

# Change Agents in Africa



A Full-Circle Learning Humanities Curriculum for Secondary Schools  
Part 2 in a Series

Companion Text: *Things Fall Apart*, by Chinua Achebe



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## Preface

The *Change Agents in Africa* curriculum originated in response to a request for Full-Circle Learning Humanities texts aligned with education standards in Africa. Its featured literary selection, *Things Fall Apart*, appears in the education standards of secondary students attending schools around the world. Adaptations of these activities may unite students everywhere in examining the role of cultural, generational and philosophical perspectives where the transitions in history require a nuanced understanding of history and complex discussions the tango between cultural intrusion and the “progress” of civilization. The question of *what* to change and *how* to approach change with sensitivity to cultural norms will evoke discussions of parallel circumstances in any age.

The students whose teachers adopt this book as a study guide may have already explored a number of habits-of-heart in depth by this point in their educational process. This book reviews a number of them in briefer multi-chapter applications. The teacher may deepen the study of a habit by integrating additional Humanities content and process or even by working with other teachers across all content areas to expand the experiential and service goals associated with the habit-of-heart.

Every generation must stand on the shoulders of the last. We must learn to appreciate the breadth of those shoulders who have carried us while preparing to carefully wield the weight of the future on our own for the sake of those yet to come.

## Teacher's Basic Planning Procedures

- Step 1.** Review the introductory section of this curriculum.
- Step 2.** Read through the supporting content material in the Suggested Unit Plans.
- Step 3.** Make copies of materials of the Teaching Tools, as needed. Using the blank unit plan template provided, write notes about any major changes, variations or additions you want to make in the projects and your service goals in the unit. For example, in some cases, you may want to have students help identify community needs before finalizing the details of a project.
- Step 4.** If you know of any locally required learning standards or educational resources you need or want to insert at various points in the unit, to enhance the learning process, note them on the unit plan template. In all other areas, just indicate the page numbers in this book that you will refer to for the content you need.
- Step 5.** You have already read through the unit and considered the end from the beginning. Now continue with this “backwards planning process” to consider the length of time it will take to complete the community service and deep thinking outcomes – the long-term goals within the unit. Assume that student participation and current events may add layers to the project. Identify the target dates for completing the major projects, factoring in the learning activities that need to occur in preparation for the project, as well as the scheduling needed with community partners.
- Step 6.** Calendar your unit plan based on the Full-Circle Learning Unit format and record it on a blank calendar page. A template is provided to cover 9 months.
- Step 7.** Use the Teacher Resource Sheets as needed in class. Student Resource Sheets may be duplicated when possible or written out on the board.
- Step 8.** Each week, make a list of any materials you will need to best facilitate the activities. Use the daily/weekly lesson plan template as an optional tool, or use the daily planning tools recommended by your school.
- Step 9.** Prepare notes or a complete lesson plan for each day's class period, based on your long-term planning. Draw upon texts, community experts, and other resources available to you and your students. You will feel confident knowing you can see the positive end results from the start.

# Teaching and Planning Tools

## About Planning

This section includes helpful tools for teachers to apply during the planning process. Review this section and use the materials to customize each unit. The final Chapter also offers support strategies for building a school culture that aligns with the goals for curriculum design.

The priorities and goals of education vary slightly for each educational system and school. Subjects, schedules and strategies may be weighted according to the value system embraced within a specific learning community. Yet teachers and parents around the world tend to recognize certain universal values that relate to the health, happiness, intellectual development and well-being of both the individual child and the community.

This curriculum encourages teachers to adapt and customize the projects to the local region, to empower students to improve their own communities and to emphasize required organizational priorities and timelines. Most teachers find it helpful to have a guide to creating a pacing plan over the course of a unit and over the course of a year. These plans help them to address the need to add chronological steps within the process, or to help students scaffold their knowledge, reasoning capacity and application of skills.

While a teacher must see the end goal before preparing the first lesson, the 13-S Step template shows the order in which the *students* experience a curriculum. It demonstrates the outcome rather than the order in which the teacher conducts his or her planning steps.

The most effective Full-Circle Learning teachers, even those very gifted at spontaneously teaching “in the moment,” will start by planning. The following factors will commonly guide the planning process:

- a. age-specific learning goals;
- b. human needs that students can address in the broader community, and the related community resources to help address them;
- c. goals for linking the character goal to these identified community outcomes and academic outcomes;
- d. specific activities teachers adapt from the curriculum using the 13-S learning unit template;

- e. a plan book or calendar to schedule the activities, bring about the learning objectives and complete the projects over the course of the unit;
- f. a pacing plan that extends over a month, a semester or a year, to incorporate all the units in the curriculum.

As you plan, remember to factor in time for students to teach and re-teach needed skills (for example, time for revising and enhancing written work in advance of a community project, time to review math functions needed for a statistical chart, etc.).

The series of steps in Exhibit A shows how a teacher integrates a particular habit-of-heart theme or desired life skill to extend its relevancy through all the academic and creative content areas, culminating in the service projects. The teacher leads students toward a sense of motivation and accomplishment that transcends a test score alone and helps them contribute to the well-being of others through a well-placed, purposeful application of skills that underlies moral instincts and habits. The teacher's goal, then, is to inculcate the deep gratification that comes not only with a job well done, but a job applied in pursuit of a meaningful life.

At certain times during the human maturation process, this process looms as an essential need:

- In early childhood, when the brain grows quickly and the innate tendency toward altruism can benefit most from the nurturing of this link between intellectual and emotional development of traits such as empathy, kindness and cooperation.
- During the elementary school years, when personality traits become habits and cultural values, and when children seek boundaries and confirmations that help them define how to measure the results of their life's work.
- During the adolescent years, as young people increasingly look for role models beyond their own family members; they increasingly seek individual identity and purpose, while relying even more on the peer group values; based on neurological research, they are hard-wired to create bonds with role models who show them how to live a meaningful life.\*

Students emerging from childhood to adulthood especially need the infrastructure of a curriculum that allows them to take initiative while still respecting core community values. Studies show that they remain engaged when they experience a sense of belonging within a positive peer culture while exploring their capacities to contribute something valuable based on personal strengths.

The secondary curricula for Full-Circle Learning factors in the sociological perspectives of these youth while maintaining the pursuit of purpose as a high priority for education that motivates learning and personal growth, unites communities, and advances civilization in life-affirming ways.

Read each unit carefully well before the day you enter class to present the materials. Make a unit plan and collect any materials needed to present it. Collaborate with other

teachers on your team and reproduce the pages you need to plan meaningful activities based on the supplementary books and library or computer resources available to you and your students. The future is already here. You are looking at it when you enter the classroom and see the faces of your students. Make the most of it.

## Exhibit A: The 13-S Steps

1. Sense it.

Present an anticipatory set or attention-getting activity that piques curiosity or connects to prior knowledge, to explain the significance of the habit-of-heart. Tap as many of the visceral senses as possible. Emotional impact or positive memories can also provide sensory experience. Let the process supersede the formula, and be sensitive to the psychological proclivities of the group. For instance, if a classroom of students has been traumatized by a shared experience in their community, an appropriate activity for Step One might be an activity to allow students to rebuild bonds or to express something restorative about their shared experience, as it might offer the emotionally healing act that moves them forward as a learning family with a sense of purpose. (Do not ask students to relive a trauma and do not present an unpleasant experience for this introductory step.) Connect joyful or enlightening sensory activity with the context of the habit-of-heart projects you will pursue throughout the unit. (See examples within the curriculum.)
2. See it.

Write the habit-of-heart on the board in large letters.
3. Say it.

Clap out the number of syllables. Have the students clap with you.
4. Synchronize it.

Give the syllables in the word different pitches and sing or chant the word together, to help the students remember the word (or let a volunteer offer an appropriate melody). Synchronizing pitch and syllabic sounds is especially effective with long words.
5. Shape it.

Draw the shape of the word around the written word. Have all students write the word on their own paper (or for young preschoolers, provide a paper with the word prewritten) and draw the shape around it. Explain that this box is not part of the written word but will help them remember how to spell it.
6. Symbolize it.

Demonstrate an action associated with the word. Have the class practice this action. Let students practice other actions associated with the word. Challenge students to draw a symbol next to the word that will help them remember what it means. You may offer several symbols as suggestions.
7. Show it.

Assign role plays on the conflict bridge associated with the word. Using Hypothetical characters may help shy children overcome their fears.
8. Storytell it.

Read aloud a story about the trait, engaging age-appropriate learning skills among the students. Discuss how the story would have ended differently if certain characters would have used the habit-of-heart

differently. Also use guided imagery to help students envision the quality's application in their lives. (Literacy take-home books may be available for the youngest preschoolers.)

9. Sing it.

Teach students a Habit-of-Heart song about the current habit. Students will rehearse it frequently, for enjoyment as well as for performance, with an emphasis on the idea that music is a gift they give to teach others what they have learned. (In a preschool class, the shyest students may hide behind props they wave and still feel they are participating.) English language learners will focus on identifying words on the song sheet as they listen to the music.

10. Standardize it.

This step often expands into days, weeks or months of activity, as you integrate the unit theme into all the standards-based academic content areas and arts-based areas, based on the objectives and learning outcomes expected in your educational program. Teach the context of basic concepts within social studies, science, language arts and math or economics. Apply process-based learning and project-based learning where possible, as suggested in the lesson plans or as your age-appropriate content suggests.

These artifacts created with new knowledge may become tools to teach others as students implement service activities that occur in the following steps. If yours is not a full-day school but an enrichment program, this step may be referred to as the Supplement it step because it can change in length based on the schedule, content areas and flexibility of the educational program.

11. Send it.

Students learn a quote or learning concept about the habit and make pictures that depict the concept. Send the pictures to international pen pals or friends and ask for feedback or provide a joint service goal as the outcome of the mailing. If possible, include photos of the students and artifacts of their learning, and ask for information about the other students.

12. Share it.

Students have already experienced global connections on a small scale. They now need to see the value of their teaching and learning in their own community. They sing and present their learning and give handmade gifts to an audience of adopted grandparents or to someone in the community who needs their service, or they teach the concepts to students in another classroom by singing or pantomiming songs and displaying artwork. (In one school, the youngest students taught the older students their songs periodically, and vice versa.) In a school or setting where all students are presenting, students may participate in a school-wide museum or other off-site service field trip. Also have students return their Habits-of-Heart homework depicting how they practiced their learning at home.

### 13. Sustain it.

Allow circle time or “council time.” Older students may pass an object to take turns speaking, or they may write in a journal. Discuss the positive impact of the project in terms of community change. How will the internal and external successes of the projects help to sustain the habit-of-heart in the community and in the individual, through transformation of character and joint participation in enhancing the wellbeing of the human family? Consider further connections between project-based classroom content and character lessons with service to humanity as the outcome. When this reflection time produces a sense of sustained commitment to the habit-of-heart and to the integrated content skills and wisdom learned in the unit, you are ready to proceed to the next unit.



## Matching Community Needs and Resources

(This sample shows how teachers brainstormed the links between needs, resources and educational requirements. Reproduce these blank pages for personal brainstorming use as you read the chapters that follow and customize for local use.)

