



Cultures in Conflict

Visual Prompt: Why are artifacts such as the one shown above considered indicators of a civilized community?

Unit Overview

“Until the lion has a voice, stories of safaris will always glorify the hunter.” To illustrate this African proverb, Chinua Achebe wrote the acclaimed novel *Things Fall Apart*, in which he provides a powerful voice for the Ibo, a community nearly silenced by European colonialism. In this unit, you will continue your exploration of culture by reading and studying Achebe’s novel. By immersing yourself in the culture and community of the Ibo people, you will analyze a complex

community, the institutions that enable it to function, the conflicting roles of its members, and the way in which it is affected by political and social change. Your opinions of the Ibo community’s response to change may be positive, negative, or mixed; however, like millions of others who have read the novel, you may find that the characters and community of *Things Fall Apart* remain with you long after your study is complete.



GOALS:

- To analyze cultural experiences reflected in a work of literature from outside the United States
- To analyze how complex characters in a novel develop and interact to advance a plot or theme
- To research to answer questions, explore complex ideas, and gather relevant information
- To present findings to an audience clearly and logically, making use of digital media
- To draw evidence from a literary text to support analysis and reflection

ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

- reliability
- validity
- plagiarism
- annotated bibliography

Literary Terms

- proverb
- folktale
- archetype
- epigraph
- motif
- foil
- characterization
- foreshadowing
- tragic hero
- hamartia
- irony (dramatic, verbal, situational)

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**Language and
 Writer’s Craft**

- Active and Passive Voice (3.5)
- Compare/Contrast (3.7)
- Academic Voice (3.8)
- Using Precise Language (3.11)
- Word Patterns (3.15)

*Texts not included in these materials.

Learning Targets

- Examine thematic connections between proverbs and folktales.
- Predict how and why an author uses proverbs and fables in a novel.

Proverbs and folktales are one part of a culture’s oral tradition. People share proverbs and folktales in order to express important stories, ideas, and beliefs about their culture.

1. As you read the novel *Things Fall Apart*, you will encounter many proverbs and folktales that illustrate the beliefs of the Ibo people. One memorable Ibo proverb is “Proverbs are the palm oil with which words are eaten.” Explain what you think this proverb means.
2. In small groups, read and discuss the following proverbs from the novel. Then explain each one in the graphic organizer.

Proverb	Explanation
If a child washes his hands, he could eat with kings.	
When the moon is shining, the cripple becomes hungry for a walk.	
Since men have learned to shoot without missing, [the bird] has learned to fly without perching.	
The clan was like a lizard. If it lost its tail it soon grew another.	
I cannot live on the bank of a river and wash my hands with spittle.	
A man who pays respect to the great paves the way for his own greatness.	

LEARNING STRATEGIES:

Think-Pair-Share, Word Wall, graphic organizer, Discussion Groups

Literary Terms

A **proverb** is a short saying about a general truth.
A **folktale** is a story without a known author that has been preserved through oral retellings

My Notes

Learning Targets

- Gather, evaluate, and cite sources to answer questions about the historical, cultural, social, and geographical context of the novel.
 - Use evidence from research to present findings to the class.
1. In a group, brainstorm a list of possible questions about your assigned topic. Use your questions to guide your group's research on one topic.
 2. When researching on the Internet, it is important to evaluate the **validity** and **reliability** of the information you find. Look at the authority of the information (e.g., was it written by experts?), as well as its objectivity. Use this chart to evaluate Internet sources.

LEARNING STRATEGIES:

KWHL, Brainstorming, graphic organizer, Note-taking

ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

A source has **reliability** if its information can be trusted and is of good quality.

A source that is truthful or accurate has **validity**.

Plagiarism is the act of using another person's words or ideas without giving credit.

Questions to Evaluate Sources	Responses
<p>The URL:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the website's domain? (.com = a for-profit organization; .gov, .mil, .us = a government site; .edu = an educational institution; .org = a nonprofit organization) • Is this URL a professional or personal page? 	<p>List Website (title and URL).</p> <p>What can you tell from the URL?</p>
<p>Sponsor:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What organization or group sponsors the Web page? • If it has a link (often called "About Us") that leads you to that information, what can you learn about the sponsor? 	<p>What can you learn about the page's sponsor?</p>
<p>Timeliness:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When was the page created? • When was it last updated (usually posted at the top or bottom of the page)? 	<p>What can you learn about the page's timeliness?</p>
<p>Purpose:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the purpose of the page? • Who is the target audience? • Does the page present information or opinion? 	<p>What can you tell about the page's purpose?</p>
<p>Author/Publisher:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who publishes this page? • What credentials does the author have? • Is this person or group considered an authority on the topic? How do you know? 	<p>What else can you learn about the author?</p>
<p>Links:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the page provide links that work? • Do the links go to authoritative sources? • Are they objective or subjective? 	<p>What can you tell from the links provided?</p>

Researching Context

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the*

- It is also important to avoid **plagiarism**. As you research, keep good notes about your sources and direct quotations so that you can cite them accurately. Note the URL of each site you view, as you may need to revisit the site to collect further information. Use note cards or a word processing program to record information.
- As you listen to your classmates' presentations, fill in the organizer below with information about their topics.

