

<p><b>CHINUA ACHEBE’S <i>THINGS FALL APART</i>: A POSTCOLONIAL PERSPECTIVE</b></p>		<p><b>Literature</b></p> <p><b>Keywords:</b> Postcolonial, Achebe, Colonized, Okonkwo, <i>Things Fall Apart</i>, POCO theory.</p>
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<p><b>Rzan G. Dohal</b></p>	<p><b>An English Student. Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.</b></p>
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<p><b>Abstract</b></p>	<p><i>Things Fall Apart</i>, a novel written by Chinua Achebe, illustrates the African lifestyle by reflecting African traditions, beliefs and their feelings upon meeting the white men. In this short perspective, it is examined according to the seven postcolonial theory analysis questions proposed by Charles E. Bressler.</p>
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### Introduction

The postcolonial theory also known as POCO began in the 1950’s. According to the Cambridge dictionary, “postcolonial” could be defined as “from or relating to the period after colonialism.” It came into play based on the ways the colonizers treated the colonized and fed on their fears. And this theory can be applied to different literary works through 7 questions found in *Literary Criticism* by Charles E. Bressler. In this paper the poco theory will be applied to Chinua Achebe’s novel *Things Fall Apart*. As it is a great representation of the African culture. Furthermore, reflecting African traditions, beliefs and their emotions when coming across the white men in the novel.

#### Applying the Questions:

First, what happened when the two cultures came across each other, and who was believed to be superior?

Upon meeting both cultures suppose they are superior. On one hand the men of the Igbo Village think they are stronger and that the white men stand out like sour thumbs, even calling them “albino” under the impression that they are to die soon. For this reason, the villagers agree to grant the white men land on the Evil Forest grounds to build a church because they think the white men will all be dead in four days time. On the other hand, the white men believe they are better and smarter making the villagers think they are weak and submissive while appearing to follow their rules only to enforce their own rules and practices by the end of the novel.

Second, you must briefly describe both cultures mentioned and what each values and rejects.

The Igbo culture is extremely conservative towards their beliefs, completely trusting the Oracle of the Hills and the Caves. They also value traditions passing them from generation to generation as well as their elders. All while they reject anything that might contradict them. However, the white men resemble the future with their inventions, such as the bicycle. Along side that, the white men cherish their country, faith and enforce their rules and language around the world while refusing other religions and ideals.

Third, how does each culture perceive the world?

The Igbo people think solely of themselves and the lives of the people in Umuofia. On the contrary, the white men only want to dominate the world embedding their ideas and beliefs everywhere they go in hopes of conquering the world.

Fourth, you need to consider how the colonizers affected the colonized.

The white men represent the colonizers and are superior because they are able to slide into the small cracks of the weak hearted individuals outcasted by the clan. For example, the twins the white men rescue from the bush and the “*osu*”<sup>1</sup>. Additionally, they fulfill the outsiders by giving them purpose which enables the colonizers to slowly spread their language and faith across the nine villages whom represent the colonized.

Fifth, is there a shift in the colonized personal views of themselves?

Yes, there is. In the beginning, the colonized Umuofians are under the assumption that they are in a position of power and rule the land. But towards the end of the novel, they fear the white men deeply and surrender to them mentally which allows the white men to have a strong footing in Umuofia.

Sixth, what are the similarities and differences between the languages of both cultures?

Both cultures use different types of speech, with the white men using very complex and sophisticated terms, for instance, saying “superfluous” and “infuriating.” Unlike the Igbo people who use a lot of proverbs in their speech, such as, “Okonkwo was as slippery as a fish in water” and “if a child washes his hands he could eat with kings.”

Seventh, what are the methods practiced to silence the colonized voices?

In the end of *Things Fall Apart*, it is clear that the Umuofians are forced into silence out of fear. It can be seen when they are obligated to pay a fine. Furthermore, the novel itself is written in

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<sup>1</sup> *osu*: outcast

the colonizers' language. Yet, many Ibo words are mentioned in the novel, like, “*chi*”<sup>2</sup>, “*kola nut*”<sup>3</sup> and “*obi*”<sup>4</sup>.

## Conclusion

Indeed, the novel *Things Fall Apart* is a great representation of how a country or village can be colonized without any previous agreement. And the colonization process does not happen abruptly or forcefully but by sliding through the cracks. Answering the previous questions show that Umoufia although a fictional village is colonized and can be a prime example of colonization as well as how it happens. This novel shed a light on many valuable lessons that are not discussed here. I believe this is a novel that should be taught with much care and attention to every detail because although written before more than 60 years ago, the ideas it contains are still and will be very relevant and important.

Foreign Words Used in the Novel:

- 1 - *osu*: outcast
- 2 - *chi*: personal god
- 3 - *kola nut*: a fruit that grows on a kola tree
- 4 - *obi*: the large living quarters of the head of the family

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<sup>2</sup> *chi*: personal god

<sup>3</sup> *kola nut*: a fruit that grows on a kola tree

<sup>4</sup> *obi*: the large living quarters of the head of the family