

# Honors: Things Fall Apart

Content Area: **English Language Arts**  
Course(s): **Language Arts Literacy II Honors, Language Arts Literacy IV Honors**  
Time Period: **3 weeks**  
Length: **3 weeks**  
Status: **Published**

## Unit Overview

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In *Things Fall Apart*, Chinua Achebe explores the conflict between a man and his own culture, and a man and an invading culture. *Things Fall Apart* can be considered a traditional tragedy, with the figure of Okonkwo killing himself due to a fear of failure and a sense of not being able to save his culture/society; one teaching of the book might focus on the interpersonal conflicts and character flaws eventually leading to the violence at the end of the book. A fuller teaching of this book will question the possibility and validity of a traditional culture to resist the influence of outside cultures, invaders, and the (inevitable) changing of the idea of society over time; this teaching of the book will be, essentially a post-colonial reading. Finally, this book can be considered as a writer's attempt to capture and retell the stories of his culture, as a means of preserving that culture, advancing that culture, but also rebelling against that other society which invaded.

## Transfer

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Throughout the unit, students will be able to:

- Explain the family structure, social structure, religious beliefs, and cultural traditions of the Ibo people.
- Describe how Okonkwo's experiences throughout the book transform him.

## Understandings

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- Students will understand :
  - That Okonkwo's concepts of masculinity, tradition, and fate lead to his sense of his own failure (and, ultimately, his death), that he is simultaneously the hero, victim, and even villain;
  - That there were "cracks" in the Igbo belief systems and inequities in social structures that allowed for those early Christian converts to be influenced by and to buy into the colonial administration of their invaders;
  - The points in the novel in which Okonkwo must confront his lack of control over his life and his world;
  - That *Things Fall Apart* represents an important contribution to post-colonial literature, allowing for Achebe to take back the stories and history of his society that has been nearly destroyed by an invading culture and belief system.

## Essential Questions

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How do families shape our identity/actions and what is the individual ultimately responsible for?

How do social customs create/affect our sense of identity and possibly limit our ability to adapt to outside influence?

How can we work to understand literature from a different culture?

How might the culture of one society destroy that of another culture?

## **Students will know**

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- Historical context of novel (Pre-Colonial Nigeria, Colonization of Africa by Europeans [namely, British, French, Dutch], Igbo culture itself)
- Plot details
- Character development (Okonkwo, Ikemefuna, early Christian converts, white missionaries)
- Themes (post-colonialism, gender, fate, rebellion)

## **Students will be skilled at**

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Throughout this unit, students will understand that...

1-Consciously use and evaluate a wide variety of strategies before, during, and after reading, viewing, and listening to increase their comprehension and recall of *Things Fall Apart*.

2-Explain the effects of a variety of literary devices and techniques in *Things Fall Apart*.

3-Demonstrate an understanding of the main ideas, events, or themes of the play *Things Fall Apart*.

4-Develop coherent and plausible interpretations of *Things Fall Apart*.

5-compare and analyze different presentations of *Things Fall Apart* (modern, film, etc.)

6-demonstrate confidence in their abilities to communicate effectively through the study of African and post-colonial literature.

7-demonstrate an openness to the divergent ideas and opinions expressed by classmates and others while analyzing the *Things Fall Apart*.

## **Academic Vocabulary**

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Post-Colonialism

Social Structure/Hierarchy

Polygamy

Subordination/Exploitation

Missionaries

Tragic Hero

Patriarchy/Matriarchy

## **Learning Goal 1**

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Understand and evaluate the role of colonialism and post-colonial thought on the events and attitudes of *Things Fall Apart*.

## **Objective 1 - Levels 1 and 2**

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- Understand the history of African (specifically Nigerian) colonization.
- Understand what post-colonial literature is.

