

# Things Fall Apart

Author  
**Chinua Achebe**

Year Published  
**1958**

Original Language  
**English**

## THEMES

### The Challenge of Cultural Change

Set in 1800s Nigeria, *Things Fall Apart* tells the story of Okonkwo, his family, and his clan. Focusing on Okonkwo's rise and fall, it is both a tale of human relations and a commentary about foreign influence on local cultures. Okonkwo returns from exile to find missionaries have brought radical changes—changes he may not survive.

#### Betrayal

Okonkwo feels betrayed by his son's femininity and his clan's passivity towards foreigners.

#### Culture & Change

While many Ibo resist change, those who are outcasts welcome the Europeans and change.

#### Fate vs. Free Will

Born poor, Okonkwo exercises free will and works to become wealthy and raise his status.

### Author

The Nigerian-born author is widely seen as the father of modern African literature. His first novel, the insightful social commentary *Things Fall Apart*, has been translated into more than 50 languages. Nelson Mandela said Achebe "brought Africa to the rest of the world."



**CHINUA ACHEBE**  
1930–2013

### Symbols



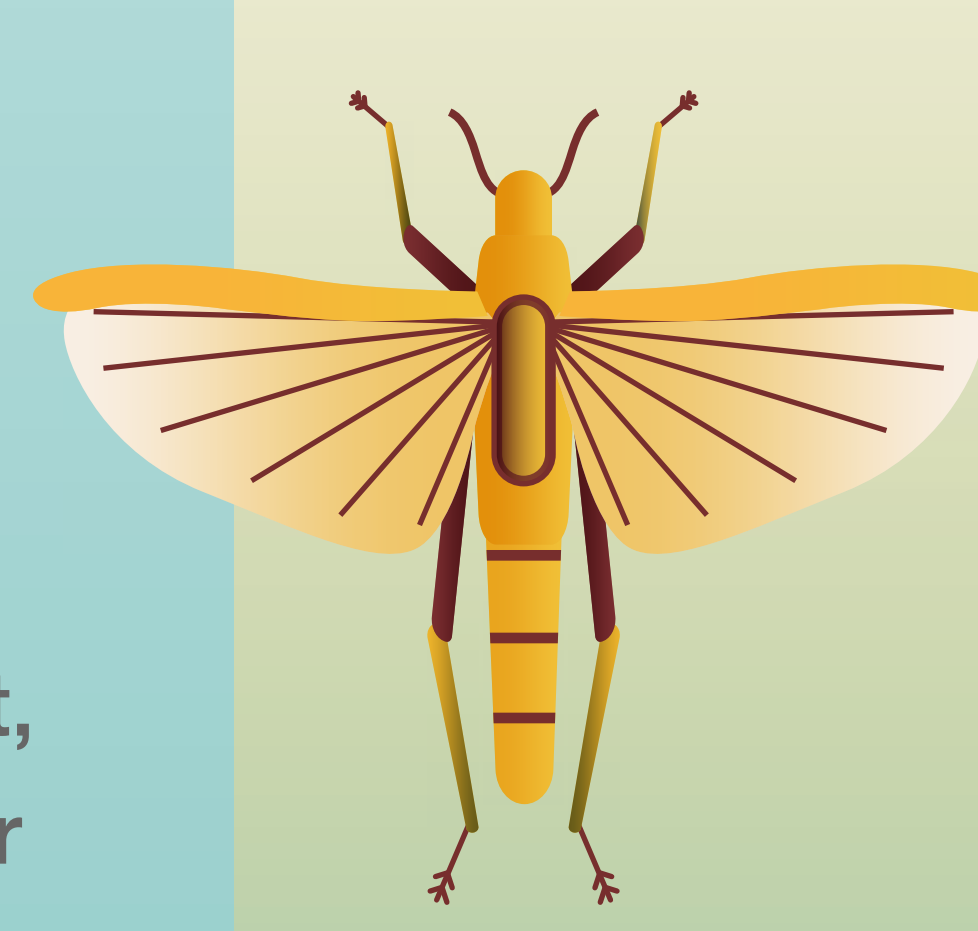
#### Fire

Okonkwo is known as the Roaring Flame and his blazing anger eventually destroys him.



