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Things Fall Apart (Norton Critical Editions)



Synopsis

Chinua Achebeâ™s tragic novel of pre-colonial Igbo society was a major literary and cultural event when it was published in 1958. Written during a period of nationalist assertion and an emerging modern culture in Africa, *Things Fall Apartâ™*s influence quickly spread from Nigeria throughout Africa and beyond. In its fifty years, this unforgettable novel has been translated into fifty languages and has been read by millions. A Chronology of Achebeâ™s life and work and a Selected Bibliography are also included. 2 maps

Book Information

Series: Norton Critical Editions

Paperback: 624 pages

Publisher: W. W. Norton & Company; Reprint edition (December 19, 2008)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0393932192

ISBN-13: 978-0393932195

Product Dimensions: 5.2 x 1.4 x 8.4 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.4 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

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Customer Reviews

SPOILERS AHEAD: This novel was set in the Igbo homeland in what is now southeastern Nigeria in the late 1800s/early 1900s. I read about three-quarters of the book before I could begin to appreciate it. Up to then I'd disliked the main character, Okonkwo, an important person in the village whose major traits were harsh anger, pride and inflexibility, finding him one-sided and uninteresting. I felt the description was plodding and little of importance was happening, and wasn't greatly interested in the village life. Much of the novel was concerned mainly with his point of view, and his interactions with the other, relatively minor characters were unexciting. When a dramatic event occurred, such as his accidental shooting of a villager that led to his exile, it was described in a flat, undramatic tone that seemed inappropriate and puzzled me. I couldn't help comparing this novel unfavorably with another I happened to be reading, *Palace Walk*, by Naguib Mahfouz, with its complex, many-sided protagonist, the many other strongly developed people in his family, the

dramatic interaction between them, and the rich world around them that was reasonably familiar. It was only after reading some background material on the Internet that I could begin to understand how Achebe's novel aimed to recreate a vibrant culture that had existed before colonization on its own terms, with its oral tradition, rituals and taboos, and guardian spirits, and show what had been lost. The focus on a period before colonization and the depiction of the whites as interlopers has been called innovative for its time. Likewise the use of language in the words of the villagers, instead of pidgin.

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