



education

Department:
Education
PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

CURRICULUM GRADE 10 -12 DIRECTORATE

NCS (CAPS)

ENGLISH HOME LANGUAGE

GRADE 11

TEACHER SUPPORT DOCUMENT

THINGS FALL APART

JUST IN TIME (JIT) PROGRAMME

MARCH 2024

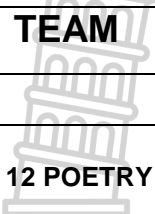


1. PURPOSE AND RATIONALE


“Things Fall Apart” is rich in literary techniques and themes such as the clash of cultures, the consequences of change, the nature of power and the complexities of identity. Chinua Achebe’s novel has sparked discussions about post-colonialism, feminism and the representation of Africa in literature. Teaching “Things Fall Apart” encourages learners to consider multiple perspectives and engage in debates about power dynamics, cultural authenticity and narrative voice. This guide aims to enable and empower learners to engage in close reading, critical thinking and in-depth analysis of the text to deepen their understanding of the novel.



2. JIT RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT TEAM – MAY 2024



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Before teaching the novel, the teacher of English should provide learners with a brief overview of it.

3. OVERVIEW OF THE NOVEL

Things Fall Apart, written by Chinua Achebe, is simple story of a "strong man" whose life is dominated by fear and anger,

It is set in pre-colonial Nigeria. The novel chronicles the life of Okonkwo, a proud Igbo warrior, as he navigates the shifting dynamics of his community.

It captures the cultural richness of Igbo society, delving into its customs and traditions, spirituality, and social structures.

The novel follows the life of Okonkwo, an influential leader of the fictional Igbo ("Ibo" in the novel) clan of Umuofia. Among other things, he is a feared warrior and a local wrestling champion.

- The novel is split into three parts, with the first describing his family, personal history, his violent exterior and tortured soul, and the customs and society of the Igbo.
- The second and third sections introduce the influence of European colonialism and Christian missionaries on Okonkwo, his family, and the wider Igbo community.

4. AUTHOR'S BACKGROUND

Chinua Achebe was born on November 16, 1930, in Ogidi, Nigeria and on died March 21, 2013, in Boston, Massachusetts. He was a Nigerian novelist.

Achebe grew up in the Igbo (Ibo) town of Ogidi, Nigeria. After an automobile accident in Nigeria in 1990 that left him partially paralyzed, he moved to the United States.

He was one of the most famous 20th Century African writers. He published his first novel, Things Fall Apart, in 1958 and has since published four more novels and a series of short stories, essays, and other literature. Much of Achebe's work focuses on the themes of colonialism, post-colonialism, and the tumultuous political atmosphere in post-colonial Nigeria.

Chinua Achebe died in Boston on March 22, 2013. He was 82 years old.