Month	Habit-of-Heart and Key Integrated Academic/Arts Goals or Outcomes	Broader Community Needs for Service Related to Themes	Share It and Send It Steps	Potential Contacts (Guest presenters, field trip hosts, mail or email recipients, etc.)
Example:	<p>Theme: Aspiration</p> <p>Skills: Humanities– Research skills Writing persuasive letters</p> <p>Research of current events shows context between daily life and economic structure</p> <p>Economics/Math– Understanding economy; co-ops, microloans</p> <p>Art: Murals as math to honor skills that build community</p>	<p>Need for jobs</p> <p>Need to upgrade infrastructure</p> <p>Need higher standard of living for the under-employed</p>	<p>Current events to explore gaps between needs and jobs and to identify new opportunities; Letters to civic leaders</p> <p>After chapter, identifying skills, goals and aspirations; collect ideas through wisdom exchange</p> <p>Create class co-op with new skills; give help to creating hope for all Post public mural to honor contributors to</p>	<p>Guests: Civil engineers, college students, business owners</p> <p>Field Trip: Public facility where mural will be posted.</p>

			community	
<b>Month</b>	<b>Habit-of-Heart and Key Integrated Academic/Arts Goals</b>	<b>Broader Community Needs for Service Related to Themes</b>	<b>Share It and Send It Steps</b>	<b>Potential Contacts (Guest presenters, field trip hosts, mail or email recipients, etc.)</b>
<b>September</b>				
<b>October</b>				
<b>November</b>				

<b>December</b>				
<b>January</b>				
<b>February</b>				
<b>March</b>				

<b>April</b>				
<b>May</b>				
<b>June</b>				

## Backwards Planning and the 13-S Steps

Backwards planning refers to the process of seeing the end from the beginning. Even though the steps appear in chronological order, based on what the students experience, the teacher's process is just the opposite. We must envision the finish line before taking the first step.

To begin this process, first look at the content of the unit plan and think about academic standards you need to teach over the course of the unit. Some ideas you will immediately see ways to implement and others you will want to adapt uniquely for your learning community or region. Note these special adaptations such as unique community needs and special human resources on the resource sheet called Community Needs and Resources. Starting with the habit-of-heart theme and the service ideas in your unit, where will you need to customize? What type of share it and send it projects from the curriculum need adjustments to best help students exercise their skills while enhancing the transformation of the community? Which of these projects strengthens the current habit-of-heart? How might the project integrate relevant skills in multiple content areas? Social Studies, Science or Literature often provide a starting point, while Math often reinforces supportive skills for a project. (For one project, you may focus on math reasoning; for another statistics, pie charts or bar graphs may help advocate for a cause; for another, students may build using by employing geometry concepts, etc.)

Check the curriculum first for ideas. Use this note-taking resource only as needed, to customize. Once you have a strong idea, identify your Share-It and Send-It steps. These project ideas may come directly from this Full-Circle Learning curriculum, but they will necessarily involve customization in terms of the details; or they may be completely customized to your local needs. Supporting music might come from a Full-Circle Learning source (CD or download) or may come from local resources. Introducing students to many genres, over time, can expand their understanding of the universal nature of artistic and musical expression as service to society.

Once you have identified your service project plans, you are ready to plan for the other 13-S steps. Sometimes these steps will shift based on the changes you have made in your particular service project, but customize the concepts as needed. Although the 13-S form may be just a template to more specifically plan the projects listed in the curriculum, it can also help you adapt the plan for specific community needs and available resources. Know that the curriculum is here for you to draw from as needed, adding or adapting to allow the teacher, student and community participation that make it appropriate for your learning community. **If possible, reproduce the following pages to ensure that you will have one template per habit-of-heart unit.**





## Template for Full-Circle Learning Unit Plan

### 13-S FORMULA

Copy and use this template to make notations on your overall plans for each unit of study.

**HABIT-OF-HEART:** \_\_\_\_\_

**DATES:** \_\_\_\_\_

**COMMUNITY NEED/S STUDENTS WILL ADDRESS:** \_\_\_\_\_

DESCRIPTION OF STEP	NOTES TO GUIDE PREPARATION
<p><b>SENSE IT.</b> Present an anticipatory set or attention-getting activity that piques curiosity, links to ultimate service goals, or connects to prior knowledge to explain the significance of the habit-of-heart, using as many of the senses as possible. Follow up with descriptions or examples to demonstrate the meaning of the word.</p>	
<p><b>SEE IT.</b> Write the habit-of-heart on the board in large letters.</p>	

<p><b>SAY IT.</b> Clap out the number of syllables. Students clap along.</p> <p><b>SYNCHRONIZE IT.</b> Students give the syllables in the word different pitches and sing or chant the word together. Synchronizing pitch and syllabic sounds is especially effective with long words. The chant becomes a cheer to use when students are practicing the habit-of-heart.</p>	
<p><b>SHAPE IT.</b> Draw the shape of the word around the written word in a way that suggests a visual metaphor. Conduct a kinesthetic activity to reinforce the meaning, such as building a human train to represent cooperation. Have younger students write the word and draw the shape to promote word recognition and to reinforce the concept.</p>	
<p><b>SYMBOLIZE IT.</b> Have students agree on an action associated with the word. (Prohibit gang signs.) Have the class practice this action. When calling the class to show the habit, instead of using the cheer, a student or teacher can silently use this gesture.</p>	
<p><b>STORYTELL IT.</b> Use real-life applications, current events, examples in recent assignments, role plays or literary passages that present opportunities to discuss the habit-of-heart. Discuss how the plot might have ended differently if certain characters had</p>	

<p>applied or not applied the habit-of-heart. Students imagine the most positive endings.</p>	
<p>SHOW IT.</p> <p>Collect examples of relevant applications from curriculum, current events and school culture.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Assign hypothetical demonstrations on the conflict bridge, using interpersonal, community-based and international conflicts.</li> <li>2. Use guided imagery to help all students envision the application of the quality in their lives.</li> <li>3. Reinforce the habit by making Habits-of-Heart homework a tradition. (Students show/describe how they practiced the habit. Parents participate.)</li> </ol>	<p><b><u>Describe the Conflict Participants:</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><u>1.</u></li> <li><u>2.</u></li> <li><u>3.</u></li> </ol> <p><b><u>Guided Imagery Theme (repeated twice weekly)</u></b></p>
<p>SING IT</p> <p>Rehearse a Habit-of-Heart song about the current habit, emphasizing that music serves two purposes, as a gift of joy and comfort or as a tool to inspire action or advocacy</p>	<p><b><u>Song/s:</u></b></p>
<p>STANDARDIZE IT (SUPPLEMENT STANDARDS-BASED LEARNING.)</p> <p>Look for thematic threads of continuity in core content areas. You will find suggestions throughout this book. Here, students express the habit through research, study and action. Apply process-based learning and project-based learning where possible. Use graphic organizers, to connect thematic and academic</p>	<p><b><u>In the spaces that follow, write page numbers of activities to emphasize or key words of activities you will add to unit.</u></b></p>

<p>content. Integrate two relevant ideas to the end service goal or to the objects being produced as a service to society. Apply authentic outcomes wherever possible, as students create artifacts that become gifts to honor those working in the fields or products used for advocacy or problem-solving.</p>	
<p><b>SEND IT.</b>          Create a wisdom exchange with another class. Seek information or send congratulations from a research facility. Mail or email a wisdom exchange to a global classroom collaborator. Write to newspapers, professionals or officials, in reference to a service goal.</p> <p>For global collaborators, if possible, include photos or drawings of the students and artifacts of their project, telling of its impact and relationship to the habit-of-heart. Challenge the distant brothers and sisters to share ideas and to join them as they address the issue. (i.e.poverty, deforestation, energy concerns.)</p>	<p><b><u>Service Objective and Learning Goal Reinforced:</u></b></p>
<p><b>SHARE IT.</b>          By now, students may have already experienced a distant connection with the human family. They also need to witness the value of their teaching and learning in their own community. They teach or advocate for a cause or share something they have created with their knowledge to help the community. They may sing and present to an audience they are honoring on a service-learning field trip. Alternatively, in some cases, local service occurs onsite, by bringing a guest presenter in or by creating an in-school museum.</p>	







**Literary Selection:** *Things Fall Apart*, by Chinua Achebe

## Preparing for the Literary Selection

Full-Circle Learning units integrate character and service with each academic unit of study whenever possible. The teacher may introduce his or her own plan, using the Full-Circle Learning 13-S steps, or work with other teachers in the same grade level to plan projects that bring the unit toward purposeful fulfillment of a service project. The suggestions below provide teacher prompts only but may be used flexibly, based on community needs. Before beginning your unit:

1. Obtain copies of the featured text for the course, *Things Fall Apart*.
2. Plan to present background information on Chinua Achebe. Write on the board any words that students may not know, or, alternately, hide the words in the room on strips of paper and have students search for them. They search for dictionary definitions of whatever words they find.
3. The reading itself can be conducted individually or in groups. The questions also can be conducted as a group discussion but may also be used in follow-up quizzes, if desired.
4. The individual activities include writing, role play and even music and art, periodically coming to fruition as community service. They are a major focus of each chapter-end section. Some activities are short and others extend for several days or even weeks. Therefore, most classes will finish the book in no less than six weeks and may take up to a full school year, depending on how many other activities you are integrating into your school day.
5. When reading in class, some methods have proven helpful for struggling readers. Occasionally, have small groups take turns standing and reading a paragraph in unison. Each student, then, hears words pronounced correctly by others in a more participatory way, and the standing and sitting motivation stimulates brain activity.

The teacher's section gives suggested responses for discussion questions, integrated learning projects and a suggested final activity.

### **Please Note:**

Do not postpone introducing the history section but, rather, present it simultaneously with the literary activities. Each content area helps provide context for the other, so partnering teachers may initiate their activities during the same week, even though they appear here in chronological order.

Read through the entire section and determine whether to partner with other teachers or to introduce the material in one classroom.

Unit-end projects help the teacher check for understanding while reinforcing relevancy. Please read to the end before scheduling the activities in a lesson plan book, as some activities and projects will overlap the reading time.

The integrated activities are designed to help students create understand the richness of culture, the consequences of history, the opportunities to create social change

through the arts and also the fulfillment of transformation through personal development and positive social action. Wherever you see an opportunity to introduce a local theme, customize a project or adapt the content, this will improve the program. This curriculum provides the framework, while you dress it based on your community needs and resources.

Review the resource section at the end of this chapter, *Things Fall Apart Introduction*. Determine how you will introduce Chinua Achebe as an author. What important facts do you want students to know about him before they begin reading? Perhaps you will give each of several students an important fact to know and tell about him. Then you will ask them to come up with one word definitions of his role in society. Write the word agent on the board and let students determine whether Achebe was an agent of change, and in what way. Explain that their study of this work and its place in history can challenge them to become change agents in their own way.

Challenge students, meanwhile, to research and read about other evidences of change in the world around them and bring some to class before they begin the next unit.

## Introducing the Module Theme

### Sense It Step

Bring to class two different forms of the same plant, such as a seed and a fully grown vegetable or a tree limb with leaves and another limb that has shed its leaves. Keep them obscured in a bag or container.

Ask students to close their eyes. Tell them you will rub an object against their arm and they are not to open their eyes until everyone has felt the object. Brush one limb against the arms of half the class and the other limb against the arms of the other half.

Have students open their eyes. Ask them to describe the object. Write their descriptions in a Venn diagram on the board. Place similar words in each half of the conjoined circles, with words that describe both limbs in the center.

