CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES AND ADOLESCENT CONCERNS

IN NIGERIAN YOUNG ADULT NOVELS

by

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(ABSTRACT)

Multicultural literature is a very important tool in today's classrooms because it enables teachers and students to learn about the practices, historical background for attitudes, norms and customs of other cultures and peoples. "Multicultural literature has value as a literary tool and mechanism of expanding cultural awareness and knowledge" (Walker-Dalhouse, 1992, p. 53).

However, many of the novels and books about Africa used in schools, especially those by non-African authors, tend to reinforce common stereotypes and generalizations about the continent. Therefore, teachers and librarians need alternatives to the books currently available. Books by African authors usually present accurate portrayals of African cultures and societies because the authors write about cultures that have been passed down to them by previous generations, as well as personal observations and experiences.

This study presents a selection of ten Nigerian young adult novels which can be used in a high school multicultural and global curriculum as well as in teacher preparation courses for English Education students, especially in adolescent literature courses. The
noveis include Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*, and *Chike and the River*, Buchi Emecheta’s *The Bride Price* and *The Joys of Motherhood*, Cyprian Ekwensi’s *Juju Rock*, Chukwuemeka Ike’s *The Bottled Leopard* and *The Potter’s Wheel*, Flora Nwapa’s *Efuru*, Wale Okediran’s *The Boys at the Border* and Rosina Umelo’s *Felicia*. The novels have a wide range of experiences that should satisfy the interest of young adults as well as help them to develop more cross cultural understanding.

After the introduction and summaries of the novels in chapters one and two, chapter three discusses Nigeria’s socio-political history and geographical information. The first part of the analysis—cultural perspectives—covers chapters four, five and six, which focus on socio-historical and communal perspectives, family structure and extended family, as well as religious beliefs. The second part—adolescent concerns—covers chapters seven, eight and nine, which focus on generational conflicts, peer group relationships, courtship and marriage preparations, and gender roles. Chapter ten gives the conclusions derived from the study. Appendix A suggests strategies and resources for teaching and using the novels in a multicultural classroom.
DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my husband, Ayodele, who has continuously given me absolute support and encouragement;

to my mother, Felicia Adenike Osokoya, who with forty years of teaching experience, showed me that teaching is a rewarding experience and that education is still a worthwhile field to go into;

and to the memory of my father, Cornelius Adeyemi Osokoya who encouraged me to go as far as I can with my education.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

At a social gathering that took place a couple of weeks after I returned to Blacksburg to continue my graduate studies, someone asked me, "What does elephant meat taste like?" I later found out that the man who asked this question, soon after I had just been introduced to him as an African, is an elementary school teacher with many years' experience. I was amazed that a teacher with several years in the classroom knows only generalizations and wrong assumptions about Africa, which could possibly be passed on to his students. As the semester progressed, a fellow graduate student asked, on learning that I am an African, whether I knew a lady from Kenya with whom she had taken a class the previous semester. Another one asked if I had all my education in this country because I spoke English well. A few months later, I was asked to speak about my country, Nigeria, at a school and some of the students wanted to know if we have only dirt roads in Nigeria, and if we have schools like theirs. Now several semesters later, people still ask me such questions about Nigeria and other African countries. I have come to the conclusion that these
questions are asked because of wrong assumptions and misinformation about Africa and Africans. Questions such as those asked above prompted my interest not just in multicultural curriculum, but in global curriculum issues that have arisen because of the need to educate all students about what other cultures and places are really like.

NEED FOR THE STUDY

There are several reasons why American schools need to have the kind of multicultural and global curriculum which would enable students to be exposed to, and help them to learn about societies and cultures in other parts of the world. From elementary school to middle school to high school to college students and even school teachers, there is a general lack of knowledge about other parts of the world and their cultures. An exposure to what the rest of the world is really like becomes even more important with the incredible diversity in today's classrooms, as more and more children from other parts of the world come here to live with their parents. In addition to learning about their new country, these children need to have the opportunity to continue to learn about their old countries too, in order to keep their heritage alive and feel that their countries are important enough to be studied.
As school populations become more and more diverse, teachers are more than ever encountering students from different cultures in their classrooms. Therefore, teachers are facing "today a challenge of extraordinary dimensions because their students are amazingly diverse. We hear 10-20 languages spoken in one school, meet families in the United States only a short time..." (Tiedt, 1992, p. 13). Also, more minorities are coming into the school system, and "projections for 'minority' enrollments in public school classrooms for the year 2000 range anywhere from 35% to 50% of the entire school population" (Stover, 1991, p. 12). Therefore, in order to meet the needs of the increasing school enrollment, it is important that more schools continue to shift their emphasis to a more multicultural and global curriculum.

The diversity in school populations is also making it necessary for teachers to teach their students to have ethnic tolerance and sensitivity, so that students from different backgrounds can have better understanding and awareness of each other's cultures. "As facilitators of learning, teachers have an opportunity to affect perceptions their students develop about the many people of the United States" (Palmer, Davis and Smith, 1992, p. 231). In addition, Pang and Nieto (1992) note that "in multicultural education, every child is seen as a national treasure who
should be celebrated, challenged and encouraged to grow." Therefore, "in order for students to become sensitive to cultural differences, teachers must find ways to facilitate tolerance, respect, and concern for different ethnic groups in society" (Palmer, Davis and Smith, 1992, p. 235). As Arlene Barry (1990) says, "We send powerful messages to students through the methods and materials of our instruction" (p. 47).

Another reason that it is becoming increasingly necessary to have multicultural and global curricula is the fact that the world is becoming smaller in the sense that advancements in global communications, travel and trade have made economic interdependence easier. As a result of global interdependence, people of all nations and colors have to interact. In order to be able to interact successfully and effectively with people from other parts of the world, and function globally in a competitive world in the future, students need to be educated now about other cultures.

Young people today are living in a global community that is shrinking because of the rapid communication made possible through modern technology.... [yet] that community is being disrupted by misunderstandings and cultural differences. (Tway and White, 1988, p. 180)
Therefore, "all instructional experiences should strive to... promote understanding of one's culture, culture of origin, and other cultures" (Mariaskin and Sofo, 1992, p. 22).

One excellent way of learning about other cultures and other parts of the world is through the reading and studying of literary works from those places. "Multicultural literature has value as a literary tool and mechanism of expanding cultural awareness and knowledge" (Walker-Dalhouse, 1992, p. 53). Also, through multicultural literature, students can learn about the practices, historical background for attitudes, norms and customs of other cultures, providing vicarious experiences and helping them to become more sensitive to different ethnic groups (Palmer and Davies, 1992 p. 231). Tway and White also write that

one means of understanding a country and its people is through literature, which embodies customs, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors.... literature alone is a time-honored extender of experience and allows a reader to step into another place or time for a while and even into another person's character. (p. 179)
Multicultural literature is therefore a very important tool in today's classrooms. As Regina Cowin recognized, "Multicultural literature would encourage... students to respect the values and perspectives of other ethnic groups" (Cowin, 1988, p. 195). Mariaskin and Sofo point out that "Literature selections from a variety of cultures.... can assist students in identifying cultural similarities and thereby encourage understanding and tolerance" (Mariaskin and Sofo, 1992, p. 22).

