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task Achebe set for himself in writing this book.February 17, 2023The 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.The world has no end, and what is good among one people is an abomination with others.If you don't like my story, write your own.Things Fall Apart, published in 1958, has the reputation of being the first great African novel. Set in the late 1800s, the story revolves around Okonkwo, a prominent farmer and community leader who has worked hard since he was forced to fend for himself at an early age after his deadbeat father died young. But Okonkwo worries that the next generation does not respect tradition. Worse, British Missionaries have arrived, threatening to destroy village life as they know it.There are some timeless themes explored in this novel. And the writing is technically strong, subtle and full of symbolism (yams, anyone?). That said, Things Fall Apart is a tough read in 2019. First, at least half the book is a rather detailed account of daily village life that, candidly, did not interest me very much (so many yams). In this respect, it reminded me of the exhaustive sections on island life in Robinson Crusoe. Far more importantly, the book suffers because Okonkwo is a rather reprehensible character. Because of his fear of being weak like his father, he cultivates a fiery temper. He regularly beats his wives; his family is afraid of him. He can think of no greater insult for a man than to call him a woman.Things Fall Apart is not the type of novel I typical read, as I generally opt for a bit lighter fare. I read it because I'm working my way through the Pop Chart 100 Essential Novels, which is the point: to force myself to read classics outside of my wheelhouse. I respect its status as a groundbreaking classic, but this book just did not work for me. I understand its the first of a trilogy, but I dont plan to read the rest of the series.2019 from-library pc-100-essential-readFebruary 9, 2017Achebe's classic is a quick and interesting read albeit with a depressingly realistic end. My curiosity will most likely lead me to more of his work and I enjoyed the narrative style. The ambiguities of cultural clash with an obvious misbalance of power and the two different kinda of brutality in the conflict were thought-provoking and painful to read because they were surely even worse in real life.african-lit fiction nigerian-20th-c June 17, 2021Oh boy, where do I start? I read Things Fall Apart (the entire African Trilogy acutally) this year for Black History Month. So quite a bit of time has passed already and I am unhappy to report that the story hasnt really left a lasting impression on me. I have forgotten many plot points and had to consult many secondary sources in order to write this review. I definitely want to reread Things Fall Apart when I am older. I think its one of those books that, to put it into Calvinos words, has never exhausted what it has to say; it is definitely a most important document in the history of African literature, and I think Ill appreciate it even more later in life.Before Things Fall Apart was released, most of the novels about Africa had been written by European authors, portraying Africans as savages who were in need of Western enlightenment. Achebe, who had studied English literature at university, quickly realised that there was a gap in his bookshelf where African literature should have been. Thus far, novels of the caliber of Joseph Conrads Heart of Darkness were the custom when it came to descriptions of Africa in literature and we all know what Achebe thought of Conrad and his notion of Africans as rudimentary souls. So, I think we can all agree with Achebe, that he and all the other African writers of the time were incredibly brave and needed to finally fill that gap. Things Fall Apart was written in 1958 as the colonial system was falling apart in Africa. Its story chronicles pre-colonial life in the south-eastern part of Nigeria and the arrival of the Europeans during the late nineteenth century. It is seen as the archetypal modern African novel in English, one of the first to receive global critical acclaim. It is a staple book in schools throughout Africa and is widely read and studied in English-speaking countries around the world. The novel follows the life of Okonkwo, an Igbo man and local wrestling champion in the fictional Nigerian clan of Umuofia. The work is split into three parts, with the first describing his family, personal history, and the customs and society of the Igbo, and the second and third sections introducing the influence of British colonialism and Christian missionaries on the Igbo community. Does the white man understand our custom 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.I have to admit that I found it incredibly hard, at first, to keep track of what was happening in the story. I might be at fault here because I definitely didnt read it as attentively as I could have, but the reader has to get through a large portion of info dumbs and various introductions of characters in the first few chapters of this novel. It is very palpable that Achebe wrote Things Fall Apart with a Western audience in mind. He explains to us certain festivities and traditions in a very straightforward way. He introduces us to the Ancestral religion and different gods, he explains how a bride price is decided, how certain pieces of clothing are worn and how certain instruments look and are being played. Being from the West, those explanations were definitely needed and came in handy, nonetheless, they interrupted the flow of the story and more often than not pulled me out of it. Having read the remainder of The African Trilogy, I can attest that those info dumbs became less and less as the books move along, and thus made a much more enjoyable overall reading experience for me possible, since most things are somewhat understandable through context.Achebe wrote his novels in English because the written standard Igbo language was created by combining various dialects, creating a stilted written form. In a 1994 interview with The Paris Review, Achebe said, "the novel form seems to go with the English language. There is a problem with the Igbo language. It suffers from a very serious inheritance which it received at the beginning of this century from the Anglican mission. They sent out a missionary by the name of Dennis. Archdeacon Dennis. He was a scholar. He had this notion that the Igbo languagewhich had very many different dialectsshould somehow manufacture a uniform dialect that would be used in writing to avoid all these different dialects. Because the