### Discussion

Can you imagine why your descriptions are not all the same? (Now bring out the two objects and ask the next question.) Are these the same object? Explain your answer. (Elicit that they are the same object, experienced in different seasons or at different stages of its evolution.)

Ask students when/if they realized they were both describing two aspects of the same plant at different stages of its growth.

Do *you* always feel the same? Would you describe your attributes and habits differently as you change and grow? Yet you are still the same person.

Some things about you change and some do not. You cultivate your inner strengths but apply them more beneficially, hopefully, as you mature—and in ways you could not have foreseen when you were younger.

Is this also true for society? Can we plant ideas that become seeds of change or flowering signs of progress? Discuss the responses.

As you seek to refine your own character, you become a master of change.

As you honor the best aspects of the past and yet work for positive change in society, you become an agent of change in society.

Considering the objects we touched, when is change good? (When it brings growth, when it promotes life, when it feeds us, etc.) This is true of plants, of humans and of societies. By looking at ways to improve the wellbeing of others, we can all become change agents.

*[The teacher will choose actions and activities for the next few steps in the unit. Because multiple habits-of-heart will be featured within the units of the book, the emphasis should be on how our emerging habits can contribute to positive change needed in a community.]*

*Create a class song or select one from the Change Agents or other FCL CDs, from among traditional songs or from the class's own favorites.*

*Develop a class motto.*

*Incorporate a visual symbol of metamorphosis, such as the plant, into a project somewhere within the unit.*

### **Introducing the Author**

Preview the resource section at the end of this chapter, *Things Fall Apart Introduction*. Determine how you will introduce Chinua Achebe as an author. What important facts do you want students to know about him before they begin reading? Perhaps you will give each of several students an important fact to know and tell about him. Then you will ask them to come up with one word definitions of his role in society. Write the word agent on the board and let students determine whether Achebe was an agent of change, and in what way. Explain that their study of this work and its place in history can challenge them to become change agents in their own way.

Challenge students, meanwhile, to research and read about other evidences of change in the world around them and bring some to class before they begin the next unit.

*You have now introduced the theme of the module. Next, introduce the first chapter.*

### **See It. Say It.**

Write the words *Change Agents* on the board. Say it together.

Define the word *agent*. We generally think of an agent as someone who acts on behalf of someone else, an institution, individual or cause. In this case, the cause is positive change. Conduct the layering strategy on the board. Have students each imagine a type of positive change they would want to represent, by indicating one thing in the community they feel needs changing. The teacher or a student writes these items in layers or stacks to build a tower of change. These are the types of changes the class wants to see, they must desire to become agents of this change. They will develop the habits of deep community change by first evaluating a few of the personal changes needing in individuals that generate change in a group.

Because we will use literature as the basis for our study, we will cover one habit over the course of every two chapters.

## **Synchronize It.**

Develop a chant based on the term *Change Agents*. This can become an introduction to later chants you use as you reintroduce the Synchronize it step throughout the book.

Choose several students to each sing the word on several different pitches. Sing them in succession to a rhythm of your choice. Syncopate the rhythm and sing it together. Take five minutes to create a group song, to help the class remember the word, which you may use to create a new morning routine and as an impromptu celebration song to remind them of the identity to which they will aspire during this course.

## **Shape It**

The general theme of *Habits of Change Agents* appears first as introductory content for students to absorb before you present the Humanities reading selections. Suggest a gesture such as a tower of change to help everyone recall the tower they build together.

## **Symbolize It**

Create a gesture as if you are molding clay and then placing it on the heart, to show that changing a community must start with the individual. This gesture can be used to gently remind a student to look inward rather than outward to improve a relationship, a situation or a project.

## **Storytell It**

Ask students to research the nature of change. Each one should tell about one thing that has improved in their local or world community within their lifetime. They must first describe the situation before and after the change, then research and tell how the change came about in terms of its influences, its advocates, its explorers, its pioneers, etc. Did change occur through the consciously through the contributions of a few or the acts of many? What habits and qualities contributed to the positive aspects of the change? Which personal habits could threaten or undo the benefits of this change? Students may write scripts and dramatize their stories about the historical events that led to the change.

## **Show It**

Choose some of the events students identified in the community as content for the conflict bridge. What obstacles and opponents did agents of change face as they tried to make changes in the world? How did the peacefully make changes?

## **Sing It**

Introduce the Full-Circle Learning song *Move Those Mountains*. What does the song recommend to people trying to build a community? What qualities do you think it describes? How would you depict the song in a dance, mural or piece of art? Allow students to form a creative expression of the song for later use.

## **Standards-based Learning: Humanities**

**Reading book:** *Things Fall Apart*

**Please Note:**

Teach the content in the resource section at the end of this chapter, *Things Fall Apart Introduction*. Determine how you will introduce Chinua Achebe as an author. What important facts do you want students to know about him before they begin reading? Perhaps you will give each of several students an important fact to know and tell about him. Then you will ask them to come up with one word definitions of his role in society. Write the word agent on the board and let students determine whether Achebe was an agent of change, and in what way. Explain that their study of this work and its place in history can challenge them to become change agents in their own way.

Challenge students, meanwhile, to research and read about other evidences of change in the world around them and bring some to class before they begin the next unit.

[All remaining chapters give self-contained steps and introduce individual habits-of-heart.]

### **Share It**

Students each write about the changes they have researched for a reading in the round. They create an oral presentation about positive changes in the world. Their reading mentions the strength of character and integrity needed to create such a world. They present the reading in a public setting such as a community center, storefront or house of worship or for the younger students.

### **Send It**

Students write a group letter about a change they want to see in their community that requires group effort. They send the letter to their local community newspaper or get permission to post the letters on the wall in a post office, transportation center or another public place. Posters may attract people to their message.

Students monitor the signs or ask the host site for follow up, to discern whether their message received attention. (If online, they may check the number of viewers their site received.) Onsite, they need interview skills and observation skills or survey skills to monitor the effectiveness of their communications.

## **Sustain It**

Students gather in small groups and pass the talking stick to discuss their skits, oral presentations, letters and posters. They focus on three questions: 1. Did they notice a shift in attitude as they planted the idea of change in the community? Did they see shifts in the actions of others that could lead to gradual improvements, over time? Did they make the same changes they challenged others to make in the community? Reflection on these questions marks the development of a change agent in the making.

## ***Things Fall Apart: About the Author***

Nigerian author Chinua Achebe wrote *Things Fall Apart* in 1958, during the movement to give African history and heritage a voice in English literature. It became the most widely known novel of its period.

Chinua Achebe passed away March 21, 2013 at age 82. As a Nigerian writer, he not only stood at a crossroad in time but defined that crossroad. When his first novel was published, Africa itself had come to a turning point in its literary history. A new generation of novelists had emerged. Some, educated at mission schools or with a heavy emphasis on Western development, searched for ways to correct history or to reject the preconceived notions in some of the books on which they had been trained.

For Chinua Achebe, it was time to give a voice to his ancestors, the Igbo people. By creating complex characters who illustrated the thought process of a world “falling apart”—ironically taken from a Western poem by Charles Butler Yeats called “The Second Coming.” This poem is about the transition of one age to another, symbolized by spirals (gyres) whose contrary motion depicts the struggle between science, democracy and speed and the inner forces of character and mysticism. Things fall apart as the beast in the poem emerges and slouches toward the new age.

In Achebe’s fictional world, similarly, things fall apart under the tensions of a preliterate society, an evolving literate world, and a new oppressive regime. He neither glamorized the lives of the ancestors nor gave heroic qualities where they were not earned. Instead, he portrayed the struggle as an ongoing evolution of real humans, each struggling to meet the definition of self-mastery based on the goals and context of the age in which they were born.

The South African writer and Nobel prize winner Nadine Gordimer described Achebe as an author who “has no illusions but is not disillusioned.” (Quoted in *New York Times* in 1988, requoted in *New York Times* obituary, March 23 2013.)

Over a lifetime, Chinua Achebe earned a place as one of the most respected voices in international literature. He studied Shakespeare, Milton Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats and Tennyson. In the 1950s he moved to London to work for the British broadcasting system. He went on to teach university classes in the West for many years, and yet he dedicated himself to writing about Africa because he felt the world needed more books by Africans, about Africa. His background, his place in history and his literary gifts particularly qualified to him write those books and to lead that movement. His themes and tone, established in *Things Fall Apart*, set a standard that many others followed in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.

His other novels, written from 1960 – 1988, included *No Longer at Ease*, *Arrow of God*, *A Man of the People*, and *Anthills of the Savannah*.

## About the Book

In *Things Fall Apart*, readers learn about the traditions and transitions that occurred in Igboland (Southeastern Nigeria, on the banks of the River Niger) between 1874 and 1904. Men, women and gods each played a unique role in sustaining community life in Igboland. Fables (moral stories) and relationships with the supernatural among the mortals maintained the core values in the community.

Chinua Achebe, educated in English, was among the authors who wanted to use the English novel to capture pre-colonial life at a time when Africa was becoming very proud of its heritage. He did not idealize the characters or the lifestyle, however. Rather, he used the English novel as a medium to infuse oral storytelling into history and to mold traditional African characters with complex lives, social structures, thoughts and feelings.

These characters stood transfixed between the time-worn traditions of pre-colonial Africa and the modern age, at a point when education and religion would gradually raise questions about the logic of centuries-old violence embedded into age-old traditions. However, the government systems that tried to “civilize” them and to subdue their traditions seemed no better than the systems they replaced. Outsiders offered education in the British system, but religious missionaries who offered this education sometimes mocked the native religion. The new government sometimes inadvertently and sometimes intentionally brought humiliation and brutality upon this proud society. Not only the social structure, but also the identity of the main character “falls apart” by the end of the story.

As we read, we will have opportunities to examine how things might have ended differently. In *Things Fall Apart*, we consider what qualities in the human condition the author suggested are unconditional, what we can change, and what habits or traditions inevitably fall apart as each generation evolves to examine former belief systems with new eyes. We will think about how to keep what is precious and polish what is tarnished in our own character. We will also have a chance to view our path to becoming the change agents of our own generation, by honoring elders but developing and applying the habits-of-heart relevant to our own times.

## Chapter Activities

### Chapter 1 - Respect

#### Discussion Questions

Read the first four paragraphs of the book. Was Okonkwo someone you would like to know? Why or why not? Now review the last paragraph of Chapter 1. Why did people of Okonkwo's time show him respect, even though he treated them unpleasantly?

Compare the reputation of Okonkwo with war heroes or celebrities you know about today. What is the difference between being famous and being notorious?

#### Long-term Assignment: Respect

We will study several habits-of-heart as we cover read *Things Fall Apart*. The first of these is Respect. How does this habit lead to a fruitful life rather than just a life of being known and feared? Which habits help to create positive change in the world? As a group, list examples of famous people who were admired but not feared.

As you read the book, look for examples of people in the real world who are creating such examples. Individually write about these people. Depict them in drawings or sculptures. Prepare to present their stories and pictures to the class. Cite the dominant habit from this list practiced by the individual you have studied. Place your story under this work in a special classroom display.

### Chapter 2

#### Discussion Questions

Okonkwo lived in Umofia, a land of magic and superstition, but that was not what he feared most. What were his two greatest fears? What two things did he hate that his father loved?

Describe how the boy named Ikemefuna was a victim of the traditions of his people in a way that allowed him no choice in his own destiny?

