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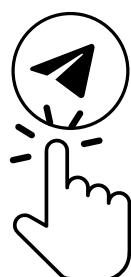
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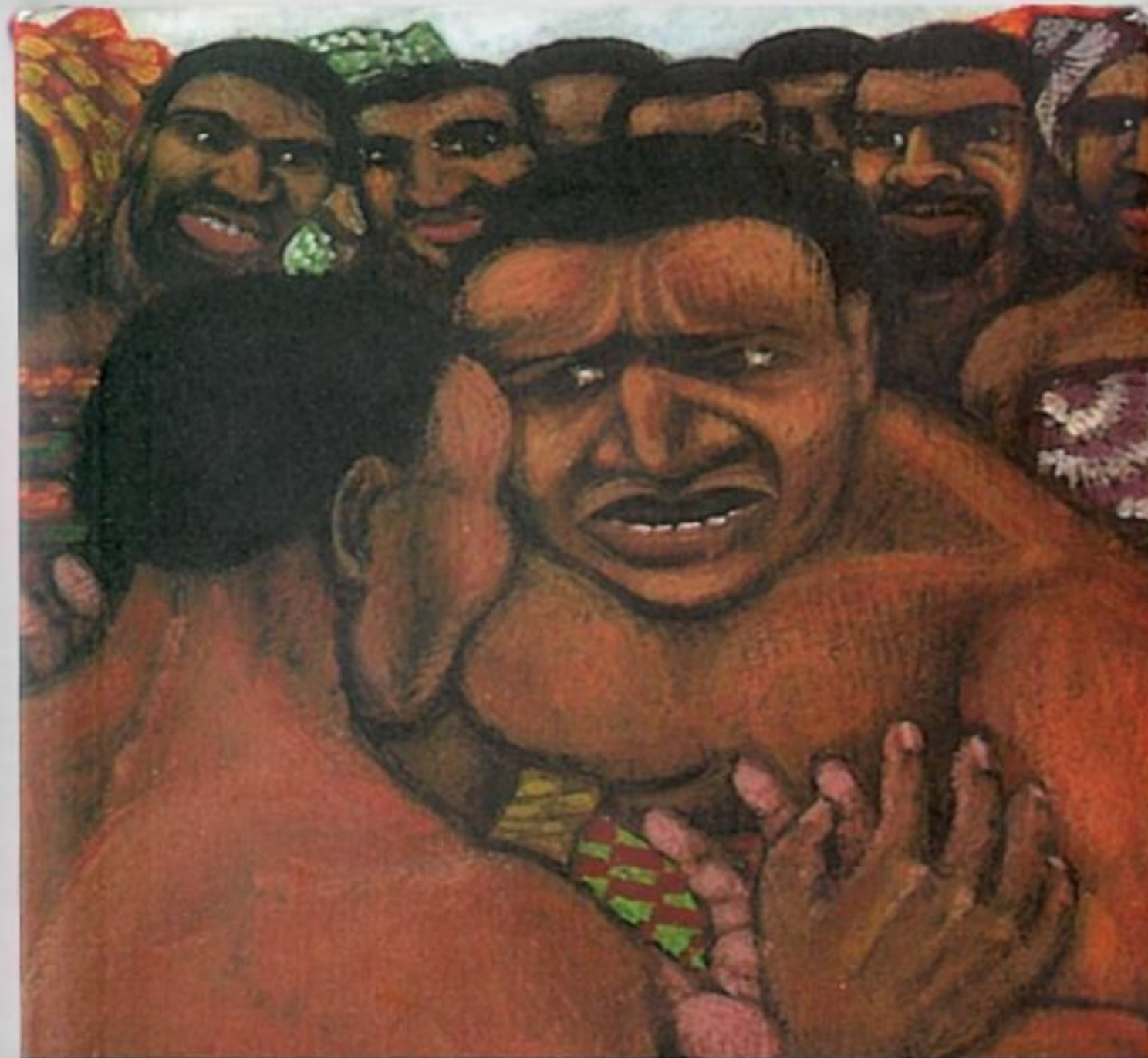


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Things Fall Apart

Chinua Achebe

A NCCER, Ministry of General Education programme in partnership with Macmillan Education



MACMILLAN READERS



HEINEMANN ELT GUIDED READERS

INTERMEDIATE LEVEL

CHINUA ACHEBE

Things Fall Apart

Retold by John Davey

HEINEMANN ELT

INTERMEDIATE LEVEL

Series Editor: John Milne

The Heinemann Elt Guided Readers provide a choice of enjoyable reading material for learners of English. The series is published at five levels – Starter, Beginner, Elementary, Intermediate and Upper. At Intermediate Level, the control of content and language has the following main features:

Information Control

Information which is vital to the understanding of the story is presented in an easily assimilated manner and is repeated when necessary. Difficult allusion and metaphor are avoided and cultural backgrounds are made explicit.

Structure Control

Most of the structures used in the Readers will be familiar to students who have completed an elementary course of English. Other grammatical features may occur, but their use is made clear through context and reinforcement. This ensures that the reading, as well as being enjoyable, provides a continual learning situation for the students. Sentences are limited in most cases to a maximum of three clauses and within sentences there is a balanced use of simple adverbial and adjectival phrases. Great care is taken with pronoun reference.

Vocabulary Control

There is a basic vocabulary of approximately 1,600 words. Help is given to the students in the form of illustrations, which are closely related to the text.