missionaries were powerful, what they wanted to do they did. This became the law. But the standard version cannot sing. There's nothing you can do with it to make it sing. It's heavy. It's wooden. It doesn't go anywhere.Achebe's choice to write in English has caused controversy. While both African and non-African critics agree that Achebe modelled Things Fall Apart on classic European literature, they disagree about whether his novel upholds a Western model, or, in fact, subverts or confronts it. Personally, I also remain undecided on this issue. Achebe continued to defend his decision. "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. And I definitely cant fault him for that logic. I actually quite agree with it. Nonetheless, throughout the book it also becomes clear that Achebe tried to adhere to the Western standard, in all probability to be respected as a serious author, and I cant fault him for that either. Turning and turning in the widening gyreThe falcon cannot hear the falconer:Things fall apart; the center cannot hold:Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world.He admits himself that the usage of the opening stanza of William Butler Yeatss poem The Second Coming, from which the title of the novel is taken, as an epigraph to Things Fall Apart, was purely done for show. He says: Actually, I wouldnt make too much of that. I was showing off more than anything else. As I told you, I took a general degree, with English as part of it, and you had to show some evidence of that. Apart from that, Things Fall Apart suffer from the unlikeable characters-syndrome. There are simply not many people to root for in this novel. Okonkwo is strong, hard-working, and strives to show no weakness, but he is also obsessed with his masculinity. He sees (and treats) his wives as inferior. As a result, he often beats his wives and children, and is unkind to his neighbours. I was quite prepared for Achebe to show the patriarchal structures of village life, and dont fault him for showing it how it was, nonetheless, that prevented me from showing to much empathy toward Okonkwo. Unfortunately, the female characters truly take the backseat in this novel and I never really got a sense for their personality and therefore didnt root form them either. Achebe doesnt deem them important enough to make the according place for them within this narrative. It seemed as if the very soul of the tribe wept for a great evil that was comingits own death.One thing I absolutely adored about this book, however, was its ending. I know it might come across as quite gimmicky and in-yo-face but I think that Achebe achieved what he wanted to show in the most straightforward way. At the end, when the local leader of the white government, Gregory Irwin, comes to Okonkwo's house to take him to court, he finds that Okonkwo has hanged himself to avoid being tried in a colonial court. Among his own people, Okonkwo's actions have tarnished his reputation and status, as it is strictly against the teachings of the Igbo to commit suicide. A researcher comments that the story of Okonkwo will make for a good page in his book, or at least a paragraph.This sentence, which concludes the novel, satirizes the entire tradition of Western ethnography and imperialism itself as a cultural project, and it suggests that the ethnographer in question, the District Commissioner, knows very little about his subject and projects a great deal of his European colonialist values onto it. The language of the commissioners proposed title reveals how misguided he is: that he thinks of himself as someone who knows a great deal about pacifying the locals is highly ironic, since, in fact, he is a primary source of their distress, not their peace.african-writers black-writersMay 12, 2016 . " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " Displaying 1 - 30 of 22,142 reviewsGet help and learn more about the design.Chinua Achebe (/tnw tɪ/, born Albert Chinualumogu Achebe; 16 November 1930 21 March 2013) was a Nigerian novelist, poet, professor, and critic. His first novel Things Fall Apart (1958) was considered his magnum opus, and is the most widely read book in modern African literature.Raised by his parents in the Igbo town of Ogidi in South-Eastern Nigeria, Achebe excelled at school and won a scholarship for undergraduate studies. He became fascinated with world religions and traditional African cultures, and began writing stories as a university student. After graduation, he worked for the Nigerian Broadcasting Service (NBS) and soon moved to the metropolis of Lagos. He gained worldwide attention for Things Fall Apart in the late 1950s; his later novels include No Longer at Ease (1960), Arrow of God (1964), A Man of the People (1966), and Anthills of the Savannah (1987). Achebe wrote his novels in English and defended the use of English, a "language of colonisers", in African literature. In 1975, his lecture An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's "Heart of Darkness" featured a famous criticism of Joseph Conrad as "a thoroughgoing racist"; it was later published in The Massachusetts Review amid some controversy.When the region of Biafra broke away from Nigeria in 1967, Achebe became a supporter of Biafran independence and acted as ambassador for the people of the new nation. The war ravaged the populace, and as starvation and violence took its toll, he appealed to the people of Europe and the Americas for aid. When the Nigerian government retook the region in 1970, he involved himself in political parties but soon resigned due to frustration over the corruption and elitism he witnessed. He lived in the United States for several years in the 1970s, and returned to the U.S. in 1990 after a car accident left him partially disabled.A titled Igbo chieftain himself, Achebe's novels focus on the traditions of Igbo society, the effect of Christian influences, and the clash of Western and traditional African values during and after the colonial era. His style relies heavily on the Igbo oral tradition, and combines straightforward narration with representations of folk stories, proverbs, and oratory. He also published a number of short stories, children's books, and essay collections. From 2009 until his death, he served as David and Marianna Fisher University Professor and Professor of Africana Studies at Brown. Bio from Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia. Photo by Stuart C. 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What happened in chapter 11 of things fall apart. What happened in things fall apart chapter 1. What happened in chapter 22 of things fall apart. What happened in chapter 3 of things fall apart.