Okonkwo respected tradition more than anything, but in postmodern culture, respect for human life trumps respect for tradition. Ikemefuna was a victim of a society in transition. If a man is measured by the empire he creates, then what becomes of a boy who is not allowed to grow up and create his own choices but is punished for the choices of others? What would you change about this situation?

#### Group Activity: Respect

As a class, imagine you are a tribal council. Write a just law that shows respect for a culture who respecting human life. Suggest the options for what to do when someone commits murder.

## Individual Activity: Respect Journal

Respect also comes with the words we speak, which can serve as weapons or tools for good. Keep a personal log for a week. At the end of each day, write a journal entry describing each time you spoke with respect to an elder or even to a classmate. Also describe any event that occurred in which you spoke disrespectfully. Describe how your words probably felt to the individual. Rewrite the incident with the words or actions you could have chosen and the impact they might have had. Correct the action in the next 24 hours.

## Chapter 3 - Humility

### Discussion Questions

Okonkwo's father came to an unlucky end, presumably because he had a bad *chi*. Thus, he did not give his son Okonkwo an easy start, with a barn or a title or a young wife in the land of Umuofia. How did Okonkwo's feelings about his father's fate affect his own push for success?

Have you ever blamed your own challenges on those who came before you and did not make your life easy enough? Did blaming others hold you back or push you ahead?

What hardship did Okonkwo face in the year he took 900 yams from Nwakibia? What qualities did he develop to help himself through this year? What qualities do you feel he did not take time to develop?

### Individual Writing Activity: Humility

How do you face difficult challenges or disadvantages in life? Do you have a plan for accepting accountability for your flaws, mastering your own habits, and facing your own character struggles? Was humility the first step to accepting the need for a plan?

For example, how do you consciously practice moderation when you are tempted to take what does not belong to you or to take more than your fair share? How do you learn to control your impulses; to reflect on and correct your mistakes; to curb your ego? Do you readily admit you have made a mistake, or does someone point it out to you? Share at least one habit that has been helpful to you and the approach you took to developing the essential habit of humility.

## Chapter 4

### Discussion Questions

What happened in the beginning of chapter 4 that made the elders question Okonkwo's humility?

Later in the chapter, the boy Ikemefuna was taken from an enemy clan to atone for the murder of Udo's wife. He was sent to the home of Okonkwo for three years, to live as if he were another son. How does Okonkwo feel about the boy? How does he demonstrate his feelings, and why?

How does he treat his second wife Ojiugo in this chapter, who stays out too long plaiting her hair?

## **Group Activity – Teaching Humility**

Meet in small groups. Each group will role play a meeting of the elders. Someone will play Okonkwo. The elders will advise him on the benefits of humility and give constructive guidance for developing this habit.

## **Chapter 5 - Moderation**

### **Discussion Question**

When Okonkwo heard the beat of the drums, calling the villagers to the wrestling match, he “trembled with the urge to conquer and subdue.” What was symbolic about this line? How did his reaction to his wife Ekwefi demonstrate this need when she uses a few banana leaves to wrap food? Although industriousness is perhaps his best trait, what trait did he lack?

### **Group Activity - Moderation**

When you are performing a task, do you think about the end goal? Moderation (not too much or too little of something) ensures that we have balance in our lives. Divide into pairs and act out the following scenarios:

1. You are working hard to finish cleaning up, and a friend spills something in your path. Show what is more important, the work you have done or your patience with your friend.
2. You have worked very hard on your schoolwork, and you received the highest grade on class. Another student next did you did score as highly. You feel proud and want to shout out that your scores are highest. Demonstrate how you would show moderation between aspiration and humility at this point?
3. You want everything to be perfect when you are performing a task. Your brothers and sisters do not pay so much attention to detail. Sometimes you become angry and say hurtful things to them. How can you moderate your need for perfection with the need for patience? Think of some special methods to practice moderation and demonstrate them.
4. You have been invited to a feast, and your family has not had enough to eat lately since you mother lost her job. You want to take more food than the others. Demonstrate how you will show moderation.
5. Your community must take its well water from the same source as a neighboring village. Often there is not enough for everyone to water their plants and ensure their family’s needs in the same day. Talk with the chief of the neighboring village to work out a solution.

### **Individual Activity**

In your journal, document and describe each time you show moderation during the coming week.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Discussion Questions**

This chapter follows the light conversation at a wrestling match where the leader of the village is the one who threw the most cats (wrestlers who fight without landing). Based on the dialogue here, find all the references that show the fine line between the supernatural world (world of the spirits) and the human world in the daily interactions within the community.

Because all these situations are presented as fact, do you think it would be easy to change your habits if you, as a villager, were introduced to a different belief system based on another set of theological, philosophical or scientific assumptions? Explain your response. If you could choose the most productive aspects of life in Umofia, which ones would you keep? Choose one character with habit you would want to moderate. What is that habit? Drinking palm wine? Fighting or encouraging violence? Showing rage or impatience?

Do you think the personal challenges of people in Umofia are similar to the issues people face today? Draw a Venn Diagram to see how many similarities and differences you have found so far in the immoderate actions that could affect a society. Are there other practices we have today that did not exist then, such as too many of the wrong foods, too much pollution, and other items on your diagram?

### **Individual Activity**

List the things you feel would enhance society if experienced in greater moderation. What are you doing to contribute to moderation in each of those categories? Make a pledge to do something to generate moderation in at least one aspect of life in your community.

**Group Activity:** Discuss what you have visualized so far when you picture Umofia. Sketch a scene from daily life there. Students each receive a tile to paint a mural of their concept of Umofia, based on what they read in *Things Fall Apart*. Each week, they add new tiles to the mural, based on details they have read. Students conduct the math to determine the scale of the mural. Where will it hang? How large will it be? How many tiles should it have? How large can it be if every student receives three tiles?

## **Chapter 7 Civic-mindedness**

### **Discussion Question**

Nwoye loved the story of the vulture who pleads with the sky to soften the hearts of men and send down rain. He did not like the brutal stories his father told. What does this tell you about the natural character traits or habits-of-heart Nwoye felt inside and wanted to develop? In what ways was his own civic-mindedness supported by his culture? Who in his life resisted it as a sign of weakness?

### **Group Activity: Civic-mindedness**

There are many ways in which we can gather together and “plead with the sky to soften hearts of men and send down rain” today.

List some of the issues faced in your region, such as drought, regional conflict, hunger, sanitary water, etc. Research the root causes and potential solutions to the problems. Who might you plead with, as a group, to bring about change? For example:

Would different international energy policies influence drought and growing conditions locally? Could awareness of the suffering children bring compassion to the hearts of leaders prolonging conflict in a region? Might engineers at a university be helpful in introducing techniques for clean water in a remote area or use of vaccines in a region without a clinic?

Choose an agency to whom you will address your cause in a letter or email. If possible, use scientific data or math statistics or art to strengthen your case. Divide into groups. Each group might conduct interviews on one aspect of the problem or add special elements to the appeal based on their strengths.

Now write a heartfelt appeal, with each group supplying one letter or paragraph. Have everyone sign it. Ask your school to send the appeal to the institution that can respond to your request.

Improving your community, as a group, will help you understand the sense of empowerment that Nwoye strived for—one that comes through education instead of through violence. Even if you do not receive immediate results, your cry will be heard, as the vulture's cry still rings through the skies through the ages.

## **Chapter 8 Ethics**

### **Discussion Questions**

Why do you think Okonkwo did not eat or sleep well after he killed Ikemefuna?

The boy had been given to his family to make restitution for a killing by a member of another clan, but Ikemefuna had grown very close to Okonkwo and his son Nwokwe. Based on the actions Okonkwo took, what do you think was most important to him, empathy or the laws of the tribe? How was this perspective different from civic-mindedness the way his son practiced the habit?

What decision would you make today if you were part of a tribal council or if you were an elder advising him?

What does Obierika say about Okonkwo's reason for the killing? Why would the circumstance have been different if it had happened during the planting season?

## **Chapter 9**

### **Discussion Questions - Ethics**

Ezinma is close to her father and her mother and she is precious to them, and yet they have come to believe she is the reincarnation of earlier children who died, and therefore must be an ophange or evil child who keeps dying and reentering the world. When they are trying to break this cycle, she has a conversation with her mother about cooking yams for their guests. Ezinma

thinks they have put in too many leaves, but her mother reminds her that the leaves shrink when they boil down. What fable does her mother tell about the snake lizard? What is the symbolism of this tale?

Ethics refers to the morality (rightness or wrongness) of a certain group of actions based on the standards of a certain group or culture. The motives as well as the outcome determine the ethics of a situation. In this fable, the snake lizard who irrationally killed its mother thought at first that it was observing justice. When science revealed the truth, the snake lizard realized he had committed a greater injustice by killing his mother for no reason. Only the tragic outcome helped him see his mistake and feel remorse.

Discuss the meaning of the term ethics. Clip several newspaper articles and bring them to class. Compare the difference between incidents in which impure motivation is the cause of an ethics violation and unintended outcomes result in ethics violations. How does a group make sure its actions are based on accurate information when implementing policies, to avoid injustice? For example, some companies hire ethicists. Some agencies consult with watchdog groups. Some individuals consult with advisors they know they can trust in specific fields, either professional or spiritual.

### **Group Activity: Getting the Facts**

Prepare the story as a puppet show or skit, but in the story, have the snake lizard stop and learn about the science of expansion and contraction before he loses his temper.

## **Chapter 10**

### **Discussion Questions**

Who were the egwuwu and what was their role? What did the author mean when he said that one of them had a springy step like Okonkwo's and that Okonkwo was missing from the meeting?

Can you think of a reason why the villages would carry out justice through a court made up of egwuwus?

### **Group Activity: Ethics**

Take a class poll. If you had nine classmates determining a consequence about an infraction that happened at school, would you trust their judgment more if they 1) wrote up their decision anonymously; 2) disguised as wise leaders and gave speeches about it; , or 3) simply offered opinions speaking as themselves?

Based on your poll results, what gives most people today confidence today in the credibility of a source? Is it the integrity of the person speaking or the practicality, morality and character expressed within the opinion? Discuss the reasons you think the poll turned out the way it did.

## Chapter 11

### Discussion Questions

In Chapter 11, Ekwefi and Okonkwo let the priestess carry away their beloved daughter to the cave. How does the parable of the snake lizard relate to the treatment of Ezinma, the child, and to other who suffered due to the accidental nature of their birth, such as twins?

This chapter also features Ekwefi's story of the tortoise and its shell. What habits-of-heart did the tortoise lack? What loss did he suffer as a result—loss of respect? Was the story meant to simply explain why a tortoise has a shell of many pieces or perhaps to teach a child the value of ethics, respect, moderation and other habits-of-heart? What aspects of the tortoise's character do you think the mother saw in her husband? Why do you think she would tell the story to her daughter?

### Individual Activity: Ethics Journal

Each day for a week, record news stories that show the benefits of good ethics and the harm done to society through poor moral choices or unethical choices. The teacher will select one story and have students act it out, changing the actions of the characters to reflect ethical choices in the end. Did the potential impact on society or the subject's family shift after the role play?

(Some of the stories can also be from the current topics in the students' history books.)

Take a trip to the library. Research other fables used to teach important lessons. How have these shaped the cultural values and also the linguistic idioms of the country? Bring at least one example to class.

Set a date for a service project involving families. As your class service, have a storytelling circle or hold puppet shows with younger children, to teach ethics through animal stories.

