

Things Fall Apart - Final Essay



In your final writing assignment for *Things Fall Apart* you will be asked to analyze the text through a particular lens. This isn't nearly as difficult as it sounds; all you need to do is start looking at the text in a specific way. For example, if you were to write an essay about the role of women in Umuofia, you would re-examine the book looking specifically at the ways in which women are treated. If you were to write about the ways in which Okonkwo seems to violate tribal codes, you would examine the book looking for those particular moments. In short, a lens is just a tool for seeing things in a particular way.

There are several different essay options for your final writing assessment, but all have the same requirements. Each typed final essay must have:

- A clear introduction, including a hook, some context/background, and a complete thesis.
- At least 3 body paragraphs with relevant topic sentences and logically selected textual evidence that clearly support the thesis.
- Proper MLA citations.
- A conclusion.
- An attached rough draft.

Please select one of the following essay prompts:

1. In his poem "The Second Coming," William Butler Yeats writes that as things fall apart "the center cannot hold." Discuss the ways in which society in Umuofia fell apart and the potential causes for this fall.
2. Examine the role of women in Igbo culture. Are women portrayed as important members of the society or as something more akin to cattle? Perhaps something in-between?
3. Examine the role of the missionaries in *Things Fall Apart*. Is their presence in the novel entirely negative, entirely positive, or something else?
4. In what ways does the church pose a threat to Okonkwo, his way of life, and the health of the tribe? Has it, as Obierika said, cut apart that which held the tribe together?
5. In an essay discussing why he wrote *Things Fall Apart*, Chinua Achebe writes the following:

This theme—put quite simply—is that African people did not hear of culture for the first time from Europeans; that their societies were not mindless but frequently had a philosophy of great depth and value and beauty, that they had poetry and, above all, they had dignity. It is this dignity that many African people all but lost during the colonial period and it is this that they must now regain. The worst thing that can happen to any people is the loss of their dignity and self-respect. The writer's duty is to help them regain it by showing them in human terms what happened to them, what they lost.

From "The Role of the Writer in a New Nation," 1964

How well do you believe that Achebe manages to accomplish his goal? How well does he show this "depth and value and beauty" in the Igbo people? How does he depict them as human, with human dignity and human failings?

(The preceding prompt was largely stolen from Scott Hill)