Topic	Research Notes
Chinua Achebe	
Nigeria: History	
Nigeria: Geography and Agriculture	
British Colonialism and Nigeria	
Missionary Involvement in Africa	
Tribal Life	

Check Your Understanding

- What are some of the key elements of a valid and reliable Internet source?
- How did your research help provide a context for the novel?
- What new predictions can you make based on the class presentations?
- Compare and contrast the class presentations: What made some more engaging, informative, or effective than others?

Learning Targets

- Plan to use reading strategies to aid comprehension.
- Understand a cultural experience reflected in a work of literature.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Chinua Achebe (1930–2013), the son of a Christian minister, was one of Nigeria’s most celebrated novelists. Born an Ibo in Ogidi, Nigeria, in 1930, Achebe was educated in English. Achebe taught English at the university level at colleges in Africa and the United States. His first and best-known novel, *Things Fall Apart*, was published in 1958. Achebe wrote several novels, short story collections, and books of essays.

1. As you examine the cover and **epigraph** of *Things Fall Apart*, what predictions can you make about the novel? Consider the title. To what “things” might Achebe be referring?

2. Copy the following names and pronunciations onto a blank bookmark supplied by your teacher. *Things Fall Apart* focuses on a culture that may be unfamiliar to you. Even though the novel is written in English, the author uses words and phrases from his native Ibo language. Review the glossary at the back of the novel. Add additional words and definitions to your bookmark as you read. Consider including: *chi*, *ilo*, *nza*, and *obi*.

Achebe (Ah-chay-bay)

Chinua (Chin-oo-ah)

Ekwefi (Eh-kweh-fee)

Ezinma (Eh-zeen-mah)

Ikemefuna (Ee-keh-meh-foo-nah)

Obierika (Oh-bee-air-ee-kah)

Nwoye (Nuh-woh-yeh)

Ojiubo (Oh-jee-oooh-boh)

Okonkwo (Oh-kawn-kwoh)

Umuofia (Oo-moo-oh-fee-ah)

Unoka (Ooh-no-kah)

LEARNING STRATEGIES:

Previewing, Predicting, graphic organizer



WORD CONNECTIONS

Roots and Affixes

Prediction contains the root *-dict-* from the Latin word *dicere*, meaning “to tell or see.” This root also appears in *contradict*, *dictate*, and *dictionary*. The prefix *pre-* means “before.” The suffix *-ion* indicates that the word is a noun.

Literary Terms

An **epigraph** is a phrase, quotation, or poem that is set at the beginning of a document or component. An epigraph may help direct the reader to the author’s purpose or theme.

My Notes

Culture Wheel

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the*

4. Work with a group to review the Ibo words and their definitions below, and then place the words into the appropriate section of the Culture Wheel organizer that follows.

Glossary of Selected Ibo Words and Phrases*

agbala	woman; also used for a man who has taken no title
ani	Earth goddess
chi	personal god
efulefu	worthless man
egwugwu	masquerader who impersonates one of the ancestral spirits of the village
ekwe	type of drum made from wood
foo foo	food made from yams that serves a chief role in the annual Feast of the New Yam
ilo	the village green where assemblies for sports, discussions, and so on take place
iyi-uwa	a special kind of stone that forms the link between an ogbanje and the spirit world (Only if the iyi-uwa were discovered and destroyed would the child not die.)
jigida	string of waist beads worn by women
kola nut	food used to greet visitors and guests
kwenu	shout of approval and greeting
ilo	village playground
Ndichie	elders
obi	large living quarters of the head of the family
ochu	murder or manslaughter
ogbanje	changeling; a child who repeatedly dies and returns to its mother to be reborn
ogene	musical instrument; a kind of gong
osu	outcast (Having been dedicated to a god, the osu was taboo and not allowed to mix with the freeborn in any way.)
oye	one of the four market days
palm wine	fermented palm sap used for celebration and ceremony
udu	musical instrument; a type of drum made from pottery
yam	most valuable cash crop grown in the village

*Source: *Things Fall Apart*, Chinua Achebe (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1958).

Writing Prompt: How is Okonkwo’s character influenced by his complex relationship with his father? Be sure to:

- Include a topic sentence that compares or contrasts the two characters.
- Use specific details and quotations from the novel as support.
- Use active voice.

Independent Practice: Double-Entry Journal

3. Look for examples of Okonkwo’s feelings and fears, the reasons for those fears, and the effect they have on his actions. Also look for a **motif** or **foil**.
 - Include textual evidence from each chapter in the left-hand column.
 - Write your personal response or interpretation in the right-hand column.
 - As you read Chapters 1–4, continue the chart on a separate sheet of paper.

Feelings and Fears: Passage from the Text	Personal Response or Interpretation
Example: “But his whole life was dominated by fear, the fear of failure and of weakness.” (Ch. 2)	I wonder why Okonkwo is so afraid. How could he be a successful wrestler if he is dominated by fear?

Literary Terms

A **motif** is a recurring image, symbol, theme, character type, or subject that becomes a unifying element in an artistic work. A **foil** is a character whose traits contrast with and therefore highlight the traits of another.



WORD CONNECTIONS

Roots and Affixes

Dominated contains the root *dom-*, from the Latin words *domus*, meaning “house,” and *dominus*, meaning “master (of the house).” This root also appears in *dominant*, *predominant*, *domineer*, *dominion*, *domestic*, and *domicile*.

My Notes



WORD CONNECTIONS

Multiple Meaning Words

In literature, a *foil* is a character. This word also refers to a sword used in the sport of fencing, and to aluminum foil. As a verb, to *foil* means to prevent success.