5. PLOT STRUCTURE / DIAGRAM

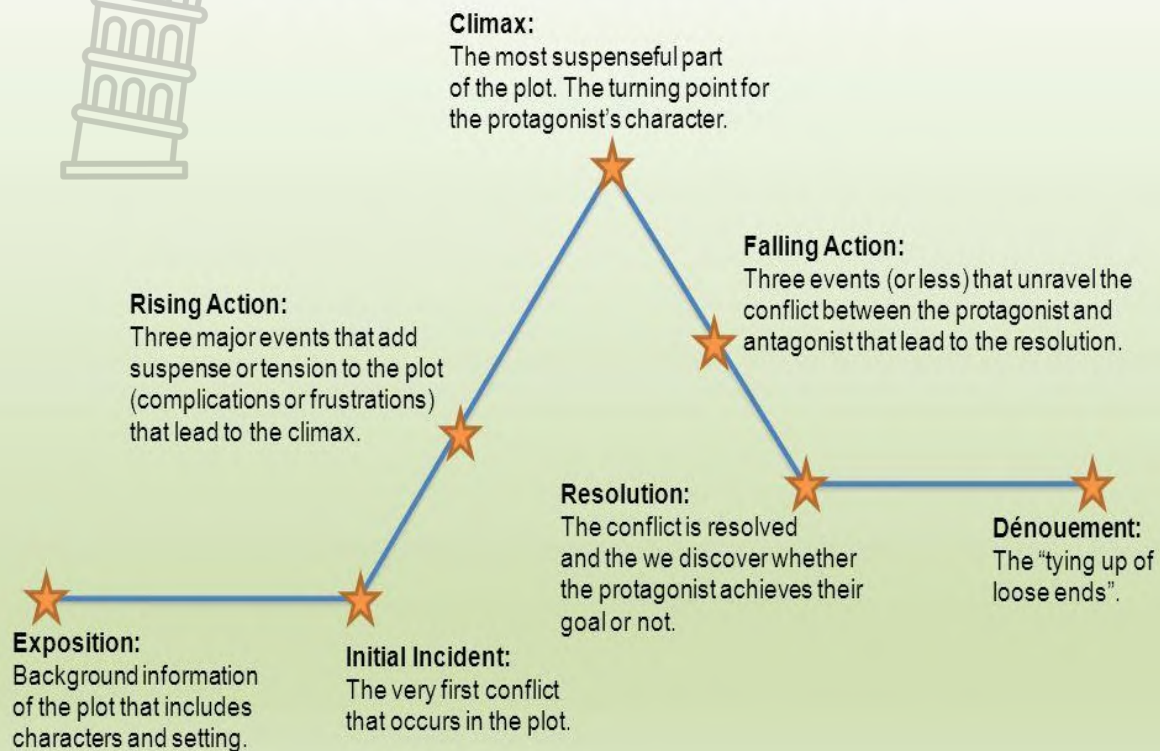
Freytag's pyramid is a very helpful tool to teach plot structure. Before any novel is taught to learners, the structure of the plot must be discussed.

The plot diagram helps the learner to organise a story into specific parts.

Use Freytag's Pyramid below to teach learners the structure of the plot.



FREYTAG'S PYRAMID



- Discuss each part of the diagram with learners.
- Guide them to complete the activity on the PLOT STRUCTURE in the learner's guide.



5.1 ANSWERS TO PLOT DIAGRAM



EXPOSITION: Umuofia, Africa in the 1800's.

INCITING ACTION: Unoka, Okonkwo's father was known as the biggest failure in all of Umofian history.

RISING ACTION: Okonkwo prides himself on being the best leader of Umofia, or at least, being nothing like his father. He has three wives and an array of children.

CLIMAX: Okonkwo attends the funeral of Ezeudu, and as they are paying their respects, he accidentally shoots someone. The people of Umofia are outraged by his actions and someone Okonkwo and his family are thrown out of Umofia.

FALLING ACTION: Okonkwo and his family go to live where his uncle, Uchendu, lives. He is forced to be away from Umofia for seven years. Okonkwo plans to rebuild his life for that time being. Uchendu helps Okonkwo get settled and start farming again.

RESOLUTION: Seven years later, Okonkwo returns to Umofia to find that the white men have completely taken over. Okonkwo is disappointed that the people of Umofia have lost the will to fight and stand up for themselves against the white men. Christianity is taking over Umofia and Okonkwo and others burn down a church. They are imprisoned until a fine is paid for their actions.


DENOUEMENT: Once the fine is paid and the prisoners are released, Okonkwo goes back home. He is distraught and hangs himself. One of the commissioners come to visit him, and finds him dead. Obrieka enlists the help of the commissioner to bury Okonkwo. Later the commissioner plans to write a book about Okonkwo.

6. STORY STRUCTURE

This activity allows learners to place events in chronological order.

It allows learners to tell the story in their own words.

The following may be used as a guide for teachers to prompt the learner along.

