

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

I. Read AND annotate the following:

Things.Fall.Apart Reader's Guide By [Chinua Achebe](#)  
Introduction

Things.Fall.Apart, Chinua Achebe's first novel, was published in 1958. Worldwide, there are eight million copies in print in fifty different languages. This stunning work, which John Updike calls "a great book, that bespeaks a great, brave, kind human spirit," is often compared to the great Greek tragedies. It concerns itself with the classic struggle between rigid traditionalism and the winds of change. Specifically, it is about the effects of British colonialism on a small Nigerian village at the turn of the century. A simple story of a "strong man" whose life is dominated by fear and anger, it is written with remarkable economy and subtle irony. Uniquely and richly African, at the same time it reveals Achebe's keen awareness of the human qualities common to men of all times and places.

Chinua Achebe was born in Nigeria in 1930. He was raised in the large village of Ogidi, one of the first centers of Anglican missionary work in Eastern Nigeria, and is a graduate of University College, Ibadan. His early career in radio ended abruptly in 1966, when he left his post as Director of External Broadcasting in Nigeria during the national upheaval that led to the Biafran War. He was appointed Senior Research Fellow at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, and began lecturing widely abroad. From 1972 to 1976, and again in 1987 to 1988, Mr. Achebe was a Professor of English at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, and also for one year at the University of Connecticut, Storrs. Cited in the London Sunday Times as one of the 1,000 "Makers of the Twentieth Century," for defining "a modern African literature that was truly African" and thereby making "a major contribution to world literature," Mr. Achebe has published novels, short stories, essays, and children's books. His volume of poetry, *Christmas in Biafra*, written during the Biafran War, was the joint winner of the first Commonwealth Poetry Prize. His

novel *Arrow of God* was winner of the New Statesman-Jock Campbell Award, and *Anthills of the Savannah* was a finalist for the 1987 Booker Prize in England. Often mentioned as a leading candidate for the Nobel Prize in Literature. Mr. Achebe holds an Honorary Fellowship of the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters, as well as more than twenty honorary doctorates from universities in England, Scotland, the U.S., Canada, and Nigeria. He is also the recipient of Nigeria's highest award for intellectual achievement, the Nigerian National Merit Award. <https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/565351/things-fall-apart-by-chinua-achebe/9780385474542/readers-guide/>

AI Overview (I, Mrs. S., typed in "What do students need to know before reading Things.Fall.Apart")

Before reading Things.Fall.Apart, students should understand that Chinua Achebe wrote the novel to counter European stereotypes of Africa by portraying a complex, pre-colonial Igbo society. Key areas of focus include understanding the impact of British colonialism, the function of cultural traditions like proverbs and titles, and the roles of masculinity and community in the story. [1, 2, 3, 4, 5]

Key Knowledge Areas Before Reading

- **Historical Context:** The novel is set in the late 19th-century Nigeria during the onset of British colonialism, marking the collision of African communities with European powers.
- **Cultural Background (Igbo Society):** Students should understand that Umuofia is a complex, structured society with its own government, legal system, and religion, not the "primitive" depiction often found in European literature.
- **Key Themes:**
  - **Tradition vs. Change:** The tension between traditional life and the

encroaching Western religion/government.

- Masculinity: The protagonist, Okonkwo, is driven by an extreme fear of being perceived as weak or feminine, a motivation rooted in his culture's, but his own, strict interpretation of masculinity.
- Colonialism/Christianity: The role of missionaries in dismantling local

culture, which brought both educational opportunity and social division.

- Structure & Language: Achebe incorporates Igbo words and proverbs to authenticate the narrative and show that the community has a rich, sophisticated oral tradition. [[1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#), [7](#)]

II. Google the landscape of Nigeria

III. Read and annotate the book. Stop at the end of each chapter to summarize on the next sheet. Also, keep your characters listed below in order that you meet them. These notes and annotations, including from I above, will be part of your summer reading grade.

IV. Get a ½ inch to a 1 inch binder for this class and a pack of at least 5 tabs. You will need this on the first day!

Character/Place List and Descriptions: (I have STARTED this for you)

PLACES

Okonkwo =

Umuofia =

Unoka =

Mbaino =

Okoye =

Ikemefuna =

Chapter Summaries (Handwrite these. Do not type or use another document.):

Part One 1:

2:

3:

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Part Two 14:

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Part Three 20.

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