Check Your Understanding

- What conflicts already existed in the Ibo culture before the arrival of the colonists?
- How is Unoko (Okonkwo’s father) set up as a foil to Okonkwo?
- Predict how father/son tensions could be a motif in this novel.

Family Ties

pick up
the

My Notes

Language and Writer's Craft: Compare/Contrast

In this unit you have been comparing and contrasting Achebe's characterization. As you prepare to write a compare/contrast essay for Embedded Assessment 1, think about various ways to organize your thoughts. For example, think about the organizational structure of a thesis statement. Many compare/contrast thesis statements begin with words like *although*, *whereas*, *even though*, or *while*. These words suggest that a contrast is to follow.

Example: *Although* Okonkwo and Unoka both are tall men, Unoka walks with a stoop, suggesting that he is burdened by the expectations of his tribe.

Another way to write a compare/contrast thesis statement is to focus on differences and similarities.

Example: A similarity between Okonkwo and Unoka is that both are tall men. Their differences, though, are more pronounced than their similarities.

As you choose how to write a compare/contrast essay, focus on major ideas that you want to compare/contrast, the purpose of the essay, and the audience. You might also use a graphic organizer as a prewriting tool to help you choose ideas to compare/contrast.

Writing Prompt: How do Okonkwo's family relationships make him a sympathetic or unsympathetic character? Be sure to:

- Write a thesis statement that compares and contrasts at least two relationships and explores their effect on characterization.
- Include supporting details and quotations from the novel.
- Use an effective organizational structure with transition words and phrases.

Sacrificial Son

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the*

Question	Page No.	Answer and Support
How has Nwoye changed and what has caused the changes?		
Describe the arrival of the locusts. What is the reaction of the people of Umuofia?		
Do you think that Ikemefuna suspects that he is going to be killed? Why or why not?		
How does Okonkwo feel about Ikemefuna's death? How does Nwoye feel?		
Genesis 22:1–19 of The Bible presents the story of Abraham and Isaac. What similarities and differences are there in the sacrifices of Isaac and Ikemefuna? How does this incident illustrate the novel's father/son motif?		
How do you think the death of Ikemefuna will affect the relationship between Okonkwo and Nwoye?		
Okonkwo does not heed the advice of the old man, Ogbuefi Ezeudu. What consequences do you think there may be for his part in the death of Ikemefuna?		

Researching and Comparing Pre- and Postcolonial Ibo Culture

My Notes

Assignment

Your assignment is to examine one aspect of tribal culture presented in *Things Fall Apart*, its significance to the Ibo community, and to compare and contrast how that cultural aspect changed from precolonial to postcolonial Nigeria. You will create a presentation that reflects your research.

Planning: Take time to plan, conduct, and record your research.

- What research questions will help you compare and contrast one aspect of pre- and postcolonial Ibo culture?
- How will you find and incorporate textual evidence of your cultural aspect from the novel *Things Fall Apart*?
- How will you record your research in an annotated bibliography?

Creating and Rehearsing: Collaborate with your group to create and prepare a presentation with visual support.

- How will you select the most interesting and relevant facts and details to include in your presentation?
- How will you organize your presentation to compare and contrast Ibo culture before and after the colonial period?
- How could you use a presentation tool such as PowerPoint or Prezi to incorporate audio and visual components into your presentation?
- How will you choose relevant images and write appropriate captions to engage your audience?
- How will you divide the speaking responsibilities and transition between speakers?
- How will you use the scoring guide to revise and provide feedback on your own and others' presentations as you rehearse?

Presenting and Listening: Rehearse to deliver a smooth presentation; prepare to listen and respond to other presentations.

- What are the effective speaking and listening techniques you will need to use to engage your audience?
- During your peers' presentations, how will you organize your notes on the subject of each presentation?

Reflection

As you read the rest of *Things Fall Apart*, consider the following:

- What generalizations can you make about the impact of colonialism on native cultures?
- Which aspects of Ibo culture do you think were negatively affected by colonialism? Positively?

SCORING GUIDE

Scoring Criteria	Exemplary	Proficient	Emerging	Incomplete
Ideas	<p>The presentation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> communicates findings and evidence clearly, concisely, and logically uses well-researched, accurate, and relevant facts, details, and examples demonstrates a deep understanding of the subject. 	<p>The presentation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> communicates findings and evidence uses mostly accurate and relevant facts, details, and examples demonstrates an adequate understanding of the subject. 	<p>The presentation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> communicates insufficient findings and evidence uses inaccurate, irrelevant, or insufficient facts, details, and examples demonstrates lack of understanding of the subject. 	<p>The presentation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> communicates insufficient findings and/or no evidence uses few or no facts, details, and examples demonstrates lack of understanding of the subject.
Structure	<p>The presentation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> introduces the topic in an engaging manner, uses smooth transitions, and provides a thoughtful conclusion thoroughly analyzes the topic through compare/contrast makes strategic use of digital media to integrate multiple sources of information. 	<p>The presentation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> introduces the topic, uses transitions, and provides a conclusion analyzes the topic through compare/contrast makes use of digital media to integrate multiple sources of information. 	<p>The presentation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> lacks an introduction, transitions, and/or a conclusion does not analyze the topic through compare/contrast makes some use of digital media but may not effectively integrate multiple sources of information. 	<p>The presentation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> lacks an introduction, transitions, and/or a conclusion does not analyze the topic through compare/contrast does not use digital media and/or multiple sources of information.
Use of Language	<p>The presentation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> demonstrates effective oral communication skills (eye contact, pacing, command of formal English) uses precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to manage the complexity of the topic includes a complete annotated bibliography with correct citations, summaries, and source evaluations. 	<p>The presentation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> demonstrates adequate oral communication skills (eye contact, pacing, command of formal English) uses some precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to manage the topic includes an annotated bibliography with citations, summaries, and source evaluations. 	<p>The presentation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> lacks effective oral communication skills (eye contact, pacing, command of formal English) uses inappropriate language and/or vocabulary for the topic lacks an annotated bibliography and/or provides incorrect citations, summaries, and source evaluations. 	<p>The presentation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> lacks effective oral communication skills (eye contact, pacing, command of formal English) uses inappropriate language and no domain-specific vocabulary lacks any type of bibliography and does not provide citations, summaries, or source evaluations.