In addition to students learning about other cultures, teachers and school librarians will also become and sufficiently knowledgeable about other cultures and countries as they teach their students about cross-cultural understanding. "Representing the culture from which it springs, literature presents a compelling means of achieving cross-cultural understanding" (Tway and White, 1988, p. 180). Cross-cultural knowledge and understanding are valuable for both teachers and students alike because a lot of teachers themselves are not really conversant with other cultures and events in other parts of the world. Everyone normally relies on the media for information, but the information is not always accurate and may even be distorted. In the past, most school curricula planners did not feel the necessity of including the study of other cultures.
The need to promote global learning for world understanding and cooperation is not a high priority in most school curricula.... [as] the insularity of our country and the long-held myth that we are self-sufficient have kept us, as a nation, from developing a stronger world outlook.

(Tway and White, 1988, pp. 189-190)

One of the ways of correcting this problem is by having a multicultural and global curriculum. As Barry says, "Through the use of multicultural materials, we can help our students recognize similarities among all people and appreciate the value of human differences" (Barry, 1990, p. 47).

**STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Literature books from and about other parts of the world are already being used in classrooms and school libraries, and many of these are from Africa. While this is a good step towards teaching a multicultural and global curriculum, many teachers do not know enough to really explain to their students the issues, cultural practices and concepts that form the content of these books. They accept the books and their illustrations as they are, without realizing that many contain wrong assumptions and misinformation.
Many of the multicultural novels about Africa used in the schools today, especially those by non-African authors, do not present an accurate and realistic portrayal of the cultures they are writing about. There are widely held stereotypical beliefs about the African continent that are based on misconceptions and generalizations, which are being perpetuated and reinforced by many of the books and their illustrations, either because the authors chose to focus on these in their books, or because they themselves are unintentionally using these generalizations as gospel truths. Some of the authors tend to focus on exotic ethnic groups and to portray of lifestyles of a bygone era, without specifying that these practices are no longer common or acceptable. "Children of all backgrounds have been and continue to be inculcated with negative opinions and misconceptions about the peoples of West Africa, and thus, by extension, people of African ancestry" (Walker and Rasamimanana, 1993, p. 14).

Some of these books as well as the media contribute to and reinforce widely-held negative views and stereotypes. From Tarzan movies to children's books such as Ashanti to Zulu, Africa has been presented and portrayed as an exotic continent: a land of half-clad primitive people and savages, where there are only mud-huts in the jungle and dirt roads. Also, nightly television news programs steadily barrage
viewers with negative images of war and refugees -- films of famine and starvation in Somalia, Sudan and Rwanda. At the same time they fail to tell the whole story -- that there are many other countries in Africa where life is going on peacefully. Therefore, "it is easy to understand the stereotyped statements often made about Africa and Africans by both adults and children who have been educated in the U.S. school system" (Walker and Rasamimanana, 1993, p. 14).

In her presentation at the 1993 University of Iowa International Writers' Workshop, Chiedza Musengezi, a writer for children from Zimbabwe, notes that award-winning books, such as *Ashanti to Zulu* and *Jambo Means Hello, Moja Means One*, inform the child outside of Africa about Africa through sweeping statements. She also asks, "When will the child outside of Africa learn that the average African child has never heard the roar of a lion, or set his eyes upon a leopard or a giraffe; that these animals are few and can only be found in far away game parks and zoos?" (Musengezi, 1993, p. 3).

There are many books about Africa used in the schools that contain generalizations and exaggerations, yet these are the books which are available to students as exclusive sources of information about the continent of Africa. For example, Jan Carew's *The Third Gift*, makes no reference to the location of the ethnic group being portrayed in the
story. There could have been a reference to the specific part of the continent where the Juba people can be found, in order not to reinforce the impression that Africa is just one big village where everyone must know each other, instead of a continent with over fifty countries, each with diverse cultures and ethnic groups. Unless the reader is an African, or is extremely knowledgeable about Africa, there is no way of knowing the setting of the story. It is the reference to the Savannah and the Juba people that led me to deduce that the story must be about a group of people in the southern part of Sudan, because the town of Juba is located there. Also, the Savannah is a zone of grassland found across the northern part of West to Central Africa, just south of the Sahara desert. The southern part of Sudan falls within this zone. It is not hard to imagine the difficulty of the non-African reader, who may not know these details, to correctly identify the Juba people's location on the map. While The Third Gift is a fine novel, with an important readers could easily generalize and think that the conditions and lifestyles described can be applied to the whole continent.

Another misleading book is Gerald McDermott's Anansi, the Spider: a Tale from the Ashanti. This is a good trickster folktale, but the introduction on the inside front cover is misleading because it states that Anansi, the spider "speaks in eloquence for the people of West Africa." The fact is
that Anansi features prominently in the folktales of the
Ashanti people of Ghana. Other ethnic groups in the
different countries along the West African coast have their
own trickster figures in their folktales. The tortoise is
the predominant figure in Yoruba folktales. Eshu, a
mythological figure, is also sometimes featured as a
trickster, while the hare features in the folktales of other
ethnic groups. The spider also features as the trickster
figure in the folktales of the Hausa people, but he is known
by a different name, Gizo. Joyce Cooper Aakhurst also makes
the mistake of generalizing, as she states in the
introduction to Adventures of Spider that the spider is a
favorite person in the stories of West Africa.

One book that focuses entirely on the exotic is Margaret
Musgrove's Ashanti to Zulu: African Traditions. The contents
and illustrations emphasize the unusual aspects of life of
certain African cultures, some of which are very small
groups, that should not be used to portray whole countries.
The illustrations are not realistic because they focus on
exotic costumes that are far from the way people would
normally dress, thus reinforcing the widely-held, but
erroneous notion that Africans are “primitive”. Non-African
readers, who may not know that the illustrations do not
reflect the everyday dress of the people portrayed, would
automatically assume that the illustrations are correct.
Also, there is no mention in the text of the countries where the groups can be found.

Although an attempt is made to show the location of some of the groups on a map of Africa at the end of Ashanti to Zulu, the locations are not accurate. The Yoruba people are found in the southwestern part of Nigeria and the southeastern part of Benin Republic, not in the middle belt of Nigeria as shown on the map; and the Hausa people are not located in the northeastern part of the country as the map indicates. The area is normally inhabited by the Kanuri and Shuwa Arabs. The illustrations in the book also send a completely wrong message to young readers because of the emphasis on villages and rural areas, which will just reinforce the erroneous belief that Africa is one big village and rural area. In the countries where the groups portrayed are located, there are, in addition to the villages, urban and suburban areas, with infrastructure that compares favorably with urban areas in other parts of the world. In addition to this emphasis on rural areas, the illustrations in this book, as well as in some others, frequently depict people holding bows and arrows, without pointing out the fact that these weapons are no longer used for war today. In fact, there is no African country without trained military personnel and hardware just like countries all over the world. Many an African leader has been
criticized for spending large portions of their national income on military equipment.

