



# Characters

**OKONKWO** is a tragic hero. He begins as a young and influential leader of the Igbo community. As a fierce warrior and a successful farmer, he is strong, proud and driven. His embarrassment about his lazy father, Unoka, has driven him to overcompensate for his father's ways, by not tolerating idleness or gentleness. He suppresses feelings of affection and isolates himself by exhibiting anger through violent, irrational behaviour. His flaws, however, are that he never questions the wisdom of his ancestors; he is impulsive, bringing trouble and sorrow upon himself and his family; he fears weakness and failure; and is proud and inflexible. He commits suicide: a shameful and disgraceful death, like his father's.

**NWOYE**, Okonkwo's oldest son, is a sensitive, young man. Nwoye disappoints Okonkwo by showing signs of his grandfather's sensitivity, weakness and laziness. Okonkwo's view of manhood distorts his view of Nwoye's personality. Nwoye is constantly beaten by Okonkwo in the hopes of correcting the faults that Okonkwo sees in him. Elements of mercy and pity of his mother's stories contrast with Okonkwo's life of blood and violence, and as a result, makes Christianity appealing for him, which displeases Okonkwo.

**IKEMEFUNA** is a boy of fourteen who is given to Umuofia by a neighbouring village, to avoid war. He is a clever, resourceful young man. He develops a close, brotherly relationship with Nwoye, and influences him in a way that is admirable to, and approving of, Okonkwo. Okonkwo, although fond of Ikemefuna, but does not demonstrate his affection because of his fear of looking weak. Ikemefuna fills the void in Okonkwo's life that Nwoye cannot.

**UNOKA** is Okonkwo's father and the root of all his fears and problems. Unoka's priority was to enjoy life to the fullest. He lacked responsibility and he did not plan for the future. As Unoka's behaviour was contrary to typical Igbo tradition, he was treated in a demeaning manner by Igbo clansmen and, later, by Okonkwo, his son. Yet he is supported by the people who continuously lend him money and allow him to sustain his life. His death is the ultimate embarrassment to Okonkwo as he is left to die above the ground in the Evil Forest.



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**OBIERIKA**, serves as a foil for Okonkwo. Unlike Okonkwo, who is impulsive, he thinks before he acts. Obierika, as Okonkwo's best friend, supports Okonkwo and comforts him in his depression over Ikemefuna's death. When Okonkwo goes into exile, Obierika takes care of Okonkwo's yams and seed-yams and gives Okonkwo the profits. Obierika is open-minded; he questions the Igbo traditions, ritual, and tribal laws. He is receptive to new ideas as he thinks that change may improve the Igbo society. Okonkwo is unable to accept any change to traditional Igbo culture and beliefs. Whereas Okonkwo believes in violence against the British, Obierika understands that rising up against the British is too late.

**MR. BROWN**, as the precursor for colonialism, is the first, white, Christian missionary in Umuofia and Mbanta. He is an understanding and accommodating man. His policy of compromise and non-aggression makes him willing to respect and understand the Igbo beliefs. This leads him to befriend prominent clansmen and to build a school and hospital in Umuofia. He is also open-minded and discusses religious beliefs with Akunna, a clan leader of Umuofia. Neither man gives up his beliefs, but each gains respect for the other. He only knows the British way, which is to instate the British form of government and remove the traditional government of the Igbo people.

**REVEREND SMITH** replaces Mr. Brown as the new head of the Christian church. Unlike Mr Brown, he is strict and uncompromising, and demands that his converts reject their indigenous beliefs. He is disrespectful of Igbo beliefs and customs, and considers their beliefs to be the work of the devil. His behaviour epitomises the problems of colonialism. His dogmatism incites converts to become fanatical and irrational. This instigates the clash between the church and the British government, culminating in Okonkwo beheading the messenger.

**THE DISTRICT COMMISSIONER** is an authority figure in the colonial government in Nigeria. He represents the racist colonialist, and thinks he knows and understands everything about the indigenous African customs, for which has no respect.

Adapted from: <https://www.sparknotes.com/lit/things/characters/>

<https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/t/things-fall-apart/character-list>