Previewing Embedded Assessment 2 and Creating a Tableau

LEARNING STRATEGIES:

Skimming/Scanning,
Summarizing, Close Reading,
Role Playing

My Notes

Learning Targets

- Identify and analyze the knowledge and skills needed to complete Embedded Assessment 2 successfully.
- Reflect on concepts, essential questions, and vocabulary.
- Analyze the roles and relationships of characters.

Making Connections

In the first part of this unit, you have been reading the novel *Things Fall Apart* and analyzing how a writer develops a story and its characters. In this last half of the unit, you will continue reading the novel and will also read informational texts to help you set the context for the novel and learn more about its author in preparation 9 for writing a literary analysis essay.

Essential Questions

Based on your understanding from the first part of the unit, how would you answer the essential questions now?

1. How might a culture change when it encounters new ideas and members?

2. How can an author use a fictional character to make a statement about culture?

Developing Vocabulary

Think about the Academic Vocabulary and Literary Terms you have studied so far in this unit. Which words or terms can you now move to a new category on a QHT chart? Which could you now teach to others that you were unfamiliar with at the beginning of the unit?

Unpacking Embedded Assessment 2

Read the assignment for Embedded Assessment 2: Writing a Literary Analysis of a Novel.

Your assignment is to write an analytical essay about *Things Fall Apart* in which you examine a character’s response to the cultural collision caused by the introduction of Western ideas into Ibo culture. In your essay, analyze how the collision challenges the character’s sense of identity and explain how his response shapes the meaning of the work as a whole.

In your own words, summarize what you will need to know to complete this assessment successfully. With your class, create a graphic organizer to represent the skills and knowledge you will need to complete the tasks identified in the Embedded Assessment.

Gender Views

pick up
the

My Notes

During Reading

2. As you read Chapter 14, look for textual evidence that presents a different view of gender now that Okonkwo has been exiled to live with his mother's kinsmen for seven years.

Ideas About Gender in Chapter 14 of *Things Fall Apart*

Quote	My Comments

After Reading

3. Prepare to discuss the following questions with a small group by highlighting textual evidence from each chart to support your responses.

- How and why do the views of gender shift from Part 1 of the novel to the first chapter of Part 2?
- How do you feel about the attitudes toward gender that are expressed in the novel? Do you agree or disagree with them?

Check Your Understanding

How are the ideas of gender expressed in the novel similar to and different from those in your own culture?

A Tragic Hero?

Learning Targets

- Understand and apply the concept of a tragic hero to Okonkwo.
 - Write to explain the degree to which Okonkwo is a tragic hero.
1. Consider the main characters in other books you have read or films you have viewed. Do those characters meet your criteria for being considered a hero?
 2. A hero is not always a **tragic hero**. Read Aristotle’s classical definition of a tragic hero, analyzed in the first column below. Then, complete the chart by providing examples from Okonkwo’s life as well as the lives of other characters from literature or film.

Aristotle’s Definition of a Tragic Hero	Examples of Okonkwo’s Heroic Behavior	Examples of Heroic Behavior from Books/Film
He has a mixture of good and bad in his personality.		
He has a fatal flaw, or <i>hamartia</i> , which leads to his downfall.		
He usually goes on a journey or participates in a quest.		
He has a large capacity for suffering.		
His downfall is often preceded by self-realization.		

LEARNING STRATEGIES:
graphic organizer, Drafting

My Notes

Literary Terms

A **tragic hero** is a central character who is usually of high or noble birth and demonstrates a “fatal flaw.” The tragic hero’s fatal flaw is **hamartia**, an ingrained character trait that causes the hero to make decisions leading to his or her death or downfall.

A Tragic Hero?

pick up
the

My Notes

Language and Writer's Craft: Word Patterns

When reading and writing, be aware of the patterns that many words follow as they change from a noun to an adjective to a verb. Be sure to use the correct form in your writing. For example:

Noun: *analysis*

Verb: *analyze*

Adjective: *analytical*

Noun: *beauty*

Verb: *beautify*

Adjective: *beautiful*

Some words do not change form when they are used as different parts of speech. For example:

Noun: *address* (a residence, a speech)

Verb: *address* (speak to)

Noun: *challenge* (a dare or invitation to a contest)

Verb: *challenge* (defy or issue a call to a contest)

3. Look at the following word pairs and decide which is the noun and which is the adjective.

angry, anger

misery, miserable

natural, nature

strong, strength

easy, ease

zeal, zealous

Check Your Understanding

Writing Prompt: To what degree does Okonkwo fit Aristotle's definition of a tragic hero? What flaw leads to his downfall? Be sure to:

- Include an introduction that defines a tragic hero.
- Provide supporting details and textual evidence from different chapters.
- Write a conclusion that includes reflection on another tragic hero.