 Opening of the book	The opening of Chinua Achebe's <i>Things Fall Apart</i> introduces Okonkwo, the main character of the story, and the village of Umuofia which he lives. It also shares information about Okonkwo's personality and how it both differs from and was shaped by his father Unoka, who was lazy and carefree.
Ikemefuna's life with the family	Ikemefuna lives with Okonkwo's first wife and quickly becomes a well-loved member of the family. He serves as a role model for Okonkwo's eldest son, Nyowe, and over time he also earns Okonkwo's respect. Ikemefuna comes to call Okonkwo "father".
Ikemefuna's death	The village elders decide that the time has come to kill Ikemefuna and finally settle the dispute with the neighbouring village. Okonkwo insists on taking part in the execution, despite the fact that the boy calls him "father". Ikemefuna's death harms the relationship Okonkwo has with Nyowe. His death signals the start of things falling apart.
Life in Umuofia and Ezinma's trip	The village of Umuofia is the symbolic heart of <i>Things Fall Apart</i> , as well as the setting for much of the novel's action. Umuofia is patriarchal and run by a council of elders and titled men. Ezinma is forced to go with Chielo to Agbala's house is the sacred cave. Ekwefi and Okonkwo follow Chielo to the cave, both very concerned. Chielo refers to Ezinma as "my daughter", suggesting a relationship that may lead Chielo to choose Ezinma as a priestess.

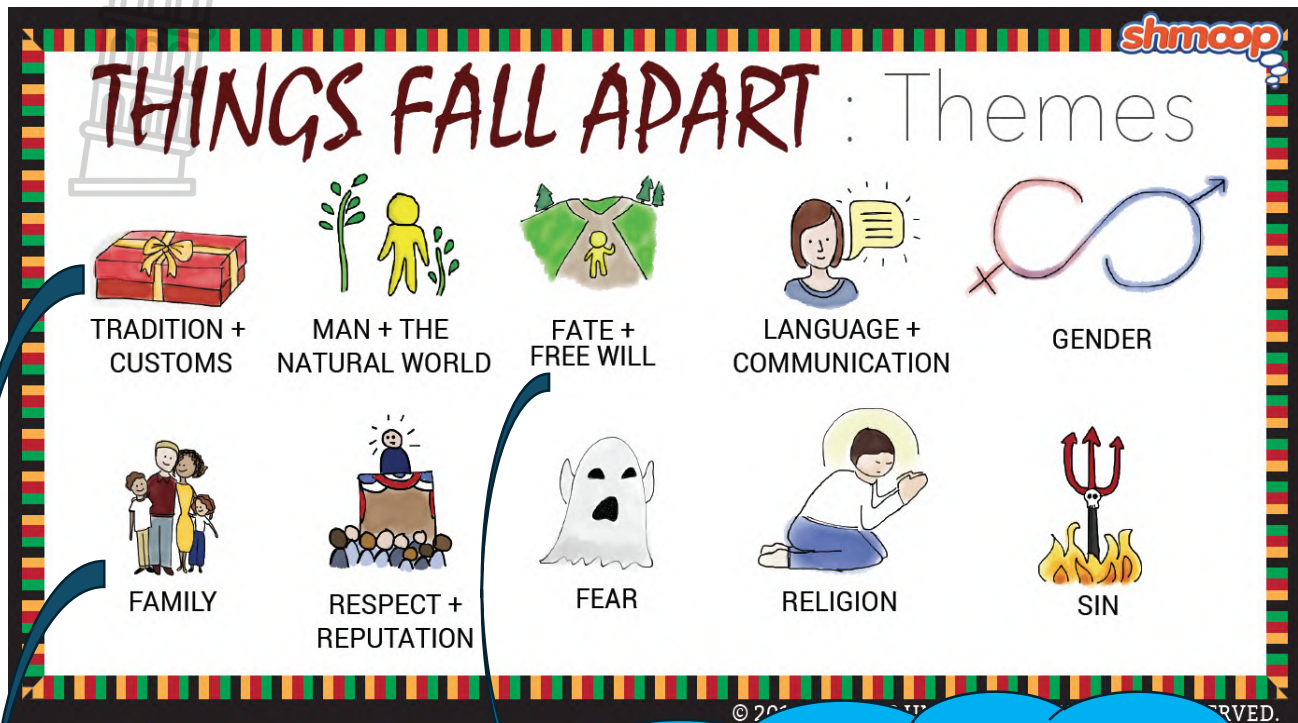
Ezuedu's funeral and the death of his son	Everyone in the village gathers for Ezuedo's funeral. Okonkwo accidentally kills Ezuedo's son when his gun goes off. Okonkwo's accidental killing of a clansman is a crime against the earth goddess, and he and his family must leave Umuofia for seven years.
Time in Mbanta	Okonkwo feels that his seven years in exile (in Mbanta) have been wasted. He feels the loss of exile. He could have risen to the peak of Umuofian society if he had not been forced into exile. His uncle explains to him that it was right for him to come to his motherland in this situation.
Nyowe's conversion	Nyowe converts to Christianity because he is disturbed by various events that have occurred during his lifetime, including the killing of his foster brother, Ikemefuna and the abandonment of twins in the Evil Forest. He also wants to reject the excessive standard of masculinity his father wants to uphold. Nyowe is not at all like his father, and Okonkwo constantly punishes him for being different. Stifled by his father's expectations, Nyowe runs away and joins the European church.
Christian influence grows	Christianity divided the Igbo people as some were mesmerised by the religion and some not. The number of converts grows steadily as they see their traditional beliefs as increasingly outdated and powerless.