Glossary

Some difficult words and phrases in this book are important for understanding the story. Some of these words are explained in the story, some are shown in the pictures, and others are marked with a number like this ...³ Words with a number are explained in the Glossary on page 92.

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A Note About This Story

This is a story about life in Africa before the Europeans came, and about the destruction of this life by the Europeans. The people in the story lived in a district of Nigeria called Umuofia. The people of Umuofia were farmers. They produced goods, such as palm oil, that the Europeans wanted.

Umuofia was a small district of nine villages. The people of these villages belonged to the same clan. A clan is a group of people who live together and share the same customs¹. In time of war, all the people of the clan helped each other and fought together.

The religion of these people was not Christianity. The clansmen had many different gods. Some of the gods were very important. One of the most important gods protected the crops, and she was called the Earth Goddess. Some of the gods belonged to a man's family and wooden figures of these gods were kept in one of the family huts. The clan believed that their customs pleased the gods, and they believed their gods would punish people who broke these customs.

The people of Umuofia did not know much about the rest of the world. They grew their own food and made their own things. The clan had its own customs, religion and leaders. The way of life in Umuofia had not changed for a long time, but the people were free. They made their own decisions and they chose their own leaders. In Umuofia, a man could become a leader as a result of his own work and ability.

The People in This Story

Okonkwo	a famous man in Umuofia
Unoka	Okonkwo's father
Nwoye	Okonkwo's eldest son
Ikemefuna	a boy from another clan
Ekwefi	Okonkwo's second wife
Ojiugo	Okonkwo's third and youngest wife
Ezinma	Okonkwo's daughter
Obierika	Okonkwo's closest friend
Ezeudu	the oldest man in Umuofia
Uchendu	Okonkwo's uncle from Mbanta
Mr Kiaga	head of the church in Mbanta
Chielo	the priestess of the God, Agbala
Mr Brown	the first English missionary in Umuofia
Mr Smith	the second English missionary in Umuofia
The District Commissioner	the English administrator of the district

Okonkwo

Okonkwo lived in a small village called Iguedo, in the district of Umuofia. There were nine villages in Umuofia. Okonkwo was well-known by everyone in the other eight villages near his home and even by people living a long way away.

Okonkwo first became famous when he was a young man. At eighteen years old, Okonkwo fought the best wrestler in all Umuofia and he won the match. He put the other man flat on his back on the floor. And everyone was proud of Okonkwo.



Okonkwo was now nearly forty years old. His fame had grown like a bush fire³ and he was very famous indeed. He was tall and big and he walked like someone with springs in his feet. He had thick black eyebrows over his eyes. His nose was wide. If you did not know Okonkwo, and if you just looked at him, you would think he was a serious man and not very kind to people.

Sometimes Okonkwo would be very angry. When he was angry, Okonkwo could not say what he wanted to say. So he used his hands instead of words, and he hit people.

Okonkwo's father died ten years ago. His father was called Unoka. Unoka was a very lazy person and he did not like work. He did not like seeing blood and he was afraid of fighting. Unoka had been poor all his life because he never saved any money.

When Unoka had some money he always spent it on lots of palm wine⁴. He asked all his friends to come to his hut and drink the wine with him. They used to have a very happy time, sitting in a circle, drinking and singing songs. He was a sad-looking man and only seemed to be happy when he was making music. Music made Unoka very happy.

Okonkwo was ashamed⁵ of his father. Okonkwo hated men who were lazy. And, as he was strong and brave, he hated men who were afraid of fighting in battles and wars.

When Unoka died, he left nothing for his wife and children. Okonkwo wanted to be strong and rich and powerful but he began with nothing. In the village it was not important who your father was. People knew that Okonkwo could do great things.