LA.RI.11-12.6	Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text in which the rhetoric is particularly effective, analyzing how style and content contribute to the power, persuasiveness or beauty of the text.
LA.RL.11-12.3	Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).
LA.RL.11-12.5	Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text (e.g., the choice of where to begin or end a story, the choice to provide a comedic or tragic resolution) contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact.
LA.RL.11-12.9	Demonstrate knowledge of and reflect on (e.g., practical knowledge, historical/cultural context, and background knowledge) eighteenth-, nineteenth- and early twentieth-century foundational works of literature, including how two or more texts from the same period treat similar themes or topics.
LA.RL.11-12.10b	By the end of grade 12, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, at grade level or above.

## **Objective 2 - Levels 3 and 4**

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- Apply ideas colonialism and post-colonialism to the events of *Things Fall Apart*.
- Evaluate and critique (via discussion and writing) the role of colonialism and post-colonialism on the events of *Things Fall Apart*.

LA.W.11-12.1.A	Introduce precise, knowledgeable claim(s), establish the significance of the claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that logically sequences claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.
LA.W.11-12.2.A	Introduce a topic; organize complex ideas, concepts, and information so that each new element builds on that which precedes it to create a unified whole; include formatting

(e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., figures, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.

LA.W.11-12.2.B	Develop the topic thoroughly by selecting the most significant and relevant facts, extended definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples appropriate to the audience’s knowledge of the topic.
LA.RI.11-12.1	Accurately cite strong and thorough textual evidence, (e.g., via discussion, written response, etc.), to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferentially, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.
LA.RI.11-12.2	Determine two or more central ideas of a text, and analyze their development and how they interact to provide a complex analysis; provide an objective summary of the text.
LA.RL.11-12.10b	By the end of grade 12, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, at grade level or above.
LA.SL.11-12.1	Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with peers on grades 11–12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
LA.SL.11-12.1.A	Come to discussions prepared, having read and researched material under study; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence from texts and other research on the topic or issue to stimulate a thoughtful, well reasoned exchange of ideas.
LA.SL.11-12.1.B	Collaborate with peers to promote civil, democratic discussions and decision-making, set clear goals and assessments (e.g., student developed rubrics), and establish individual roles as needed.
LA.SL.11-12.1.C	Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that probe reasoning and evidence; ensure a hearing for a full range of positions on a topic or issue; clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions; and promote divergent and creative perspectives.
LA.SL.11-12.1.D	Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives; synthesize comments, claims, and evidence made on all sides of an issue; resolve contradictions when possible; and determine what additional information or research is required to deepen the investigation or complete the task.

## **Learning Goal 2**

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Understand, evaluate, and critique the Okonkwo's concepts of masculinity, tradition, and fate lead to his sense of his own failure (and, ultimately, his death), that he is simultaneously the hero, victim, and even villain.

## **Objective 1 - Levels 1 and 2**

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Identify and explain how Okonkwo's actions, relationships, and reactions to events reveal his attitudes about masculinity, tradition, and fate.

LA.RL.11-12.1	Cite strong and thorough textual evidence and make relevant connections to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.
LA.RL.11-12.3	Analyze the impact of the author’s choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).
LA.RL.11-12.6	Analyze a case in which grasping a point of view requires distinguishing what is directly

stated in a text from what is really meant (e.g., satire, sarcasm, irony, or understatement).

LA.RL.11-12.9

Demonstrate knowledge of and reflect on (e.g., practical knowledge, historical/cultural context, and background knowledge) eighteenth-, nineteenth- and early twentieth-century foundational works of literature, including how two or more texts from the same period treat similar themes or topics.

LA.RL.11-12.10b

By the end of grade 12, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, at grade level or above.

## **Objective 2 - Levels 3 and 4**

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Evaluate and critique (via discussion and/or writing) whether Okonkwo is the hero, victim, villain, or some combination of the three, based on his role in the events and outcome of the novel and the destruction of a culture.

LA.W.11-12.1

Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

LA.W.11-12.1.A

Introduce precise, knowledgeable claim(s), establish the significance of the claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that logically sequences claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.