7. STORYBOARD PLOT

- An illustrated, shortened account of the plot summary (25 chapters) has been given in the learner's book.
- Teachers need to guide learners through the plot summary so that effective understanding takes place.

8. THEMES

- Encourage learners to identify possible themes and expand on them.



Ritual etiquette between the host and the guest: They pass a kola nut to each other until the host finally breaks it, honouring their gods and ancestors

Family is huge in this novel, because the family unit was very important in Igbo culture. Families are very large in the novel, not stature but in quantity.

Even though Okonkwo often exercises his "inflexible will," fate ultimately clashes with and dominates his free will to bring about his demise.

Ponder on the following...

1. How is Okonkwo's destiny viewed in the beginning of the book? Why is it seen so positively?
2. To what extent is Okonkwo's life governed by forces outside his control?
3. What deliberate choices does Okonkwo make that further his path towards self-destruction?
4. Consider Ikemefuna. How does he, as a character, epitomize a victim more than anyone else in the novel?

Now, what are your thoughts on the other themes?

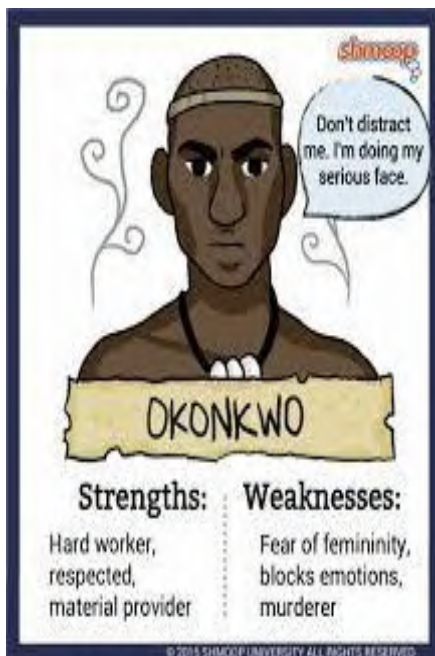
9. WORD BANK

- *Things Fall Apart* contains many words which may be difficult for learners to understand.
- It is therefore imperative for teachers to use the WORD BANK in the learner's guide to help them understand the plot of the novel.

10. ANALYSIS OF MAIN CHARACTERS

- The aim of this section is to prompt the learners to build onto the analysis already given.
- Encourage learners to fill in the table correctly.
- Use the following analysis to assist learners.