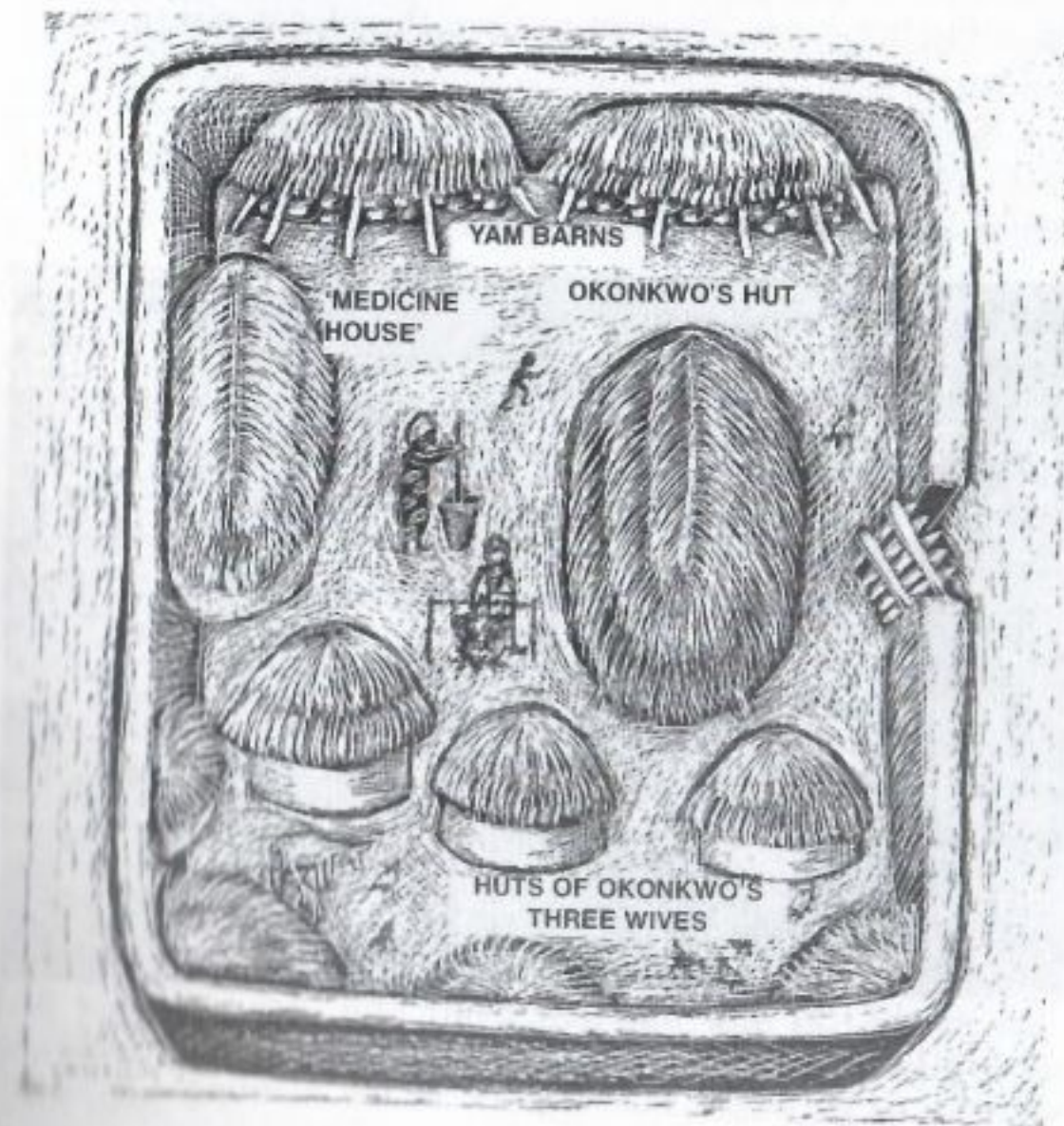
A few years later, Okonkwo had married three wives. He owned a large farm and he had a large compound with a thick wall of red earth round it.

Okonkwo's hut was built behind the only gate in the red walls of the compound. Each of his three wives had her own hut. Two barns were at one end of the compound, and they were full of

yams⁶. At the other end of the compound there was a shed for the goats and each wife had built a small hut for some chickens near her own hut.

There was a special house near the barns. Okonkwo kept the wooden figures of his family gods in this house. It was the family shrine and Okonkwo often went there to pray for himself and his family and to give gifts to his gods.

Okonkwo had become one of the greatest men in Umuofia at that time. Everyone in his clan respected⁷ him because he was not like his father.



Ikemefuna Comes to Umuofia

The night was dark and silent. The moon was not shining and there were no happy children playing in the fields. It was quiet everywhere. The people were afraid of the dark and they kept inside their huts.

Okonkwo had gone to bed and had blown out the palm-oil lamp. But just before he went to sleep the silence was suddenly broken.

Okonkwo lay in bed and heard the sound of a gong being hit by the town-crier. This man was crying out his message and hitting the gong hard.



The town-crier was asking every man in all the nine villages in Umuofia to go to the market-place in the morning. Okonkwo

Ikemefuna Comes to Umuofia

knew from the man's voice that something was wrong. The meeting in the market-place was going to be important. Okonkwo listened while the town-crier's voice became quieter and quieter in the distance.

Okonkwo guessed the meeting would be about a war with a neighbouring clan. But he was not afraid of this. In the last war he was the first man to bring a human head home. That was the fifth human head Okonkwo had captured. So war did not frighten him. Okonkwo would go to the meeting and find out if his guess was correct or not.

In the morning, the market-place was full of people. There were about ten thousand men waiting, and they were all talking quietly. Then one man, who was a good speaker, shouted out, 'Umuofia kwenu' which means 'We all greet you, Umuofia'. And everyone shouted back the answer 'Yaa', which means 'Umuofia thanks you for the greeting'.

The speaker shouted out four times. For the first time he faced the north; for the second, the east; then the south; and for the last time he faced the west.

There was complete silence. Everyone listened. The man who was speaking touched his white hair with his hand, and he stroked his white beard. And then he shouted, 'Umuofia kwenu' for the fifth time. And again ten thousand men shouted back 'Yaa'.

Then suddenly the man pointed his left hand towards Mbaino, which was a town not far away. As he pointed, he started speaking through closed teeth.

'The wild people of Mbaino have killed a young woman who lived here in Umuofia,' he said.

The crowd became angry, but everybody stood still. And in a calm, clear voice the speaker told the people what had happened. He told them that the wife of Ogbuefi had gone to the market at Mbaino and had been killed there by some men.

The husband of the dead woman was sitting in the crowd. He was listening and he looked sad. Everyone in the crowd felt very angry with the people of Mbaino.

After a lot of talking, the crowd at the meeting decided to send Okonkwo to Mbaino. Okonkwo would give the people of Mbaino a choice of two things. They could choose to go to war with Umuofia or they could give a young man and a young woman to the clan.

All the other districts were afraid of going to war with Umuofia, because Umuofia was very powerful and strong. If ever there was a quarrel between another district and the district of Umuofia, the other district would first try to come to a peaceful agreement.