LA.W.11-12.1.B

Develop claim(s) and counterclaims avoiding common logical fallacies and using sound reasoning and thoroughly, supplying the most relevant evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both in a manner that anticipates the audience's knowledge level, concerns, values, and possible biases.

LA.W.11-12.4

Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in standards 1–3 above.)

LA.SL.11-12.1

Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with peers on grades 11–12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

LA.SL.11-12.1.A

Come to discussions prepared, having read and researched material under study; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence from texts and other research on the topic or issue to stimulate a thoughtful, well reasoned exchange of ideas.

LA.SL.11-12.1.B

Collaborate with peers to promote civil, democratic discussions and decision-making, set clear goals and assessments (e.g., student developed rubrics), and establish individual roles as needed.

LA.SL.11-12.1.C

Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that probe reasoning and evidence; ensure a hearing for a full range of positions on a topic or issue; clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions; and promote divergent and creative perspectives.

LA.SL.11-12.1.D

Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives; synthesize comments, claims, and evidence made on all sides of an issue; resolve contradictions when possible; and determine what additional information or research is required to deepen the investigation or complete the task.

LA.SL.11-12.3

Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric, assessing the stance, premises, links among ideas, word choice, points of emphasis, and tone used.

## **Learning Goal 3**

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Understand, evaluate, and critique Chinua Achebe's employment of literary technique and structure to explore

the above themes/concepts.

## **Objective 1 - Levels 1 and 2**

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Understand/identify Achebe's use of characterization, aphorism, symbolism, sentence/paragraph structure.

LA.RL.11-12.1	Cite strong and thorough textual evidence and make relevant connections to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.
LA.RL.11-12.4	Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful. (e.g., Shakespeare as well as other authors.)
LA.RL.11-12.5	Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text (e.g., the choice of where to begin or end a story, the choice to provide a comedic or tragic resolution) contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact.
LA.RL.11-12.6	Analyze a case in which grasping a point of view requires distinguishing what is directly stated in a text from what is really meant (e.g., satire, sarcasm, irony, or understatement).

Craft and Structure

## **Objective 2 - Levels 3 and 4**

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Evaluate and critique (via discussion or writing) Achebe's characterization and use of Igbo cultural aphorism/symbolism.

LA.W.11-12.2.A	Introduce a topic; organize complex ideas, concepts, and information so that each new element builds on that which precedes it to create a unified whole; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., figures, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.
LA.W.11-12.2.B	Develop the topic thoroughly by selecting the most significant and relevant facts, extended definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples appropriate to the audience's knowledge of the topic.
LA.W.11-12.2.D	Use precise language, domain-specific vocabulary, and techniques such as metaphor, simile, and analogy to manage the complexity of the topic.
LA.W.11-12.3.A	Engage and orient the reader by setting out a problem, situation, or observation and its significance, establishing one or multiple point(s) of view, and introducing a narrator and/or characters; create a smooth progression of experiences or events.
LA.RI.11-12.1	Accurately cite strong and thorough textual evidence, (e.g., via discussion, written response, etc.), to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferentially, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.
LA.RI.11-12.2	Determine two or more central ideas of a text, and analyze their development and how they interact to provide a complex analysis; provide an objective summary of the text.
LA.RL.11-12.3	Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).

LA.SL.11-12.1	Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with peers on grades 11–12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
LA.SL.11-12.1.A	Come to discussions prepared, having read and researched material under study; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence from texts and other research on the topic or issue to stimulate a thoughtful, well reasoned exchange of ideas.
LA.SL.11-12.1.C	Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that probe reasoning and evidence; ensure a hearing for a full range of positions on a topic or issue; clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions; and promote divergent and creative perspectives.
LA.SL.11-12.1.D	Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives; synthesize comments, claims, and evidence made on all sides of an issue; resolve contradictions when possible; and determine what additional information or research is required to deepen the investigation or complete the task.
LA.SL.11-12.3	Evaluate a speaker’s point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric, assessing the stance, premises, links among ideas, word choice, points of emphasis, and tone used.

