

Principles of Literary Study  
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Office hours: Mondays 2:00–3:00 or by appointment

April 26, 2021. Achebe (4).

## upcoming

- ▶ paper 2 pre-writing due Wednesday
  - ▶ working on *motive*
- ▶ paper 2 due Sunday, May 9
- ▶ course evaluation: <https://sirs.ctaar.rutgers.edu/blue>
  - ▶ I wish I could give you sugary snacks as you fill it out

## the matter of colonialism

One could almost write a whole chapter on him. Perhaps not a whole chapter but a reasonable paragraph, at any rate. There was so much else to include, and one must be firm in cutting out details. He had already chosen the title of the book, after much thought: *The Pacification of the Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger*. (208–9)

## Okonkwo/Umuofia

Okonkwo's machete descended twice...

He heard voices asking: "Why did he do it?"

(204–5)

## protagonists

Mr. Kiaga stood firm, and it was his firmness that saved the young church. (157)

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He had just sent Okonkwo's son, Nwoye, who was now called Isaac, to the new training college for teachers in Umuru. (182)

# Quayson

1. Identify the motive: what is the problem Quayson addresses?
2. Now locate a major argumentative claim about the novel: how do you know?
3. Think about Quayson's reading of evidence: can we carry his interpretation further or critique it?

## motive

All these critical formations in relation to Achebe's work can be perceived as united in subtle maneuvers that take the culture of the realist novel as most truthfully inscribing the space and time of history. (122)

This reading of *Things Fall Apart*, then, is offered as a means of exposing the gap that exists between the realist African text and the reality that it is seen to represent. (125)

Reading "culture" out of a novel is valuable but inadequate. (133)

## argument (dialectical synthesis)

*Things Fall Apart* thus explores a loving image of Umuofia at the same time as it reveals a dissatisfaction with the values of the society it describes in such detail. And this is undertaken at a more subtle level than the mere explication of content can reveal. (133)

I agree with him and add that the very choice of the metropolitan language for the writing of post-colonial literatures secretes liminality into the inaugural act of post-colonialist representation itself. (124)

## Achebe's language

It did not occur to him [Achebe] that he was the first great African writer in the English language...Shortly afterwards he came to London on a course at the BBC. He showed it [*Things Fall Apart*] to his course officer who sent it round to Heinemann's Heinemann's normal fiction reader read it and did a long report, but the firm was still hesitating whether to accept it. Would anyone possibly buy a novel by an African? There were no precedents.

Alan Hill, interviewed by Kristen Holst Petersen in 1990, rpt. in *Things Fall Apart*, ed. F. Abiola Irele (New York: Norton, 2009), 148–49.

Maybe someday I will, myself, translate *Things Fall Apart* into the Igbo language. Just to show what I mean, though, for me, being bilingual, the novel form seems to go with the English language. Poetry and drama seem to go with the Igbo language.

“Chinua Achebe, *The Art of Fiction No. 139*,” interviewed by Jerome Brooks, *Paris Review* 133 (Winter 1994).

next

- ▶ Coetzee, “The Novel in Africa” (story...kind of)
- ▶ Coetzee, “The Dog” (story)