Other books reinforce stereotypes by over-relying on and emphasizing animal images and natural disasters. An example of such a book is Clayton Bess’s *Story for a Black Night*, which focuses entirely on the impact of smallpox on a family's life in Liberia. Also, there are statements that tend to generalize in the story. An example is on page 15, where the narrator makes a sweeping statement about rogues and bad people in Africa, though the story is set in a village not far from Monrovia, Liberia.

Another problem with the juvenile books about Africa is pointed out in the section on sub-Saharan Africa in *Our Family, Our Friends, Our World*. Many authors consciously or unconsciously use pejorative language, which reveals a lack of sensitivity for the cultures they are writing about. "Examples of insensitive language include the term ‘tribe’ for ethnic group; ‘Bushmen’ for the San and ‘Hottentots’ for the Khoi, and the words ‘hut’, ‘native’... (Miller-Lachman, 1992).

Apart from the stereotypes in the mass media and literature books, students and others get their image of Africa from social studies and geography textbooks, which are also beset by many of the same problems of generalizations, inaccurate and out-of-date information, and
insensitive and pejorative language. In *Images of Africa in Social Studies Textbooks*, Marylee Croft points out that Blatant as well as sophisticated stereotypes about the peoples and cultures of African nations are perpetuated by problems of accuracy of information, bias in presenting ideas and facts; misconceptions based on unscholarly or handed-down concepts which are not corrected by excerpts; omissions of important issues, cultural themes, periods of history, conditions affecting political development.... (p. 2)

She also notes that Africa was presented in some textbooks as a 'primitive', backward area of the world; that "except for Egypt, history 'began' with European explorers 'risking' their lives to enter the heartland of Africa;... the colonial period was described as a time when Africans were taught the better and more 'civilized' ways of the west" (p. 2). In addition to this, she notes that (as in literature books) "many textbooks focus heavily on the exotic, devoting undue coverage to the hunting and gathering societies of the so-called 'Bushmen' and 'pygmies'.... the popular notion that Africa was teeming with wildlife was accepted and readers were thrilled with full color photographs of lions,
cheetahs, and charging elephants" (Croft, p.2). She adds that it is important for students to learn that a "significant proportion of the so-called primitive peoples such as the Mbuti, Twa, Khoi and San are making a living through farm labor, business and trading, professions, military service and industrial employment" (Croft, p. 5).

Many students of yesterday have become today's teachers and today's students will become the leaders and teachers of tomorrow. It's the attitudes that students learn in the classrooms of today that they will carry with them for life. Just as it is important to teach a multicultural and global curriculum in the schools, preservice teachers in colleges of education also need to know and to learn correct and accurate information about other cultures and countries, particularly Africa, in order to be effective and informed teachers in the future. In their study of preservice Social Studies teachers titled *The Persisting and Common Stereotypes in the Teaching of Content on Africa in Public Schools in the United States*, Osunde, Brown and Tlou found that a majority of American student teachers and adults still have serious misconceptions and lack of knowledge about Africa, and they perceive Africa as a strange continent inhabited by savage and wild tribesmen and clans (Osunde, Brown and Tlou, P. 4).
Because of the pervasive nature of the stereotypes, distortions, and generalizations and half-truths found in the books available about Africa, it is necessary that students, student teachers, teachers and librarians, be exposed to realistic literature books from Africa that would give them a perspective on Africa different from the one they have been used to. As noted by Stover, "students from all cultural backgrounds should learn alternative perspectives and values in order to be comfortable in an increasingly culturally diverse society" (1991, p. 13).

In addition to exposing students from diverse backgrounds to realistic African literature, students of African descent in particular, need to read books that would give them a sense of pride in African culture and heritage; that would show them the historical, socio-economic, political, traditional as well as modern and contemporary aspects of life in African societies. This knowledge is important because, unlike students of European descent who have lots of exposure and available information about European history, culture and values, there has not been much information about Africa, and what has been available has been mostly negative. For the sake of the students of African descent in particular and all students in general, it is important to find for classroom use literature books
about and from Africa that are realistically written and devoid of the usual stereotypes.

Books by African writers usually give a good idea of what African societies are really like because these writers are best qualified to write about their countries and cultures. They are writing about what they have experienced personally or have witnessed, as well as about cultures that have been passed down to them by previous generations. They are therefore aptly qualified to accurately portray their societies because the contents of their books easily pass the test of reliability. Generally in their books, African writers present and reveal an in-depth coverage of the issues presented, in a way that non-Africans cannot.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study, then, has been done for two reasons. The first is to present a selection of Nigerian novels for young adults, which can be used in a high school multicultural and global curriculum. The reason for presenting the books from Nigeria is to enable American teachers and librarians to become aware of the existence of authentic and realistic alternatives to the books about African countries that are currently available in school libraries and in the juvenile sections of bookstores. The novels can also be used in
teacher preparation courses for English Education students, especially in adolescent literature courses.

Another reason for the study is to examine the selected Nigeria literature for cultural perspectives which include social, communal and family values, as well as young adult concerns. As noted by Stover (1991), "teachers and librarians should provide students with books which will introduce them to diverse cultural experiences and should discuss with the students the similarities and differences among those cultures" (p. 13). This study should be of particular interest to teachers and students because they will gain a better understanding of Nigeria and some of the country's cultures. By learning through this study about the cultural experiences depicted in the novels, teachers and librarians would be in a better position to help their students develop more cross-cultural understanding. In general, both students and teachers will benefit from the study because they will become better informed about an African country. As noted by Banfield, teachers and librarians need to recognize that good books on African-American themes are crucial to the healthy development of all children. The importance of such books to black children is clear, but it is not so commonly recognized that
such materials are of importance to other children, who are equally at risk from the deleterious effects of racism perpetuated in trade and textbooks. (1982, p. 9)

Through the study's focus on the cultural perspectives depicted in the books, teachers and librarians would understand the unfamiliar practices in this body of literature better, and their new understanding would enable them to help their students to understand African cultures better. Banfield also notes this point, that teachers and librarians need to realize that accepting the challenge of selecting materials that will enhance the self image of the African-American child and present an accurate portrayal of peoples of African descent for all children means also accepting responsibility to become well informed in certain critical areas. (1982, p. 9)

One reason for using Nigerian books in this study is the fact that as a Nigerian, who grew up and was educated through the undergraduate degree level in Nigeria, I have had experiences similar to some of the incidents narrated in some of the books. As I read through the books, memories of my childhood and adolescent years were brought back,
especially experiences with members of my extended family, as well as my experiences accumulated as a student at Saint Teresa's College Ibadan, a Catholic boarding high school for girls. Therefore, I feel that I am in a unique position to interpret this body of literature because I will be discussing the cultural issues and concerns of a country I know so well, having grown up in Nigeria.

Another reason for using Nigerian books is the fact that Nigeria has a vibrant book industry and has many internationally acclaimed writers, including the first African to win the Nobel prize for literature (Wole Soyinka in 1986) as well as Chinua Achebe, whose novels, including the classic *Things Fall Apart*, are well known. In addition to this, Nigeria has a multi-ethnic population (over 200 ethnic groups), which also happens to be the highest in Africa: 89 million people, according to the 1991 census. Therefore, I feel that the books from Nigeria have a wide range of experiences and perspectives that will satisfy the interests of young adults in a multicultural classroom.