Learning Targets

- Analyze how key plot events develop a theme related to cultural conflict.
- Cite thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly and to draw evidence from the text.

LEARNING STRATEGIES:
Socratic Seminar, graphic organizer, Discussion Groups

Before Reading

1. In Chapter 15, Uchendu says, “The world has no end, and what is good among one people is an abomination with others.”

Part 2 of *Things Fall Apart* introduces the cultural conflict when white men come into contact with the Ibo. Predict what aspects of each culture might appear as an “abomination” to the other.

My Notes

During Reading

2. Chapters 15–19 span six years in the life of Okonkwo and his village. Record key events and explain their significance on the chart below.

Key Events of Chapter	Why Events Are Important
Chapter 15—second year of exile	
Chapter 16—fourth year of exile	
Chapter 17	
Chapter 18—last year of exile	
Chapter 19	

Colliding Cultures

pick up
the

My Notes

After Reading

3. Work with a partner to select three to five key events. List them below. For each event, write an interpretive or universal question that will help you explore the conflicting cultures in Part 2 of *Things Fall Apart*. You will use these questions as you participate in a **Socratic Seminar**.

Event 1:

Event 2:

Event 3:

Event 4:

Event 5:

Check Your Understanding

Expository Writing Prompt: After you participate in a Socratic Seminar about cultural conflict in *Things Fall Apart*, choose one of the events discussed and explore its significance in a timed response. Be sure to:

- Discuss how the event develops a theme related to cultural conflict.
- Use precise vocabulary and an academic voice.
- Cite textual evidence to support your interpretation.

Learning Targets

- Analyze how different characters and conflicts advance the plot.
- Make connections to the cultural misunderstandings in the novel.

Before Reading

1. Read the excerpt below from Chapter 20 of *Things Fall Apart*. Underline or highlight statements that illuminate the misunderstandings between the Ibo and the missionaries.

Does the white man understand our customs about land?

How can he when he does not even speak our tongue? But he says that our customs are bad; and our own brothers who have taken up his religion also say that our customs are bad. How do you think we can fight when our own brothers have turned against us? The white man is very clever. He came quietly and peaceably with his religion. We were amused at his foolishness and allowed him to stay. Now he has won our brothers, and our clan can no longer act like one. He has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart.

2. With a partner, choose one of the statements and decide whether or not Obierika's assessment of the situation is accurate. Find textual evidence from the novel to support or refute the statement.

During Reading

3. Use the following chart to compare and contrast the two missionaries, Mr. Brown and Mr. Smith. Record what each says and does, along with their attitudes and beliefs. Continue on a separate page if needed.

Mr. Brown	Mr. Smith

LEARNING STRATEGIES:
Skimming/Scanning, graphic organizer, Rereading

GRAMMAR & USAGE Complex Sentences

Writers use complex sentences to create an interesting style. A **complex sentence** contains an independent clause and at least one subordinate clause. Think about how clauses work in these two sentences: "He knew *that he had lost his place* (noun clause) among the nine masked spirits *who administered justice in the clan* (adjective clause)." "How do you think we can fight *when our own brothers have turned against us* (adverb clause)?" What other examples can you find from the text?

My Notes

Cultural Misunderstandings

pick up the

After Reading

4. Work with group members to consider why someone from another culture might think the practices or beliefs listed below are strange. Add at least one more cultural aspect to the organizer along with your response.

Cultural Practice or Belief	Why Someone from Another Culture Might Find the Practice or Belief Strange
In the novel <i>The Poisonwood Bible</i> , an African man comes to America and is shocked to find out that Americans use the bathroom <i>in</i> their house and not outside away from the home.	
Many Americans adorn their bodies with different types of tattoos and piercing.	

5. Identify Ibo beliefs and practices in *Things Fall Apart* that differ from those of modern Americans. Contrast them below.

Ibo Belief or Practice	Modern American Belief or Practice
Twins are considered evil and abandoned in the Evil Forest.	Twins are usually welcomed and cared for by their families.

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WORD CONNECTIONS

Multiple Meaning Words

The word *right* has several meanings, such as correct or a legal right. *Right* also can refer to a turn or to a type of triangle.

Check Your Understanding

- Can one culture be “right” and another culture “wrong”? Explain.
- How did the two missionaries respond differently to cultural misunderstandings?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Winner of the 1923 Nobel Prize for Literature, William Butler Yeats (1865-1939) produced some of the most enduring poems written in English in the twentieth century. Despite living in Ireland during decades of great political and religious upheaval, Yeats's poems are marked by a deep mysticism, specific symbolism, and universal emotions.

Poetry

The Second Coming

by William Butler Yeats

Turning and turning in the widening gyre

The falcon cannot hear the falconer;

Things fall apart; the center cannot hold;

Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,

5 The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere

The ceremony of innocence is drowned;

The best lack all conviction, while the worst

Are full of passionate intensity.

Surely some revelation is at hand;

10 Surely the Second Coming is at hand;

The Second Coming! Hardly are those words out

When a vast image out of *Spiritus Mundi*

Troubles my sight: somewhere in sands of the desert

A shape with lion body and the head of a man,

15 A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,

Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it

Reel shadows of the indignant desert birds.

