

# Things Fall Apart

## Part One (Chapters 1–13)

by Chinua Achebe

### Pre-Reading Vocabulary Practice

Optional Post-Reading Quiz Included

**Practice words:** abomination, brusqueness, capricious, emissary, esoteric, imperious, incipient, prowess, resignation, specious

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#### PRE-READING ACTIVITY

Vocabulary Preview ..... 2

Answer Key — Preview ..... 3

**Caution:** share only if self-checking

#### OPTIONAL POST-READING QUIZ

Vocabulary in Context ..... 4

Answer Key — In Context ..... 5

**Caution:** do not share with students

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#### About the Pre-Reading Activity (open-dictionary; ungraded or completion grade):

Students preview 10 words from the upcoming reading, each in a sentence that supports understanding. They choose the best meaning from 3 choices.

#### About the Optional Post-Reading Quiz (use after reading, or skip):

Same words, now in real excerpts from the text, with questions that build reading and analytical skills.

#### Vocabulary Sections for this Book:

**Section 1 · Part One (Chapters 1–13) · Okonkwo and his village of Umuofia**

Section 2 · Part Two (Chapters 14–19) · Okonkwo's years of exile in Mbanta

Section 3 · Part Three (Chapters 20–25) · Okonkwo's return to Umuofia

**Bold = this section.** Other sections are available at [verbalworkout.com](http://verbalworkout.com).



[verbalworkout.com](http://verbalworkout.com)

(all resources free)

# Vocabulary Preview

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Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Period \_\_\_\_\_

*Read each prompt. Then choose the best meaning for the bold word.*

1. To the villagers, eating that animal was an **abomination**.
  - A. a foolish waste
  - B. an ancient tradition
  - C. a detestable thing
2. His **brusqueness** on the phone left the new client feeling unwelcome.
  - A. endless chatter
  - B. bluntness of manner
  - C. awkward shyness
3. The **capricious** heiress fired her staff and rehired them weeks later.
  - A. prone to sudden mood changes
  - B. cruel and demanding
  - C. stubborn and unyielding
4. The queen sent an **emissary** to deliver her terms to the rebel camp.
  - A. a battlefield scout
  - B. a messenger or representative
  - C. a personal bodyguard
5. Few knew the club's **esoteric** rites.
  - A. meant for a select few
  - B. odd and disturbing
  - C. very old and sacred
6. The **imperious** manager dismissed every suggestion with a wave of his hand.
  - A. careless and forgetful
  - B. impatient and restless
  - C. haughty and domineering
7. The **incipient** rebellion was still confined to a few villages.
  - A. led by outsiders
  - B. in an early stage
  - C. kept tightly secret
8. The young knight was famous for his **prowess** in combat.
  - A. great skill or bravery
  - B. clever, cunning tactics
  - C. great strength and size
9. With a quiet sigh of **resignation**, she watched her plans fall apart.
  - A. acceptance of the inevitable
  - B. bitter regret over a loss
  - C. a wave of deep exhaustion
10. The website made a **specious** health claim.
  - A. vague and unclear
  - B. bold and exaggerated
  - C. false but convincing

### Reading Helpers

*(Not quizzed — helpful for this text.)*

**agbala** — Igbo for “woman”; also an insulting term for a man with no title or recognized status in the clan

**chi** — a personal god or spirit believed to shape one’s fortune

**ogbanje** — a spirit-child believed to die and return repeatedly to the same mother

**egwugwu** — masked figures representing ancestral spirits in ceremonies and trials

# ANSWER KEY

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| #  | KEY |
|----|-----|
| 1  | C   |
| 2  | B   |
| 3  | A   |
| 4  | B   |
| 5  | A   |
| 6  | C   |
| 7  | B   |
| 8  | A   |
| 9  | A   |
| 10 | C   |

# Vocabulary in Context

## Things Fall Apart

### Part One (Chapters 1–13)

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Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Period \_\_\_\_\_ Score \_\_\_\_\_ / 10

Read each excerpt carefully. Then choose the best answer to each question.

