



Mapping Change: How Colonialism Changed a Man, His Community, and His Culture

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by Anne Marie Esposito

". . . a man who can't tell where the rain began to beat him cannot know where he dried his body."

("The Role of the Writer in a New Nation")

According to Chinua Achebe, the African writer must help African peoples and others realize that Africans had a viable and intact culture before the Europeans ever came to Africa. The African writer's job is to recognize and celebrate that culture so that all African peoples can begin to reclaim their dignity. As a teacher it's my job to present Achebe's novel, *Things Fall Apart*, in such a way that my students don't fail to recognize and celebrate that cultural perspective as well. To facilitate that understanding I need to not only make the text accessible to my students, many of whom are reluctant or limited readers, but also to provide some historical and cultural context as well. Since I want my students to make the appropriate text-to-text, text-to-world, and text-to-self connections, I need to use a wide variety of geographical, historical, cultural and literary resources. These resources will help my students understand what happens to Ukonkwo, his community, and his culture. They will draw on these resources and recognize that Achebe has created a literary work that has revised African history. After finishing the novel and the unit, my students will know just how civilized the African peoples were and just how systematically the European imperialists and missionaries annihilated native African communities for their own selfish reasons.

Now some may question why this novel or why this unit, and as an experienced teacher I can answer confidently. First, I have been with the New Castle County School District at Delcastle High School for sixteen years and I helped write the English Language Standards for the District. What I will have my students do with the reading will be aligned with the standards for English 12 and will be assessed with a required writing portfolio assignment. Just reading the novel alone will provide my students the opportunity to examine and evaluate some very sophisticated literary techniques and to review all the literary components of the novel. The fact that it is set in Africa and written by an African writer makes it world literature and quickly provides the required different cultural perspective. More importantly, however, is the element of challenge it will provide. This novel and this unit should challenge the way they look at the world around them.

Almost everything my students read and write during English 12 addresses the idea of change. As Frodo, the main character in *The Fellowship of the Ring* by J. R. R. Tolkien, discovers once he embarks on his journey to

destroy the ring, the world can be an extremely different and dangerous place once a young person leaves the comfort and security of his home community. My students are about to embark on new journeys themselves. They are about to make the transition from high school to either work or college, and their lives and lifestyles are about to undergo some very serious changes. I want to prepare them for these changes and that means challenging the way they look at the world and even how they view their place in the world. Like it or not we are moving into a more global society and that means change. More and more people of different cultural backgrounds immigrate to the United States at a time when the United States finds itself more actively involved in a variety of global issues and concerns. I believe my students need classroom opportunities where they can safely begin to question information, cultural perspectives, and ideas and this unit will be one of those opportunities. As they progress through the various activities they will make connections between what they read and what they know about the world around them.

Content

Things Fall Apart, written by Chinua Achebe, tells the story of an Igbo warrior, Okonkwo, and his ill-fated attempt to take a stand against the spreading British influence and control in his community. Okonkwo is a proud and powerful man whose personal strength literally flows from the heart of his Igbo culture. Through him we learn the cultural heritage and traditions of the Igbo people who reside in the fictional village of Umuofia and share in their personal joys and sorrows. Although he sometimes suffers the consequences of his own ambitious nature, Okonkwo is a good man who works hard to improve the life and wellbeing of his family and his community. We experience his shame and frustration when an accidental cultural transgression forces Okonkwo to return to his Motherland of Mbanta where he must remain for seven years. During his time there we learn, like Okonkwo, the importance of familial and cultural ties and the ever growing presence of the white missionaries who continually test the spirit and authority of the traditional Igbo deities and the beliefs that support them. Sadly, it is upon his return to Umuofia that Okonkwo witnesses the changes wrought by British influences. Although some villagers appear to benefit from the spread of commerce and education, these changes come with a growing administrative authority that challenges their own. When he and other Umuofia leaders attempt to meet with the District Commissioner, they are held captive and humiliated by the new Imperial authorities. Though many in Umuofia do not want to submit to this new authority, it is only Okonkwo who is willing to physically attack their authority and ultimately sacrifice his life and eternal rest for his cultural heritage. Through Okonkwo's life and death we see a man of dignity, a man who recognizes that his community and culture are worth preserving. In reading this book my students will note many of the similarities between African cultural traditions and their own and appreciate a truly African telling of the effects of British colonialism in Africa.

Before my students begin reading Chinua Achebe's novel Things Fall Apart, they need to know why it was written. Whenever there is any literary discussion of the novel, I have often found some form of this African proverb cited: "until the lion has his or her own storyteller, the hunter will always have the best part of the story" ("African Proverb of the Month"). I want my students to understand that the novel was written so that readers would learn about the colonization of Africa through a completely African voice. In his essay, "The Novelist as Teacher," Achebe writes, "I would be quite satisfied if my novels (especially the ones I set in the past) did no more than teach my readers that their past - with all its imperfections - was not one long night of savagery from which the first Europeans acting on God's behalf delivered them" (Hopes and Impediments:

Selected Essays 1965-1987, 45). To make sure my students fully comprehend that idea, I will provide them with some historical and geographical background on the European exploration and conquest of Africa. This information will help them question that Eurocentric view of the so-called "dark" continent of Africa.

