through its realistic narrative, readers encounter some limited violence including abuse, murder, and ultimately, suicide. These events are part of the realistic look at the life of Okonkwo and the development of the conflict and characters. In addition, there are several references to cultural traditions including spirits and other mystic elements.*

## **AP Connections**

This book offers a unique cultural perspective that encourages depth of thought from honors readers. *Things Fall Apart* is a widely read piece of African literature and has been referenced on the Advanced Placement exam several times over the last 25 years.

## **Additional Unit Design Connections**

Coming soon