Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

*Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe Background Notes

* **Who is Chinua Acebe?**
1. Achebe was born in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_ . He was born to \_\_\_\_\_ parents who were deeply \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
2. Achebe is highly \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. He often wrote about \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and traditional \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
3. He moved to the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ where a car accident in \_\_\_\_\_\_ left him \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ from the waist down.
4. Achebe is called the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
* **What was important to Achebe?**

Politics and African Colonization

1. He wrote \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ literature about waning African culture under \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (British) colonization
2. He critiqued the corrupt \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ governments that controlled the \_\_\_\_\_ people

African Culture, Family, and Tradition

1. The use of the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ language as a replay of African \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ tradition, such as \_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and verbal descriptions of life and life lessons—Achebe tried to keep alive important aspects of the Ibo culture in his writing
3. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ in the light of African colonization were a large part of Achebe’s literature
* **About what did Achebe write?**

African Colonialism and Culture

1. Nigerian professor Ernest N. Emenyonu states, “Achebe looked at the African experience under white Christian colonialism as a systematic \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_of the entire African culture.
2. **Important:** He tries *not* to take a side; he remains as \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ as possible in his writing, attempting to avoid \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Masculinity and Femininity

1. Many of his main characters portray a traditional, patriarchal Igbo (Ibo) society.

-\_\_\_\_\_\_ take numerous wives AND \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ are beaten regularly

1. Some of his female characters represent \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and go against the regular male character that \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ femininity as a bad thing.
* ***Things Fall Apart* (1958)**
1. Okonkwo is an **overly** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ leader and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ champion in the fictional Nigerian village of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
2. The novel focuses on Okonkwo, his wives and children, the Igbo (Ibo) community in which he lives, and the white missionaries who attempt to introduce Christianity to the Igbo culture.
3. Achebe uses \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to tell Okonkwo’s sad story; his life takes a wrong turn after he participates in a terrible\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ in order to avoid looking \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
* **Historical Context- Tribal Society**
1. Story takes place in the tribal village of Umoufia in the late \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, prior to English \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. The Ibo worship many \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ who are represented by priests and priestesses within the tribe
3. Each individual has a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ god, or \_\_\_\_\_\_, that directs his actions
4. The Ibo are a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ society with \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ as the primary crop
5. People in the village are grouped according to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ male member holds the most \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
6. Large emphasis on tribal \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
7. Village concerns, including \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, were handled by tribal \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
8. System encouraged \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ work and the spread of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
9. In the novel, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ is respected and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ by other villages
* **Historical Context- the spread of Christianity**
1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ took its strongest hold in Africa when the majority of the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ arrived in the late 1800’s
2. Missionaries provided \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and attempted to convert tribes from their \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_beliefs
3. Africans were \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_of European Christians at first, but \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ eventually converted
4. As more members adopted \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ values, the clans divided and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ arose
* **Historical Context- English colonization**
1. After the arrival of the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, conflicts between villages were resolved by white \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ rules
2. When violence involved missionaries or \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, British soldiers would often \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ entire villages instead of punishing guilty individuals
3. Africa \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ from a society determined by \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ language and cultures to a land divided by political borders that divided it into at least\_\_\_\_\_ nation states
4. The divisions split \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ groups which led to tension and sometimes \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
5. British colonial rule in Nigeria lasted from \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
6. On \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, Nigeria was granted status as a sovereign state and member of the British \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, but was still under the rule of the British \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
7. In \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, a new constitution replaced the British monarch with a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ president
* **Compare and Contrast**
1. **1800’s**- before colonization, language & geography separate African societies

**Colonial Africa**- Africa is divided into more the 50 nation-states with no regard to common languages or traditions

**Today**-Societies are no longer clear cut. There is more opportunity for education & improved means of transportation & communication. Societies have become mixed, but ethnic conflicts still sometimes lead to violence

**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**1800’s**- religion varies, but most Africans share some common beliefs and practices

**Colonial Africa**- Missionaries arrive and introduce Christianity; many tribesmen convert

**Today**-more than 25% of Africa is Christian, but traditional African religion is still practiced, as well as Islam

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**1800’s**- Africans have their own identities and cultures; there is little interest in participating in the modern world

**Colonial Africa**- African children are taught European history so they can compete in the modern world; their own heritage is ignored

**Today**-There is a renewed interest in cultural heritage, and traditional customs are being taught to African children

* **The Structure of *Things Fall Apart***
1. It’s a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Greek tragedy
* Follows a tragic hero, who is a great or virtuous character, destined for a downfall.
* Shows Okonkwo’s \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, or character flaws:

Hubris (pride)

Ate (rashness)

* These character flaws lead to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, or reversal of fortune.
* **Themes**

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.