I began my research on the exploration and colonization of Africa by reading *The Scramble for Africa: White Man's Conquest of the Dark Continent From 1876 to 1914* by Thomas Pakenham. The book provided a detailed account of the exploration of central Africa and the political brokering and intrigue that precipitated and continued its division and colonization. I learned that David Livingstone's discovery of the Congo, four times larger than the Nile, created an easy route into the heart of Africa. This discovery and those of other explorers like Verney Cameron, Henry Stanley and John Speke opened the heart of Africa to commerce and Christianity. King Leopold II of Belgium, anxious to expand his country's territorial and economic holdings, held the first geographical conference on Central Africa in 1876. This event started to reshape African history by triggering a scramble for additional land in Africa. Again Africa was seen as the perfect opportunity to extend European markets, promote European ideas of civilization and morality, and satisfy the European need for power and dominion over all they saw.

As I reviewed the maps in both the book and various websites, I learned what many Europeans may have seen when they looked at Africa - large expansions of land crying for development. Other than the colonies that outlined the coastal trade routes, some maps included few details other than lakes or rivers required for trade. Since the maps were created by European explorers and map makers, the maps included only what the Europeans considered important. Explorations of the African interior were generally funded by European governments or private investors for specific reasons. Those reasons and the maps they generated often expose some of the imperialistic and stereotypical attitudes Europeans had when they view the vast continent of Africa. In fact, Pakenham notes that King Leopold II referred to Africa as *cake* and different areas as a *pear* or a *plum*. Africa would definitely feed the European appetite for growth and power.

Since maps often illustrate a particular point of view, my students need to examine a variety of African maps, pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial maps. I want to use maps so my students and I can explore how various forms of information conveyed through maps may have colored our understanding of Africa and its peoples. Do the maps help or hinder our understanding? Answering that question may be an excellent way to explore what they believe the maps reveal about the physical, social, and economic make-up of the continent. I intend to use the Imperial Federation Map, a map of Africa before the scramble: indigenous and alien powers in 1876; a map drawn to show the parts of Africa that had adopted Christianity and those that had not; a map of ethnic groups in Africa; a map of Nigeria at the time of Independence, and additional maps that highlight the routes of particular explorers and earlier names of a variety of territories in Africa (see teacher resources). Through careful *deconstruction* and *discussion*, I want my students to realize just how much information and misinformation maps can convey if they are examined without some attention to social, political or historical context.

In addition to examining maps I want my students to take a closer look at some of the explorers whose interests and discoveries fueled the scramble for Africa. Who were these men and why did they sacrifice their lives to chart this foreign territory? Did they seek gold, glory, or God? Did they exploit the native Africans or enrich them? Although many students may recognize the names Stanley and Livingstone, they may not know why they went to Africa or what they accomplished by going there. I want my students to enhance their physical and political knowledge of Africa by doing some independent research on other explorers like Cameron, Burton, Speke, Baker, Grant, and de Brazza. I want some to even research European and African leaders like King Leopold II and King Cetshwayo. In learning more about these individuals, they will learn more

about the physical details of Africa, its economic resources, and the political and social factors behind its eventual colonization. Armed with this background information, students will see how and why the Europeans pushed their way across Africa.

Once my students and I have reviewed the European point of view, it will be time to introduce the African point of view. It should come as no surprise to anyone that there is a distinct difference between European and African storytelling. Even though Achebe has adopted the European written narrative, he has definitely embedded the African oral tradition within it. To understand this Nigerian viewpoint, my students will need to know some of the uniquely African literary devices that Achebe uses in his narrative. First, and foremost, is the use of proverbs to convey meaning. Since "proverbs are the palm oil with which words are eaten" (Things Fall Apart 7), my students will need to know the definition of a proverb and the literary role they play in African Igbo discourse. Before they even begin reading the novel, my students will need to explore some of the proverbs found in the first few chapters. This will give them the opportunity to discuss what they might mean and how they could figure into the story. One proverb they will find worthy of discussion is the one found at the end of chapter one - "if a child washed his hands he could eat with kings" (8). Many young people need to separate themselves from parents or family to find their own success and students will have little trouble making this cross-cultural identification with Okonkwo. After their initial introduction to both Okonkwo and his father Unoka in chapter one, students will see that Okonkwo would never find success if he patterned his life after that of his father. Later, in chapter three, they will learn that Okonkwo, like many of them, helped to support his parents as he struggled to build a name and life for himself. The proverb lets us know that Igbo culture values a young person who successfully makes his own way in the world.

Storytelling is another important device Achebe uses in his novel. African storytelling, part of the griot tradition, has always played an important role in African society and my students will read and listen to some traditional folk tales taken from the book *West African Folk Tales* by Hugh Vernon-Jackson. Several of them will feature the tortoise, an animal character that appears routinely in many African tales. Since African storytelling is seamlessly woven into the narrative, my students not only need to recognize this literary device and its purpose, but actually see how it contributes to an African perspective rather than a traditional European one. They need to recognize that Achebe has Ekwefi tell her daughter, Ezinma, the story of the tortoise and the birds in chapter eleven for a reason. The chapter begins with a glimpse of a very warm and loving period in the evening where Ekwefi and Ezinima are passing the time by sharing traditional Igbo stories. Not only does this snapshot of mother and daughter reinforce the close relationship parent and child, but it also captures the importance of storytelling as a method of instilling traditional Igbo values within the community. The folktale addresses the consequences of greed and I believe it is included by choice rather than chance. Not only does Achebe take the opportunity to legitimize a purely oral tradition as a means of authenticating and preserving African culture, but he also emphasizes an African view toward greed. These two techniques are literary, not visual, but these literary turns, when read and understood, generate very tangible images. I don't want my students to overlook their significance simply because the devices were lost in translation.