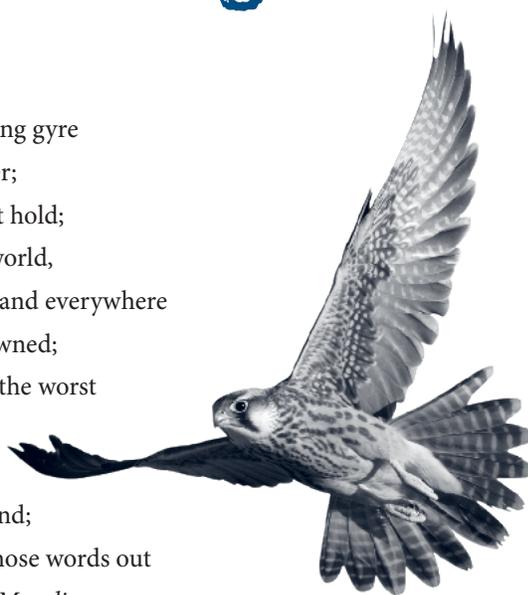
The darkness drops again; but now I know

That twenty centuries of stony sleep

20 Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle,

And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,

Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?


**WORD
CONNECTIONS**
Roots and Affixes

Anarchy contains the root *-arch-*, from the Greek word *archos*, meaning “leader.”

This root also appears in *architect*, *patriarch*, *archangel*, and *monarchy*. The prefix *an-* means “not” or “without.”

My Notes

KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS

An **allusion** is a reference to a well-known person, event, or place from history, music, art, or another literary work. What allusions do you recognize in the poem? Why do you think the author uses them?

A Letter to the District Commissioner

*pick up
the*

LEARNING STRATEGIES:
Discussion Groups, Drafting

Literary Terms

Irony is a literary device that exploits a reader's expectations. Irony occurs when what is expected turns out to be quite different from what actually happens. **Dramatic irony** occurs when the reader or audience knows more about the circumstances or future events in a story than the characters within it. **Verbal irony** occurs when a speaker or narrator says one thing while meaning the opposite. **Situational irony** occurs when an event contradicts the expectations of the characters or the reader.

My Notes

Learning Targets

- Analyze the use of irony in the novel.
- Write to explain the negative effects of cultural misunderstanding.

Before Reading

1. Consider the three events from the novel summarized below. What kind of **irony** does each represent? Explain.

Event 1: At the end of Chapter 15, Okonkwo tells his good friend Obierka that he doesn't know how to thank him enough for tending his yam crop while Okonkwo is in exile. Obierka tells Okonkwo to kill himself.

Event 2: Okonkwo's greatest fear is that he will appear weak and feminine. He appears to have little respect for women. Yet his favorite child, the one with whom he has the closest bond and understanding, is his daughter Ezinma.

Event 3: In Chapter 7, when Ikemefuna thinks he is journeying with the clansmen to the home of his birth, he is worried about whether his mother is alive, but otherwise feels safe. The reader knows that he is actually about to be killed.

2. With a partner, review Chapters 23–25, looking for textual evidence of different kinds of irony. List and explain at least two examples:

Example 1:

Example 2:

Interview

AN AFRICAN VOICE

Chinua Achebe, the author of one of the enduring works of modern African literature, sees postcolonial cultures taking shape story by story

by Katie Bacon

Chunk 1

Chinua Achebe's emergence as "the founding father of African literature ... in the English language," in the words of the Harvard University philosopher K. Anthony Appiah, could very well be traced to his encounter in the early fifties with Joyce Cary's novel *Mister Johnson*, set in Achebe's native Nigeria. Achebe read it while studying at the University College in Idaban during the last years of British colonial rule, and in a curriculum full of Shakespeare, Coleridge, and Wordsworth, *Mister Johnson* stood out as one of the few books about Africa. *Time* magazine had recently declared *Mister Johnson* the "best book ever written about Africa," but Achebe and his classmates had quite a different reaction. The students saw the Nigerian hero as an "embarrassing nitwit." *Mister Johnson*, Achebe writes, "open[ed] my eyes to the fact that my home was under attack and that my home was not merely a house or a town but, more importantly, an awakening story."

In 1958, Achebe responded with his own novel about Nigeria, *Things Fall Apart*, which was one of the first books to tell the story of European colonization from an African perspective. (It has since become a classic, published in fifty languages around the world.) *Things Fall Apart* marked a turning point for African authors, who in the fifties and sixties began to take back the narrative of the so-called "dark continent."

Achebe depicts his gradual realization that *Mister Johnson* was just one in a long line of books written by Westerners that presented Africans to the world in a way that Africans didn't agree with or recognize, and he examines the "process of 're-storying' peoples who had been knocked silent by all kinds of dispossession." He ends with a hope for the twenty-first century—that this "re-storying" will continue and will eventually result in a "balance of stories among the world's peoples."