ANALYSIS OF THE MAIN CHARACTERS

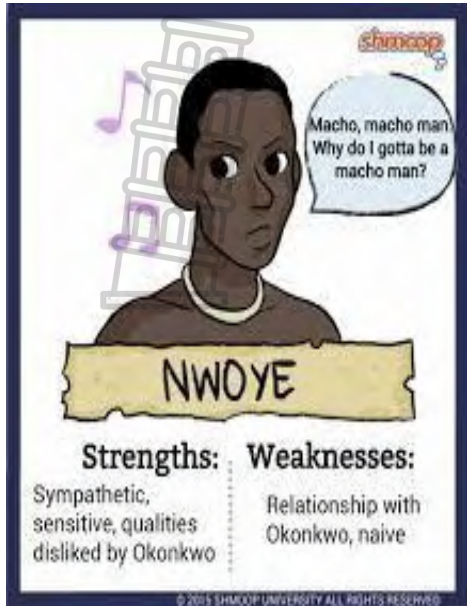


OKONKWO

Okonkwo is a self-made, well-respected member of the Umuofia clan. Though outwardly stern and powerful, much of his life is dictated by internal fear. His greatest, overwhelming worry is that he will become like his father – lazy, unable to support his family, and cowardly. Okonkwo considers many of his father's characteristics to be feminine.

Much of Okonkwo's behaviour results from a reactionary desire to be completely unlike his father. This means that Okonkwo attempts to work hard, provide for his family materially, be brave, and be masculine in every possible way. As a result, Okonkwo becomes successful in many ways – he becomes very wealthy, holds a high-ranked position in the community, has three wives, and is known for his skill as a wrestler and warrior.

NYOYE



Nwoye is Okonkwo's eldest son who Okonkwo considers irredeemably effeminate and very much like his father, Unoka.

As a child, Nwoye is the frequent object of his father's criticism and remains emotionally unfulfilled.

Eventually, Ikemefuna comes to fill that void and Nwoye, in his adoration of his adoptive brother, begins to emulate him.

In a strange way, Ikemefuna fills the role of both father and brother for Nwoye, providing him with a peer to share his thoughts and a role model.

IKEMEFUNA



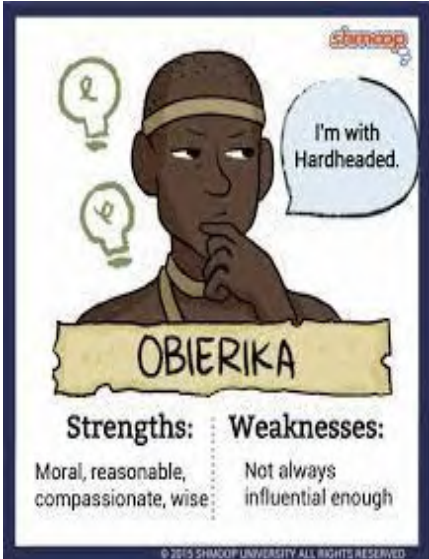
Ikemefuna is a fifteen-year-old boy from a neighbouring clan, Mbaino, who is given up to Umuofia as a sacrifice for killing one of the women of Umuofia.

He lives with Okonkwo's family for three years before the elders order him to be killed. In those three years, he grows very close to Okonkwo's family, especially Nwoye.

Okonkwo even prefers him to his true son Nwoye, considering Ikemefuna to be a promising, hard-working young man. His murder, in which Okonkwo takes a part, haunts Okonkwo throughout the book.

From the very beginning, Ikemefuna is the ultimate victim; his fate is completely out of his control since he is taken away by his family so early in life for a crime which he had no part in, nor any knowledge of. In his new life, Ikemefuna is subject to the whims of his new father and the Umuofia elders, in whose hands his fate ultimately lies.

Ikemefuna is a prime example of how Okonkwo's fear of being like his father – feminine and cowardly – drives him to make a poor, regrettable decision. He joins in killing Ikemefuna because he is afraid of being weak, yet he is haunted by his decision and it also