Construction and culture are also areas I need to address with my students before, during, and after our reading of the novel. Achebe organizes this literary work into three parts and I want my students to consider why he does it. Part One is a very significant section in the book because he not only introduces the characters and the conflicts but his African culture as well. It is in these early chapters we learn just how civilized Igbo society was. We learn about Igbo family life and community life. We learn about Igbo values and traditions. We not only learn about the Igbo religion and the role it plays in every aspect of tribal life, we learn about the judicial system as well. The characters in this novel are men and women, husbands and wives, sons

and daughters, friends and enemies. They feel deeply about the things that matter most to them. They are not careless and they are never needlessly cruel or violent. In fact, in the character of Obierika we see the model of a man who is unafraid to think deeply and compassionately about all that happens around him. My students need to make those connections. Part Two covers Okonkwo's exile and it too is quite purposeful. Set in the motherland, it is in this section we hear the words and advice of Uchendu, a man who has lived long enough to remember what life was like for Africans before circumstances and men began to change. Finally, Part Three marks Okonkwo's return to Umuofia. Of course, the white missionaries and government have usurped most of power within his village and Okonkwo cannot bear the effect it has had on his community and his place in it. Life has changed and Okonkwo is too proud to change with it. This part is purposeful and so is that last paragraph where the District Commissioner first states that when he writes a book about his time in Africa he will address a chapter to Okonkwo and then only a reasonable paragraph. The power of the European pen diminished Okonkwo and his story. In constructing his narrative, Chinua Achebe has written Okonkwo back into history.

With their growing appreciation for African storytelling, students should have little trouble using more *literary* maps to document their understanding of setting, character, plot, and theme as they progress through the novel. As we read I will have my students use Venn diagrams to compare and contrast the characters of Okonkwo and Unoka, Okonkwo and Obierika, and Mr. Brown and Mr. Smith. Early in the novel, I will have the students use an interactive website like the "Village of Umuofia" to help them visualize what a real African village could look like and this will assist them when it comes time to create their own maps of Umuofia and its surrounding villages. Drawing pictorial maps of the physical environment and the chain of events that lead to the eventual devastation of that environment will help my students understand how the growing presence of European missionaries and government officials changed the life and the culture of the Igbo people of West Africa and other African tribes across the continent. After we finish the novel I can have my students complete a mind map of the entire work as an overview of all its literary devices and components. This would be excellent preparation for the evaluation paper they will write as an assessment piece and portfolio requirement.

After reading and writing about the novel my students should have a better understanding of African cultural history and African storytelling techniques. They should understand how maps can help or hinder our understanding of the world. Since the English Language Arts curriculum is portfolio driven, my students, with minimal instruction, should be able to successfully write a proposal using the required technical format and an evaluation of a literary work through the author's use of literary techniques or development of theme (see Appendix). My students should begin to realize that as we move toward a more global society, they need to recognize and appreciate other cultural viewpoints. And most importantly, my students should see that change is inevitable so they need to be open to new ways of looking at the world around them and new roles they can play in world in which they live.

Instructional Approach

For many teachers knowing what to teach is the easy part; determining just how to do it is the tricky one. Since my students are thinking more about prom and graduation than what is between the covers of the latest novel we're reading in class, I need to be pretty engaging to capture and maintain their interest. The administrators in my building consistently remind me that our school district has two major instructional goals:

to increase teacher use of Marzano's nine instructional strategies for highly effective instruction and to monitor student learning through the use of formative and summative assessments. I also know that I am expected to actively engage my students from bell-to-bell in a ninety-minute blocked class and to have my students complete all portfolio assignments and assessments successfully. This means I have to create high interest lessons and differentiate instruction as much as possible. If I want to keep my supervisors and my students happy, I need to approach this entire unit as a journey of student-centered discovery rather than teacher-led direct instruction. I am merely the tour guide on this African excursion. I'll supply the instructional map, but they'll cover the territory together.

I intend to begin our little expedition into the heart of Africa with what they know best—their own little piece of the world, their homes. For an opening activity to the unit and to mapping, I will ask each student to draw a floor plan, or map, of their favorite room in their respective homes. Those maps will then be exchanged with a classmate so they have the opportunity to *read* each others maps. What did the mapmaker include in his or her map and what does the reader think the map says about the room and the map-maker? What questions does the reader have about what is and isn't in the map? Each student will respond in writing and then discuss those responses with one another. Afterwards, with me serving as the recorder, the students will create a list of what the maps actually revealed and what they didn't. All I should need to say is maps often provide some information about a place or a person, but certainly not all the information. Maps can lie or mislead, depending on how they are drawn or why they are drawn.

