

Masculinity and Femininity in Things Fall Apart

Character Analysis

Okonkwo

- Okonkwo wins a wrestling match against The Cat to earn respect. What does this tell us about Okonkwo and being a stereotypical man?



Okonkwo

- Read the description of of Okonkwo on page 3 – 4.
 - How does this description illustrate Okonkwo's masculine characteristics?
- Fire – How is fire a symbol for Okonkwo's anger and masculinity? Can you find a quotation that illustrates this?**

Unoka

- Okonkwo's Father
 - Read the description of Unoka on page 4 – 5
- Compare and contrast Okonkwo and Unoka. How does one's description/characteristics differ from the other? Which is traditionally masculine? Which is traditionally feminine?*

Okonkwo's Father / Son Relationship

- His relationship with his father shapes most of his violent and harsh personality.
 - He wants to overcome his father's poor background and rise to prominence.
- “**Agbala**” which means woman and a reference to a man with no title

Women

- Okonkwo has 3 wives and 8 children and they live in fear of him.
- He frequently beats his wives and associates anger with masculinity.
- Women in Ibo tribe are frequently mistreated, given little respect.

Women in the Novel Continued

- Do you think the women in the novel are weak? Are they portrayed as that?

What are some instances where the women in the novel demonstrate strength?

Ikemefuna

- Okonkwo stabs Ikemefuna violently, even though the boy calls him father.
- He does this so he doesn't seem weak and effeminate in the eyes of others.
- In many ways this is the beginning of 'Things Falling Apart.' So one could argue that the idea of masculinity and femininity signify the downfall of Okonkwo and his village.

Nwoye

- Loves his mother's stories and is very close to his mother.
- Resists his father's idea of masculinity when the missionaries arrive

Are the missionaries a representation of femininity?

Tragic Flaw

- A tragic flaw is “a trait in a character leading to his/her downfall, and the character is often the hero of the literary piece. This trait could be the lack of self – knowledge, lack of judgment, and often pride.” ([Literary Devices.net](#))

How is Okonkwo a tragic hero?