	<p>permanently emotionally distances him from Nwoye.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">UNOKA</p>  <p style="text-align: center;">UNOKA</p> <p>Strengths: Music, being able to relax</p> <p>Weaknesses: Irresponsible, unable to provide for family</p> <p style="font-size: small; text-align: center;">© 2015 SHMOOP UNIVERSITY ALL RIGHTS RESERVED</p>	<p>Unoka is Okonkwo's father. Though he is a talented musician, he is lazy and irresponsible, falling into debt and bringing shame upon his family. Unoka's bad reputation in Umuofia haunts Okonkwo throughout the novel. However, Unoka did not intentionally set out to defame his family, he just seemed to find no pleasure in anything but leisure, parties, and music. Passion for music occupies Unoka's world more than anything and he finds his greatest joy playing his flute at festivals. What Unoka can't seem to bring himself to do is work – despite his family nearly starving and his massive list of unpaid debts.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">OBIERIKA</p>  <p style="text-align: center;">OBIERIKA</p> <p>Strengths: Moral, reasonable, compassionate, wise</p> <p>Weaknesses: Not always influential enough</p> <p style="font-size: small; text-align: center;">© 2015 SHMOOP UNIVERSITY ALL RIGHTS RESERVED</p>	<p>Obierika is Okonkwo's best friend and also a respected man in Umuofia. He often offers reasonable counterpoints to Okonkwo's desire for rash action, although Okonkwo rarely takes his friend's advice. More than any other character, Obierika is a thinking man, one who works things out in his head. He is one of the few characters who is truly concerned with moral ambiguities and he encourages Okonkwo to view the world in a more balanced and less hasty manner.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">EKWEFI</p>	<p>Ekwefi is Okonkwo's second wife. Once a village beauty, she ran away from her home and husband to marry Okonkwo. She was smitten with Okonkwo when he beat the notorious Cat in a legendary wrestling match. Though it's kind of romantic that Ekwefi ran away and eloped with Okonkwo, it turns out he's not Prince Charming. Ekwefi, like Okonkwo's</p>

	<p>other two wives, suffers quite a bit under his forceful and aggressive rule of the household. At one point, just because he was in a bad mood, Okonkwo beat Ekwefi badly and even threatened to kill her with his gun. Regardless, Ekwefi is the most spirited of Okonkwo's wives and frequently stands up to him and talks back.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">EZINMA</p> 	<p>Ezinma is Okonkwo's eldest daughter and Ekwefi's only child. The girl has a very close relationship with her mother, and she is her father's favourite child. Okonkwo – being a man who basically only values masculine qualities – strongly wishes that Ezinma had been born a boy, which, from his frame of mind, shows how much he loves and values her.</p>

11. ANSWERING EXAM TYPE QUESTIONS

11.1 LITERARY ESSAY

Consult previous JIT documents to help you with the teaching of the literary essay.

- Learners must be taught how to write the literary essay question.
- Discuss INTRODUCTION, BODY AND CONCLUSION.
- Discuss THEME STATEMENT.
- Discuss the important points made in the body of the essay.
- Discuss the CONCLUSION.

- Use the PEEL method in your teaching.
 - P – POINT (state your point)
 - E – EVIDENCE (provide evidence)
 - E – EXPLANATION (offer an explanation)
 - L – LINK (link to the next point/paragraph/main idea/topic).
- Build on vocabulary needed to write the literary essay.
- Build on a bank of linking words to allow a natural flow of the essay.
- Guide learners to write the body and conclusion of the essay.

TOPIC

In a carefully planned essay of 350–400 words (1½–2 pages) in length, critically discuss to what extent the title of the novel is reflected in Okonkwo’s life and the lives of the villagers.

STEP 1: Unpacking the topic

- Every word in the topic must be analysed.
- This step cannot be rushed through.
- Navigate through STEP 1: UNPACKING THE TOPIC in the learner’s guide thoroughly.
- A sample introduction is given to learners in the learner’s guide. They may use it to start writing their essay.

STEP 2: PLANNING

- Planning is vitally important, especially for the struggling learner.
- Teach learners the process of writing:
 - mind-mapping
 - drafting
 - editing
 - final essay



Marking Guideline

- The title is a clear indication of the ‘fall’ of Okonkwo and of the relatively

peaceful and regulated village life shared by the clans.

