

Interpretive Essay Assignment

DUE: TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 22

May be handed in in class or submitted by email in a DOC, RTF, or PDF format. Note: Your email submission only “counts” if you receive a reply back from me saying I got it. As stated in the syllabus, any late submissions are marked down 10 points per class meeting.

Please format your essay as follows. Your essay should

- ▶ Be typed, double-spaced, in 12 pt. Times or Arial, with one-inch margins. Please spellcheck and, if you’re not sure about your writing, have a friend read it. I will not mark down for grammar, but clarity is vital.
- ▶ Have a cover page with the title, your name, my name, and the date, and have page numbers on each page after the cover page.
- ▶ Run 4–5 full pages, plus the cover page. Start with an introduction stating your opinion; then give your evidence in the main body; followed by a conclusion summarizing how the evidence supports your opinion.
- ▶ Have all direct quotations, indirect quotations, and ideas from other sources footnoted according to a standard citation style. This is extremely important and failure to do this will seriously affect your grade.
- ▶ **Optional draft due: Tuesday, Nov. 15.** I will not grade it, but I will provide feedback.

ASSIGNMENT

From either Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* or Azuela’s *The Underdogs*, choose either

- (a) a pair of characters with an ongoing relationship that changes over the course of the story, or
- (b) a character whose attitude transforms through the story.

All literature is commentary and criticism of society. Make an argument that these changes represent what the author is trying to say about how the real-life social transformations that form the context for the novel affected people living in those societies. As much as possible, focus your argument specifically in terms of *one* specific theme of social change — religion and piety, family, gender, morality, class, violence, realism vs. idealism, etc. *How* and *why* did that society change, and how is the author illustrating that change using characters in his fictional narrative?

The main body of your paper must:

- (a) *describe* and carefully *analyze* a series of examples from the book that support your argument, *and*
- (b) discuss scholarly opinion on your topic from at least one work of primary secondary literature — a book or an article about the novel or the time and place the novel talks about.
 - The book or article must be either a primary or a secondary source.
 - Tertiary sources — including textbooks and ANYTHING on the internet — are not allowed.
 - Some articles you might wish to use are posted on my website. They’re listed on the next page.

Your conclusion should be the last one-third or so of your essay and relate to the following: What, in the end, is the author trying to say, and how does he support his argument? Finally, based on your understanding of the society in question, do you agree with what Achebe or Azuela was trying to say, and why?

SOME ARTICLES YOU MIGHT FIND RELEVANT

All of the following are uploaded to my web site. You'll find links on the course's web page.

Los de Abajo [The Underdogs]

Bradley, D. "Patterns of Myth in *Los de abajo*." *The Modern Language Review*, Vol. 75, No. 1 (Jan., 1980), pp. 94-104.

Dulsey, Bernard. "The Mexican Revolution as Mirrored in the Novels of Mariano Azuela." *The Modern Language Journal*, Vol. 35, No. 5 (May, 1951), pp. 382-386.

Gerdes, Dick. "Point of View in *Los de Abajo*." *Hispania*, Vol. 64, No. 4 (Dec., 1981), pp. 557-563.

Griffin, Clive. "The Structure of *Los de abajo*." *Revista Canadiense de Estudios Hispánicos*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (Otoño 1981), pp. 25-41.

Murad, Timothy. "Animal Imagery and Structural Unity in Mariano Azuela's *Los de abajo*." *Journal of Spanish Studies: Twentieth Century*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (Fall, 1979), pp. 207-222.

Murad, Timothy. "Foreshadowing, Duplication, and Structural Unity in Mariano Azuela's *Los de Abajo*." *Hispania*, Vol. 64, No. 4 (Dec., 1981), pp. 550-556.

Things Fall Apart

Aji, Aron and Kirstin Lynne Ellsworth. "Ezinma: The 'Ogbanje' Child in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*." *College Literature*, Vol. 19/20, No. 3/1, (Oct., 1992 - Feb., 1993), pp. 170-175.

Champion, Ernest A. "The Story of a Man and his People: Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*." *Negro American Literature Forum*, Vol. 8, No. 4 (Winter, 1974), pp. 272-277.

Hoegberg, David. "Principle and Practice: The Logic of Cultural Violence in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*." *College Literature*, Vol. 26, No. 1, Cultural Violence (Winter, 1999), pp. 69-79.

MacKenzie, Clayton G. "The Metamorphosis of Piety in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*." *Research in African Literatures*, Vol. 27, No. 2 (Summer, 1996), pp. 128-138.

Nnoromele, Patrick C. "The Plight of a Hero in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*." *College Literature*, Vol. 27, No. 2 (Spring, 2000), pp. 146-156.

Obiechina, Emmanuel. "Structure and Significance in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*." *English in Africa*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (Sep., 1975), pp. 38-44.

Okpala, Jude Chudi. "Igbo Metaphysics in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*." *Callaloo*, Vol. 25, No. 2 (Spring, 2002), pp. 559-566.

Osei-Nyame, Kwadwo. "Chinua Achebe Writing Culture: Representations of Gender and Tradition in *Things Fall Apart*." *Research in African Literatures*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (Summer, 1999), pp. 148-164.

Rhoads, Diana Akers. "Culture in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*." *African Studies Review*, Vol. 36, No. 2 (Sep., 1993), pp. 61-72.