

## THINGS FALL APART WEBQUEST

### Overview:

*Things Fall Apart* is set in pre-colonized Nigeria. The main characters are members of the Ibo tribe. Do any of you know anything about Nigeria or the Ibo? No? Well, here's your chance to learn. Before we begin reading Achebe's book, you'll need to learn something about the culture he is writing about.

### Task:

You will research some basic information about different aspects of the book, the author, the Nigeria described by Achebe, as well as numerous cultural characteristics. **You are expected to write answers by hand on your own paper.** You will need this information to help with the context of *Things Fall Apart*. There could be a quiz!

### Instructions:

Read the information on the web pages listed, take notes, record the web address for the sources you use, and then use this information to address the questions listed in your presentation.

#### 1. Nigeria

##### a. History: British Colonialism: look at all sites before addressing the questions

- i. [Merriam-Webster: Colonialism](#)
- ii. [The Myth of Neo-colonialism](#)
- iii. [The Colonial History and Literature of Nigeria](#) (Read only the first eight sections, from "The beginning of Nigerian Literature" to "A literary view of Nigeria by British writers.")
- iv. [Missionaries in Pre-Colonial and Early Colonial Nigeria](#)
  1. What is British Colonialism? When/why did it occur?
  2. How long was Nigeria a colony? How did it affect Nigeria?
  3. What was the effect of colonialism on Nigerian culture and politics?

##### b. Geography//Agriculture: look at all sites before addressing the questions

- i. <http://www.nigeriahc.org.uk/about-nigeria>
  1. Where is Nigeria? What is the climate? Growing season? Agriculture?
  2. How does the geography affect agriculture here?
  3. What agricultural products are found in Nigeria?
  4. How does agriculture contribute to the nation's economy?

#### 2. Ibo People: Do a search for websites about the Ibo people and look at the sites listed below before addressing the questions.

- a. <http://logicerror.com/thingsFallApart-review> (Destroying Native culture)
- b. [Webster defines Ibo](#)

- i. Where are the Ibo people from? Give a short history of the Ibo people
- ii. What happened to the Ibo people in the late 1800's?
- iii. What does tribal life look like for the Ibo tribe?

#### 3. Chinua Achebe: Complete a search over the life of Chinua Achebe and look at any sites listed below before addressing the questions. Feel free to look at other sites as well.

- a. [Chinua Achebe and Language](#)
  - i. Who is Chinua Achebe? When and why did he write *Things Fall Apart*?
  - ii. What was Chinua Achebe's original name? Is he Nigerian by birth?
  - iii. What is a theme that runs through Achebe's writings?
  - iv. What is the greatest influence on Chinua Achebe's writing? What other statements has he made about writing this book?
  - v. Why does Achebe mix English and Ibo in his work? Does the use of the Ibo language help or hurt the reader in understanding his work?
  - vi. Should Nigeria reject English in favor of their native language? Why?

#### 4. Modern Nigeria

- a. [Igbo](#): Complete a search on the modern Igbo people and answer the following question:
  - i. In what ways are the people in Ibo society equal?
  - ii. Describe the religious structure of the Ibo.
- b. [Nigeria](#)
  - i. Why did Nigeria have so many coups (overthrowing the government) and dictators?
  - ii. What is the basis of the Nigerian economy?
  - iii. Where do the Ibo live in Nigeria?

#### 5. Fables and Proverbs: after you look at these sites, consider the questions below...

- a. [Fables](#)
- b. [Parables](#)
- c. [African Proverbs](#)
- d. [Background on African Folktales](#)
  - i. What is the definition of a fable?
  - ii. List three characteristics of a parable.
  - iii. There are several fables and parables in American lore as well. Discuss one in detail.
  - iv. Why are African proverbs so important to African culture?
  - v. Find one proverb listed and describe its meaning.
  - vi. Find one example of an African proverb on another website.

#### 6. Ibo Government: after you look at these sites, consider the questions below...

- a. [Ibo Government](#)
  - i. What is the "age-grade?" and what is their function in Ibo society?
  - ii. What is the difference between Diala and non-Diala?
  - iii. How do the Ibo make decisions?
  - iv. Why did the Europeans think that the Ibo were truly practicing democracy?

#### 7. Agriculture in Nigeria

- a. [Yam](#)
- b. [Palm oil](#)
- c. Among the most important crops cultivated by the Ibo are the yam and the oil palm. The African yam is a large tuber with a thick, dark outer skin covering white meat. Yams can be boiled, mashed, fried, or roasted like potatoes. The oil palm tree reaches heights of 30 feet or more. Small oval fruit grows in large clusters at the base of the leaves. Oil from the fruit's soft shell is used to make soap and candles. Palm-kernel oil is squeezed from the hard nut inside the fruit.
  - i. What is a staple? What were the two important staples of Nigerian tribal life?
  - ii. How is the palm oil used? What might be our connection to palm oil?
  - iii. How are yams stored? How are yams prepared to eat?
  - iv. What percent of the world's yams are produced in Africa?