- Okonkwo grows up in a home where his father's gentle nature and laziness caused him humiliation and shame. He is determined not to be his father's child.
- He believes that his 'inflexible will' is a necessary and admirable quality, and that it is the only way to become successful.
- To achieve this, he becomes a forbidding husband and father. He cannot show any emotion other than dissatisfaction with his family, or rage at their 'faults' and simple demands. 'To show affection was a sign of weakness' is his mantra.
- He severely beats up his wife and her child when he suspects that she had cut banana leaves. Afterwards, he shoots the same wife because she muttered something about his use of guns. He is extremely violent, and does not know how else to make himself count except through punishment and bullying.
- Okonkwo places his hopes on his son Nwoye to be his successor, yet Nwoye is unlike his father. He does not enjoy listening to his father's stories about war and brave men; instead, he prefers his mother's gentle stories and songs. Okonkwo's severity causes Nwoye to be a 'sad-faced youth'.
- Okonkwo regards his son as 'despicable', 'effeminate' and an 'abomination'. He cannot hide his deep resentment and disappointment in Nwoye. He feels even more betrayed when Mr Kiaga is instrumental in making a Christian convert out of Nwoye – things are indeed falling apart. He distances himself with distinction from his 'weak' father, but faces a son who probably has more in common with his father Unoka than with him, the strong leader, father, husband, etc.
- He dotes on his favourite child, ironically a daughter, called Ezinma. He wishes that she were a boy, because he sees in her a kindred spirit. His rejection of Nwoye, because he is 'effeminate' and therefore inadequate, is somewhat ameliorated by the presence of his very feminine daughter. The irony is almost sublime.
- The arrival of Europeans disrupts the villagers' lives dramatically and

permanently. The missionaries appear to be kind and non-judgemental, but they introduce a religion that is contrary to all beliefs that are held dearly by clans. It causes a rift, because missionaries also bring with them western education.

- Mr Brown appears to understand that African religious beliefs and the Christian faith share commonalities. His replacement (Rev. James Smith) is the worst kind – he regards all things African as inferior, primitive, base and objectionable.
- With the District Commissioner, Rev. Smith is keen to get rid of all that which represents Ibo religion and culture, and to replace it with whatever version of Western ideas and beliefs they purport. They are arrogant and dangerous.
- With an increasing number of the clansmen and -women openly professing their new-found Christianity, traditionalists such as Okonkwo are horrified at the betrayal. Their rigid belief system does not allow them to consider change. They are threatened by the White man's power.
- Nwoye and Obierika are able to distance themselves from the rigid and relentless traditions and superstitions that are often deadly and cruel. They are more flexible and agreeable. They will probably endure the colonial invasion.
- But the arrival of rapacious whites will forever undo the orderly and happy existence that the clans knew.
- In the same way that Okonkwo destroys himself because he cannot accept and change, the villagers will be destroyed and humiliated by colonialism and corruption. They will 'fall apart' in no uncertain terms.

11.2 CONTEXTUAL QUESTIONS

- The contextual questions are laid out in such a way that learners are able to unpack the question properly before attempting to answer them.
- Guide learners through the question first.
- They must understand the **meanings of the instructional verb/s** in the question.
- They must understand the **meanings of other words** in the questions.