### Suggested Family Service Project:

Create a mosaic mural depicting the story of the tortoise. Invite children to participate in creating a mural that will become a reminder to the community of the habits-of-heart the story teaches. Suggested materials: Shells, rocks, clay, etc. and painted words. (Involve a local artist as a mentor if needed.)

## **Chapter 12 Review**

### **Discussion Questions**

The people of Umofia prepare for one of the feasts leading up to a wedding in Chapter 12. It is important to the men that the bridegroom give two fat goats to the bride's family as a dowry and that the bride and her mother prepare a feast for everyone with all the traditional foods.

If you were bringing special qualities or habits-of-heart to ensure the success of your future family, rather than goats, yams, soups and foo-foo, what habits would you bring? Think about the happiest relationships you have seen or in which you have participated. What habits did the participants work to prepare? Create a menu for a happy wedding feast or family reunion. Include some of the habits-of-heart you have studied or practiced so far. Share these in class. At the family service day, serve food and name menu items after these habits, such as Humble Pie, Respectfu-fu-ly Made Dish, etc.

## **Chapter 13 Honor**

### **Discussion Questions**

This chapter is a turning point because Okonkwo realizes his own vulnerability. What happens to bring this about? What must he do as a result?

What are some changes in character or perspective you do or do not hope he will discover in Part Two of the book?

### **Individual Activity**

Write your predictions about who Okonkwo will become. What must happen for your version of the story to come true?

## **Chapter 14**

### **Discussion Questions**

Okonkwo's uncle, Uchendu, receives him in his mother's homeland. What message does he give Okonkwo about the role of mothers?

How does he define honor in terms of Okonkwo's responsibility to his family, to honor the memory of his mother? How many children had Uchendu lost in order to feel that he had earned the right to scold Okonkwo for his self-pity?

Did you ever have a problem that made you feel sorry for yourself? Did you find that when you noticed the sorrow of others and comforted them, you were able to better transcend your own feelings of self-pity? Share an example with the class.

### **Individual Activity: Honor Journal**

How do you define honor? Think of your greatest current challenge. Write down what you are doing to overcome it. As part of your plan, incorporate one action each day that involves reaching out to help others, to think less about your own trials. Each time you are faced with a difficult choice, honor the memory of those who have made sacrifices for you by becoming a symbol of charity yourself. Define honor as a chance to be the best you can be in responsible, live-giving ways. At the end of one month, write a page describing any changes you have seen in your life or in the way you feel about yourself and others.

### **Group Activity: Music as a Motto**

Each day in class, sing the song “Honor,” from the Change Agents CD, or sing another song that serves as inspiration in moments of difficulty. Challenge the class to commit the song to memory for personal use.

## **Chapter 15**

### **Discussion Questions**

There were many reasons for the clash between the white men and the Igbo people. Why do you think Uchendu thought it foolish to kill the white men?

Could there be more than one answer to this question?

### **Honor Challenge**

Have you ever been involved in a situation in which you hurt someone – perhaps by taking something of theirs or gossiping or verbally hurting their feelings—and you ended up being the one most hurt in the end?

What did you learn from this experience? Write about the experience in your journal if you like. Most importantly, write a letter of apology to the person you intended to hurt. It could lead to healing for both parties.

## **Chapter 16**

### **Discussion Question**

What did the missionaries tell the villagers about the gods that made them laugh?

What message in the hymn touched the young boy Nwoye?

### **Group Activity: Music and Mood**

Many songs or genres of music tell of suffering. A few songs place the singer in the role of healer. (Two examples are the bluegrass song “See Me” and the gospel song “Move Those Mountains” and the pop song “I Aspire” on the Change Agents CD, and the song “Consider This” on the Gratitude CD.)

As a class, listen to songs about healing the suffering of others. Discuss the emotions you feel. Do the lyrics of songs help you imagine ways to overcome tragedy by helping others?

## Chapter 17

### Discussion Questions

When the missionaries did not die in the Evil Forest, what effect did this surprise have on the villagers?

What did Nwoye decide to do when his father became angry and tried to kill him?

The missionary quoted his Lord as saying “They who hear my words are my father and mother.” What do you think he meant about loyalty based on blood relations versus belief?

How did Nwoye regain a sense of love and oneness in his life?

### Individual and Group Activity: Capturing Meaning through Metaphor

Nwoye had responded to the songs of suffering and poetry, just as he once found mythic meaning in his mother’s fables. The symbols in these art forms touched his emotions and gave him a sense of the meaning of life. Okonkwo, by contrast, ground himself in history, the cycles of seasons and centuries. Even his gods were tangible (touchable) rather than unseen. Thus, he could not understand the faith of his son. Consider the role of art (poetry, drawing, sculpture, dance and music) in creating symbols that stir emotions and create faith in ideals as opposed to representing realities. Experiment with one or more of these art forms.

First go out into an open space. Choose an object in your environment. Write a poem about this tangible object. (See the Girls United anthology *Haiti Through Our Eyes* for examples of poems about objects.) You may begin your poem:

Here I sit.

Here I see

[Complete the verse with vivid images.]

Next, choose an object that suggests a metaphor for something you value or feel strongly about. For example, you may see a pot and think of it as a receptacle of knowledge. You may see a plant and think of the gift of life. Find an original image and metaphor and write the second verse of Here I sit, Here I see...

Revise your poem as needed. When you meet with the class again, read your verses aloud. Which verse stirs your emotions? Which creates a reaction when you read it aloud? Do they build on each other? Is this true for the rest of the class?

Take a class poll at the end of the readings. Are most people stirred by a connection to the tangible, visible objects or the mention of natural beauty, or do they relate to intangible ideals expressed through poetry?

Is there value in each perspective? Why or why not?

Continue to perfect your verses. Create verses using metaphor to write about the habits-of-heart. Keep the poems in a class poetry corner.

## **Chapter 18 Open-mindedness**

### **Discussion Questions**

Why did nearly all the osu in MBanta join the new religion?

What did Mr. Kiaga teach about outcasts?

When a Christian reportedly killed a sacred python—possibly in self-defense— what did the people of MBanta want to do about it and why? What did Okonkwo want to do about it and why? Were the philosophies of the region changing in ways he could or could not adapt to?

If Okoli could not answer as the python killer, do you think it was because “the gods were able to fight their own battles,” as the clan said when they determined not to fight the Christians?

Think of a situation you have read or heard about in which some people had a scientific explanation for an event and others had a mystical explanation. Have you heard of instances in which science actually proves a mystical phenomenon?

### **Individual Writing Challenge**

The poem by Yeats upon which Achebe based his title uses the term “falling apart” to describe the struggle one attribute of an era in transition -- when the world is outgrowing one way of thinking and shedding its understanding to evolve into new patterns of

thought. In some ways, a snake is an ideal symbol of the opportunity to shed its skin and reveal a new perspective.

Write a short story about a specific scientific process or about a discovery. In the community you describe, science and mystic beliefs come into harmony. Your story can be set in the present or future. It can be 800-1000 words. In the story, one or more characters relates to the world in a new way and unifies two groups of people in the process.

## **Chapter 19 Open-mindedness**

### **Discussion Questions**

Why does Okonkwo prepare an extravagant feast before leaving his mother's homeland?

Do you predict that he will return to Umofia after his banishment to find his status in the community preserved? Will he find that the changing trends in tradition, education and religion have occurred everywhere or only in MBanta?

### **Individual Activity: Open-mindedness**

Compare Okonkwo's changing life circumstances to something you have experienced when you were faced with a turn of events. How did open-mindedness make your situation easier?

## **Chapter 20**

### **Discussion Questions**

Name three things Okonkwo lost while he was away.

Name three things he vowed to do to regain status.

What did the white colonialists' government courts do that offended the dignified men of Umofia, and what did the prisoners do, in turn, that offended the prison guards?

Find the paragraph in this chapter that explains the title of the book.

### **Group Activity**

Do you think by developing personal habits-of-heart at varying rates, the characters interrupted outmoded customs? Do you think all the things that “fell apart” were good things? Why or why not?

As a class, discuss customs that all share. How can you unify through traditions that unify and bring peace instead of violence, class division, or tragedy? Make a plan of action together for a group project.

## **Chapter 21**

### **Discussion Question**

Describe the conversation between Akunna and Mr. Brown. What was similar about their concept of a Supreme Being or God the father? What was different? How did this affect their attitudes toward the community?

### **Group Activity: Open-mindedness**

Explore the faith traditions present in your community. Specifically, What is their concept of God and how does it affect the daily life, values and community contributions of the believers? Each student should research and report to the class on a different faith.

Create a Venn diagram to show the uniquenesses and the similarities among them all. Based on the similarities, determine a shared goal and invite representatives of each group to participate in a joint community service project with the class.

## **Chapter 22**

### **Discussion Questions**

In this chapter, Mr. Smith takes over for Mr. Brown. How was Mr. Smith’s approach differ from Mr. Brown’s approach to the people? What were the consequences of this difference?

### **Group Activity: Open-mindedness**

Have you ever been in a group and heard yourself doing more talking than listening, only to find that others soon did not want to hear what you had to say? This exercise will help you practice the habit of open-mindedness . Gather in small groups of 4-5 people. Each group has a rock, stick or a piece of fruit. The person holding the object is the only one who can speak. You will pass it from left to right.

You have learned that there are three new students who want to come to school but space for only one. You are the leaders of the school and must decide what to do. One student cannot walk and has never attended school. One student, a girl, has only been to school occasionally in the past because she had to help her elderly grandmother where she lived before. One student has come from a city, where he was well educated, and he would actually have to repeat a grade in order to attend your school, as you do not offer his grade level. You only have a chair for one of these students, though each wants to come. Each of you must express your opinion about what to do.

You can only speak when you are holding the object as it travels around the circle. In addition, you must paraphrase what the person next to you has said. For example, “You have said that you believe we should admit the girl who has been helping her grandmother, because if we educate girls, they will educate their children in the next generation. I want to add that we do not know the gender of the crippled person who has never had a chance to attend school, and if it is a girl, I think we should give her a chance.”

## **Chapter 23**

### **Discussion Questions**

The destruction of the church by the fathers of Umofia marked the beginning of a series of sad events. Cite the ways, in this chapter, in which their deed is avenged with trickery, dishonesty and humiliation, which makes their lives more difficult as a result. Does anyone seem better off for their suffering?

### **Individual Projects: Valuing all Equally**

Research an historical event in which destruction and revenge played a role in bringing about human suffering. How would you rewrite history if respect for all human life were the goal of every leader?

### **Group Conflicts**

Individuals volunteer to share their written reports with the class. They call on class members to represent the interests of the main players on the conflict bridge. Each key figure must strive to respect all human life by the time they reach the center of the bridge.

## Chapter 24

### Group Activity: Conflicted over Open-mindedness

When the people of Umofia met, one of the prisoners, Okika, called them to battle, even if it meant fighting clansmen who now supported the government. No one had ever found it acceptable to kill a clansman before. Using the conflict bridge, have Okika and a clansman carry on a debate about whether it is better to go to war--even with the possibility of killing other clansmen--or to find another way to rid the land of unjust prison practices. Have one person play Okika and another play a more neutral member of the clan who had not been in prison. Have both sides strive to practice open-mindedness.

### Discussion Question

What choice did Okonkwo make in the end of the chapter? How do we know his clansmen did not agree with this choice?

## Chapter 25

### Discussion Questions

Why do you think Okonkwo killed himself -- because he had taken a man's life or because there were no longer enough warriors who agreed with his reasons for taking a man's life?