#### Yams

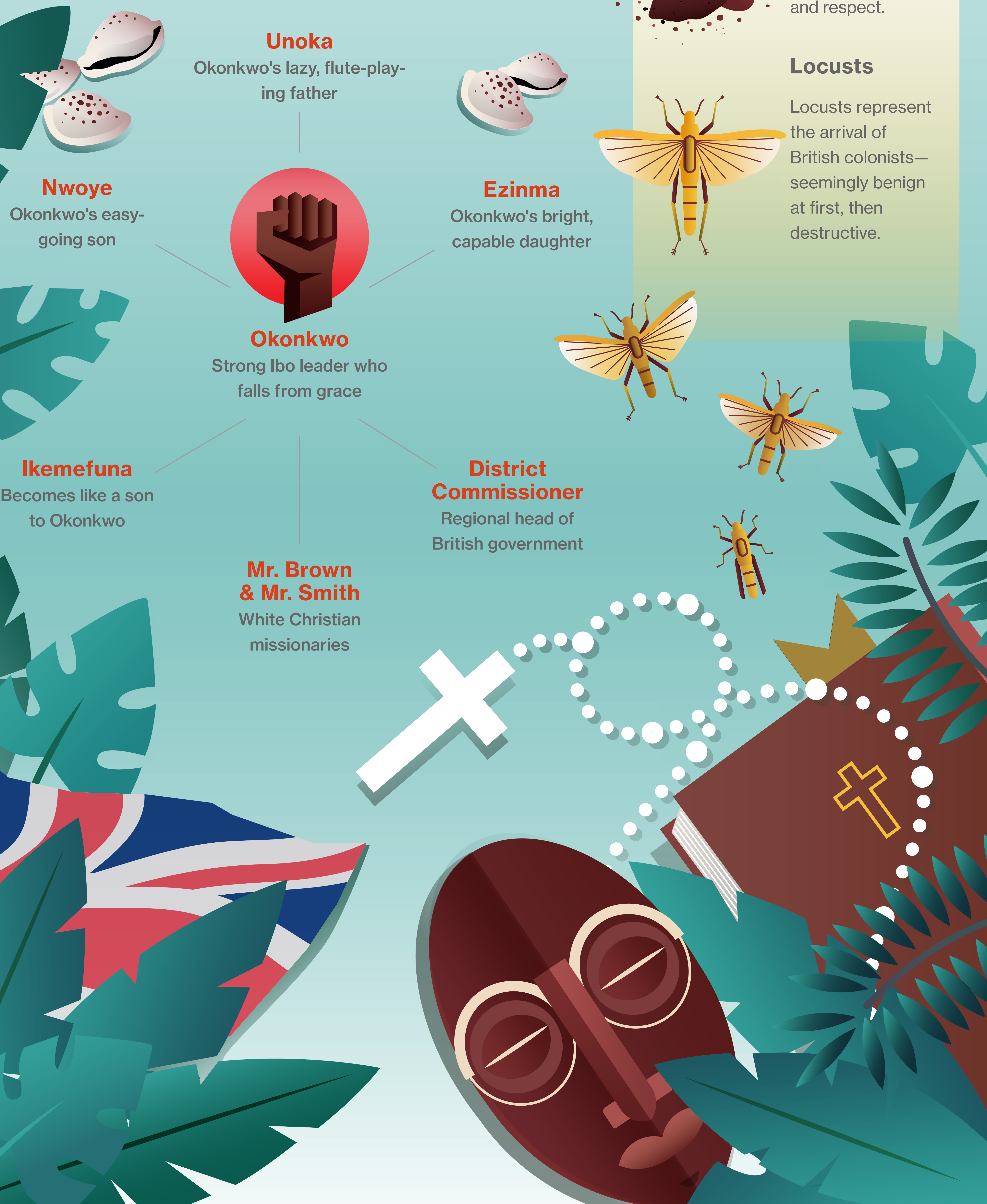
Grown by Ibo men, yams symbolize masculinity, wealth, and respect.



#### Locusts

Locusts represent the arrival of British colonists—seemingly benign at first, then destructive.

### Main Characters



### Things Fall Apart by the Numbers



7

Years Okonkwo spends in exile with his family after he accidentally kills a member of his clan



2

Additional novels Achebe wrote about Okonkwo's family and other clans of the Ibo society



£32

Amount Achebe paid to have his manuscript typed up from his only handwritten copy



>50

Languages into which *Things Fall Apart* has been translated



*He has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart.*

Obierika, Chapter 20