The study is a literature-based exploration of the selected Nigerian novels suitable for use in a high school multicultural and global curriculum. There are two main areas of focus: cultural perspectives as well as young adult concerns depicted in the novels. The emphasis is on a cultural study of the books, rather than on literary
analysis. It is necessary to point out at this point that I am looking at the novels through my personal lens. The interpretations and analyses of the cultural practices and events portrayed in them are based on my personal experience as a Nigerian who has lived and interacted with Nigerians from different ethnic groups and all walks of life.

ORGANIZATION OF THE DISSERTATION

After the Introduction (Chapter 1), that includes the rationale for the study and the review of literature, chapter 2 includes materials as well as summaries of the selected novels. Chapter 3 discusses the socio-political history of Nigeria and gives some geographical information about the country. The analysis has two parts. The first part deals with the cultural practices portrayed in the novels that are different from American culture. This part of the study focuses on the cultural perspectives depicted in the novels, which include unfamiliar social, communal, family values and religious practices peculiar to the cultures portrayed. The second part of the analysis deals with young adult concerns and issues raised in the novels which are similar to the concerns of young adults here in the United States as well as in other parts of the world.

The first part, cultural perspectives, covers chapters four, five and six, which focus on the socio-historical and
communal perspectives, family structure and extended family, and religious beliefs. The second part focuses on adolescent concerns, covering chapters seven, eight and nine, which treat issues such as generational conflicts in the novels, peer group relationships, courtship and marriage preparations, and gender roles. Chapter ten gives the conclusions derived from the study. Appendix A gives suggestions for teaching and using the novels in a multicultural classroom. The same appendix also gives a list of resources that the teacher can tap to obtain information.
CHAPTER 2

NIGERIA: SOCIO-POLITICAL HISTORY

The country known as Nigeria came into existence as a result of the colonization of the various ethnic groups and small kingdoms that have lived in the area since prehistoric times. According to Levy, it is known from archeological evidence that some Iron Age cultures existed in some parts of the area, especially in the middle belt, between the fifth and third centuries B.C. One of the informative pamphlets published by the Office of the President in Lagos also mentions the fact that "terra cotta sculptures from the Nok culture period (900B.C.-200B.C.), were excavated from a site near Jos, in Plateau State" (Perspectives of Nigerian Culture, p.16-17).

About the eleventh century A.D., Yoruba city states were already in existence in the southwest and some of them later became powerful kingdoms, such as Ife, Oyo and Benin. Some, such as Ife and Benin, were also famous for their bronze sculptures and works. By the end of the fifteenth century, Islamic influence was firmly established in the North through commercial interaction with Islamic kingdoms of
North Africa, across the Sahara. Some northern Nigerian city states, such as Kano and Daura, had by that time become important commercial centers on the Trans-Saharan trading routes. In the east, the pattern of development of communities was different; "...communities tended to be stateless. Settlements were very small and far apart. Leaders were, as they remained well into the twentieth century, people who had shown themselves worthy of respect" (Levy, p. 23).

The first Europeans to establish trading relations were the Portuguese, who came through the Atlantic ocean into the southern part of the area in the fifteenth century. The initial contacts between the peoples of Africa and European visitors were of a peaceful and amicable nature, resulting in gradual development of commercial relations between the two continents (A Brief History of Nigeria, p. 17).

Other European nations became interested in the area as a result of the slave trade. By the early 1800s the British had abolished slavery, and they began to penetrate the interior through the delta of Nigeria's longest and most important river, River Niger. They established the Royal Niger Company to procure for factories in Europe agricultural products and raw materials such as palm-oil,
palm kernels, rubber and spices. In order to eliminate competition from other European nations, they signed treaties with traditional rulers of the various ethnic groups they came in contact with. When internal strife threatened trading activities, they began to establish administrative units. Around this time, missionaries also began to come into the area, spreading all over southern Nigeria. They began to convert the people to Christianity and they introduced western type of education, by establishing elementary schools first and secondary schools later. By 1861 the British had annexed Lagos Island, and gradually extended their influence over Yorubaland in the southwest. By 1887 much of the eastern part had come under British administrative rule, and by 1894 the areas along the coast were known as the Niger Coast Protectorate. The British continued to push their influence northwards, building roads and railway lines and establishing a railway system in order to facilitate the movement of goods and services. By 1900 the northern part became the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria. In 1914, the north and the south were amalgamated into the Colony and Protectorate of Nigeria with Sir Frederick Lugard as governor-general. For administrative purposes there were three regions: Eastern, Northern and Western.
By the end of the Second World War, Nigerians began to agitate for self-rule, especially the educated class, many of whom had gone to Britain for higher education. (The first University was established in 1948 at Ibadan in the west as a college of University of London). A federal form of government was formed with the 1954 constitution, and on October 1, 1960, Nigeria became a fully independent member of the British Commonwealth of nations. On October 1, 1963, the country became a federal republic, consisting of the three regions: East, West and the North.

There are three main ethnic groups in Nigeria. The Ibo dominate the Southeast, the Hausa/Fulani dominate the North, and the Yoruba dominate the Southwest. In addition to the big three, there are over 200 other ethnic groups of varying sizes, found all over the federation, each with its own different language and sub-culture. At independence, it was decided that English would be the lingua franca because it is the only language that is common to everyone, since it is the language of instruction in the schools and higher institutions as well as the language of business. Till the present time, English remains the official language of the country.

Soon after independence, ethnic as well as conflicting regional and national interests led to internal strife and dissension. The Western and Eastern Regions were resentful
of the perceived domination of the federal government by the North. On January 15, 1966, a bloody military coup d'etat, organized mainly by junior military officers from the East, took place. Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, the federal Prime Minister (a Northerner), the leaders of the Northern and Western regions, as well as senior military officers from the north and the west were killed. An Ibo senior officer, General Aguiyi-Ironsi was declared Head of State. He declared a military government and appointed military governors over the regions. But dissent and dissatisfaction continued; and on July 29, 1966, Northern army officers staged a counter military coup d'etat and General Aguiyi-Ironsi was killed. Lieutenant Colonel Yakubu Gowon from the North became the Head of State. This coup led to the massacre of thousands of Easterners residing in the North, and there was a mass exodus of more than one million Easterners living in the North, for the East.

Dissension in the East was a result of the massacres, and in May 1967 Colonel Gowan introduced emergency powers and announced the division of Nigeria into 12 states (6 in the North, 3 in the West, and 3 East of the Niger). The creation of states was rejected by the East, and on May 30, 1967, the East seceded from the rest of the federation, creating the Republic of Biafra. The Military governor of the former Eastern Region, Lieutenant Colonel Odumegwu Ojukwu became
the Head of Biafra. On July 6, 1967, the Federal Government of Nigeria declared war on Biafra. The civil war lasted till January 12, 1970, when Ojukwu, realizing the fact that the noose was tightening around the little that remained of Biafra, escaped to Cote D'Ivoire, and his military commander surrendered to the federal forces. By the time the war ended, over one million Easterners, mostly Ibos, had perished. Instead of punishing the Eastern States further, the federal government put in place a policy of reconciliation and reconstruction. Today, economic data suggest that the eastern part of the country as prosperous as the other parts in terms of economic and other activities.