What does it mean to pacify?

Why would the District Commissioner think of using this title in his future book about Umofia?

Did Okonkwo and the District Commissioner live in two different worlds? Explain your response.

### Individual Writing Assignments: Open-mindedness and Language

Rewrite the last scene of the book as if it were happening 100 years later and each character spoke the language of the other. In this version, challenge each character to value the role of empathy. Depict Okonkwo having a conversation with himself. Depict the District Commissioner having a conversation with himself. What intervention could make each one more curious about the feelings or perspectives of others? Will the outcome of your story be the same as it was in Chinua Achebe's version.

Now choose a topic about which your mind is made up. Write a paragraph advocating the opposite viewpoint. Think of it from the perspective of someone whose life experience differs from yours. Now write a paragraph about what you really believe. The teacher will take the positions and have students randomly draw the slips of paper from a box. A student will defend whatever position he has drawn on a topic, reading it to the class and inviting comments. The presenter will keep in mind the varying perspectives of others in the room and let listening, rather than judging, influence the conversation. Write on the board the points on which the whole class agrees. What have you learned about becoming a change agent in ways that unify rather than divide?

### **Mastery Ceremony**

Discuss with students the question of how each generation distills wisdom and the next builds on it to layer new knowledge. Ask how they think their own generation has benefited from the past and what they think their generation has to offer the generation of the future.

Hold an event and invite families. Students greet and seat guests and serve them food before serving themselves. The students perform songs. On the program, each student presents an essay or poem to an elder describing one habit-of-heart the student has learned from them. The item may be presented personally and, at the student's discretion, a copy may also be displayed. The teacher presents individual habit-of-heart certificates to students.

### **Culminating Sustain It Project**

Discuss the ways in which your city has changed and the ways in which it has not changed in your lifetime. How can you, as individuals and as a group, bring your habits-to-heart to bear, as well as your writing, statistical skills, and knowledge of history and science, to be the change agents of your time? Discuss this question until you come to a group consensus on a project. Also choose a personal goal to complete by the end of the school year.

How did these chapter activities enhance the unit plan you created in the beginning of the book? Who benefited? Who changed? What skills have you strengthened as a change agent?

Complete essays using these prompts, display them in a class book called "Things Come Together." Make copies for the class library.

## **Teacher's Answer Key to Literary Section**

**(Written responses to chapter questions and discussions)**

### **Response to Chapter 1**

Okonkwo had no patience. He was large, angry and fearsome. It was clear that people respected him but not so clear how many liked to spend time with him.

Okonkwo was a wrestler and a warrior. He had wealth, titles and three wives.

A person can be infamous or notorious for their crimes or bad deeds. To be famous for good deeds requires ethics and respect for others.

### **Responses to Chapter 2**

Okonkwo feared failure and weakness. He hated gentleness and idleness, which his father loved.

Ikemefuna became a victim of the traditions of his people in a way that allowed him no choice in his own destiny? To avenge the killing of a daughter of the clan, the people of Mbaino had to sacrifice a son and gave Ikemefuna to Okonkwo.

Ikemefuna did not have free will because Okonkwo could choose to raise him as a son or to kill him.

### **Responses to Chapter 3**

Okonkwo feared a contemptible life and shameful death.

He faced the worst growing season in history trying to feed his father's family and his own. His industriousness is his greatest strength and he exhibits transcendence through miserable times. However, these traits are shown through an inflexible will, which limits his capacity for respect and makes him resentful of his father's failure.

### **Responses to Chapter 4**

He felt affection toward the boy, but he demonstrated it only by showing anger and by letting the boy go to meetings and carry his stool and goatskin bag, because he felt it was a sign of weakness to show his affection.

He beat his wife very heavily, even though it was a sacred week called the Week of Peace.

## **Response to Chapter 5**

He was industrious and would rather be working on his farm than waiting around for a feast. He was angry about the time spent on the preparations in his new residence compared to the village he came from. Out of frustration, he beat his wife for the simple action of using banana leaves to wrap food. He could not temper his industriousness with moderation.

He wanted to conquer and subdue other people and things in his environment, while greater patience would have allowed him to subdue his own impulses.

## **Responses to Chapter 6**

The people gather in front of a silk-cotton tree where spirits of good children wait to be born and where young women often come, hoping to become pregnant.

Chielo asks Ekwefi if Okonkwo almost killed her with his gun, and she confirms it. Chielo says that Ekwefi was saved because her chi was awake.

Chielo comments that she thinks Ekwefi 's daughter Enzima will live, since she has passed the age of six, even though she is an ogbanje, a mischievous spirit destined to die and be reborn again and again to her mother.

Chielo is described as a mild-mannered friend, quite different from the Oracle of the Caves, whom she becomes whenever the spirit of Agala is upon her.

## **Responses to Chapter 7**

Nwoye had a natural sense of empathy and concern for others. He wanted to think about serving his community in positive ways rather than by fighting like a warrior. The clan came together as share croppers to harvest food, to hold feasts and to perform sacred duties together. He did not like it when his father glorified stories in which men came together to perpetrate violence.

## **Responses to Chapter 8**

Okonkwo loved the boy as a son and felt anger at having to kill him but would have felt disgrace at refusing to kill him. He lived by ancient laws rather than acting on the dictates of his conscience. Today he might be advised to put his loyalty to an innocent son above an unreasonable oath of revenge.

Obierika said that if the Oracle had told him that his own son should be killed, he would neither be the one to refute it nor the one to do it, because "it is the kind of action for which the goddess wipes out whole families."

Okonkwo thought that if he had killed Okonkwo during the planting season, he could keep his mind on his work and would not have to think or talk about it. (He could have suppressed his feelings better.)

## **Response to Chapter 9**

The snake lizard gave his mother seven baskets of leaves to cook and she returned three, so he killed her. The leaves had actually shrunk during the cooking process. When he repeated the cooking experiment and it turned out the same way, he killed himself. One way to interpret this story is that when we act impatiently and impulsively without thinking about rational facts, we hurt others. When we realize the truth, the pain of our actions hurts ourselves.)

### **Responses to Chapter 10**

The egwuwu were nine supernaturals from the underground, each representing a village from the clan. Their purpose was to come together to settle disputes.

The author implied that Okonkwo was one of the egwuwu and that they were really tribal leaders, in costume.

The egwuwu system worked for a number of reasons: 1) The people believed that supernatural figures had more authority than a court of ordinary humans, who do not control human destiny and might not have inspired obedience. Some people, such as Uzuwulu, would not accept the opinions of their peers. "He will not listen to any other decision," one elder said to another, when asked why such a trifling case was brought before the egwuwu. The egwuwu also brought about control through fear because of their imposing costumes. Also, perhaps wearing a mask allowed men to state a more objective but unpopular opinion in matters brought to the council.

Poll results will vary.

### **Group Activity**

Elicit that when we reflect and learn to think for ourselves, we base our judgments on the integrity, morality and character of the matter, whether anonymous or not, rather than considering tribal biases or trusting without question those who present the disguise of wisdom.

The class may want to test this theory by dividing in half and presenting each half with a similar opinion poll on which there can be two opposing opinions (for example, should the school garden be planted with one crop or another.) One half will listen to representatives who debate the point orally. The other half of the class will go outside during the presentations and write their own opinions, which they turn in to the teacher, who will read them aloud, anonymously, to the group. After each group votes on their opinions, they will evaluate their own internal motivations and consider whether they were voting for a friend's excellent presentation or for the actual viewpoint, anonymously expressed. Did each group choose the same plant? How can ineffective or effective leaders shape our opinions?

If we must wear a costume, let it be the cloak of honor and integrity. Mediate a conflict from your history book in which one student helps two other characters make an ethical choice.

### **Responses to Chapter 11**

This chapter showed how, by accepting traditions that invoke fear or even violence, parents were hurting the most innocent members of society—even those they loved most.

The tortoise suffered loss of integrity and self-respect, loss of friendships, loss of property, loss of his reputation and finally, loss of his smooth shell.

The story was a fable, intended to teach a message using some unexplained question in nature. The mother might have noted that Okonkwo was also proud, lacking in humility, and demanded respect in the eyes of everyone else. While these traits were excused in him because he was the head of the household, she might have told the story to warn her daughter not to grow up to be like her father.

### **Responses to Chapter 12**

Answers will vary but should include some of the habits-of-heart introduced this year. The class may want to have a feast and bring foods or gifts that represent the different habits. They could honor family members who demonstrate these habits.

### **Responses to Chapter 13**

Okonkwo's gun went off at the funeral of a clansman, killing the 16-year-old son of the deceased. For this infraction, Okonkwo was banned from the land and had to return to his mother's village for seven years.

Each student may vary in determining changes they do or do not want to see in Okonkwo's character during his time away. For example, they may feel that he has taken responsibility for the care of his farm and family, but they would like to see him develop greater empathy, humility and patience as a result of this experience. Students can identify the barriers to his character development and predict what his challenges might be before moving on to Part 2.

### **Responses to Chapter 14**

Uchendu said that Okonkwo's role is to honor his mother by comforting his wife and children while they are in exile and to not let his own sorrow weigh him down and kill him, or they would all die in exile.

Uchendu had lost 22 of his own children.

### **Responses to Chapter 15**

The people of Abame believed the Oracle and feared the future he predicted about the attack of the white men, so they killed a white man who may have simply been wandering far from his homeland. This only upset the man's people, who came upon the marketplace with greater force, thus making the Oracle's prophecy come true. Although this is the literal interpretation, on a symbolic level, to kill someone "who does not speak" could represent the killing of an innocent victim or the killing of someone who won't tell what plan of attack might be waiting. The safest course, then, may be not to take a life, based on the reaction of the wise elder, Uchendu.

## **Responses to Chapter 16**

They said that the gods were not alive, were only made of wood and tone, and could do no harm.

Nwoye was impressed by the hymn about brothers who sat in darkness and in fear—who left twins to die in the bush and who killed innocent boys such as Ikemefuna.

## **Responses to Chapter 17**

Some people began to question their superstitions, others to believe that the white clergy had great power. As a result, some of the villagers began to listen to the messages and convert to the new religion.

Nwoye decided to go to Umofia and teach in a Christian school and never return. He later converted his mother and sisters.

He may have meant, in a sense, that people tend to feel more emotionally bound to someone who respects them and cares about them than to someone who is in the same family but bases their acceptance on conformity and does not care about the needs and development of the individual.

## **Responses to Chapter 18**

The osu were outcasts and could not marry or mingle with others until Mr. Kiaga told them that all were welcome in the new church.

He told them to shave their hair and come to church. He said that, like twins, outcasts were equal with all others in the eyes of the one Creator.

The people of MBanta did not want to find and kill whoever killed the python, saying “it is not our custom to fight for our gods. “ They said they would rather let the rumored act remain in the secrecy of the killer’s hut. Okonkwo advocated violence, saying it was womanly not to hold someone accountable for violating this rule. The people compromised by ostracizing the Christians. Okonkwo felt disgust about their sense of compromise, showing he was not adaptable to their changing traditions.

One way of saying “the gods were able to fight their own battles” is to recognize that pythons are strong animals with large appetites and have the power to kill. The python need not have godly qualities at all to kill. If Okoli had been trying to protect himself from a python living near his tent, it may have only been a matter of time before he became the python’s meal.

