Things Fall Apart
by
Chinua Achebe
Notes
And
Background Information
I. Chinua Achebe
A. Born in Ogidi, Nigeria in 1930, the son of a missionary school teacher

B. Studied English, history, and theology at Government College and University College in Nigeria, where he earned a B.A.; later earned an M.A. from the University of Mass.

C. Worked as a teacher and broadcast director

D. Founded a publishing company and became a research fellow/professor of English at several universities, including the University of Nigeria and Bard College (New York)

E. Currently professor at Brown University in Rhode Island
F. Major works


G. Writing Style: standard English, blended with pidgin, Igbo vocabulary, proverbs, imagery, and speech patterns
II. Nigeria
A. Historical Background

1. 500-200 B.C.: dominated by the Nok, followed by the Kanem-Bornu, Benin, and Hausa kingdoms

2. 15\textsuperscript{th} century: explored by the Europeans, becoming a center for the slave trade

3. 1861-1960: British colonial rule

4. 1960: became an independent nation; as of 1963 divided into 36 states and 1 territory
B. Modern Nigeria

1. population: over 149 million (July, 2009)

2. official language: English

3. major tribal languages: Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo, and Fulani

4. 250 ethnic groups: Hausa-Fulani (20%), Yoruba (21%), and Igbo (18%)

5. Religions: Muslim (50%); Christian (40%); indigenous (10%)

6. Economy: petroleum based
Map of Nigerian states
Nigerian Linguistic Groups
Nigerian Flag
III. *Things Fall Apart*
A. Published in 1958
B. Title inspired by the 1919 poem “The Second Coming” by William Butler Yeats: “Things fall apart; the center cannot hold;” (line 3)
C. Setting: eastern Nigeria, late 1800s-early 1900s, during the British colonial expansion into Umuofia
D. Synopsis
   1. Part I examines the life of the Igbo village of Umuofia before the arrival of the British, focusing on the main character Okonkwo
   2. Part II examines Okonkwo’s life in exile
   3. Part III examines life in Umuofia after British rule is established
IV. The Igbo (also Ibo) Tribe
A. Originated in SE Nigeria and number about 15 million

B. Embraced Christianity under British rule during the 14th century

C. Played a major role in the Nigerian Independence Movement in the 1960s

E. Engaged in a lengthy civil conflict from 1966-1970 with the mostly Muslim Hausa-Fulani

E. Formed the Republic of Biafra in 1967, which was later absorbed into Nigeria
Resources


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