Now that I have set the stage my students can begin their exploration of Africa and maps by spending sometime examining a variety of African maps. I found most of them at the University of Texas Library and the Boston Public Library websites. The maps I selected for this activity were created for very different reasons and over a range of time periods. Often the maps offer their own unique way of viewing the world and those viewpoints changes to suit the maps purposes. With some computer assistance, I created a power-point presentation that allows me to show my students a particular map in its entirety and some close-ups of specific sections of that same map. This is of particular importance because I want them to pay careful attention to what the maps do and do not include. I want them to begin to compare and contrast the text of the maps, recognizing and questioning the similarities and differences. As J. B. Harley notes in "Deconstructing the Map," "maps belong to the terrain of the social world in which it is produced" (232). Like it or not, they often carry a particular attitude or bias and I want my students to undercover them. I also want them to record their thinking using a mind map so everyone is focused on the maps instead of retreating into their own little worlds. Since this is planned to expand their thinking, I am going to use any note taking or reflection device that works to hold them accountable for that thinking. How will I accomplish that goal you may ask? I'll do it with the touch of mouse.

One of the first maps my students will examine is the "Imperial Federation Map." It is a flat representation of the world that has been shaded to highlight the areas that are part of the British Empire. What makes the map special is the art work surrounding the geographical information. The art work has its own subtext since it appears to record and glorify British colonial expansion. We begin our examination of the map by first looking at it in its entirety and then at close-ups of its different sections. As we examine that map I will model both a think aloud and two column note-taking. They can use my thinking, adding and expanding to it as they see fit, or their own. Next we will examine the map titled "L'Afrique" following the same steps except they will do the two column note-taking on their own. Since everyone will need to talk by this point, I will have them do a quick pair-share using the A-B method of conversation, one partner talks for a minute while the other just listens attentively before switching roles. As my students expand their understanding of maps, I want all my students to articulate their thinking. Now they should be ready to examine the rest of the maps I have uncovered

through my research to work with their own maps in small groups. Each group will be given illustrations of one or two maps which they will examine, discuss, and record individual notes within their respective teams. Using the maps I already have on the power-point, the groups can report out on their observations and conclusions. As always, I will have my students write a short reflection on what they have learned about what maps do and do not reveal. As we progress, the reflections pieces will become part of their classroom journals and a regular source of formative assessment for me.

Once we have studied some maps as a class, my students will be ready for some independent or small group research. I have always woven small research projects into the study of any literary work we do in English 12 since one of our assessment pieces is an independent research paper on how an individual, social movement or invention contributed to a change in our society. These projects not only provide an opportunity for my students to expand their knowledge and understanding of the current content, but they allow them to practice and strengthen their research and presentation skills. These projects also give me the chance to monitor, assess, and strengthen their research skills while assessing my students' growing understanding of the current content. The projects will provide opportunities to reflect on the process and the product of their learning and serve as a springboard for a technical writing piece, a business proposal.

Through this assigned research project I want my students to uncover that the exploration of central Africa triggered colonial expansion into all parts of Africa. To meet this goal my students will select an explorer from a pre-selected list and form groups based on interest and number. They will be given a direction sheet outlining the procedures, individual and group expectations, and the specifications for the final product and its presentation. Of course, procedures will require that one individual in the group will serve as cartographer and that student will assume the responsibility of creating a map of the explorer's journey. Working independently or in a small group (3-4 students), I want my students to uncover who their chosen explorer was, why he or she was driven to explore and map the unknown, and how the existing European powers used his/her discoveries to enrich and extend their own colonial and commercial empires. Through this activity I want my students to continue to question the role maps and map-making may have played in the eventual partition of Africa. The connections they make and the conclusion they draw will help construct the bridge they need to cross if I want them to truly understand why Achebe was driven to write *Things Fall Apart*.

To ensure a smooth transition from reading maps to reading fiction, my students and I will take a brain break with an authentic assessment assignment. This break gives us the opportunity to examine the required technical writing skill through a report within the context of a real learning experience. Since few explorers ever left home without finding someone to pick up the tab for the expedition, my students will assume the persona of their selected explorer and write a business proposal to finance their travel plans. I will provide my students with the purpose and format for a proposal. We will read a model proposal to generate ideas for their individual proposals. My students will write and then edit their own one-page proposals.

This break to write will also provide the opportunity to introduce the author and some of the African literary devices and cultural artifacts my students will encounter as they read *Things Fall Apart*. Since I want them to enjoy reading this novel, I need to make it accessible to them. This means I have to provide some instruction in the African devices Achebe uses in the narrative and why he uses them as one way to engage them in the story. One way I will do this is with some study of proverbs. Since they are short and can stand alone, I will have the students record their thoughts and reactions to one or more proverbs written on the board when they enter the classroom. I will pull those proverbs from the first few chapters of the novel and give the students not only the forum to discuss them in advance of the reading but to make connection to some of our own cultural adages. I want my students to see that Nigerians may use palm oil to grease the wheels, but

we use "a spoonful of sugar" or honey to sweeten our words. I have also collected some pictures of African masks from Nigeria. Again, using journal writing as a formative and reflective assessment, I will have the students record their thoughts on the masks and make connections to the use of masks in this culture and others. During the actual reading of novel, students will have opportunities to reflect on how the discussion or description of masks helps them appreciate the African perspective developed through the narrative.