The python was an animal given mystic qualities when, in fact, his biological tendencies drive him to eat the food available to him.

## **Responses to Chapter 19**

He prepares an extravagant feast to show his gratitude to the community for their hospitality and because “it is good for kinsmen to meet.”

Each person may have a different prediction about what Okonkwo will find in his homeland, Umofia.

## **Responses to Chapter 20**

Okonkwo lost his place as one of the nine masked administrators of justice. He lost his chance to lead the tribe in war against the new religion. He lost the chance to take on one of the highest titles in the clan.

He would build a bigger compound with a bigger barn and two more wives' huts.

He would initiate his sons into the wealthy class of society.

He would try to take the highest title in the land.

The District Commissioners arrested those who, in the name of custom, had thrown away their twins or had molested twins. The prisoners had to do menial work cleaning the grounds, which they would never be asked to do as men of high title in the tribe. In turn, they sang demeaning songs about the officials and prison guards, who they said were fit to be slaves.

The Obierika explains to Okonkwo, in a paragraph near the end of the chapter, how the language barrier makes the challenges even more formidable when the white colonialists are trying to understand tribal customs. They came in peaceably, many people followed them, and the tribe was no longer unified. Regarding the white man, Obierika says, "He has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart."

## **Responses to Chapter 21**

Describe the conversation between Akunna and Mr. Brown. What was similar about the concept of a supreme being or God the father? What was different?

The god Chukwu was to be feared because no one could know his will or could approach him. Sacrifices were made to his messengers, the smaller gods. Mr. Brown's God was a loving one who need not be feared, he said. However, Mr. Brown came to understand how the Umofians compared Chukwu to the queen, whose ambassadors were sent out as government officials just as the father god needed smaller gods who could deal directly with the people.

## **Responses to Chapter 22**

Mr. Brown spent his time mostly urging the people to attend school so they could assume leadership of their own society. Mr. Smith considered them heathens, listened only to his own opinions, and did not take time to understand the customs of the people, and thereby alienated them. In the end, they burned down his church.

### **Regarding Group Activity:**

The teacher should walk around and observe the interactions of the students. They each may come up with a different response, and some may have a creative solution to the problem. Some may have come to the group believing that all girls deserve a right to be educated. Some may have preferred to help the

crippled student, not knowing the gender. Others may have said that the boy would have a better chance of succeeding – or that he would not benefit, since he would be repeating the grade. The point is that there are many justifications for whatever answer is given, based on the perspective of the student. Yet they must come to a consensus.

At the end of the discussion, ask them to evaluate how they arrived at consensus. Did they find that the activity forced them to listen and consider the ideas of others rather than only listening to their own reasoning? Was it easier to come to a conclusion than if they had listened to preconceived notions?

### **Response to Chapter 23**

The Umofians are arrested by the District Commissioner, who has been informed of the church burning from the perspective of the white clergy. Next, they are beaten and their heads are shaved, a sign of humiliation. The guards starve and torture them. The court messengers collect bribe money from their families but keep some of it for themselves. No one seems better for their suffering.

### **Response to Chapter 24**

Okonkwo killed the court messenger who asked the Umofians to stop their strategy meeting. His compatriots created a tumult that let the other court messengers escape rather than attacking. They questioned his action of beheading the court messenger. (They had lost their taste for ruthless violence and they also feared a battle against the government, which they knew they could not win.)

### **Responses to Chapter 25**

Okonkwo lamented that there were no longer warriors who agreed with his traditions, motives and actions.

To pacify is to subdue or to appease someone, usually so they will not get in the way of what you want to do.

The District Commissioner did not understand the traditions of the Africans and wanted to keep peace but also to control them without empathy. He thought Okonkwo's story was just one small insignificant example of how his strategies were successful in subduing the will of the indigenous people, which was his goal as an official in a colonial government. Okonkwo wanted to uphold tradition and to maintain his concept of manhood rather than giving in to mercy. Each one—but especially Okonkwo—due to the isolation of their positions, were complex characters who showed the difficulty of moving from an age of tribalism toward an age of integrated cultures, in which the best of each tradition could be extracted through meaningful communication and interaction. Okonkwo was not yet ready for such a world, nor was the District Commissioner.

### **Discussions upon Conclusion (or Essay Questions)**

Divide the class into three groups, labeled A, B and C. Each will hold a discussion on the topic assigned below. They will search for examples in the book. They will present their question to the broader class

and illustrate their responses to the group using explanations, skits, and drawings. The class will then layer their own responses to the original question. The instructor will facilitate the discussion and elicit from the students the points under Possible Responses.

### Group Questions

*Things Fall Apart* was set in the late 1800s. What do you know about the history of Igboland at this time?

If you did not know anything about the history of Africa at this time, what could you deduce (guess from context clues) about the following topics after reading this book:

- A. The importance of language in Chinua Achebe's description of two colliding worlds
- B. The role of Ibo gods in the people's concept of fate versus free will (For example, how did a person explain hardship or illness that came into their lives?)
- C. The role of tradition in establishing family or community life as well as farming practices (For example how did the number of wives and children in a family affect the growing and harvesting of crops? What influences altered this way of life?)
- D. The reasons why some traditional people welcomed the Europeans who settled there and others felt that welcoming immigration of colonialists and the changes they brought led to the years when "things fell apart."

### Possible Responses:

- A. Language barriers delayed understanding, with one British rule and many African dialects. Many of the problems between the cultures arose because the local people could not express emotions, customs or ideas except through an interpreter even on those occasions when the goal was meaningful discussion. Sometimes a wise interpreter would play intermediary to prevent a conflict. Even the access to words was perceived differently among the native and colonial peoples. Mr. Brown learned that when the gods spoke, they were capricious (unpredictable and willful) and no man could counter their words. In Mr. Brown's world, people read the written words of God in scripture and used their own voice to discuss and interpret the ways to act on their beliefs. Language and words, written or spoken, became a wave to swim across in building peaceful relationships between cultures.
- B. The chi was half-god or, by modern standards, almost like an alter ego. When events were difficult to explain or even when personal choices or impulses were difficult to grapple with, relying on a system of gods gave a sense of order to individuals living in a close-knit society. Because of the importance of the community and its code of ethics (rules and social practices), the chi provided explanations and resolutions to a preliterate group of indigenous people living far from other peoples who practiced different ways of life. As people gained education, traveled more and explored new ideas, some searched for punitive, violent ways to maintain

community identity and to act on their widening understanding of diverse belief systems. Some wanted to use their freedom to express open-mindedness in positive ways. The transition proved difficult for those whose status, gender or social position was made secure by the old rules. Okonkwo, for example, had been raised not to express understanding and empathy or even emotion but to rule with authority and violence when necessary. The new world called for openness to diverse views and concern about others' feelings. (Share examples as a class.)

- C. Or many generations, the patriarchal (male-dominated) world of an Ibo community relied on a man to count his wealth through the number of wives and children in his compound. By amassing a sub-community of his own, capable of producing food and workers to share in the yam harvest and community rituals, he felt a level of status and success. Still the community gatherings were primarily to build solidarity (unity around a set of customs, organizing principles of beliefs) rather than to have feasts where the crops were shared. Everyone was expected to fulfill his or her role in contributing to the sustenance and order of the family, learning an assigned role at the appropriate age. This changed as some left their compounds and mingled with other clans and tribes or moved to the city and learned new skills. Exposure to Western ideas about religion, civil law and, eventually, about education were perhaps the most pronounced influences on the changing lives of villagers in farming communities.
- D. Some people had tired of the routine violence imposed by the advice of the medicine men in appeasing the chi and protecting the village of the honor of the Igbo character. Some felt drawn to the ideals expressed in the new religion, in which some of their teachers taught peace, tolerance and empathy. The Westerners, however, did not always live up to their own ideals, nor did they allow the Ibo to practice their own traditions. The older men of the village did not find their way of life preferable to the old ways. They saw that their lineage would soon be interrupted as the concept of monogamy (one wife per husband) diminished their legacy. If this caught on or if their sons left, their villages would not have as many farmers, their wives would not have as many children, and their traditions would fade, one by one. Their solidarity would be lost. They also did not like being tried in the courts of the newcomers instead of applying their own style of justice, however merciless and tied to superstition it may seem to their interlopers.

### **Whole-Class Group Activity**

Constructive and destructive values compete in every society. Most people work to cultivate the most positive ones. Look at the list of qualifiers below. Which would you ascribe to the most fierce Igbo traditionalists such as Okonkwo? Which would you ascribe to the emerging 20<sup>th</sup> Century Igbos represented by Nwokwe? Indicate O or N accordingly, or B if the quality describes both. (The teacher may want to draw a Venn diagram for this discussion.)

Based on this input, which generation seems most sustainable over time? Which would you describe as the having the most potential for change?

Respect

Humility  
Civic-Mindedness  
Moderation  
Honor  
Ethics  
Open-mindedness  
Transcendence  
Refinement  
Aspiration

## Integrated Learning:

### To the History (or Humanities) Teacher

Before or during the class reading of *Things Fall Apart*, help students review the history upon which the novel was based.

Before class:

1. Copy and cut out the sections of *A Brief History of Igboland*, included on the following pages.

In Class:

1. Divide the class into eight groups. Each group appoints two scribes, two artists, two oral speakers and two choreographers.
2. Give each group one of the sections you have cut out.
3. Ask them to study the section, conduct further library research, as needed, and prepare a presentation. Allow ample class periods for practice and preparation. In each presentation:
  - The oral speakers will divide the content and tell the class about their subject. They may present backup information or quotes from the novel that demonstrate examples of the points made.
  - One scribe will write the key points boldly on the board and another will have written the key points on a paper that can be posted on a classroom bulletin board for future reference.
  - The artists will work in advance to display drawings and timelines, as needed, to illustrate the topic.
  - The choreographers will dramatize the action as the oral speakers present.

On the Day of the Presentations:

1. Each group will present to the class and then take questions from the class. They will commit to finding answers they do not know.
2. The class will take notes on the presentations and, on another day, be quizzed on the content. They may review the information on the bulletin board and the visual displays, as needed.
3. The teacher will present the summary and discuss its points in class.

On another day or week:

1. Follow up with conflict bridge exercises that could have improved history, such as these:
  - a. The British traders need palm oil and meet the African traders, who want to buy palm oil from the same community. How will respect play a role in the conflict?
  - b. The missionary visits an Igbo chief to talk about his religion. The chief has listened for an hour and wants to tell about his religion, but now the missionary

says it is time for him to go. How will open-mindedness play a role in this conflict?

- c. A warrant chief catches an Igbo young woman out late at night. She says she is taking palm oil as a sacrifice for the oracle, to make the warrant chief go away. He says she stole the palm wine from the trading post, so he wants to both charge her and tax her for it. How will ethics play a role in this conflict?

## **A Brief History of Igboland**

Igbo refers to an ethnic group dating back centuries and greatly influencing the development of African culture. One of the largest ethnic groups in Africa, at least 15 million people are known as Igos or Ibos. The Igbo ancestral home includes agricultural communities studded across Nigeria from the Cross River in the east to the Niger River in the west. It also encompasses swamps, tropical rain forests and grasslands. Find this area on a current map and see if you can trace the ancestral homeland.