The people of Mbaino did not want to go to war. So they sent a young man and a young woman back with Okonkwo.

Two days later, Okonkwo returned to Umuofia with a boy of fifteen and a young woman. The young woman was given to Ogbuefi, the man whose wife had been killed. Soon Ogbuefi married the young woman.

The boy, called Ikemefuna, was given to Okonkwo. Everyone agreed that Okonkwo was the best man to take care of the boy.

Okonkwo took Ikemefuna home and gave him to his first wife.

'This boy belongs to the clan. So look after him,' Okonkwo told her.

'Will he stay with us for a long time?' she asked her husband.

'Do what you are told, woman,' Okonkwo shouted.

So Okonkwo's first wife asked no more questions and took Ikemefuna to her hut.

Ikemefuna Finds his Best Friend

When Ikemefuna first arrived in Okonkwo's house, he was very, very frightened. He did not know where he was. He did not know why he was in Umuofia. He did not know the young woman who came with him from Mbaino, or where she had gone. And he certainly did not know that his own father had killed the woman from Umuofia.

Ikemefuna only knew that one day some men had come to his house and had talked with his father. After they had finished talking, the men had taken Ikemefuna outside and given him to a strange man. Ikemefuna's mother had cried a lot when he left, but he had not cried. He had been too surprised by what was happening.

In the first few days at Umuofia, Ikemefuna was very frightened and unhappy and lonely. Once or twice he tried to run away but he did not know where to run to. He often thought of his mother and his younger sister. And when he thought of them, he cried a lot. But Okonkwo's first wife was very kind to him and she treated Ikemefuna like one of her own children.

At first Ikemefuna was very quiet and spoke very little. When he did speak, all he said was, 'When shall I go home?' He did not eat any of the food he was given. Okonkwo was very angry when he heard that Ikemefuna would not eat. One day Okonkwo came into the hut with a big stick in his hand. He stood over Ikemefuna with the stick. Ikemefuna shook with fright. He was so frightened that he ate his yam. He did not want to be beaten by Okonkwo.

Okonkwo left the hut after Ikemefuna had eaten all his food. As soon as Okonkwo had left, Ikemefuna went outside and was sick. He was ill for three weeks and Okonkwo's first wife looked after him.

Ikemefuna Finds his Best Friend

When Ikemefuna was better, he seemed to be happier and not so frightened. He was beginning to get used to his new home and he was finding some new friends. He did not cry so often and he did not think of his mother and his sister so much. In his new family, Ikemefuna found a real friend. His name was Nwoye, and he was the eldest son of Okonkwo and his first wife.

Okonkwo thought that Nwoye was very lazy and he was afraid that Nwoye would grow up to be like his grandfather, Unoka. So Okonkwo kept beating Nwoye and telling him what to do. Nwoye became a sad-looking boy. Like his mother and his sisters, Nwoye was very frightened of his father.

So when Ikemefuna arrived, Nwoye was very happy to have someone to play with him and to talk to him. Ikemefuna, too, was very pleased to find another young boy of his own age in the family. After some time, Nwoye and Ikemefuna became good friends and they were like two brothers. The two boys went everywhere together.

Nwoye was two years younger than Ikemefuna, and he followed Ikemefuna everywhere. Nwoye thought that Ikemefuna knew everything. Ikemefuna knew the names of all the birds. He could make traps to catch the little animals which came out of the forest. And he knew lots of stories which he told Nwoye.

Even Okonkwo liked Ikemefuna. But of course he did not let anyone know this. Okonkwo never let anyone see that he was kind. He always had to show people that he was strong and powerful. So Okonkwo treated Ikemefuna in the same way as he treated his other children – like a very strict father. In fact, Ikemefuna called Okonkwo 'Father'. Sometimes Okonkwo let Ikemefuna carry his stool and his goatskin bag⁸ when he went to a big, important meal. This made Ikemefuna feel very proud. He felt like a real son of Okonkwo.

The Week of Peace



4

The Week of Peace

Every year in Umuofia the people kept a Week of Peace. This was always the week before the people planted their yams. The Week of Peace was the one week in the year when everyone had to be kind to each other. No one was allowed to fight anyone else. Husbands were not allowed to beat their wives or their children. But Okonkwo broke the peace.

One day during the Week of Peace, Okonkwo came home early in the afternoon. He sat and waited for his meal to be brought to him. His third wife, his youngest wife, called Ojiugo, was to cook that day. But Ojiugo was not at home.

That morning she had gone to see a friend and had not come back in time to cook the food. Okonkwo waited for

The Wrestling Match

Okonkwo hoped the Goddess would forgive him for beating his third wife. Okonkwo was really very sorry about what he had done. He knew he had done wrong. But because he had to show everyone that he was strong, Okonkwo did not tell anyone that he was sorry.

The rest of the clan knew that Okonkwo had taken the gifts to the Earth Goddess, but they wondered if he was really sorry. They did not think Okonkwo really respected the gods of the clan. If anyone respected the gods, he would fear them and do what they told him. Okonkwo said he respected the gods, but he never showed the people that he was sorry.

In the past, men who broke the Week of Peace were often killed. They were kicked around the streets until they died. The clansmen thought that Okonkwo was very lucky to get such an easy punishment for doing such an evil thing. Okonkwo had been lucky. Now he seemed to think that he was better than the gods.

Okonkwo was a very proud man indeed.