Coming up with small, introductory activities to introduce a novel is never difficult for an English teacher, but a detailed plan for the overall instructional approach to an entire literary work can seem daunting. To make the process easier for both students and teacher I plan to use daily journal writing as a way to structure my class and to monitor student learning. As we progress through the novel, there will be an open-ended question related to the reading on the board as they enter the room. For example, I may ask if they agree more with Obierika or Okonkwo about the importance of adhering to strict, traditional values within the tribe. I learned last year that I could have students begin this journal activity with the bell if I assign one student in each group to distribute student journals as soon as they arrive. If the students know I collect and grade their journals, they participate without additional prompting and that increases student involvement. That involvement doubles when I follow-up with a brief pair-share exchange to discuss how they responded to the question. The journals are also an excellent vehicle to address district standards for reading through the use of text-to-self, text-to-text, and text-to-world connections (see Appendix). The journals double too as a resource for illustrative details when students write portfolio pieces that draw upon ideas and conventions within the novel. For those students who appear to struggle with using only written description to create a sense of place, I found a website that may help them. The website, "Village of Umuofia," takes visitors on a virtual tour of fictional Umuofia using photographs of traditional village life. These students can use the website either at home or school to help them with the appropriate connections.

Along with the journals, I will incorporate the completion of some chapter questions and some comprehension testing. More of my students will read outside of class if they know I will routinely assess them on the reading. The more they read, the more they engage in the text. Since one of the two summative assessments on the novel is an evaluation paper, I continually question my students on why Achebe makes some of the literary choices he does. For example, in addition to having students consider why he uses the proverbs and the folk tales, I'll stop and ask them to consider why he divides the novel into parts. I want them to realize that Part One shows the reader that the Igbo people had a civilized, cultured society before the white man arrived. My students will choose one formative assessment from a choice of two small group activities.

They may elect to either create a picture book comparing the African customs or celebrations depicted in Part One to customs or celebrations in their own cultures or to create an issue of the Umuofia News, a typical daily newspaper where students would be reporters on the paper who write news articles appropriate for four very different sections of the paper. I have used the newspaper idea in the past and students came up with neat ideas for the sports, national, local, life, and business sections of the paper.

As we continue reading Parts Two and Three, we will review the foreshadowing and irony found in Part One and continue to pay close attention to them as the story progresses. We will continue to question the very human motives, conflicts, and values explored in the book. For example, I want them to list Okonkwo's positive and negative attributes. How do these attributes affect the choices he makes? I want my students to question why Nwoye, like so many others in the tribe, was so attracted to the words and songs of the white missionaries. I want my students to consider why Okonkwo was so unforgiving of his son. My students also need to demonstrate an understanding of literature as a reflection of when and where it was written. To meet this instructional target, my students need to recall some of the information they learned during their work

with the maps and the explorers. They need to consider the existing demands and limitations within the tribe and the new demands and conflicts created by the white missionaries and government officials. They will find themselves even more involved when I ask them to make the required text-to-self and text-to-world connections. I know my ESL students will identify with that cultural tug-of-war many of the characters experience within their changing community, and my more politically aware students will make a connection between the European interference in African society and American interference in the Middle East. All-in-all the ending of the novel is not lost on my students although many are dissatisfied with the ending. For them, the ending, Okonkwo's suicide, seems anti-climatic and this generates some good discussion. Our conversation about the ending always comes back to the one proverb that is repeated in the novel. That proverb is "since man has learned to shoot without aiming, Eneke the bird has learned to fly without perching" (22). The tribe must change to survive. To illustrate this change, students need to create their own maps of Ukonkwo's village before and after the white man usurped control. In some ways these maps are an opportunity to visually consider the effects of change.

Obviously, European colonialism changed the face of Africa in a variety of ways. Using their journals, students will list some of the positive and negative influences the Europeans had on African communities and culture. We can consider if life actually improves for the majority of villagers at this time. We may want to consider some of the long lasting effects colonialism has had on many African countries. The problems in Rwanda and Sierra Leone may be familiar to some students who have seen the films *Hotel Rwanda* or *Blood Diamonds*. Some may have heard of the concert for Darfur or read articles about that area. No matter what additional resources we use to round out our discussion of the novel, we must be able to say why we think Achebe tells this story and why we should have taken the time to read it. Understanding the answers to these questions should also allow us to make connections to the changes going on in our own lives. Change is inevitable and we need to be able to accommodate it without losing ourselves in the process.

Now that the novel has been completed, we can pull back and evaluate the work on its literary merit alone. The English 12 portfolio requires that students complete a written evaluation of the literary work. ELA standards state that students will be able to evaluate the literary techniques a particular author uses with respect to purpose and effect on the reader. To meet the standard students need to identify three techniques Achebe uses to develop his work and illustrate them with several detailed examples from the text. This is a relatively simple writing assignment once the students have a chance to identify the techniques and collect the evidence. I like a student-centered, collaborative approach to this task using poster-size paper. All the students need to do is create a mind-map with this question at the center: Why read *Things Fall Apart*? Each arm of the map will be the various literary devices and components we've identified in class and the lines off those arms will be the examples they find to illustrate the techniques and components. Of course, the lines off those examples will say why those are helpful to the readers in understanding the work in part and as a whole. When the mind-maps are complete the groups will participate in a "gallery walk." A gallery walk is an instructional strategy where students actually move around the room from poster to poster with the members of their own groups. The groups spend a specific amount of time at each poster, discussing what that group included in their work and evaluating its effectiveness. At the end of the walk students write an individual reflection explaining why one poster may have been better than another. It's a perfect way to gather the information the students need to write the paper and actually have them practice the evaluation process. Afterwards, on their own, they will have several days to write their evaluation of *Things Fall Apart*.