**1** “To crown it all he had taken two titles and had shown incredible prowess in two inter-tribal wars.”

As it is used in the passage, the word “prowess” most nearly describes Okonkwo’s

- A. leadership of the war council
- B. skill and courage in battle
- C. titles won through his wealth

**2** “...Okonkwo of Umuofia arrived at Mbaino as the proud and imperious emissary of war, he was treated with great honour and respect...”

In the passage, Okonkwo is characterized as

- A. bold but courteous
- B. shrewd and watchful
- C. proud and domineering

**3** “It was deeper and more intimate than the fear of evil and capricious gods and of magic, the fear of the forest, and of the forces of nature, malevolent, red in tooth and claw.”

The passage most strongly suggests that the people fear their gods partly because the gods

- A. act in sudden, unpredictable ways
- B. punish only the wicked
- C. demand endless sacrifices

**4** “Okonkwo’s first son, Nwoye, was then twelve years old but was already causing his father great anxiety for his incipient laziness.”

According to the passage, the laziness that worries Okonkwo about Nwoye is

- A. only beginning to appear
- B. already a fixed habit
- C. hidden from his father

**5** “He died of the swelling which was an abomination to the earth goddess.”

The information in the excerpt primarily functions to

- A. honor his memory among the clan
- B. describe the course of his illness
- C. show why his death brought disgrace

**6** “But he was struck, as most people were, by Okonkwo’s brusqueness in dealing with less successful men.”

Which choice best describes Okonkwo’s manner toward less successful men?

- A. blunt and curt
- B. patient and kindly
- C. warm but guarded

**7** “Whenever Nwoye’s mother sang this song he felt carried away to the distant scene in the sky where Vulture, Earth’s emissary, sang for mercy.”

The author most likely calls Vulture “Earth’s emissary” in order to

- A. stress its fearsome power
- B. present it as Earth’s messenger
- C. portray it as Earth’s ruler

**8** “As she buried one child after another her sorrow gave way to despair and then to grim resignation.”

It can reasonably be inferred that Ekwefi’s “grim resignation” means she has

- A. vowed to fight for the next child
- B. accepted her losses as inevitable
- C. lost all love for her family

**9** “...some really evil children sometimes misled people into digging up a specious one.”

The passage most strongly suggests that a “specious” iyi-uwa is one that

- A. looks genuine but is false
- B. belongs to a living child
- C. is buried especially deep

**10** “...the spirits of the ancestors, just emerged from the earth, greeted themselves in their esoteric language.”

Which statement about the ancestral spirits’ speech is best supported by the passage?

- A. It changes at every ceremony.
- B. It is shouted for all to hear.
- C. Only a select few can understand it.

# ANSWER KEY

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| #  | KEY | NOTE                                                                                                                                                    |
|----|-----|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1  | B   |                                                                                                                                                         |
| 2  | C   |                                                                                                                                                         |
| 3  | A   |                                                                                                                                                         |
| 4  | A   |                                                                                                                                                         |
| 5  | C   | Theme comprehension. Such a death offended the earth goddess, so Unoka was carried off to die in the Evil Forest rather than given an honorable burial. |
| 6  | A   | Character comprehension.                                                                                                                                |
| 7  | B   |                                                                                                                                                         |
| 8  | B   | Taught in the sense of weary acceptance of the inevitable, not the resigning of a position.                                                             |
| 9  | A   |                                                                                                                                                         |
| 10 | C   |                                                                                                                                                         |

#### Teacher Context: Part One (Chapters 1–13)

Part One establishes Okonkwo as a respected, self-made leader of Umuofia, a man driven by a deep fear of weakness and failure. It portrays Igbo customs, religion, and family life, including the fostering and eventual killing of the boy Ikemefuna. It ends when an accidental killing at a funeral forces Okonkwo and his family into a seven-year exile.