

Sample Paragraphs

Each paragraph contains:

- ❑ A topic sentence
- ❑ At least two smoothly integrated citations (evidence)
- ❑ Commentary on the evidence
- ❑ Elaboration on the commentary that connects to the topic

On Manhood:

In Chinua Achebe's novel *Things Fall Apart* the theme of manhood in the Igbo culture is a dominant one. From the very outset of the novel it appears that there are very clear roles that men must follow. In particular a man's worth in society is linked to his material possessions. This can be seen quite clearly through the distinctions that Achebe highlights between Okonkwo and his less successful father, Unoka. He owned virtually nothing, and was mocked for lack of monetary success. Achebe writes that "people laughed at him because he was a loafer," (5). Clearly, the Igbo culture placed a high value on working hard to gain riches. Okonkwo is described as having great wealth as a farmer, several barns full of yams, and three wives [8]. Achebe continues to point out that "age was respected amongst [the Igbo], but achievement was revered," [8]. Interestingly, Achebe does not draw attention to the fact that Unoka was a very gifted musician. His musical achievements seem to be almost unimportant in the Igbo society, suggesting that his worth is, in fact, found almost solely in his ability to provide for his family.

On Death:

For the Igbo people of Chinua Achebe's novel *Things Fall Apart* death was a constant, yet it was rarely viewed with the sense of finality that it is seen with in the West. While children often died before reaching the age of ten [74], and men regularly consulted the spirits of their dead relatives [17], death was not viewed as final. Rather, the process of death and birth were viewed as cyclical. Okonkwo's wife, Ekwefi, gave birth to many children who died in infancy before giving birth to her daughter Ezinma. Achebe describes Ezinma as an *ogbanje*, a child who haunts its mother by traveling between the physical and spirit world [80]. It seems clear that Igbo saw the space between life and death in a less rigid manner than traditional Western beliefs would.