Formative and Summative Assessments

As discussed in the Instructional Approach students will complete a wide-range of individual and collaborative formative assessments. These assessments are to improve understanding and monitor student progress. All these assessments provide feedback to the students as they learn. The two portfolio assignments, the proposal and the evaluation papers, are summative assessments. Based on how fast we progress through the unit and how well students do on their formative assessments will help me decide if a third summative assessment is required. I sometimes give my students a multiple-choice and short-answer test on a novel as a final check but that is determined by the class. If I find I need to review basic comprehension, I will reassess with the extra summative assessment.

Lesson Plans

Since my classes are 90 minute blocks, I sometimes combine units to maximize instructional time. For example, once my students and I have read a novel together, giving me the opportunity to review all literary techniques and devices important in upcoming novels, I may integrate the reading of a second or third novel with the work we do on the research paper. Often it doubles as a classroom management tool. In earlier years when I have integrated reading a novel with the research paper, I structured my class so the first 30 minutes are SSR, or sustained silent reading, in the required selection. This focused my students, allowed time in class to complete the required reading, and provided a good balance to the various phases of the research process. The length of my lessons are then determined my where and when I place this unit in my pacing chart for English 12. As I develop my various lessons for this unit, I plan to include the time I think I may need to cover the content. Any additional time will then be used to either provide the ever needed SSR or content time for the second instructional target.

Moreover, I would like to note that at the very beginning of any new unit I will outline exactly what I want the students to understand by the completion of the unit. For this unit, by the end of the first lesson or before I begin the second, I will have on display my objectives for the map reading portion of this unit.

Lesson One: An Introduction

Rationale and Objective

I plan to begin this unit with an informal lesson to generate an interest in mapping as a way of knowing someone or something and as an opportunity to have students share with the class what they already know about mapmaking. Since we will be taking a literary excursion to Africa in this unit, students will take a quick visit to their own homes and create a "map" of a favorite room. In making their maps students will need to decide what and what not to include and in sharing their "maps" with a classmate, they will learn how those decisions influence a reader's thinking about the map and its maker. After some classroom discussion, we will look at the "New Yorker" map and discuss its purpose and point of view. At the end of the lesson students should know that maps often evoke as many questions about a person or place as they answer and that maps often carry a point of view. This can be informally assessed with a journal entry explaining what they learned about maps in today's lesson. This lesson should not require more than 45-50 minutes and it should be almost

entirely student-centered, meaning the teacher should only guide or redirect student generated information.

Resources

- Graph paper
- Blackboard with chalk or overhead
- Loose-leaf or student journals
- Computer with screen
- New Yorker map

Procedures

- Teacher will explain to students that the class will be taking a literary excursion to Africa this quarter so it might be best to start with a quick trip to our own homes.
- She will then read the directions from board/overhead saying, using the graph paper provided each student is to create a floor plan or "map" of a favorite room or place in his/her home, including as much detail as possible. A student shouldn't be afraid to draw where a current book is kept or a favorite poster hung. (15-20 minutes)
- Teacher will then direct students to exchange maps with a classmate, study each others' map, record on the back what you're able to uncover or conclude about the place and its mapmaker, and then share that information with the classmate. (5-10 minutes)
- Afterwards, together the class will create a list, using the blackboard, of what maps do and do not reveal about a person or place and some of the problems we encounter when reading a map. (5 minutes)
- Teacher will follow this discussion with the map of a New Yorker's perspective on New York. She should ask the students what they think are the map's purpose and point of view and why. (5 minutes)
- To conclude, the students will write a reflection entry in their journals explaining what they think they know about maps and mapmaking. (5-10 minutes)

Assessment

Teacher should informally assess student understanding by monitoring student-to-student discussions of their personal maps, questioning students as they generate the class list of what maps do and do not reveal, facilitating a discussion of the "New Yorker" map, and reviewing student reflections.

Lesson Two - Maps: A Purpose and a Point of View

Rationale and Objective

Once my students have had opportunity to talk about their own maps I want us to look at some European maps of Europe and Africa. In looking at the maps I want my students to question the purpose and point of view they find there. What do they think is the purpose behind the creation of each map? Does the map convey a particular viewpoint? In what ways do the maps' details or subject support those conclusions? I also want my students to review two column note-taking so I will imbed that procedure into the lesson. By the end of the lesson and its independent activities, the students should know that maps can be used by government authorities to support nationalistic and imperialistic goals and that maps can often skew one's perception of a place or situation based on what they do and don't include. This will be informally assessed through discussion, student presentations, and reflective journal writing.