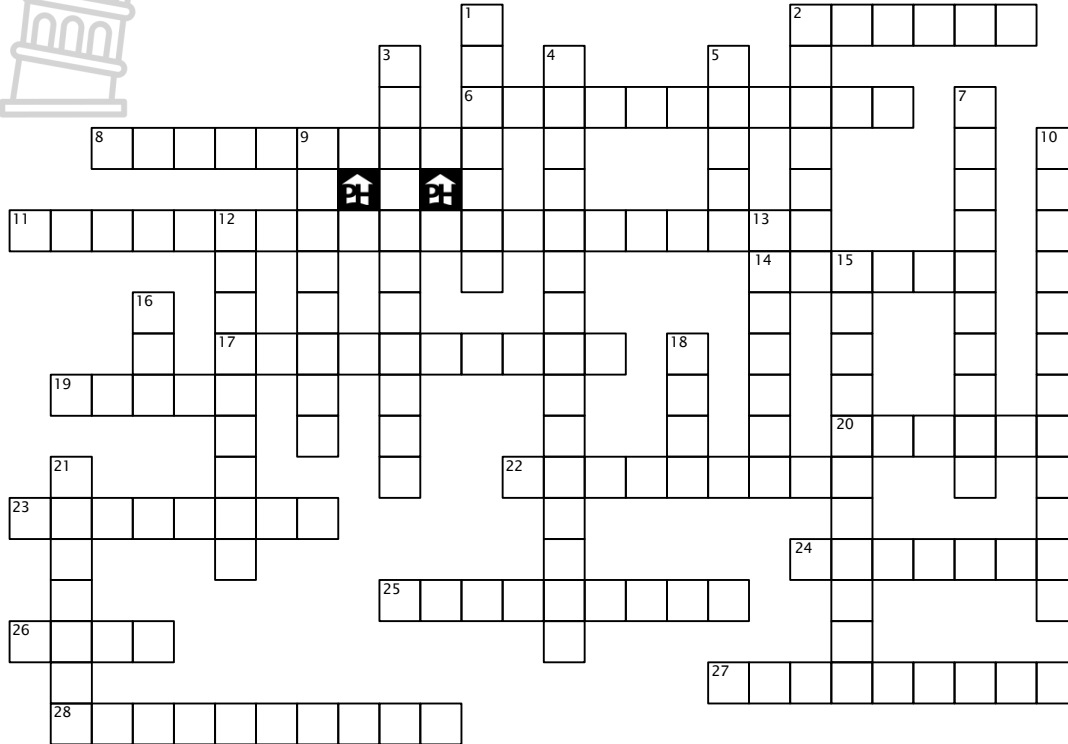
- Then, they must understand **what the question is asking of them.**
- The examples given in the learner's guide shows all of the above in steps.
- It also shows the learner how to answer the question to attain the maximum mark for that question.



12. CROSSWORD PUZZLE



Things Fall Apart



Across

2. Twins are put in pots and left to die in the _____.
6. The clan stops _____ the white church after the man who killed a sacred python dies.
8. The white men build their church in the _____
_____. (2 words)
11. The _____ violates both sets of laws in his treatment of the Umuofia leaders. (2 words)
14. Okonkwo's father, Unoka, is a[n] _____.
17. The kotma are _____ who increase the fines to keep some money themselves.
19. Okonkwo's greatest flaw is _____.
20. The name of the village Okonkwo flees to because of the killing
22. Chielo, the _____, takes Ezinma in the middle of the night.
23. Every man is believed to have a[n] _____ chi.
24. The Abame clan ties a[n] _____ to a tree like a horse.
25. Ani is the goddess of earth and _____.
26. If a man consults with his wife, he will be perceived as being _____.
27. Okonkwo achieves fame through this.
28. Ibo culture is "inferior" to white culture only in terms of _____.

Down

1. The white men cannot be driven away because they have changed the tribe's _____.
2. "A proud man can accept _____ if it applies to everyone."
3. During the _____, the Ibo clan does not tolerate any acts of violence. (3 words)
4. Okonkwo doesn't want others to join the church because of the clan's _____ (2 words)
5. Who are the central figures in tribal weddings?
7. The white men assume the Umuofia people did not have a religion or a[n] _____.
9. Osu are village _____ who join the white church.
10. Nwoye is intrigued by the _____ because of his discontent with his own religion.
12. _____ considers Okonkwo a father figure.
13. Mr. Brown encourages the clan to _____ themselves in order to attain power.
15. Families use _____ to measure the bride price.
16. _____ is another word for hut.
18. A measure of wealth
21. "[A] man who pays _____ to the great paves the way for his own greatness."

ANSWER KEY

Across

2. FOREST
6. SANCTIONING
8. EVIL FOREST
11. DISTRICT COMMISSIONER
14. DEBTOR
17. MESSENGERS
19. PRIDE
20. MBANTA
22. PRIESTESS
23. PERSONAL
24. BICYCLE
25. FETILITY
26. WEAK
27. WRESTLING
28. TECHNOLOGY

Down.

1. CUSTOMS
2. FAILURE
3. WEEK OF PEACE
4. ANCESTOR WORKSHIP
5. WOMEN
7. GOVERNMENT
9. OUTCASTS
10. MISSIONARIES
12. IKEMEFUNA
13. EDUCATE
15. BROOMSTICKS
16. OBI
18. YAMS
21. RESPECT





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