5

The Wrestling Match

On the first day of the New Year, every family always cooked large meals and invited friends to eat with them. But the second day of the New Year was always the day for the big wrestling match. Most people did not know which of these two days they liked better. But Okonkwo's second wife, whose name was Ekwefi, liked the day of wrestling more than the day of feasting.

Ekwefi was always happy when she saw wrestling matches because she always remembered the match when she first saw Okonkwo.

Ekwefi had been a very beautiful young girl. She had fallen in

The Wrestling Match

love with Okonkwo as soon as she saw him at the wrestling match. She had not married Okonkwo then because he was too poor. But a few years later, Ekwefi had run away and had gone to live with Okonkwo.

All this happened many years ago. Ekwefi was now forty-five years old. But she still loved watching wrestling matches and this day she was feeling very excited.

It was nearly midday on the second day of the New Year. Ekwefi and her only daughter, Ezinma, were sitting by the fire. They were cooking the dinner.

Suddenly they heard the sound of the drums in the distance. The drums told everyone that the wrestling match would soon begin. The drumming came from the direction of the village playground. The wind brought the sound of the drums to Okonkwo's compound. The drumming was quick and happy. Okonkwo began to move his feet to the beat of the drums. Like Ekwefi, Okonkwo became very excited. Okonkwo and his family walked to the playground. Nearly everybody in the village was there – the men, the women and the children. All the people stood round in a circle. The centre of the playground was empty. The old men and the important men in the village sat on stools brought by their own children. Okonkwo sat on the stool Ikemefuna had carried for him. Everybody else was standing up.

The wrestlers were not at the playground yet and everyone was listening to the drummers. There were three drummers and they sat in front of the circle of people who were watching. The three men had seven drums in a long wooden basket. They were beating the drums with sticks, moving from one drum to another one very quickly.

At last, the two teams of wrestlers danced into the circle. The crowd shouted as loud as they could and they clapped their hands hard together. The noise of the drums got louder and the people pushed forward. They wanted to see everything.

The Wrestling Match

so excited that they pushed nearer the centre of the circle and nobody could keep them back.

The crowd knew these two wrestlers. They had seen these two men fight in a wrestling match the year before. In that match they were equal and neither of the men was thrown on the ground. Everyone wondered if the same thing would happen again.

One of the wrestlers, called Ikezue, held out his right hand. The other man, called Okafa, grabbed Ikezue's hand and they came close together. It was an exciting match. Ikezue tried to put his right heel behind Okafa to push him over backwards. But Okafa was waiting for this. The two men held each other tightly. The muscles in their arms and on their backs stood out. The fight looked equal again.

At that moment, Ikezue bent down quickly on one knee. He tried to throw Okafa backwards over his head. But this was a wrong thing to do. It was a bad mistake. Okafa suddenly raised his right leg and he put it over Ikezue's head. Then he pushed Ikezue down on to the ground with all his strength. Ikezue fell flat on his back.

Okafa was the winner. The crowd cheered loudly and the people who had wanted Okafa to win ran towards him. They picked Okafa up and put him on their shoulders and carried him home. On the way to their village they sang happily and the young girls clapped their hands. Everyone was very pleased and they were proud of Okafa. The New Year had begun happily for them all.

6

Ikemefuna is to Go Home

Ikemefuna lived with Okonkwo and his family for three years, and the leaders of the clan seemed to have forgotten about him.

Ikemefuna was now a young man of eighteen and he was tall and strong and very lively. He was very happy living with Okonkwo's family and he was like a real elder brother to Nwoye. Ikemefuna and Nwoye were great friends and they spent most of the time with each other. Nwoye felt grown up when he was with Ikemefuna.

Both Ikemefuna and Nwoye sat with Okonkwo in his own hut. They thought they were too old to sit with Nwoye's mother and sister. Sometimes Nwoye's mother asked Nwoye to find wood for her or to do some other job. When his mother wanted Nwoye, Nwoye would pretend to be angry. He would complain about women and the trouble they made for men.

Okonkwo was very pleased with Nwoye as he seemed to be becoming a strong young man. Okonkwo knew that Ikemefuna had helped change Nwoye from a weak boy into a strong young man.

Okonkwo was very proud of both boys. He wanted Nwoye to be a strong man. He wanted him to be a man who could look after Okonkwo's family when Okonkwo was dead. Okonkwo wanted Nwoye to be rich, with enough food to feed his own family. So he was very happy to hear Nwoye complain about women. This showed that when Nwoye was older he would be able to control his family, and especially his wives.

Okonkwo often asked the two boys to sit with him in his hut and he told them stories about Umuofia. These stories were true and they were about fighting and war. Nwoye listened to the stories and knew that he ought to like them. But secretly he still

liked the stories his mother used to tell him when he was young.

His mother's stories were not about fighting and wars but about animals and birds. Nwoye knew these stories were for stupid women and children and he knew that his father wanted him to be a man. So Nwoye pretended to like the stories his father told him. Then Okonkwo was happy and he did not beat Nwoye any more.

One day, Okonkwo was sitting in his hut with Ikemefuna and Nwoye. He was eating some food and drinking palm wine. Suddenly his friend, Ogbuefi Ezeudu, came into the hut.

Ezeudu was the oldest man in that part of Umuofia. He was a very brave man and everyone respected him. Okonkwo offered Ezeudu some food, but he would not take any. Ezeudu asked Okonkwo to go outside the hut as he wanted to tell him something. The two men walked outside so the two boys could not hear them talking. Ezeudu spoke.

