



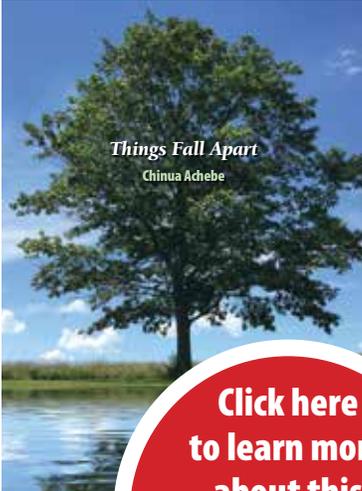
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Things Fall Apart
Chinua Achebe



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Response Journal

To The Student

Although we may read a novel, play, or work of non-fiction for enjoyment, each time we read one, we are building and practicing important basic reading skills. In our ever-more complex society, in which reading has become more and more crucial for success, this, in itself, is an important reason to spend time reading for enjoyment.

Some readers, however, are able to go beyond basic reading techniques and are able to practice higher thinking skills by reflecting on what they have read and how what they read affects them. It is this act of reflection—that is, stopping to think about what you are reading—that this journal is attempting to encourage.

To aid you, we have included writing prompts for each section; however, if you find something that you wish to respond to in the book more compelling than our prompts, you should write about that. We hope you enjoy reading this book and that the act of responding to what you have read increases this enjoyment.

After you read the indicated sections, choose the questions to which you will respond. Keep in mind that there are no right or wrong answers to these prompts, and there is no one direction in which you must go.

Part One

Chapter One

1. As you may know, William Butler Yeats was a famous Irish poet who lived from 1869 to 1939. Many parts from his poems are quoted even today, as witness the title of Chinua Achebe's novel. Below are other full or partial lines from Yeats' poems. Beside each write 1) the title of the poem from which the words come, and 2) in complete sentences, a paragraph which tells what that poem is about. The first one is given as a sample. Please follow that format. You may need to use the Internet.

- a. "Too long a sacrifice
Can make a stone of the heart."
From: Easter, 1916

This poem is written about the Irish Rebellion against the ruling British in Ireland in 1916.

- b. "An aged man is but a paltry thing.
A tattered coat upon a stick, unless..."
From:

- c. "When you are old and grey and full of sleep,
And nodding by the fire..."
From:

Chapter Two

4. The life of the village of Umuofia is simply but beautifully drawn in this novel. Look closely at this chapter to see how the pride in the values of the community is understated in describing its possessions and ways. To distinguish between that time and the present time, list the things which were present only in the African society of the 1890s. Beside it, list which equivalent things would be present in today's times. Please follow the format below, where the first item is given as a sample.

Past time

Present time

Palm oil lamp

Electric lamp

5. We all are deeply interested in how our country is governed as well as war and peace. In this chapter we see how the Umuofia people govern themselves and how peace or war is decided in the village. Imagine that you have firm views about how government should work in issues of war or peace. Keeping the way of the Umuofias in mind in these matters, write a letter to the President of the United States telling him of your feelings about our government today. You also might want to offer advice to him about any situation in the world. Be sure that your letter is respectful as you state your opinions. You could begin your letter as follows:

President _____
The White House
Washington, DC
Dear President _____,

Chapter Four

10. As we learn in this chapter, Okonko has risen to be one of the lords of the clan. His character flaws, despite this renown in his rise from humble beginnings, are beginning to show to the people of the village. Reread this chapter to appraise the type of person Okonkwo actually is. In the format below, analyze Okonkwo's character so you may be able to more fully understand him. The first one is given as an example.

Character Trait

Example showing this trait

1. killing another man's spirit

by calling him a woman

11. Okonkwo was so feared when he went to settle with the enemy village that the villagers agreed to the alternative to war, the giving of a virgin and a boy to the Umuofia village. Imagine you are a civil rights lawyer who has been hired by the families of the girl and the boy who are to be taken away from their homes and families. They are to be brought to Umuofia as virtual slaves. Write the opening argument you would be presenting to an imaginary jury pleading for the enemy village not to send the children away to Umuofia. You could begin your opening argument as follows:

Ladies and Gentlemen of the jury, a terrible thing is about to be done to a young girl and a young boy.

Chapter Eleven

30. As you will have noticed, this novel has many wonderful folk stories. Two of the most detailed and engrossing are contained in this chapter. Choose which of the two stories—Ekwefi’s or Ezinma’s—that you like best, and reread it. Imagine you have been asked to design the cover for a children’s book based on the story you have chosen. Using a piece of unlined paper, draw and color a front cover of the book jacket. It might be a good idea to borrow a fiction book from the library with a cover that you find attractive for inspiration. Make sure your printing of the title and author’s name are interesting and appropriate and that your illustration is vivid, colorful, and takes up most of the book jacket so it makes a lasting impression.
31. The story of Ezinma being taken to the Agbala in his house “in the hills and the caves” is chilling. We know from the chapter what Ekwefi and Okonkwo did after Ezinma was carried away by Chielo. Imagine that you are the parent of a ten-year-old girl, and the same thing happened to you in the village of Umuofia. You can choose to be either Ekwefi or Okonkwo. Write a paragraph detailing your internal and/or external reaction to Chielo’s demand. Then explain what you actually did, why you did it, and how the whole situation ended.
32. In this chapter, we learn a bit about the relationship between Ekwefi and her husband, Okonkwo, and how they came to be together. Imagine that you are the other two wives of Okonkwo and are sitting together making foo-foo for an upcoming feast. You both have observed the relationship of Ekwefi and Okonkwo over the years. Complete the following conversation about Ekwefi and Okonkwo’s relationship:

First Wife: Those two! Sometimes I think he loves her desperately and other times I think he just loves beating her. What do you think of them?

Second Wife: Well, the way they first met each other was pretty romantic, I’ll have to admit, but...