### **I. Igbo Language and Trades**

Because dense brush separated Igbo settlements, especially before the 20<sup>th</sup> century, communities lived in isolation and developed separate dialects. A person could travel a few miles from home and think he had encountered a speaker of a different language when, actually, he was only hearing a variation of his own Igbo language. Still, the common practices that marked Igboland were belief in common traditions and knowledge of common trades. It was not until 1900-1960 that urban centers and universities attracted the Igbo people. Before that, for 2,000 years, people had engaged in iron works (making tools, cooking pots and jewelry) and had only slowly graduated from hunting and gathering to agriculture.

Iron tools became essential in growing and harvesting the primary Igbo crop, yams, as well as plantains, bananas and cocoyams. Drinks and medicine were extracted from the oil of the palm tree using iron implements as well.

Igbo farmers knew how to rejuvenate the soil by planting crops for several years and then letting the soil lay fallow while seeking out new forest land. Farmers who took initiative thus reaped the greatest harvest. Those who did not inherit land from successful fathers engaged in share cropping.

### **II. Democratic Rule**

Igbo society developed a unique style of democracy even though its main leaders were not chosen by popular vote but by lineage (blood line) and age.

Because each village stood in isolation, the elders governed and kept the village autonomous rather than bowing to a central government. In these patriarchal societies, a father's blood line determined the social position of the son. Blood line also determined the location of the huts within the compound and the compounds within the village. The headman of each house or town was determined by age. Villagers met together in the town square, but the most important decisions were made by these elders in a special hut, or obi.

Respect for the oldest living member of the village gave him authority in all important issues, and yet the headman sought input and consensus before taking action. War broke out on those rare occasions when two villages did not use diplomacy, though most disputes could be resolved by the elders.

Women's associations, secret societies and groups affiliated by the year in which they came of age also provided ways for democratic groups to practice their skills. These groups documented historical events and also performed special farming duties and military functions, based on their seniority. This system helped each group progress toward the level of responsibility they might eventually inherit, associated with old age.

Women were said to possess superior spiritual qualities, and many became the leaders of cults and female age-group associations. Just as men apprenticed in farming, the women apprenticed in trading, weaving and in farming certain crops. They advanced not only through marriage but through hard work.

### **III. Status in Igboland**

Pride might have been a common trait among ambitious Igbo men. Those with exceptional skills could pay initiation fees to buy titles and the privileges associated with these titles. The privileges included dressing a certain way, being served first in a crowd, and other signs of status. Titles could free someone from manual labor, buy decision making power on the council of chiefs and guarantee the right to livestock and special greetings. By taking enough titles, a man could become a god. The highest title available was ozu. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, education began to play a role in the path to leadership, and British-appointed African chiefs amended this ancient process of buying the entitlement to chieftdom.

### **IV. Marriage and Social Structure**

Marriage in Igboland united two blood lines and thus involved the members of both clans in the future responsibility for the success of the household. Marrying and raising children brought pride and status to a family and increased the efficiency of food production on the farm. Men married several wives to increase the size of their household and farming operation. The wives each had separate huts and contributed their own crops but had the security of the household for extra security.

A man's first wife shared the same level of prestige and enjoyed all his titles. She headed the household and had more authority than the junior wives, though she also had more responsibility. She might even bring extra wives to her husband, to help increase the size of the household.

For practical reasons, people saw monogamy (marrying one spouse) and having few children as a path to poverty. The concept of marriage for love and fathers showing children open affection caught on later, with 20<sup>th</sup> -21<sup>st</sup> century ideals.

## V. Roles in Igbo Religion

Igbos worshipped the main god, Chukwu, who could not be seen and whose will directed everything that happened in their lives. They constantly prayed for forgiveness for transgressions (sins) and for direction, because this god was not approachable and no one could know his will. Instead, they would commune through the ancestors and major spirits. The Igo version of Satan was Ekwensu, who led people astray. This spirit would tempt people to commit crimes and subsequently punish them for it. Ekwensu's helpers included death itself, who would visit humans on their finest day on earth and take them away.

Spirits ruled nature in the Igbo work, and each priest or priestess was assigned to a post such as the caves, lakes, farms, lightning itself or even to witchcraft. The rain god could bring rain in times of drought but the fire god could bring the flames that would launch another drought. An object could be consecrated to represent a god, as a fetish, but was not the god itself. Thus, a bone or stone or piece of wood could become a sacred object, but the Igbo were not praying to the object itself, only to the spirit it represented.

Igbos would ask the higher forces for gifts such as a family with many children. Sacrificial offerings might be required by a diviner with supernatural powers who would hold a ceremony to grant the gift.

A wooden carving called an ikenga represented a man's spirit, once consecrated by a priest. A man would consult his ikenga before making important decisions and would travel with it by his side. He might also consult his chi, or guardian angel. A chi might be malevolent or benevolent. It almost controlled a person's destiny, but not quite. Hard work and a good life could compensate for a feisty negative chi, as the chi would then have to defer to the strength of the individual. This may be the most profound distinction between the Igbo religion and others, as the ill will or laziness of a guardian angel, or chi, could actually threaten to rob the individual of opportunities for happiness and allow misfortune to cloud his or her success unless the individual's will was stronger.

Igbos religion also embraced reincarnation. This feature especially affected beliefs about infants born soon after a death in the family. A newborn may represent the deceased grandparent, for example. A mother who continually lost children in childbirth or early childhood feared that she had a stubborn child, or ogbanje, who kept leaving and reentering the world through her womb. In the case of twins, Igbo parents felt they were evil or cursed and would leave them in the forest to die. This was especially puzzling, since they had prayed for a household of children, but if they did not perform certain rituals, the whole community could be harmed by the presence of twins, they feared.

Oracles could receive messages from the dead and pass them on to the living. Sometimes they warned people about danger or advised a community. They advised people about rituals. They even appealed court decisions and help people reconcile their differences. Each oracle lived in a hidden grove or shrine and only made its face known to the priestess who delivered messages to and from the shrine.

Killing carried special penalties in the Igbo religion, based on the circumstances. Only a qualified witch doctor could help with the rituals that would rid a family of an act considered an abomination, and homicide was one of these acts. If a murder occurred in a village, certain age-groups might take the property of the murderer and destroy his house before hanging him. In other areas, they would banish him for a certain number of years and ask his family to give one daughter to the family of the dead person. In war, killing was committed carefully, and beheading was not practiced by most Igbo.

Secret Societies played an important role in society. Little is known about the Igbo's secret societies of men or women because the members each took an oath not to divulge what might hinder their effectiveness. When acting in their official capacities, they wore masks, and the villagers presented not to recognize them. The council of *egwuwu* typified the sacredness with which the people revered the status of these societies.

## **VI. Migration Brings Change**

European influence gradually trickled into the veins of Igbo culture. Before 1830, slave traders had captured many Igbo and transported them out of the Bight of Biafra. The British did not want to see the slave trade continue, however, and they supported a strong abolitionist movement in Igboland. Through the African Association, they sent expeditions into the African interior, with officials and missionaries to counteract the work of the traders. Explorers such as Hugh Clapperton and Richard and John Lander had given them a sense of the route leading up the Niger River. Without resistance to malaria, many Europeans died on their new frontier. They forged ahead with quinine and other medical advances and learned to trade palm oil to import to Europe. In the last half of the 1800s, both the Africans and the Europeans appreciated the benefits of the trade.

The manufacturing era created economic shifts after 1875. As prices of palm oil fell in Europe, African and European traders haggled over prices. The chiefs along the Niger River had also begun collecting toll taxes from traders. Originally, the European traders paid them in exchange for protection, but as they developed their own system of gun boats, they complained that the fees to the chiefs had not provided any security. The chiefs relaxed their protection and a spate of robberies and retaliations broke out. A period of "gunboat diplomacy" ensued. Eventually, after many pleas, the British was granted military assistance from their government. A Captain Burr brought in a warship and bombarded the town of Onitsha, who citizens had attacked the British citizens. They destroyed both the town of Onitsha and the town of Aboh to avenge attacks on British traders.

Next, the British government set out to protect the Christian missionaries who had moving inland. The Church Missionary Society (CMS), sponsored by the Anglican Church, had a presence in Onitsha and the surrounding towns as early as 1857. Their continuing presence led to the need for government protection and the many resulting African/European conflicts that occurred during the time period described in Chinua Achebe's novel. Two different Roman Catholic societies soon joined the Anglicans, each living on a different side of the river. The Anglicans promoted Africans, while the Catholics imported missionaries from Europe.

## VII. Relationships Fall Apart

The pacifistic Igbo people practiced consultation in their dealings. They listened to the explanations of the missionaries and expected that the missionaries would also learn about their faith and customs. Many of the missionaries, however, saw Igbo society as evil and felt they needed to discredit it in order to fully convert the people to Christianity and save their souls. They exaggerated the dangers they expressed to British governments in seeking protection, so troops came to raid the towns. The new converts became bold, tearing down sacred shrines, eating sacred fish and snakes and refusing to repent for these sins, which divided their unity with their communities. One community, Asaba, suffered attack when the missionaries complained that the people still practiced human sacrifice. In town after town, as the traditional Igbo began to realize the danger the missionaries brought, they fought back, destroying churches and bringing greater violence upon themselves as British officials captured and imprisoned them.

Britain had first set out to protect the traders and then the missionaries. Finally, in 1900, the British imperial government declared Igboland a protectorate and began its formal conquest. Western Igbo towns had already suffered economic decline and had seen their social structures disrupted. They resisted control and battled the British forces in what became known as the Ekumeku movement. A coalition of chiefs united to organize younger men from the town clubs and secret societies. They responded to coded messages and met in secret. After selecting several Christian or European targets, they attacked these rattled communities in unison. Their silent methods ignited panic but could not win against British military strength. The resistance movement started in 1898 but met defeat in 1914.

Meanwhile, in Eastern Igboland, the Aro clan members were great traders and had an oracle who played a leadership role in their judicial district. They united the Igbo towns in a war of resistance after they saw their trading partners' communities destroyed. The British had kidnapped and exiled a king and deposed chiefs and even an oracle, ruining Igbo economies throughout the region. The Aro, the Abam and many Igbo communities refused to would not let their people become the subjects of the British intimidation. Their battles lasted two decades, until after the First World War.

After colonizing Igboland, the British had to figure out how to manage it. The brilliant democracy of the Igbo system did not lend itself to centralized government. The British set up a system of courts and "warrant chiefs" who controlled the local police and punished locals who resisted colonial laws and regulations. Many judicial decisions defied the Igbo concept of justice and all alienated the elders and councils recognized by the Igbo as advisors. Still, any Igbo who protested this system met with greater punishment under colonial rule.

Resistance did occur again, in the 1927-28 tax riots in Southern Nigeria and the Aba women's riots of 1929. The government began to recognize the limitations of the warrant chiefs and integrated African political systems into their own. In 1952, regions systems were implemented,

creating a platform for reform and for Nigerian independence. In October 1960, the Igbos and all Nigerians won their independence.

### **Summary of A Brief History**

When you think of a culture or nation coming of age, the process can linger. The Igbo people, due to the topography and limited migration patterns, retained a cultural life for centuries longer than the primitive societies of Europe, yet these Europeans too once embraced pre-modern conditions and customs. A clash occurred when they tried to impose their own timing on a distant people.

Because the Igbos tend to readily adapt to change, it took them only a century to participate in the benefits of the modern world. What was once a preliterate society now has trained professors, physicians, engineers, and scientists working around the globe. Their understanding of the democratic process and their culture of meeting and working in groups has translated into participation in educational and religious organizations in this, the next century.

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