#### 8. Nigerian Music and Masks: look at all sites before addressing the questions

- a. [Nigerian Music](#)
- b. [Ibo music](#)
- c. [Nigerian Percussion](#)
- d. [Pictures of African drums](#)
  - i. Why is Nigerian music called "the heart of African music"?
  - ii. What is the importance of the slit drum?
  - iii. List three common percussion instruments and explain why they are important.
- e. **Masks**
- f. [Masks and Meaning](#)

- g. [Masks pictures](#) (You may wish to search Google Images also; this site prices and sells African art pieces, and the pictures change often.)
  - i. How were the masks used in Ibo culture?
  - ii. What did they represent? What is their significance?

**9. Women in the Tribe: after you look at these sites, consider the questions below...**

- a. [Women in Achebe's World:](#)
- b. <http://www.postcolonialweb.org/nigeria/contwomen.html>
- c. <http://www.nigeriavillagesquare.com/articles/rita-gonyok/the-critical-role-of-women-in-nigerian-politics.html>
- d. Ibo women were not without power, and Achebe describes the *umuada*, or daughters of the clan, who seem to exercise authority in certain arenas. According to Rhonda Coleman, a critic who has studied the anthropological literature on the Ibo, the *umuada* also regulated the markets in each town and settled civic and marital disputes. The wives of the clan would bring pressure to bear on a man guilty of wife abuse through public humiliation. Women would harass him in front of clan members with songs and gestures of a rude nature until he changed his behavior. In the meantime, according to Coleman, kinsmen of the battered woman who had married into the clan would pressure their own men to do something about the abuse.
  - i. Name the ways both black women and white women were treated in Nigeria during pre-colonial times.
  - ii. What role did women play in pre-colonial Nigeria? What about today?
  - iii. From the passage above, how did women still keep some power? What did they control?

**10. Chi, The Spiritual Double**

- a. Check out this site: [Chi](#)
- b. According to an Ibo proverb, "Nothing can stand alone; there must always be another thing standing beside it." So too, a human being must have some company.
  - i. What is *chi*?
  - ii. Who has *chi*?
  - iii. Can you think of something to compare *chi* with in our culture? (Hint: what do you feel if you do right or wrong?)

**11. Ibo Currency: look at all sites before addressing the questions**

- a. [Cowrie](#)
- b. For further explanation:
  - i. What did the Ibo tribe use for money?
  - ii. How much typically purchased a bride?
  - iii. How many shells were in each bag?
  - iv. What does the cowrie shell come from and what does it look like?

**12. Ibo Edibles: Part One**

- a. <http://www.bioline.org.br/request?np09028>
- b. [http://www.ehow.com/list\\_7365110\\_igbo-spices.html](http://www.ehow.com/list_7365110_igbo-spices.html)
- c. Alligator pepper: sometimes called wild ginger or *malegueta* (Portuguese). This spice grows well on land newly cleared and burnt for farming. [Alligator Pepper picture](#)
- d. [http://eatyourworld.com/destinations/africa/general\\_sierra\\_leone/sierra\\_leone/what\\_to\\_eat/foofoo](http://eatyourworld.com/destinations/africa/general_sierra_leone/sierra_leone/what_to_eat/foofoo)
- e. [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y\\_m3X6qx9oI&noredirect=1](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y_m3X6qx9oI&noredirect=1)
- f. <http://www.tropiway.com/index.cfm?PageID=2>
- g. **foo-foo:** a dough made from mashed yams or from another tuber, called cassava. Foo-foo might be served in a calabash, a container made from hollow shells of the gourd-like fruit of the calabash tree. Foo-foo, usually eaten with a tasty sauce, is a staple food in many regions of West Africa.

- h. <http://ezinearticles.com/?Palm-Wine-and-Its-Importance-In-Traditional-Igbo-Society&id=5498205>
- i. Palm wine: describe what you have learned about Palm Wine and its significance to the Ibo culture especially with respect to hospitality and the economy
  - i. Describe what you have learned about these edibles spice and the significance of each to the Ibo culture and/or economy

**13. Ibo Edibles: Part Two**

- a. Kola nut: a nut inside the kola, which looks like a green grapefruit. Nuts are silver or pink and their juice contains caffeine. [Kola Nut](#)
- b. Coco-yam: a large-leafed plant with round underground tubers, called taro in Asia, and known in the United States as the base for Hawaiian poi. [See Taro plant.](#)
- c. Cassava: root vegetable, also called manioc. Its leaves are rich in nutrients. The roots are processed to make foo-foo. The leaves are cooked as a green vegetable. In granular form, cassava is known as tapioca. Cassava is a staple food in many parts of West Africa. See [Casava](#)
  - i. Describe each of the above edibles; explain what you have learned about each of them. Discuss the importance of each to the Ibo culture and economy

**14. Common Ailments**

- a. **Iba (malaria)**
  - i. [Malaria](#)
  - ii. What is iba? Where is it most likely found (in the world)?
  - iii. How can one get it?
  - iv. What are the symptoms? (What does it feel like to have it?)
- b. **Edema: The Swelling Disease: after you look at these sites, consider the questions below...**
  - i. [Edema](#)
  - ii. [Edema Overview](#)
    1. What is Edema? Why is it such a concern for the Ibo people?
    2. What can cause Edema?
    3. What part of the body is affected by Edema?