'That boy, Ikemefuna, calls you "Father". Do not help to kill him,' said Ezeudu to Okonkwo.

Okonkwo was very surprised to hear these words. He was going to speak, when Ezeudu spoke again.

'Yes,' said Ezeudu, 'Umuofia has decided to kill Ikemefuna. Our clan god, the Oracle¹³ of the Hills and the Caves, has said he must be killed. The people will take Ikemefuna outside Umuofia and they will kill him there.'

Okonkwo did not speak, so Ezeudu continued.

'But you must not help kill Ikemefuna,' said Ezeudu. 'He calls you "Father" and you must not help to kill him. If you help kill him the Oracle will not be pleased.'

Early the next day, a group of important men from all the nine villages in Umuofia went to Okonkwo's house. They sent Ikemefuna and Nwoye out of the hut. Then they spoke quietly to Okonkwo. These men stayed for only a short time. Then they left. Okonkwo sat in his hut with his head resting in his hands. He did not move.

In the afternoon, Okonkwo called Ikemefuna into his hut.

Okonkwo told him that the men were going to take him home the next day. Nwoye cried when he heard that Ikemefuna was going away. Okonkwo immediately beat Nwoye very hard because he was crying.

Ikemefuna did not know what to think. He did not really want to go home. He had forgotten what his home was like. Of course, he still missed his mother and his sister. Ikemefuna wanted to see them again. But he felt a little afraid. Ikemefuna felt he was not going to see either his mother or his sister ever again.

7

The Death of Ikemefuna

The next day, the men returned to Okonkwo's house. They had a big pot of wine with them. They wore their best clothes. They looked as if they were going to a big meeting of the clan or on a visit to another village. These men had bags over their shoulders and they carried matchets¹⁴. Okonkwo got ready quickly. They all left the compound and Ikemefuna carried the pot of wine on his head.

At first all the men were talking and laughing. But the further they went, the quieter they became. The sun got hotter and the birds in the forest began to sing. The only noise was the birds singing and the sound of men's footsteps on the ground. Everybody was silent. Ikemefuna wondered why nobody was talking and he felt a little afraid.

The footpath got very narrow. They were right in the middle of the forest. The trees were getting bigger and taller. Some were covered with climbing plants. The forest looked as if nobody

plate away from him. Ezinma took the plate and the bowl and went back to her mother's hut.

I wish Ezinma were a boy, Okonkwo said to himself again.

Okonkwo then thought about Ikemefuna again and he shivered. He tried to forget Ikemefuna but he could not do so. He thought about him all the time.

Why have I become like a shivering old woman? Okonkwo asked himself. Everybody in all the nine villages knows that I am a brave man. I have killed five men in battle. Why am I like a weak woman because I have also killed a young boy? I have become like a woman.

Thinking these thoughts, Okonkwo jumped to his feet and went to visit his friend, Obierika. Obierika was sitting under a tree, in the shade. The two men greeted each other and Obierika took Okonkwo into his hut.

'I was coming to see you soon,' Obierika said to him.

'Is everything all right?' asked Okonkwo.

'Yes. I am happy because my daughter is going to get married soon,' replied Obierika.

Just then, Obierika's son, Maduka, came into the hut. Maduka greeted Okonkwo and turned to leave. Okonkwo called out to him.

'Come and shake hands with me,' Okonkwo said. 'I saw you wrestling three years ago, when you threw the other boy onto the ground. You made me very happy.'

Maduka smiled and shook hands with Okonkwo. Then he left the hut. After he had gone, Okonkwo turned to Obierika.

'Maduka will be very successful in life,' said Okonkwo. 'If I had a son like him, I would be very happy.'

'I am worried about Nwoye,' continued Okonkwo. 'If he wrestled with a bowl of yams, the bowl of yams would throw him on the ground. None of my sons is like me. Who will take my place when I am dead?'

'If Ezinma were a boy I would be very happy indeed. Ezinma's ideas about life are good,' said Okonkwo.

'Don't worry about your sons,' replied Obierika. 'They are still very young.'

'Nwoye is now fifteen,' said Okonkwo. 'When I was his age, I was looking after myself. No, my friend, Nwoye is not too young. He will not change. I have done my best to make him grow into a man, but he is too much like his mother.'

Obierika thought, Nwoye is too much like his grandfather, Unoka. But he did not say this to Okonkwo. Instead, he spoke to Okonkwo about the killing of Ikemefuna.

'I don't understand why you refused to come with us to kill that boy, Ikemefuna,' Okonkwo said to Obierika.

'Because I didn't want to,' replied Obierika angrily. 'I was too busy.'

'Don't you think that the Oracle was right when it said that Ikemefuna had to die?' asked Okonkwo.

'I think the Oracle was right,' said Obierika. 'But the Oracle did not ask me to help kill Ikemefuna.'

'No. Maybe not,' replied Okonkwo. 'But someone had to kill him. If everyone was afraid of blood, no one would have killed the boy.'

These words made Obierika very angry. He thought that Okonkwo was calling him a coward.

'You know, Okonkwo,' said Obierika, 'that I am not afraid of blood. And let me tell you one thing, my friend. If I were you, I would have stayed at home. I would not have killed Ikemefuna. What you have done will not please the Earth Goddess. She said that Ikemefuna had to be killed, but she told you not to help kill him.'

'The Earth Goddess cannot punish me,' replied Okonkwo. 'I did not want to kill Ikemefuna. The Oracle said Ikemefuna must die.'