### **Objective 3 - Levels 3 and 4**

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Evaluate and critique Achebe's sentence/paragraph/novel structure in terms of how it contributes to the readers' understanding of the concepts of time, cultural change, storytelling, etc.

LA.RL.11-12.1	Cite strong and thorough textual evidence and make relevant connections to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.
LA.RL.11-12.3	Analyze the impact of the author’s choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).
LA.RL.11-12.4	Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful. (e.g., Shakespeare as well as other authors.)
LA.RL.11-12.5	Analyze how an author’s choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text (e.g., the choice of where to begin or end a story, the choice to provide a comedic or tragic resolution) contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact.
LA.RL.11-12.10b	By the end of grade 12, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, at grade level or above.

### **Career Ready Practice and Awareness Standards**

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CRP.K-12.CRP1.1	Career-ready individuals understand the obligations and responsibilities of being a member of a community, and they demonstrate this understanding every day through their interactions with others. They are conscientious of the impacts of their decisions on others and the environment around them. They think about the near-term and long-term consequences of their actions and seek to act in ways that contribute to the betterment of their teams, families, community and workplace. They are reliable and consistent in going beyond the minimum expectation and in participating in activities that serve the greater good.
CRP.K-12.CRP5.1	Career-ready individuals understand the interrelated nature of their actions and regularly make decisions that positively impact and/or mitigate negative impact on other people,

organization, and the environment. They are aware of and utilize new technologies, understandings, procedures, materials, and regulations affecting the nature of their work as it relates to the impact on the social condition, the environment and the profitability of the organization.

CAEP.9.2.12.C.4

Analyze how economic conditions and societal changes influence employment trends and future education.

## Technology

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TECH.8.1.12.B.2	Apply previous content knowledge by creating and piloting a digital learning game or tutorial.
TECH.8.1.12.B.CS1	Apply existing knowledge to generate new ideas, products, or processes.
TECH.8.1.12.B.CS2	Create original works as a means of personal or group expression.
TECH.8.1.12.C.CS1	Interact, collaborate, and publish with peers, experts, or others by employing a variety of digital environments and media.
TECH.8.1.12.C.CS2	Communicate information and ideas to multiple audiences using a variety of media and formats.
TECH.8.1.12.C.CS3	Develop cultural understanding and global awareness by engaging with learners of other cultures.

## Formative Assessment

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- Discussion
- Reading quizzes
- Reading responses

## Summative Assessment

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- Quizzes
- Unit test
- Essay
- Project

## Accommodations/Modifications

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- Provide extra time when needed
- Review comprehension
- Provide resources for enrichment
- Discussion



## Informational Texts

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[Chinua Achebe, "An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's 'Heart of Darkness'"](#): Achebe analyses and argues against what was the "African novel" as it was understood to the literary world before African writers entered the fray to write their own story.

[Nigerian History via BBC](#)

“Missionaries and Converts: Religion and Colonial Intrusion in Things Fall Apart” by Joseph McLaren (Modern Critical Interpretations: Chinua Achebe’s Things Fall Apart, ed. Harold Bloom 2002)

[Chinua Achebe Interview in \*The Paris Review\*](#)

[New Yorker profile of Achebe](#): Good for discussion of the author's relationship to the language and style he chooses to confront the colonial history he is exploring. Many shorter sections of this article could be easily excerpted and used for any level of student.

LA.RI.11-12.1	Accurately cite strong and thorough textual evidence, (e.g., via discussion, written response, etc.), to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferentially, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.
LA.RI.11-12.6	Determine an author’s point of view or purpose in a text in which the rhetoric is particularly effective, analyzing how style and content contribute to the power, persuasiveness or beauty of the text.
LA.RI.11-12.7	Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words in order to address a question or solve a problem.
LA.RI.11-12.10b	By the end of grade 12, read and comprehend literary nonfiction at grade level text-complexity or above.