

Correction of the Exam Paper : Etude et Critique de la Littérature Africaine / 2021 – 2022

"Things Fall Apart" by Chinua Achebe is indeed considered a groundbreaking work in African literature and is often seen as marking the beginning of the modern African novel. Achebe's novel not only tells the story of the Igbo society before and during the arrival of colonial powers but also challenges colonialist narratives and provides a distinctly African perspective. Let's explore how "Things Fall Apart" has influenced and set a precedent for future African writers, drawing comparisons or contrasts with other African novels:

1. Cultural Authenticity:

- Evidence from "Things Fall Apart": Achebe portrays Igbo culture with depth and authenticity, presenting it from an insider's perspective.
- Comparison/Contrast: Some later African writers, like Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o in "Petals of Blood" or Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie in "Half of a Yellow Sun," similarly emphasize the importance of portraying African cultures accurately and resisting external stereotypes.

2. Colonial Critique:

- Evidence from "Things Fall Apart": Achebe critiques the impact of colonialism on African societies, challenging Eurocentric views and offering an African perspective on the encounter.
- Comparison/Contrast: Writers like Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o in "The River Between" also address the consequences of colonialism, emphasizing the need to decolonize both literature and the mind.

3. Language Choice:

- Evidence from "Things Fall Apart": Achebe wrote "Things Fall Apart" in English, using the language of the colonizers to convey an African narrative, challenging the assumption that African stories should only be told in indigenous languages.
- Comparison/Contrast: Some writers, like Buchi Emecheta in "The Joys of Motherhood," similarly choose English as a medium to reach a broader audience while narrating distinctly African stories.

4. Representation of Traditions:

- Evidence from "Things Fall Apart": Achebe depicts traditional Igbo customs, rituals, and social structures, providing a nuanced portrayal of pre-colonial African societies.
- Comparison/Contrast: Writers like Yvonne Vera in "Nehanda" also delve into pre-colonial African traditions, presenting them as integral to the understanding of African identity.

5. Complex Characters:

- Evidence from "Things Fall Apart": Achebe creates complex characters with depth and individuality, challenging stereotypes and presenting a diverse range of personalities within the African context.
- Comparison/Contrast: Writers like Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie in "Purple Hibiscus" or Teju Cole in "Open City" continue the tradition of creating multifaceted African characters with their own agency and complexity.

In essence, "Things Fall Apart" has influenced subsequent African writers by setting a standard for the authentic representation of African cultures, critiquing colonial legacies, and using English as a tool for conveying African narratives. The novel has served as a landmark, guiding future writers to explore and assert their own voices in the global literary landscape.