Achebe encourages writers from the Third World to stay where they are and write about their own countries, as a way to help achieve this balance. Yet he himself has lived in the United States for the past ten years—a reluctant exile. In 1990, Achebe was in a car accident in Nigeria, and was paralyzed from the waist down. While recuperating in a London hospital, he received a call from Leon Botstein, the president of Bard College, offering him a teaching job and a house built for his needs. Achebe thought he would be at Bard, a small school in a quiet corner of the Hudson River Valley, for only a year or two, but the political situation in Nigeria kept worsening. During the military dictatorship of General Sani Abacha, who ruled from 1993 to 1998, much of Nigeria's wealth—the country has extensive oil fields—went into the pocket of its leader, and public infrastructure that had been quite good, like hospitals and roads, withered. In 1999, Olusegun Obasanjo became Nigeria's first democratically elected President since 1983, and the situation in Nigeria is improving, albeit slowly and shakily. Achebe is watching from afar, waiting for his country to rebuild itself enough for him to return.

My Notes

KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS

What inspired Achebe to write the novel *Things Fall Apart*? What did he want to accomplish?

GRAMMAR & USAGE
Dash

Writers use a **dash** to indicate a break in their thoughts. The dash may mean "in other words" or "that is to say," or it may set off parenthetical information or thoughts. A dash fits between two words without spaces between the dash and the words. Notice how the writer of this article uses the dash for emphasis and for parenthetical information.

The Author's Perspective

pick up
the

My Notes

KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS

What is the connection with storytelling and power, and what is the problem with that?

KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS

Why does Achebe view the “mindless absorption” of American ideas as a problem?

KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS

How can the English language be used as a weapon?

And therefore, describing this fate that the Africans would have had back home became the motive for the literature that was created about Africa. Even after the slave trade was abolished, in the nineteenth century, something like this literature continued, to serve the new imperialistic needs of Europe in relation to Africa. This continued until the Africans themselves, in the middle of the twentieth century, took into their own hands the telling of their story.

QUESTION 5

And that's what started with *Things Fall Apart* and other books written by Africans around the 1950s.

Yes, that's what it turned out to be. It was not actually clear to us at the time what we were doing. We were simply writing our story. But the bigger story of how these various accounts tie in, one with the other, is only now becoming clear. We realize and recognize that it's not just colonized people whose stories have been suppressed, but a whole range of people across the globe who have not spoken. It's not because they don't have something to say, it simply has to do with the division of power, because storytelling has to do with power. Those who win tell the story; those who are defeated are not heard. But that has to change. It's in the interest of everybody, including the winners, to know that there's another story. If you only hear one side of the story, you have no understanding at all.

QUESTION 6

Chunk 5

Do you see this balance of stories as likely to emerge in this era of globalization and the exporting of American culture?

That's a real problem. The mindless absorption of American ideas, culture, and behavior around the world is not going to help this balance of stories, and it's not going to help the world, either. People are limiting themselves to one view of the world that comes from somewhere else. That's something that we have to battle with as we go along, both as writers and as citizens, because it's not just in the literary or artistic arena that this is going to show itself. I think one can say this limiting isn't going to be very healthy for the societies that abandon themselves.

QUESTION 7

In an *Atlantic Unbound* interview this past winter Nadine Gordimer said, “English is used by my fellow writers, blacks, who have been the most extreme victims of colonialism. They use it even though they have African languages to choose from. I think that once you've mastered a language it's your own. It can be used against you, but you can free yourself and use it as black writers do—you can claim it and use it.” Do you agree with her?

Yes, I definitely do. English is something you spend your lifetime acquiring, so it would be foolish not to use it. Also, in the logic of colonization and decolonization it is actually a very powerful weapon in the fight to regain what was yours. English was the language of colonization itself. It is not simply something you use because you have it anyway; it is something which you can actively claim to use as an effective weapon, as a counterargument to colonization.

QUESTION 8

Chunk 6

There are those who say that media coverage of Africa is one-sided—that it focuses on the famines, social unrest, and political violence, and leaves out coverage of the organizations and countries that are working. Do you agree? If so, what effect does this skewed coverage have? Is it a continuation of the anti-Africa British literature you talk about in *Home and Exile*?

Yes, I do agree. I think the result has been to create a fatigue, whether it's charity fatigue or fatigue toward being good to people who are less fortunate. I think that's a pity. The reason for this concentration on the failings of Africans is the same as what we've been talking about—this tradition of bad news, or portraying Africa as a place that is different from the rest of the world, a place where humanity is really not recognizable. When people hear the word *Africa*, they have come to expect certain images to follow. If you see a good house in Lagos, Nigeria, it doesn't quite fit the picture you have in your head, because you are looking for the slum—that is what the world expects journalists covering a city in Africa to come back with.

Now, if you are covering America, you are not focusing on slums every day of your life. You see a slum once in a while, maybe you talk about it, but the rest of the time you are talking about other things. It is that ability to see the complexity of a place that the world doesn't seem to be able to take to Africa, because of this baggage of centuries of reporting about Africa. The result is the world doesn't really know Africa. If you are an African or you live in Africa, this stands out very clearly to you, you are constantly being bombarded with bad news, and you know that there is good news in many places. This doesn't mean that the bad news doesn't exist, that's not what I'm saying. But it exists alongside other things. Africa is not simple—people want to simplify it. Africa is very complex. Very bad things go on—they should be covered—but there are also some good things.

This is something that comes with this imbalance of power that we've been talking about. The people who consume the news that comes back from the rest of the world are probably not really interested in hearing about something that is working. Those who have the ability to send crews out to bring back the news are in a position to determine what the image of the various places should be, because they have the resources to do it. Now, an African country doesn't have a television crew coming to America, for instance, and picking up the disastrous news. So America sends out wonderful images of its success, power, energy, and politics, and the world is bombarded in a very partial way by good news about the powerful and bad news about the less powerful.