Resources

- Computer and screen
- Assorted Maps - Belgium the Lion, The Queen, Imperial Federation Map, L'Afrique and others (see teacher resources)
- Overhead and map transparencies
- Loose-leaf or student journals

Procedures

- As the students enter, distribute their journals and display the two maps of Europe — one as Belgium the Lion and the other as Europe the Queen. Ask the students to examine the two maps, draw any similarities they can between these maps and the New Yorker map from the previous lesson, and write about them in their journals. (If necessary, show them the New Yorker map again. (5-10 minutes)
- Working with their shoulder partner, have the students share their thoughts using the A-B conversation protocol, A speaks for 30-45 seconds and then B speaks. Then let them share what they learned from their partners with the class. Make sure the students identify how nationalistic the maps appear and how they suggest their own self-importance and Eurocentric viewpoint. (5 minutes)
- Before examining the Imperial Federation Map, explain to the students that we are going to look at a variety of maps to explore their purpose and point of view. To do this we're going to use two column note-taking, so they need to turn to a clean sheet of paper in their journal and make two columns - one what they see and one what they think.
- Now examine the map in its entirety. Using a Think Aloud ask the students record one or two items that you question and what you think about them. Then show the students various close ups of sections of the map, again modeling what details you might question and what you think about them.
- After looking at all the close ups, ask the students to point out what they see as different in this map from the previous maps. Ask them what they think is the purpose of this map and what point of view it might reflect. Students should recognize that the map highlights all areas under British rule and it glorifies that Empire.
- Next explain we're going to repeat the same steps during our examination of a different map, a map of Africa. This time have the students say what we should record in our journal and repeat the same questions after the steps have been completed. (Examining the maps and recording notes may take 30 minutes)
- Finally, explain to students that working in groups of 3 or 4, they will examine some other European maps using the note-taking strategy we've practiced and share their findings with the class. Distribute two different maps on transparencies to each group and give the groups about 15 minutes to examine and draw some conclusions as to purpose and point of view.
- Then have each group share their maps and their findings with the class. (15 minutes)
- If time permits, have the students reflect in their journal on what they've learned or come to understand about these maps. If not, have them complete as homework.

Assessment

Teacher should informally assess student learning by monitoring student-to-student dialogues, questioning students during classroom discussions and presentations, and reviewing their reflection entries

Lesson Three - Independent Small Group Research on European Explorers in Africa

Lesson Four - Proverbs

Rationale and Objective

If I want my students to understand and appreciate the literary devices Achebe uses in *Things Fall Apart*, they need to be able to read and understand traditional Igbo proverbs and recognize the dual purpose they serve. This novel not only uses language to convey meaning but to celebrate traditional African storytelling practices. In fact, proverbs are often embedded within the stories of the griots, or the oral historians of West Africa, who keep the history and legends of their culture alive through the continual retelling of their peoples' stories. By the end of this lesson my students should know that a proverb is a wise saying that reveals some truth about the human experience and it is an integral and valued part of the folk literature of many African peoples. Through classroom discussion and completed worksheets, I will informally assess student understanding.

Note that this lesson should take no longer than 45 minutes so it can be preceded with an introduction to Chinua Achebe and his novel or followed with the reading of chapter one.

Resources

- Blackboard and chalk
- Overhead and transparency with two or more traditional African proverbs
- Handout listing several Igbo proverbs from the first two or three chapters in the novel (teacher created using proverbs directly from the text)

Procedures

1. As students enter write on the board a typical adage found within our culture: The apple doesn't fall far from the tree or the early bird catches the worm.
2. Ask if anyone is familiar with the expression and if so what it means.
3. Then explain that in African culture wise sayings like this are called proverbs and proverbs are often a very important part of African storytelling. In fact someone who knows them and knows when and how to use them when they need to is often considered a gifted speaker. (5 minutes)
4. Now, using the overhead, show the students some traditional African proverbs from different African tribes. Go through the list asking the students what they might mean and when it might be appropriate to use them. (5-10 minutes)
5. Next, explain to the students that the novel we'll be reading, set in Nigeria, has many Igbo proverbs embedded throughout the narrative and you have a list of some of the ones found early in the work.
6. Distribute the worksheet and have the students work in pairs to discuss their possible meanings and how they might be important to the story. (15-20 minutes)
7. Review their answers and ideas about their function in the story. (5-10 minutes)

Assessment

Teacher should informally assess student learning by monitoring student-to-student dialogues, questioning students during classroom discussions, and reviewing their completed worksheets.

Annotated List of Works Consulted

Achebe, Chinua. "The Novelist as Teacher." *Hopes and Impediments: Selected Essays 1965 - 1987*. New York: Anchor-Doubleday, 1990. Although I only read some specific references to points Achebe made about his goals as a writer, I easily made connections between his purpose and his novel, *Things Fall Apart*.

Achebe, Chinua. *Things Fall Apart*. New York: Anchor Books, 1994. A wonderful novel that examines the effects of colonialism in Africa from a truly African perspective.

"African Proverb of the Month." *African Proverbs, Sayings and Stories*. 10 August 2007:

10 August 2007 <http://www.afriprov.org>>. A good source for African proverbs.

Colomb, J.C.R. *Imperial Federation*. Map. "Norman B. Leventhal Map Center." Boston

Public Library. 21 October 2004. 10 August 2007 <http://maps.bpl.org/id/m8682>>. This map's border and shading does an excellent job of conveying point of view.