Since the first coup d'etat of 1966, the military has maintained a firm grip on political power in Nigeria. In 1979 the then military ruler, General Olusegun Obasanjo, willingly organized elections and handed power back to civilians; but by December 31, 1983, the military struck again, taking over power ostensibly to wipe out corruption. In August of 1985, General Ibrahim Babangida, the third in command in the government, took over power, stating that the former leaders were too harsh on the people. He too introduced some draconian laws, and life increasingly became harder for the people. He was finally forced out in 1993, after he canceled the results of the presidential election
that was supposed to return the country to democracy. Currently, now the military are in firm control of power, and attempts to dislodge them have failed repeatedly. Out of the nine governments Nigeria has had since attaining independence, all but two have been military, including the present one led by General Sanni Abacha, who took over power in a bloodless coup d'état in November 1993.

**NIGERIA: geographical information**

Located in the extreme right curve of the Gulf of Guinea in West Africa, The Federal Republic of Nigeria is bordered on the east by Cameroon, in the north by Niger Republic and Chad, in the west by Benin Republic (formerly known as Dahomey), and the Atlantic Ocean in the South (see map of Nigeria and the world map at the end of this chapter).

There are wide climatic and vegetational variations in Nigeria, but the whole country lies in the tropics. Though the weather is generally warm all the year round, there are two seasons. The first is the Wet/Rainy season which occurs between March and October, and the second season is the Dry/Harmattan season which generally occurs between October and February. Some parts of the southern part of the country, especially the Niger delta area and most parts of the Atlantic coast area, have rainfall all the year round. Rainfall gradually decreases northwards. During the wet
season, it is usually hot and very humid in the south. During the dry season, it is usually very cold, windy and dusty in the northern parts of the country, especially from late November and mid-February when harmattan winds blow from North Africa across the Sahara desert, causing it to lose its moisture. It does not snow in Nigeria, and the temperature usually never gets below zero.

The vegetation is also as varied as the climate. In the Niger delta and some of the coastal areas, there are mangrove swamps. There are dense tropical rain forests in the south, though a lot of these have been lost to agriculture and urbanization. As one moves northwards, forests give way to mixed vegetation in the middle belt and grasslands in the north, known as the Savannah grasslands. The vegetation in the extreme north is very sparse because that part of the country is on the edge of the Sahara desert. The area is known as the Sahel zone.

According to the March 1992 census results, Nigeria has a population of 89 million people, which is the highest among African countries. Abuja, a new city and territory, built from scratch in the center of the country, officially became the capital city on December 12, 1991, when the Head of State and government offices and officials moved from Lagos, the former capital and largest city and port. There are 30 states and the Federal Capital Territory of Abuja.
For trade and commerce, Nigeria's main export product is petroleum and petroleum products. As a member of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), Nigeria is one of the world's major suppliers of petroleum. Cocoa, groundnuts (peanuts), hides and skins, small and large ruminants, timber and hardwoods, as well as minerals such as tin, columbite, coal and iron ore are produced for export as well as for use by local industries. Carvings, bronze and copper works, leatherworks, weaving and dyeing are the most popular arts and crafts. Major industries include steel rolling mills at Aladja, Jos, Katsina and Oshogbo; vehicle assembly plants at Lagos (Volkswagen), Kaduna (Peugeot saloon cars, station wagons and light utility trucks), and Enugu (Mercedes trucks and buses); and petroleum refineries at Port-Harcourt, Warri and Kaduna.

Today, the country is still beset with political instability as the people are trying to dislodge the firm grip of the military from political and economic power. From June to September 1994 workers, university students and the general populace embarked on a series of strikes which paralyzed economic and other activities in the country, in an attempt to dislodge the military. But the military rulers responded harshly, arresting and imprisoning the leaders of the pro-democracy movement in prison.
CHAPTER 3

SELECTION AND SUMMARIES OF NOVELS

FOR THE STUDY

Ten novels by Nigerian authors are used for the study. These include those that are specifically about young people and their interactions both with their peers and with significant adults, either in their family settings or in their schools or communities. Other novels include those that are about family and communal experiences which can be read and enjoyed by young adults. The novels portray a fair and accurate representation of the cultural perspective, issues and historical periods the authors are writing about. Most of the novels are used in secondary school curricula in Nigeria as well as in some other African countries, especially those by well-known authors such as Chinua Achebe, Buchi Emecheta and Chukwuemeka Ike.

Several criteria were considered in the selection of the Nigerian young adult novels. A main concern was to have a selection that would appeal to the reading tastes and interest of a wide range of students from eighth grade up. The criteria include:
1. Availability: Only some of the Nigerian books are available in libraries, but with the information in the bibliography, these books can be ordered from the publishers directly, or through well-established bookstores. While the publishers of some of the books are based in Nigeria, some are based in London and New York, there should not be any problems in obtaining the novels.

2. Books that represent a broad spectrum of experiences; including descriptions of family lifestyle and routines; portrayal of attitudes; customs and beliefs; relationships between parents and their children, males and females, individuals and the community.

3. Books that present the total dynamic picture of the presented groups, including historical, social and communal perspectives as well as religious beliefs.

4. Books that present different historical periods. The novels include those that present the pre-colonial, colonial, and contemporary experiences of people, including the experiences during the Nigerian civil war period (1967-70) and experiences under military rule.
5. Books that vary in their geographical locations, so that both rural and urban settings are presented; in their point of view (male and female); in their genre (adventure, family, romance); and in their length and appropriateness for young adults.
Table 1 - The Novels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AUTHOR</th>
<th>TITLE</th>
<th>PAGES</th>
<th>POINT OF VIEW</th>
<th>PERIOD OF THE SETTING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Buchi Emecheta</td>
<td>The Bride Price</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Colonial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buchi Emecheta</td>
<td>The Joys of Motherhood</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Colonial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinua Achebe</td>
<td>Chike and the River</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Colonial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinua Achebe</td>
<td>Things Fall Apart</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>General</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cyprian Ekwensi</td>
<td>Juju Rock</td>
<td>109</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chukwuemeka Ike</td>
<td>The Bottled Leopard</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Colonial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chukwuemeka Ike</td>
<td>The Potter's Wheel</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Colonial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flora Nwapa</td>
<td>Efuru</td>
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<td>Female</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wale Okediran</td>
<td>The Boys at the Border</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Contemporary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosina Umelo</td>
<td>Felicia</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>Female</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
THE NOVELS

The novels for the study cover different historical periods, ranging from the pre-colonial, to the colonial, to the Nigerian/Biafran civil war period, to contemporary. If they are read in order of time-frames, readers will get a sense of the changes in Nigerian life over the past one hundred years. These novels also provide a rich portrayal of ethnic and cultural lifestyle as well as rural and urban life in the country.

THE BRIDE PRICE

Buchi Emecheta's *The Bride Price* is told from the perspective of Aku-nna, who is almost fourteen when her father, Ezekiel Odia, a Second World War veteran dies from a war-related injury, after a three-week stay in the hospital. The novel opens in colonial Lagos, five years after the war, where Aku-nna and her brother Nna-ndo were born and are going to school, though their mother, Ma Blackie, has gone to their hometown, Ibuza, an Ibo town far away from Lagos, "to placate the Oboshi river goddess into giving her some babies" (p. 8).

