
Book Review: Things Fall Apart

In *Things Fall Apart*, Chinua Achebe provides a detailed account pertaining the imposition of Western ideologies in Africa. The ideologies, largely Christian values and the way of life, are responsible for the erosion of pertinent African cultural values as seen in the book. Within the novel, the main protagonist Okonkwo is used by the author to express numerous thematic dispositions. For instance, the role of a man, the value of family, and adherence to cultural practices amongst other factors are some of the main aspects highlighted through the transitioning predicament of Okonkwo. Through *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe ascertains his credulity as a reputable writer of African literature. Kenaleman indicates that the account was written by Achebe to demystify the depiction of Africans as savages by Europeans (2). His attention to details regarding the unique cultural values of the Igbo is one of the unique aspects that makes Achebe a great African writer appreciative of his culture. To accomplish the primary agenda, this critical review analyses the thematic expression of conflict, which the author excels in presenting.

Conflict is the main concept propagated by Achebe in *Things Fall Apart* and it is evident from the title of the novel. *Things fall apart* paints an impression in the reader's minds that the ending is not going to be good. This is exhibited with the death of the protagonist, as well as the end of the Igbo's traditional social set up that was premised on countless cultural adherence. It is an insightful and a bold move by Achebe to provide the reader the scope of the book in mere three words. For the audience, it is a reflection that things were flowing well for the protagonist. However, by the end of the book, circumstances will have drastically changed for everybody involved. It thus, excels as an outstanding way of insinuating the thriving of conflict in the book. Conflict is evident from the beginning with the protagonist unhappy with his family background. Having been left behind by a less achieving father who had many unpaid debts and dubbed a coward by his peers, Okonkwo is determined to be the opposite. It is the ideological conflict from what his father stood for that Okonkwo develops to be a successful man. However, such is not the only incidence of conflict that the author utilizes to shape his scope of the book. The incidences of conflicts are spread throughout the novel. For instance, after working hard to become successful, Okonkwo had three wives and several children. He ruled his family by the fist, where children and wives alike received beatings regularly. This type of conflict, not acknowledgeable at that particular time is used by the author to depict the position of a man in the traditional Igbo social set up.

The consideration of Igbo's cultural practices to outline the main conflict in the book ascertains the author's thorough treatment of the subject. As acknowledged earlier, there are numerous conflicts within the novel. However, to drive the main agenda of justifying the uniqueness of Africans as Kenaleman indicates, Achebe dives deeper into the Igbo's traditional values. For cultural competence regarding the Igbo, the author does not have to rely on other sources than himself. Born and raised within the Igbo traditional social set up, Achebe had a good account of how the society was set up before the European interference. It is based on the fundamental cultural variances that the conflict thrives. However, for the main conflict to be created, a conflict from within becomes inevitable. Okonkwo, deep into his created macho character struggles with grief and guilt after participating in the killing of his adoptive son, Ikemefuna. However, he hides the feeling for the fear of being depicted as weak. The killing of Ikemefuna alienates Okonkwo

from his biological son Nwoye. It is from there that events continue spiralling out control, leading Okonkwo to kill a boy during a funeral and being banished for seven years for the crime. The attention to specific cultural dispositions of the Igbo enables Achebe to avoid generalization of the subject. The goal was to prove to the Europeans that Africans were not savages. This is evident as every undertakings by the protagonist and the supporting characters have cultural significance or repercussions. The accidental killing of the boy earns Okonkwo banishment and the unavoidable need of starting afresh. Significantly, it is from the cultural conflict encountered by the protagonist that the author creates a loophole into the main conflict. Within the seven years of his banishment, European settlers began introducing Christianity and opposing Igbo's cultural observations. Achebe paints a clear picture of the transitioning that eroded African values that the protagonists dearly believed. Six decades down the line since the book was written, its relevance is still evident, though from a different perspective of neocolonialism.

In summary, it is evident that the scope of the book is premised on the thriving of conflict. From the beginning to the end, the protagonist is faced with numerous conflicts that help shape the thesis of the novel. However, the ultimate conflict that outlines the intended message is during the encounter between the Igbo and the white settlers. Achebe utilizes cultural justification covered in a larger section of the book to point out that Africans are indeed unique but not savages. The attention to cultural specifics avoids the generalization of the intended message, an aspect that makes the novel stand out regarding its place in African literature and history.