Harley, J. B. "Deconstructing the Map." *Cartographica*. 26:2 (Summer 1989) 1-20. A dense but useful overview for critiquing maps.

Harley, J. B. *The New Nature of Maps: Essays in the History of Cartography*. Ed.

Paul Laxton. Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 2001. Collection includes the "Deconstructing the Map" selection.

"Belgium as a lion." Map. "Leo Belgicus." Wikipedia. 22 March 2007: 10 August 2007 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leo_Belgicus>. Use this map to discuss purpose and point of view. Also, you can use it to see if students will make a connection between this map and the imperialistic goals of Leopold II.

L'Isle, Guillaume de. *L'Afrique*. Map. "Norman B. Leventhal Map Center." Boston

Public Library. 21 October 2004. 10 August 2007 <http://maps.bpl.org/id/m0612001>>.

Map shows European view of Africa.

Marzano, Robert J., Debra J. Pickering, and Jane E. Pollock. *Classroom Instruction That*

Works: Research-Based Strategies for Increasing Student Achievement. Alexandria,

VA: ASCD, 2001. This is a great resource for creating lesson plans that promote student learning.

Munster, Sebastian. "Europe As A Queen." Map. *Strange Maps*. 10 August 2007

<http://strangemaps.wordpress.com/>>. This is a terrific anthropomorphic map of Europe to use for purpose and point of view.

Pakenham, Thomas. *The Scramble for Africa: White Man's Conquest of the Dark Continent From 1876 to 1912*. New York: Perennial, 2003. A detailed overview of European colonialism in Africa from 1876 to 1912. I learned a lot from reading this book.

"The Role of the Writer in a New Nation." *African Writers on African Writing*. Ed.

G.D. Killam. Evaston: Northwestern University Press, 1973. In a reference to this work, I found the proverb that I thought best conveyed one of Achebe's purposes in writing *Things Fall Apart* - giving the colonization of Africa an African voice.

Streinberg, Saul. "View of the World from 9th Avenue." *The New Yorker*. 29 March

1976 "ASME's Top 40 Magazine Covers of the Last 40 Years." *ASME* 10 August

2007 http://www.magazine.org/Editorial/Top_40_Covers/>. It has the picture that graced the cover of *The New Yorker* depicting a classic New York point of view and yes, it is a map.

Webb, Allen. "Village of Umuofia." *Literary Worlds*. 10 August 2007

<http://www.literaryworlds.wmich.edu/umuofia/umuofia.html>>. This interactive website creates a physical layout of the fictional village of Umuofia. The pictures and music would help struggling readers gain a stronger sense of place while reading *Things Fall Apart*. I know I plan to use it!

World Masterpieces: Timeless Voices, Timeless Themes. Prentice Hall Literature.

New Jersey: Pearson Education, Inc., 2004. A world literature textbook that includes a section on African proverbs; it is a useful textbook resource.

Student Bibliography and Teacher Resources

Achebe, Chinua. *Things Fall Apart*. New York: Anchor Books, 1994.

Chamberlain, M.E. *The Scramble for Africa: Seminar Studies*. London and New

York: Longman, 1999. The collection provides additional background on European colonialism in Africa.

Monmonier, Mark. *How to Lie with Maps*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1996. The chapters I read helped me understand how maps can distort or clarify information.

Whitaker, Robert. *The Mapmaker's Wife*. New York: Delta, 2005. This novel puts a human face on cartographers and cartography.

Woodard, David and J. B. Harley. *History of Cartography*. Volume 2, Book 3. Chicago:

University of Chicago Press, 1987. This text is an interesting and detailed examination of indigenous mapmaking. Answered my question: Did Africans make their own maps?

Appendix

Delaware/NCCVT Standards for ELA, Grade 12

The unit addresses the Delaware/NCCVT Standards outlined below.

(1,2) A. Students will be able to write a well-developed and organized academic paper.

(1) B. Students will be able to produce documents written in a technical format.

3. Students will write a short report (progress, feasibility, or proposal).

(1,4) D. Students will be able to view language from different perspectives.

- Given a literary selection, students will interpret an author's meaning through an understanding of his/her use of language.

(2,4) E. Students will be able to evaluate the literary techniques a particular author uses with respect to purpose and effect on the reader.

- Given a variety of literary genre, students will explain why an author would use a particular literary technique and how it affects the reader.

(4) F. Student will be able to evaluate a literary selection in terms of human motives, conflicts, and values.

- Given a literary selection, students will determine the impact of the decisions of characters on other characters and the reader.
- Given a literary selection students will explain the motives of characters and relate them to their own lives.
- Given a literary selection, students will demonstrate that literature is a resource for shaping decisions and examining conflict.

(4) G. Students will demonstrate an understanding of literature as a reflection of when and where it was written.

- Given a piece of literature, students will provide evidence that literature often reflects the society in which it was composed by examining significant elements of the society.
- Given a literary selection, students will determine the time period of the selection.
- Given two of more pieces of literature, students will apply the knowledge gained from one selection to other selections and their personal lives

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