



Summary of the Novel

The story, which is set in Nigeria, traces the fall of Okonkwo of the Umuofia village, one of the nine villages of the area. Okonkwo has established himself as a wrestling champion, a wealthy clansman, a revered warrior and a respected leader of the village, through determination, hard work and fear of failure. Driven by the shame of his father, Unoka, who died in disrepute, he shuns idleness and weakness. He is extremely harsh on his twelve-year-old son Nwoye, whom he worries will end up a failure like Unoka.

The death of a woman from Umuofia by a man from a neighbouring tribe, results in Umuofia being given a virgin and a fifteen-year-old boy as a peace settlement. The elders of the clan entrust the boy, Ikemefuna, in Okonkwo's care. Okonkwo finds an ideal son in him, and Nwoye looks up to him as an older brother, emulation of whom gives Okonkwo much pride.

Three years later, when the Oracle decides that Ikemefuna must be killed, Ogbuefi Ezeudu, one of the village elders, cautions Okonkwo against being a part of the boy's death. Okonkwo, determined not to look weak in front of his tribesmen, fails to heed the advice, and delivers the fatal blow that kills Ikemefuna. The boy's death, like a bad omen, causes Okonkwo much grief. At Ogbuefi Ezeudu's funeral, Okonkwo's tragedy is compounded when his gun accidentally explodes and kills Ogbuefi Ezeudu's sixteen-year-old son. As killing a clansman is considered a crime against the earth goddess, to appease the gods, Okonkwo and his family are exiled for seven years to his mother's village, Mbanta.

During his exile, white missionaries arrive, and by the time Okonkwo returns, European structures are firmly established in Umuofia. The missionaries condemn the traditions and spiritual practises of the Ibo people and when a convert, Enoch, unmasks an *egwugwu* during the annual ceremony to honour the earth deity, the group of *egwugwu* burn Enoch's compound and the church. The leaders of Umuofia, including Okonkwo, are betrayed through a meeting with the District Commissioner and are arrested by the white government for this incident.

On his release, Okonkwo intends to start an uprising to reclaim the village. Okonkwo kills a court messenger, but when the crowd allows the other messengers to escape, Okonkwo realizes that his clan is not willing to go to war. Okonkwo's desperation about his changing village is so overwhelming that Okonkwo kills himself, contravening traditional beliefs and robbing himself of the burial of a warrior. The white commissioner notes that Okonkwo's rebellion and suicide, will make an interesting paragraph in his book: *The Pacification of the Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger*.

Adapted from: <https://www.prestwickhouse.com/blog/post/2018/04/how-to-teach-things-fall-apart>
<http://www.gradesaver.com/author/chinua-achebe>
<http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/things/themes.html>