After befitting traditional and Christian funeral ceremonies for Ezekiel, in which all Ibuza sons and
daughters living in Lagos at that time participated, the family had to move back to Ibuza, because "Life in Lagos, like in all capital cities, cost a great deal of money, and was not possible without a bread-winner" (p. 52). Ethnic traditions demand that everything Ezekiel Odia had at the time of his death, including his wife and children, be inherited by his closest male relation -- Okonkwo, his older brother. Okonkwo immediately sees Aku-nna, whose name means 'father's wealth', as a future source of wealth because educated girls fetch higher bride-prices at the time of their wedding. Against the wishes of his senior wife and older children, he agrees to let the girl finish her schooling as long as her mother Ma Blackie would continue to pay the school fees, even though he would collect Aku-nna's bride-price.

At Ibuza, the family is thrust into the traditional village life, which the children are unaccustomed to. They move from their monogamous family lifestyle in Lagos into a polygamous one, as Ma Blackie had to become Okonkwo's fourth wife, something she readily accepts as part of tradition and culture of her people. By the time Aku-nna finishes with schooling at age sixteen, she is kidnapped, according to an accepted but dying practice, by a family that wants her to marry their son, who promises Okonkwo a handsome bride price. But Aku-nna has fallen in love with Chike, her
bachelor teacher, who is from a prosperous but an unacceptable family in the town because his family belongs to the osu caste, descendants of slaves, and, therefore, deemed unfit to marry descendants of the freeborn. Aku-nna escapes from her captors and elopes with Chike to the petroleum mining town of Ughelli near the petroleum refining town of Warri, where another ethnic group is dominant. Aku-nna dies while delivering their love child, and the people of Ibuza feel that her death is a form of punishment, a vindication of traditional over modern values.

**THE JOYS OF MOTHERHOOD**

Set in 1934, in colonial Nigeria, Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* tells the story of Nnu Ego, who finds fulfillment in life as a mother. The novel begins with background information about Nnu Ego's parents, her childhood and life in their hometown of Ibuza. The narrator also gives information about Nnu Ego's first marriage which has just failed because she has not borne a child. Her husband Amatokwu, encouraged by his parents, marries another wife who becomes pregnant almost immediately. Eventually, Nnu Ego has to go back to her father's compound because her husband starts to ill-treat and beat her. Since she does not
want any reconciliation, her father returns the bride-price paid by Amatokwu’s family.

Soon afterward her father is approached by the older brother of Nnaife, who lives and works in faraway Lagos, expressing an interest in marrying her for Nnaife. With her consent, her father agrees and even hopes that the change of environment might be good for her, and she may begin to have children. After the bride-price and other requirements have been taken care of, Nnaife’s older brother takes her to Lagos to her new husband. On arrival, Nnu Ego is dismayed and visibly disturbed by Nnaife’s ugly physical appearance, and is disappointed to find out that Nnaife is a washerman for a British expatriate couple, a job that is not traditionally regarded in Ibuza as a real man’s job. There is nothing she can do, so she has to stay in Lagos with him, rather than return to her father in Ibuza. She soon becomes pregnant and gives birth to a baby boy. She is overjoyed, as barrenness is seen as a curse in the society. The baby suddenly dies one day, and she attempts to commit suicide by jumping off a bridge although she is rescued by someone from Ibuza who recognizes her.

She then conceives again and has a boy, whom they name Oshiaju, which means “the bush has refused this,” a reference to the fact that their previous child had been buried in the bush. She begins to respect her husband
because he has made her happy by making her a mother. In order to supplement the family income, she starts petty trading; but soon after Nnaife’s boss, Dr. Meers, and his wife have to return to England, and he loses his job. Life becomes hard for the family because it takes Nnaife some time to find another job. He works on a ship for a while, which takes him away from home for lengths of time. During this period, they have another boy. Nnaife eventually gets a job at the railway department as a laborer.

Shortly after this, Nnaife’s older brother dies in the village; and Nnaife inherits the third and most junior wife, who arrives with her daughter in spite of the fact that the family is barely making ends meet in their one-room apartment in a tenement building. Intense rivalry soon develops between the women but Nnu Ego concentrates on her trading and her children. She soon has several more children and with the profit from her business, she pays their school fees, believing like so many other parents in the culture that if you nurture and take care of your children when they are young, when they are grown and self-sufficient, they will take care of you in your old age.

In 1941, the British colonialists forcibly conscripted able-bodied men into the army to go and fight in the Second World War. Like others, Nnaife was also conscripted. In his absence Adaku, the second wife, decides to desert the family
as she feels she can now be self-sufficient, having done pretty well in business. After the war Nnaife returns with his army pension; and instead of saving it for the family’s use, he spends lavishly and goes home to Ibuza to marry a young girl, Okpo. Meanwhile the children are growing; the boys are doing well in high school. Nnu Ego continues to do her best to encourage them and nourishes the hope that, when they have their own families, they will all settle around her and take care of her. Oshiaju, the first son, soon finishes his secondary education and departs on a scholarship for higher education in America. Adim, the second son hopes to follow suit.

Around this time Nnaife gets into trouble with the law for attacking the family of a young man from another ethnic group who wants to marry one of his daughters, and he is sentenced to five years’ imprisonment. The girls marry, and Nnu Ego decides that the remaining members of the family should return to Ibuza to live. After his release from prison, Nnaife also returns to Ibuza, but he and the members of his extended family blame Nnu Ego for all the troubles of the family. From that point on, everything goes downhill for her.

What actually broke her was, month after month, expecting to hear from her son in America, and from Adim too who later went
to Canada.... from rumours that Oshia had married and that his bride was a white woman. (p. 224)

**THINGS FALL APART**

Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, set in pre-colonial Umuofia in the Eastern part of Nigeria, tells the tragic story of Okonkwo and his community. The novel, set in pre-colonial Umuofia, a community of Igbo people, portrays the conflict and clash that arise as a result of the introduction of an alien culture and religion into the society. The novel opens with a description of a wrestling contest between Okonkwo and the then champion wrestler, Amalinze, the cat. As a result of Okonkwo's victory in the contest that had taken place more than twenty years before, Okonkwo has become known as the greatest wrestler in the nine villages that make up the Umuofia clan. In addition to this achievement, by sheer dint of hard work, Okonkwo has become a wealthy farmer and is also well known for showing courage and valor in war. By the end of chapter one, he is described as one of the greatest men in his time. The reader also learns that Okonkwo has no patience with unsuccessful men, because he is ashamed of his father, who loved pleasure rather than hard work. His father dies as a pauper and
failure. To compensate for his father’s inability to leave anything for his family, Okonkwo does not tolerate what he perceives as weakness of any kind, and he is always overextending himself in order not to be perceived as having any weakness in a society that values achievement. “Age was respected among his people, but achievement is revered” (p. 12).

Unfortunately, as great and well-respected as he is in society, Okonkwo is given to rash behavior and this proves to be his undoing. During the funeral of one of the oldest and most revered men in the village, Okonkwo inadvertently kills a man with his gun; and for this offense, though deemed an accident, he is exiled for seven years. He leaves with his whole family for Mbanta to live with his mother’s kinsmen. His late mother’s people receive him well, providing him with land for farming as well as for building a homestead.