QUESTION 9

You mentioned that literature was used to justify slavery and imperialism. What is this negative coverage of Africa being used to justify now?

It's going to be used to justify inaction, which is what this fatigue is all about. Why bother about Africa? Nothing works there, or nothing ever will work. There is a small minority of people who think that way, and they may be pushing this attitude. But even if nobody was pushing it, it would simply happen by itself. This is a case of sheer inertia, something that has been happening for a long time just goes on happening, unless something stops it. It becomes a habit of mind.

My Notes

KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS

According to Achebe, how is the media coverage of Africa different from the coverage of countries like America?

KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS

Objects at rest remain at rest unless influenced by an outside force. This concept is referred to as *inertia*. To what is Achebe referring when he mentions inertia?

The Author's Perspective

pick up
the

KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS

What does Achebe wish Americans could learn from Nigerians?

My Notes

KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS

How does Achebe use a strategy of negation to define a “universal civilization”?

QUESTION 10

Chunk 7

Has living here changed the way you think about Nigeria?

It must have, but this is not something you can weigh and measure. I've been struck, for instance, by the impressive way that political transition is managed in America. Nobody living here can miss that if you come from a place like Nigeria which is unable so far to manage political transitions in peace. I wish Nigeria would learn to do this. There are other things, of course, where you wish Americans would learn from Nigerians: the value of people as people, the almost complete absence of race as a factor in thought, in government. That's something that I really wish for America, because no day passes here without some racial factor coming up somewhere, which is a major burden on this country.

QUESTION 11

Could you talk about your dream, expressed in *Home and Exile*, of a “universal civilization”—a civilization that some believe we've achieved and others think we haven't?

What the universal civilization I dream about would be, I really don't know, but I know what it is not. It is not what is being presented today, which is clearly just European and American. A universal civilization is something that we will create. If we accept the thesis that it is desirable to do, then we will go and work on it and talk about it. We have not really talked about it. All those who are saying it's there are really suggesting that it's there by default—they are saying to us, let's stop at this point and call what we have a universal civilization. I don't think we want to swindle ourselves in that way; I think if we want a universal civilization, we should work to bring it about. And when it appears, I think we will know, because it will be different from anything we have now.

There may be cultures that may sadly have to go, because no one is rooting for them, but we should make the effort to prevent this. We have to hold this conversation, which is a conversation of stories, a conversation of languages, and see what happens.

After Reading

4. Present your chunk of the interview to a group of students who read different chunks. Include your notes from the graphic organizer, your metacognitive markers, and your responses to the key questions. Work together with your new group to compose a list of additional questions you would like to ask Mr. Achebe.

Check Your Understanding

Consider the Essential Question for this unit: “How can an author use a fictional character to make a statement about culture?”

- How did the interview clarify Achebe's purpose?
- Do you think he was successful?

Writing a Literary Analysis Essay

SCORING GUIDE

Scoring Criteria	Exemplary	Proficient	Emerging	Incomplete
Ideas	<p>The essay</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> thoroughly examines a character's response to the cultural collision in the novel clearly and accurately analyzes characterization, theme, and author's purpose develops the topic with smooth integration of relevant textual evidence, including details, quotations, and examples. 	<p>The essay</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> examines a character's response to the cultural collision in the novel adequately analyzes characterization, theme, and author's purpose develops the topic with sufficient textual evidence, including details, quotations, and examples. 	<p>The essay</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> incompletely examines a character's response to the cultural collision in the novel provides insufficient analysis of characterization, theme, or author's purpose provides insufficient textual evidence, including details, quotations, and examples. 	<p>The essay</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> does not examine a character's response to the cultural collision in the novel lacks analysis of characterization, theme, or author's purpose provides little or no textual evidence, including details, quotations, and examples.
Structure	<p>The essay</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses an effective organizational strategy that follows a logical progression of ideas introduces the topic engagingly, links supporting ideas, and provides a thoughtful conclusion uses appropriate and varied transitions. 	<p>The essay</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses an adequate organizational strategy that contains a logical progression of ideas introduces the topic, links supporting ideas, and provides a conclusion uses some varied transitions. 	<p>The essay</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses an inconsistent or flawed organizational structure lacks an introduction to the topic, links between supporting ideas, and/or a conclusion uses weak, repetitive, or insufficient transitions. 	<p>The essay</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> does not use an obvious organizational structure lacks an introduction to the topic, links between supporting ideas, and/or a conclusion uses no transitions.
Use of Language	<p>The essay</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses precise language and variety of sentence structures maintains an academic voice and objective tone demonstrates consistent command of conventions (grammar, usage, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling). 	<p>The essay</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses some precise language and variety of sentence structures generally maintains an academic voice and objective tone demonstrates adequate command of conventions; may have some errors in grammar, usage, capitalization, punctuation, or spelling that do not interfere with meaning. 	<p>The essay</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses vague or inappropriate language and flawed or simplistic sentence structures lacks an academic voice and objective tone demonstrates partial or insufficient command of conventions; errors in grammar, usage, capitalization, punctuation, or spelling interfere with meaning. 	<p>The essay</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses inappropriate language and only simple sentences lacks an academic voice and objective tone demonstrates little command of conventions; significant errors in grammar, usage, capitalization, punctuation, or spelling interfere with meaning.