'That is true,' continued Obierika. 'If the Oracle said that my

Okonkwo went outside the hut. Chielo, the priestess, went into Okonkwo's compound and talked to him.

Chielo told Okonkwo many times that the god, Agbala, wanted to see Ezinma. Okonkwo replied every time that Ezinma was asleep and he asked Chielo to come back for Ezinma the next morning. Chielo took no notice of Okonkwo and still asked for Ezinma. Okonkwo still asked the priestess to come back the next morning because Ezinma had been ill and was fast asleep.

Suddenly Chielo screamed out loudly.

'Take care, Okonkwo,' she said. 'Do not ignore the wishes of Agbala. Is it wise for a man to ignore the wishes of a god? Take care.'

Usually everyone obeyed Chielo immediately. They did not ask questions. But Okonkwo wanted to make Chielo wait for Ezinma. He was not really afraid of Agbala.

Chielo walked straight past Okonkwo and went into Ekwefi's hut.

'Where is Ezinma?' she asked. 'Agbala wants to see her.'

'Where does Agbala want to see Ezinma?' asked Ekwefi.

'In his house in the hills and the caves,' replied Chielo.

'I will come with you,' said Ekwefi.

'How dare you go to see Agbala unless he asks to see you!' said the priestess. 'Give me Ezinma.'

Ekwefi gave Ezinma to Chielo.

'Come, my dear,' said Chielo to Ezinma. 'I will carry you on my back. Then you will not know that the journey is long.'

Ezinma began to cry because she was afraid.

'Don't cry,' said Ekwefi. 'The priestess will bring you back home soon.'

'Don't be afraid,' said Ekwefi again; and she stroked Ezinma's head.

Then Chielo, the priestess, went down on one knee and Ezinma climbed onto her back. Ezinma was still crying a little.

'Agbala do-o-o! Agbala ekeneo-o-o-o!' Chielo shouted these

greetings again to her god as she left the hut. Ezinma cried loudly and called to her mother. The two voices of Ezinma and Chielo disappeared into the thick darkness of the night.

Ekwefi suddenly felt very weak. She looked in the direction of the voices. Soon Ekwefi could not hear Ezinma's voice. She heard only the voice of Chielo, which was getting quieter and quieter in the distance.

'Why are you standing there looking stupid?' said Okonkwo to his wife. 'Ezinma hasn't been stolen from you.'

But Ekwefi did not listen to her husband. She stood still for a short time and then she walked quietly through Okonkwo's hut and went outside.

'Where are you going?' asked Okonkwo.

'I am going to follow Chielo,' replied Ekwefi. And she walked out into the darkness. Okonkwo sat down and thought.

11

The Cave of Agbala

The voice of the priestess was getting quieter and quieter. Ekwefi hurried to the footpath outside the compound and turned left to follow the voice.

It was a very dark night and Ekwefi could not see anything. She began to run and she fell down many times. The night was cold but Ekwefi was hot because she was running.

The priestess was still shouting out in the darkness ahead. Ekwefi followed Chielo. She did not want to get too close to Chielo. If Chielo turned round suddenly and saw Ekwefi, she would be very, very angry. But Ekwefi did not walk very far behind Chielo because she did not want to lose the priestess.

The Commissioner and his soldiers followed. The soldiers carried guns. The Commissioner told the soldiers to shoot Obierika and his men if they tried to run away.

Obierika led the men to a place just outside one of the walls of Okonkwo's compound. Then they came to a tree. Okonkwo's body was hanging from the tree. Okonkwo knew that the white man would hang him if he found him alive. So Okonkwo had decided to hang himself.

'Perhaps your men can help us cut Okonkwo's body down from the tree. And perhaps they can bury him,' said Obierika. 'We have sent for strangers from another village. We have asked them to come and cut him down, but they may not come for a long time.'

'Why can't you take the body down yourselves?' the Commissioner asked.

'It is against our laws,' replied one of the men. 'It is a crime for a man to kill himself. It is a crime against the Earth Goddess, and the man who kills himself cannot be buried by his own clansmen. His body is bad and only strangers can touch it.'

Obierika looked at the Commissioner and his men.

'You are strangers in Umuofia,' Obierika said. 'That is why we are asking you to cut down Okonkwo's body from the tree.'

'Will you bury him like any other man?' asked the Commissioner.

'We cannot bury him,' replied Obierika. 'Only strangers can bury a man who has killed himself.'

Obierika stopped talking and looked at the body of his friend hanging from the tree.

'We will pay your men to cut Okonkwo's body down and to bury him,' Obierika said. 'When you have buried him, we will ask the Earth Goddess to make the land clean again.'

Obierika suddenly turned to look at the Commissioner. Then he screamed out loudly, with great anger in his voice.

'That man hanging there,' shouted Obierika, 'was one of the

greatest men in Umuofia. You made him kill himself and now he will be buried like a dog . . .'

Obierika's voice shook with anger. He was so angry and so miserable that he could not say any more.

'Keep quiet,' shouted one of the messengers to Obierika.

'Take the body down,' said the Commissioner to the chief messenger. 'Bring the body of Okonkwo and all these people to the court.'

'Yes, sir,' replied the messenger.

So they cut down the hanging body of Okonkwo and carried him on their shoulders to the court of the white man.

Points for Understanding

1

- 1 What district did Okonkwo live in?
- 2 Why was Okonkwo ashamed of his father, Unoka?
- 3 Why did the clan respect Okonkwo?