While they are in exile, the first white man arrives in Abame, a neighboring clan, on a bicycle, which the people think is an iron horse. Also, having never seen a white man before, the people consult their oracles which tell them that the white man will break their clan and spread destruction amongst them. In order to avert this calamity, the white man is killed. Other white men come to avenge the death of the first one.
A few years later, Christian missionaries arrive in Umuofia, build their first church and win their first converts among those who are discontent with the way of life in the society. Very soon the white man introduces a system of government that does not take into consideration the traditional norms of the society. Also the Christians' religious beliefs directly contradict the laws and norms as well as the traditional religious beliefs of the land. There soon develop several conflicts between the Christian converts and non-Christians. The colonial administration sides with the Christians, and the administration imprisons the elders of the clan. In the face of the superior firepower of the British administrators, some of the people resign themselves to the change that has come over their society, but Okonkwo feels that the clan must fight back. He also cannot believe the change that has happened in his seven-year absence. To him, the people have allowed foreigners to take over their land and the new religion seems to have taken over their minds too. He vows to resist the colonialists.

After the release of the elders from prison, a war-council meeting is called; and while in progress, the colonial government sends five court messengers to tell the people to break the meeting up. In anger, Okonkwo pulls out his machete and cuts off the head of one of the messengers;
and the clan, not wanting war, allows the other messengers to escape. Recognizing the fact that the clan will not fight the British administrators, Okonkwo commits suicide rather than be captured by the British. So, when the District Commissioner arrives with a small band of soldiers and court messengers, he finds that Okonkwo is already dead.

**CHIKE AND THE RIVER**

Chinua Achebe’s *Chike and The River* is about Chike’s adventures at Onitsha, a city in Eastern Nigeria on the banks of the Niger. At the beginning of the story, Chike is sent by his widowed mother to live with his uncle in Onitsha township because she can no longer afford to pay his school fees. Before he leaves with his uncle, his mother advises him to be obedient to his uncle and warns him not to go near the big river because many people get drowned in it every year.

Chike soon settles down to life in the city, though he finds everything strange at first. In the village, no one has pipe-borne water, and everyone knows each other’s business, unlike in the city. But as the months roll by, he begins to get used to living in an urban area. He also makes friends at school, and they tell him how easy it is to cross the river on a ferry. From this point on he dreams of how to
cross the river to the town of Asaba on the other side of the river. But in order to cross the river on the ferry, he needs six-pence to cross to Asaba and sixpence to cross back to Onitsha from Asaba. His uncle, who sees children’s leisure time as a waste of precious time that should be used to study school work, refuses to give him money to go on the ferry. Anytime Chike has an opportunity, he visits the river bank, watching the big ferryboats in particular. “The more Chike saw the ferryboats the more he wanted to take the trip to Asaba. But where would he get the money? He did not know. Still, he hoped” (p. 15).

Chike’s opportunity to cross the river comes when his uncle goes to the village to stay overnight for a holiday. Chike is left at home in care of his houseboy. Without letting the houseboy know his plans, Chike goes to the riverside to watch the boats. At the river bank, he sees some boys washing the cars of some ferry passengers who are waiting to cross the river to Asaba, where they will continue their journeys. Chike offers to wash an expatriate’s car and receives a shilling for his work. Realizing that he has the exact fare for crossing to and from Asaba, Chike purchases tickets. When the next ferry comes, he crosses to Asaba. His excitement is marred by his disappointment in finding that Asaba is not at all what he has expected. Nevertheless, he sets about exploring and he

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loses track of time. By the time he realizes that he should be heading back to the ferry landing, it is too late; the last ferry of the evening has already left. Since he does not know anyone in the town, Chike returns to the marketplace and sleeps in one of the lorries parked there for the night.

In the middle of the night, he suddenly wakes up to hear some robbers discussing their plans to rob a store, with the collusion of the night guard. After some terrifying experiences in which the thieves rob the store, Chike helps the police and the owner of the store to catch the thieves, telling them to begin their investigation with the nightguard. Chike becomes a local hero as his story is told on the radio and in the local newspaper. The owner of the store also decides to award a scholarship to Chike to cover his expenses throughout his secondary school years.

**JUJU ROCK**

Cyprian Ekwensi's *Juju Rock*, is the story of an adventure by Rikku, a fifteen year old Fulani schoolboy from the northern part of Nigeria. A white man, Mr. Colly, has put an advertisement in the newspaper for a reliable, athletic boy from the northern part Nigeria, who also knows the area around Juju Rock. He also promises a possible reward of a
full four-year scholarship to a British university if his mission is accomplished. Obi urges Rikku to answer the advertisement, since Rikku was born around the area of Juju Rock and had grown up as a Fulani herdsboy, herding cattle and other livestock all over the area. At Obi's urging, he obtains permission from the school authorities to see the school doctor but visits the address in the advertisement instead.

Mr. Colly, meets with Rikku and reveals that he and some other friends have come out from England to search for a lost gold-mine around Juju Rock, not far from the River Niger. On an earlier trip up the Niger to search for the mine, their boat had capsized but Colly and two of his colleagues were able to swim to safety. Another member of the expedition, Captain Plowman is missing. The men are determined to try again, and they have the belief that Captain Plowman might be alive. They want to find him since he has the maps of the location of the mine. They also know that Captain Plowman, having lived in the country for many, many years, speaks the local language, Hausa, fluently. But something in Colly's manner tells Rikku to beware. Also Captain Plowman happens to be a friend of Rikku's father as well as his benefactor, sponsoring Rikku's education at Ilekun College. Sensing that he might be dealing with ruthless men but also wanting an opportunity to rescue his
friend and benefactor, Rikku agrees to take Colly and his fellow fortune-hunters, Greensham and Snott to Juju Rock.

At an agreed upon time one night Rikku and his friend, Obi try to slip past the nightguard at school, but the guard succeeds in catching Obi, who urges Rikku to go on to an appointed spot where a taxi that will take him to Colly is waiting. Rikku soon links up with Colly and his two friends and they set out in a car for the long journey to the north. They arrive by nightfall at a village on the big river and Rikku makes arrangements with some people he knows in the village for shelter. He overhears Greensham and Snott discussing their plans for getting rid of Rikku after the goldmine is found. Rikku is overcome with fear but not wanting to give up on finding Plowman, escapes to the village. He shows up the following morning disguised as a ferryboy in traditional robes and tribal marks ready to row the men across the river. He rows them to another village, where the village head is a friend of his father. Rikku takes the chief into confidence and asks for his assistance. While he is with the chief, members of a secret society who use the rock for their sinister rituals kidnap Colly. Rikku and the remaining white men set out for the rock immediately.

At the rock they find Colly and Plowman, but although they are outnumbered, a fight ensues between them and the
secret society members. They are captured when they run out of ammunition, but help arrives from the village to assist them. Back at the village, Rikku and plowman realize that they have to return to Lagos as soon as possible without Colly, Greensham, and Snott, especially since Rikku knows where the men are keeping Plowman's son for ransom. They both sneak off and elude the other white men. They catch a Lagos-bound train, and as soon as they get to Lagos, the boy is recovered with the help of the police. Rikku becomes a hero, and the police arrest the evil men.

