

Read Global: *Things Fall Apart* Questions

Adapted from questions supplied by Cliff's Notes and ReadingGroupGuides.com

Ice breakers: On a scale of 1-10, how would you rate this novel?
Which character would you like to have dinner with?

1. There are a lot of African terms and a glossary is provided. Does this give the book authenticity or help you immerse yourself in the atmosphere?
2. "Among the Igbo, the art of conversation is regarded very highly, and proverbs are the palm-oil with which words are eaten." Are there any stories or proverbs that caught your attention?
3. The villagers believe--or pretend to believe--that the "Supreme Court" of the nine *egwugwu* are ancestral spirits. In fact, they are men of the village in disguise. What does this say about the nature of justice in general, and in this village in particular?
4. Of one of the goddesses, it is said: "It was not the same Chielo who sat with her in the market...Chielo was not a woman that night" (p. 106). What do you make of this culture where people can be both themselves and also assume other personas?
5. Over the three years he was with Okonkwo, Ikemefuma became part of the family. What do you think about Okonkwo's actions at the time of his death?
6. Obierika is a close friend, and contrast to Okonkwo. How are the men similar and how are they different?
7. Achebe wrote this to counter the way that African cultures are presented in European and American literature, such as *Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad. Can you think of differences in the way the peoples of Africa portray themselves and the way others portray them?
8. Of Ezinma, Okonkwo thinks: "She should have been a boy" (p. 64). Why is it necessary to the story that Okonkwo's most favored child be a girl?
9. Why do you think Achebe chose to tell Okonkwo's story in the third person rather than have him tell it himself in the first person narrative style?
10. What are some of the tensions and issues facing Umuofia before the British arrive?
11. Okonkwo rejects his father's way and is, in turn, rejected by Nwoye. Do you feel this pattern evolves inevitably through the nature of the father/son relationship? Or is there something more being here than mere generational conflict?
12. What do you think Nwoye and others converts found appealing about the British missionaries and Christianity?
13. Have you read William Butler Yeats' "The Second Coming"? Why did Achebe choose to take the title of his novel from the poem?
14. Why do you think Okonkwo kills himself?
15. What contributes most to things falling apart in Umuofia?

16. Compare Mr. Brown and Reverend Smith. How does the black and white thinking of Reverend Smith contribute to Umuofia's downfall? What would have prevented Umuofia's downfall?
17. The District Commissioner is going to title his work *The Pacification of the Primitive Tribes of the Niger* (p. 209). What do you interpret from this to be his perception of Okonkwo and the people of Umuofia? And what do you imagine this augurs in the ensuing volumes in Achebe's trilogy of Nigerian life?
18. Had you read this book previously? Any other books in the African Trilogy?

Closing: Did this discussion change your 1-10 rating for this book?