2

- 1 Why were the other districts afraid of Umuofia?
- 2 What happened to Ikemefuna?

3

- 1 Why did Okonkwo keep beating Nwoye?
- 2 Why was Nwoye pleased when Ikemefuna came to live with Okonkwo's family?
- 3 Why did Okonkwo never let anyone see that he was kind?

4

- 1 How did Okonkwo break the rules of the Week of Peace?
- 2 Why did Ezeani tell Okonkwo to rake certain things to the shrine of the Earth Goddess?
- 3 Why did Okonkwo not tell anyone that he was sorry?
- 4 Why were the other villagers not pleased with Okonkwo?

5

- 1 Why were the first two days of the New Year so important?
- 2 Why was Ekwefi so excited when she heard the drums?

6

- 1 Why was Okonkwo happy when Nwoye complained about the women?
- 2 What sort of stories did Nwoye like to listen to?
- 3 What was going to happen to Ikemefuna?
- 4 What did Ezeudu tell Okonkwo not to do?

7

- 1 How had Okonkwo broken one of the rules of the clan?
- 2 How did Nwoye feel when he was sure that Ikemefuna had been killed?
- 3 When did Nwoye lose his love for Okonkwo?

8

- 1 Why did Okonkwo think that he had become like a woman?
- 2 Why did Okonkwo wish that he had a son like Maduka?
- 3 How did Okonkwo feel after he had talked to Obierika?

9

- 1 Why did Ekwefi love Ezinma so much?
- 2 Ezinma was an *ogbanje*. What does that mean?

10

- 1 Who was Chielo?
- 2 Where did Chielo want to take Ezinma?
- 3 What did Ekwefi decide to do when Chielo took Ezinma away?

11

- 1 How did the priestess, Chielo, get in and out of the cave of the god, Agbala?
- 2 Why were Ekwefi and Okonkwo happy that Ezinma had gone into the cave of the god, Agbala?

12

- 1 Was the death of Ezeudu's son an accident?
- 2 What was the difference between a 'male' crime and a 'female' crime?
- 3 What was Okonkwo's punishment?
- 4 Where was Okonkwo going to go?
- 5 What happened to Okonkwo's compound?

13

- 1 Where did Okonkwo go to in Mbanta?
- 2 What had always been Okonkwo's one big wish?
- 3 Did Okonkwo think this wish would ever come true now?
- 4 What did Uchendu mean when he said, 'Mother is most important of all'?
- 5 What was Uchendu's advice to Okonkwo?

14

- 1 Who was the stranger at Abame and how did he come there?
- 2 What did the Oracle tell the people of Abame about this stranger?
- 3 Was the Oracle right?
- 4 Why did Okonkwo think the people of Abame were foolish?
- 5 Was Obierika afraid of the stories about the white men?
- 6 Was Okonkwo afraid of the white men?

15

- 1 Why did the interpreter say the missionaries had come to Mbanta?
- 2 What did the missionary say about the gods of the clan?
- 3 Why did Okonkwo stay at the meeting?
- 4 Why did Nwoye stay?

16

- 1 Why did Nwoye not go too near the missionaries?
- 2 What did the people of Mbanta think when the missionaries did not die in the Evil Forest?

17

- 1 Why did Okonkwo beat Nwoye?
- 2 What did Nwoye do when Okonkwo beat him?
- 3 What did Nwoye want to do in Umuofia?
- 4 Why did Okonkwo remember his father, Unoka?

18

- 1 Why did the clansmen not worry very much about the people who became converts?
- 2 Why did no one want to kill the missionaries?
- 3 How many of the *osu* became converts?

19

- 1 Why was Okonkwo ashamed of the clan in Mbanta?
- 2 Did the rulers of Mbanta continue to exclude the Christians?

20

- 1 Why did Okonkwo build a very large compound when he returned to Umuofia?
- 2 How had Umuofia changed since Okonkwo had left it?
- 3 What had the District Commissioner brought to Umuofia?
- 4 Who helped the District Commissioner in his work?
- 5 Why was Okonkwo sad when he returned to Umuofia?
- 6 What did Okonkwo want to do to the white men?
- 7 Why did Obierika think that it was too late to save Umuofia?

21

- 1 What had the white man brought to Umuofia as well as religion and government?
- 2 Why did Mr Brown build a school?
- 3 Okonkwo was unhappy in Umuofia for two reasons. One reason was that many people in the clan had accepted the white man and had become weak. What was the other reason?
- 4 What did the clansmen think when they burnt the Church?

22

- 1 Why was Okonkwo happy after the burning of the church?
- 2 The Commissioner said he had brought a good government to Umuofia. How does this chapter show that it was an unfair and dishonest government?
- 3 How powerful was the new government in Umuofia?
- 4 What did Okonkwo want to do to the white man now?

23

- 1 Some men of Umuofia were not at the meeting. Who were they?
- 2 What did Okonkwo do to the chief messenger at the meeting?
- 3 How did Okonkwo know that the men of Umuofia would not fight the white man?
- 4 What had happened to the clan?

24

- 1 Why did Obierika want the Commissioner's men to help him?
- 2 What did Obierika say about Okonkwo?
- 3 What do you think was the reason for Okonkwo's death?

page 59)

someone who changes his religion and believes in a new religion.
to exclude - from the clan (page 63)
to stop a person joining in the life of a clan. The person is not
allowed to do certain things which other people do.

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