

Things Fall Apart by Chinua Achebe Notes And Background Information

I. Chinua Achebe (1930-2013)



- A. Born in Ogidi, Nigeria in 1930, the son of a missionary school teacher
- B. Studied English, history, and theology at Government College and University College in Nigeria, where he earned a B.A.; later earned an M.A. from the University of Mass.
- C. Worked as a teacher and broadcast director
- D. Founded a publishing company and became a research fellow/professor of English at several universities, including the University of Nigeria, Bard College (New York), and Brown University
- E. Died in Boston in March, 2013 at the age of 82

F. Major works

- 1. Novels: *Things Fall Apart* (1958), *No Longer at Ease* (1960), *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987)
- 2. Poetry: *Beware, Soul Brother* (1971), *Collected Poems* (2004)
- 3. Non-fiction: *The Trouble with Nigeria* (1983), *Hopes and Impediments* (1988)

- G. Writing Style: standard English, blended with pidgin, Igbo vocabulary, proverbs, imagery, and speech patterns

II. Nigeria



A. Historical Background

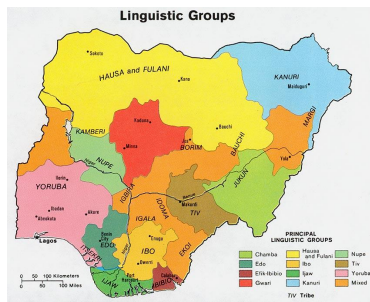
- 1. 500-200 B.C.: dominated by the Nok, followed by the Kanem-Bornu, Benin, and Hausa kingdoms
- 2. 15th century: explored by the Europeans, becoming a center for the slave trade
- 3. 1861-1960: British colonial rule
- 4. 1960: became an independent nation; as of 1963 divided into 36 states and 1 territory

A. Modern Nigeria

1. population: over 149 million (July, 2009)
2. official language: English
3. major tribal languages: Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo, and Fulani
4. 250 ethnic groups: Hausa-Fulani (20%), Yoruba (21%), and Igbo (18%)
5. Religions: Muslim (50%); Christian (40%); indigenous (10%)
6. Economy: petroleum based



Map of Nigerian states



Nigerian Linguistic Groups



Nigerian Flag

III. *Things Fall Apart*



- Published in 1958
- Title inspired by the 1919 poem "The Second Coming" by William Butler Yeats: "Things fall apart; the center cannot hold;" (line 3)
- Setting: eastern Nigeria, late 1800s-early 1900s, during the British colonial expansion into Umuofia
- Synopsis
 - Part I examines the life of the Igbo village of Umuofia before the arrival of the British, focusing on the main character Okonkwo
 - Part II examines Okonkwo's life in exile
 - Part III examines life in Umuofia after British rule is established

IV. The Igbo (also Ibo) Tribe

