

Dialectical Journal

Things Fall Apart—Chinua Achebe

As we read, you will want to write down certain quotes that seem important to the story and that particularly strike your interest. **This dialectical journal is intended to organize the important quotes from the story chronologically and reveal your reflections about these quotations.** This can be used for many of the assignments that we will be doing with the book you are reading. Below are a few examples that reveal the type of responses I am looking for.

| Page Number | Quotation | Reflection/Analysis |
|-------------|--|--|
| page 1 | EX: “Every nerve and every muscle stood out on their arms, on their backs and their thighs, and one almost heard them stretching to breaking point” | This quote struck me in its simplistic yet modernistic style. The form of the sentence seems to mirror the content. The sentence seems itself to “stretch” to its end, through the repetition of “every” and “their.” Through repetition, Achebe achieves a 1:1 relation between the structure of the sentence and the content it communicates. By doing this, Achebe includes the reader in this visceral scene, connecting the reader to the text. This simplistic yet drawn out sentence foreshadows the importance of the physical body in this society. |
| page 1 | “It was this man that Okonkwo threw in a fight which the old men agreed was one of the fiercest since the founder of their town engaged a spirit of the wild for seven days and seven nights...in the end, Okonkwo threw the Cat (Amalinze)” | (connection to art: literature, music, painting) “Making a short deft movement, Tom Buchanan broke her nose with his open hand” (<i>The Great Gatsby</i> , F. Scott Fitzgerald, p. 41). This passage from <i>Gatsby</i> connects thematically and stylistically to the passage from <i>Things Fall Apart</i> . In both passages, the brief, but powerful prose indicates the power of the man. Both passages express the animalistic potential of man; Tom, the least fluid/flowing character in <i>Gatsby</i> relies on his brute force. Both Okonkwo and Tom overpower their opponent. What is apparent is the seemingly blunt and unemotional description of the violence. Even after Tom strikes Mrs. Wilson’s face, Fitzgerald describes the cries of women having to clean up the blood. |
| page 9 | “Darkness held a vague terror for these people, even the bravest among them. Children were warned not to whistle at night for fear of evil spirits. Dangerous animals became even more sinister and uncanny in the dark” | “When I had journeyed half of our life’s way, / I found myself within a shadowed forest, / for I had lost the path that does not stray” (<i>Inferno</i>, Dante, 1-4). As I read the passage from <i>Things Fall Apart</i> , I began to think about the opening lines from Dante’s <i>Inferno</i> . The power of the darkness to obscure sight, not only literally but figuratively, is a motif that pervades all of literature. Dante’s darkness is his search for the light (God), whereas those who live in the society in <i>TFA</i> are afraid of the dark for its blanketing power. The spirits change, as they do for Dante, in the dark. |
| 44 | “The drums were still beating, persistent and unchanging. Their sound was no longer a separate thing from the living village. It was like the pulsation of its heart. It throbbed in the air, in the sunshine, and even in the trees, and filled the village with excitement” (44). | This quote really caught my eye. The simile “it was like the pulsation of its heart” really struck me. There seems to be a primal connection between the vitality of the village and the beating of the drum. That the beating of the drums blends with the beating of their hearts reveals the human connection between the village and the people who make up the village. As the drums beat, they become one. |

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