*Things Fall Apart* Essay Prompts: Honors 2019

1. Analyze the use of Igbo proverbs in the novel as cultural communication.
2. Choose one of the following characters from the book and analyze them in terms of the gender norms/roles in Ibo culture: Okonkwo, Chielo Nwoye, Enzima, or Ekwefi.
   1. Analyze the relationship between men and women in the African culture as Achebe presents it. Explain how this relationship is similar or dissimilar to the Western view of the relationships between men and women. Focus on both the positive and negative aspects of the relationship. What comment is Achebe trying to make about the dynamics of the relationship in his culture?
   2. How does Okonkwo stack up as a member of his Igbo culture? To what extent is he a good Igbo man? How does the oral tradition of the Igbo support your argument?
3. Defend the life of Okonkwo as a tale based upon the story structure of a tragic hero. Or *Things Fall Apart* as a tragedy. Why does Achebe utilize these literary traditions?
4. What techniques and theme development go into the three parts of *Things Fall Apart*? What is the purpose of each section of the novel?
5. How and to what effect does Achebe use different types of irony in *Things Fall Apart*?
6. How does Achebe use the motif of (1) the weather; (2) twins; (3) *chi*; or (4) sound/silence to effect the novel?
   1. Throughout the novel, drums, music, and the town crier’s voice punctuate the narrative at key moments. When does silence occur and what does it mean? Is there more than one type of silence? Can silence be characterized as a positive or negative occurrence? What are the implications of the fact that Unoka takes his flute with him to the Evil Forest when he dies? Okonkwo’s silence (death) at the end?
7. The title of Achebe’s novel alludes to a famous poem and one of the themes present in the novel. Read the poem “The Second Coming” by William Butler Yeats. Note how the theme falling apart is developed throughout the novel. Explain how the title develops as a theme and what techniques contribute to it. What falls apart? How?
   1. Argue how the author foreshadows the demise of the Igbo tribe and its way of life. What comes after the Igbo culture falls apart?
8. What is Achebe’s purpose with Ikemefuna in the novel? How does he develop his character?
   1. Write an essay about Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* with a focus on the character of Ikemefuna. This character is illustrative of some of the advanced character of the tribe as well as some of it’s mad logic as far as the oracle goes. He has a profound effect on the character of Nwoye, and at least temporarily, on Okonkwo. His brief stay among Okonkwo’s people showed him to be a person whose character might achieve the elusive balance that many other characters lack. Focusing on one or two attributes or issues surrounding Ikemefuna, discuss the ways that Achebe uses him as a character to illuminate central concerns in the novel.
9. Discuss the different perspectives and narrators present throughout the novel. Why does Achebe choose to use different points of view? What is the effect?
10. How does Achebe use foils? Make sure to focus on Obierika and his purpose within the novel and for readers analyzing the changing of Igbo culture.
11. How and why does Achebe use allusions to *Hamlet* (last paragraph of chapter 17) and “The Second Coming”?
12. How does the symbol of locusts relate to Europeans and Achebe’s 1980 comments: “The Igbo culture was not destroyed by Europe. It was disturbed. It was disturbed very seriously, but this is nothing new in the world. Cultures are constantly influenced, challenged, pushed about by other cultures that may have some kind of advantage at a particular time . . . . But as I said initially, a culture which is healthy will often survive. It will not survive exactly in the form in which it was met by the invading culture, but it will modify itself and move on . . . . So there is a need for a culture to be alive and active and ready to adjust, ready to take challenges. A culture that fails to take challenges will die.”