

Patriarchy and Things Fall Apart

Name _____ Date _____

Bell hooks defines patriarchy as political-social system that insists that males are inherently dominating, superior to everything and everyone deemed weak, especially females, and endowed with the right to dominate and rule over the weak and to maintain that dominance through various forms of psychological terrorism and violence. In other words, patriarchy is a system which impacts both the government and the manner in which people think is the best way to behave. It argues that men are superior to everyone and if you are not a male, you are deemed weak – especially women. It also argues that traits like strength and violence are what makes a person powerful and if a man does not exhibit strength violently this man is lesser (women of course are totally weak).

What are five examples of patriarchy that are seen in *Things Fall Apart*?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

It is clear that patriarchy is prevalent in *Things Fall Apart*, but it is important to examine the ways in which women have power throughout the novel. For example Ani, the earth deity serves a foundational deity in Odinani tradition – the religion that indigenous Igbo people follow. Ani is explained as a goddess or a woman/female/feminine manifestation of god. Moreover, Okonkwo is forced into exile due to the murder of a clansman – which is a crime against the earth goddess.

Additionally, Agbala is the deity which can predict the future and has the ability to speak on behalf of the ancestors. The priestess of Agbala, is Chielo who designates Ezinma her daughter and chastises Okonkwo for his disrespect of the gods. Okonkwo's obsession with strength and violence being the ultimate of a man leads to his demise. He kills Ikemefuna due to fear of looking weak, he disrupts the Week of Peace and disrespects Ani by beating his wife, and he accidentally kills Ezeudu's son while shooting a gun in a warrior's salute. While the Igbo as explained by Achebe are clearly patriarchal (or a group of people who follow the system of patriarchy), the Igbo's practices still hold women in high regard and understand that women are essential to life.