**THE BOTTLED LEOPARD**

Chukwuemeka Ike's *The Bottled Leopard* relates the experiences of Amobi, a first year student in a prestigious boarding secondary school in Eastern Nigeria, in 1947. The novel also focuses on the culture and traditions of Amobi's village, Ndikelionwu, in Igboland, Eastern Nigeria. The novel begins with Amobi having a nightmare one night in the dormitory of his boarding school, Government College, Ahia. In the dream, a leopard comes into one of the compounds in his village to catch a goat that has been fattened for market. The owner of the compound awakes when his dog begins to bark, and he attempts to shoot the leopard. Amobi wakes up at this point and screams, waking all the other sleeping
students in the dormitory. For the next few days, the implications of the dream bother him because in Ndikelionwu and its environs it is believed that a man can possess a leopard and send it wherever he wants, if he is endowed with such powers by the gods.

As a young lad, Amobi had been curious about such powers; and although his extended family has the reputation of being a leopard-possessing family, his father has assured him that he will never have such powers because the last relation to inherit the powers had died without passing on the powers to any of his children or relations. But Amobi continues to wonder why he should be dreaming about leopards.

Soon after this incident, an eclipse of the sun takes place. The teachers have explained the phenomenon to the students at the school, but in Amobi’s village, the eclipse is thought to be a bad omen. At Amobi’s mother’s insistence, his father sends a message to the school principal, an expatriate Briton, that his son should come home. On reaching home and finding out the reason for his father’s summons, he calmly explains to his frightened parents what happens in an eclipse. During his first night at home, he has another nightmare about a leopard.

Back at school Amobi goes through various incidents and experiences of boarding school life. He and fellow first-year students are harassed at the initiation/hazing ceremony
by second-year students. With his best friend Chuk, a boy with a white American mother and an Ibo father, Amobi gets into trouble for raiding the school orchard one night. He also does not like the fact that the school authorities, many of whom are British, denounce the local culture as primitive. The students are constantly punished for speaking any of the Nigerian languages; they must speak English at all times. He and Chuk are suspended for a two-week period, and a teacher suggests that Amobi take Chuk home to Ndikelionwu, since Chuk’s parents are far away in America, and his guardians are in Port-Harcourt.

At Ndikelionwu, Amobi tells his parents that the school has asked him to take Chuk home so that he can learn Ibo ways. Amobi has another nightmare. As a result his father, who professes to be a Christian, takes him to the dibia for consultation. After consulting the oracle, the dibia reveals that Amobi has inherited leopard-possessing powers from a deceased uncle. The solution to the problem involves the dibia performing some sacrifices at a shrine, which would enable him to magically bottle up the animal inside a covered clay pot at Amobi’s extended family shrine. Mazi Eze, Amobi’s father, could not openly go along with the dibia to the shrine because a church member is supposed to be above paganism. In an attempt to discourage church members from mixing traditional religious practices and
Christianity, the catechist has promised to excommunicate from the church any member involved in such practices. Chuk is baffled by the incident, but Amobi makes Chuk promise to keep the incident to himself when they both return to school.

Soon after their return to the boarding school, a leopard is seen one night in the school grounds. At that point, Chuk, thinking that it is Amobi's leopard, tells others about the incident at Ndikelionwu. Amobi is questioned by one of the prefects, but he denies having anything to do with leopards. The school guards decide to lie in wait with their dane guns for the leopard one night. As soon as the leopard makes its appearance, one of the guards fires a shot hitting the animal. However, they discover that it is one of the school laborers covering himself with a large leopard skin. At that stage, the principal, who believes that the tales about leopard possession are based on superstitious beliefs, calls Chuk out in front of all the students. He chides Chuk for bearing false tales about Amobi and asks him to apologize.

**THE POTTER'S WHEEL**

The Potter's Wheel by Chukwuemeka Ike tells the story of Obuechina Maduabuchi. With six older sisters and a younger
one, Obu is in the privileged position of being the only son of his parents. In a society which values sons above daughters, he is the apple of his mother's eyes, and having tried vainly to have additional sons, his mother hopelessly spoils him. Although Obu is almost nine years old, his mother does not allow him to help around the house and the farm, although his younger sister who is six years old has to help. Mazi Laza, his father, loves the boy equally dearly, but wants him to learn how to be responsible and hardworking. His father tries to involve Obu in household and farm duties commensurate with the boy's age, but he is thwarted at every turn by his wife. Mama Obu thinks that, by shielding her son from work and allowing him to do whatever he wants at any time, she is showing her love for him. She gives him preferential treatment to the dismay of his sisters. She feeds him special foods, and does not allow him to do any chores at all. The only thing Obu is allowed to do is go to school where he is an excellent student.

After constantly quarreling with his wife about Obu’s habits, Mazi Laza decides to send Obu to another village many miles away to live with one of the most feared schoolmasters around, Teacher Kanu. The teacher also happens to have a very stern disciplinarian for a wife, so many parents regularly send children who need to have some discipline instilled in them to Teacher and Madam (as the
teacher and his wife are generally known). In those days (the novel is set in 1941), it was a common practice by uneducated parents to send children to live with teachers, pastors and other educated people because it was believed that such children would receive the guidance that would enable them function in a modern world. Although the children received an education, they are in fact little more than servants. With no parents around to indulge their whims and caprices, life was usually rough at their guardians’. At first, Obu's mother does not allow Obu to go, but in a male-dominated society, the father has the last say over a child's fate, so she has to let Obu go.

She decides to travel with Obu so that she can see for herself the type of people her son will be living with. In addition to taking Obu's school fees for the year, she takes along lots of gifts for Teacher and Madam. She is well-received and satisfied that Obu will be in very good hands. She has hardly left before Obu finds out that he is no longer at home. No one gives him preferential treatment or any special foods. With the help of the other boys and girls of varying ages (Obu is the youngest) living with Teacher and Madam, Obu gets to know the ropes fast, learning to do chores in record time, as well as survival tactics. With no children of her own, Madam rules her household with an iron hand. The older houseboys and girls do the cooking and the
more difficult chores around the compound, and the younger ones have to do the less difficult, time-consuming chores such as fetching water and firewood for household use. After one school term, Obu goes home to spend the Christmas vacation with his parents. At home, his father notes that Obu has changed.

His father is happy about the improvement in Obu's character, but Obu does not want to go back because of the sufferings he has gone through. He tells his mother all the details, hoping to enlist her help in persuading his father. At the end of the holidays, his father is firmly convinced that going back to Teacher and Madam, is the only way Obu will learn to grow up properly.

**EFURU**

Flora Nwapa's *Efuru* is the story of Efuru, a remarkable woman, who becomes a successful business woman but goes through two failed marriages. In spite of her being well-to-do, she is childless in a society that does not usually tolerate childlessness. The story begins with Efuru agreeing to marry Adizua even though he is poor and cannot afford to pay her father the customary bride-price/dowry. Knowing that her father will object if the bride price is not paid, Efuru runs away from home and moves in with Adizua and his widowed
mother. When her father discovers that she has eloped, he sends strong young men from his extended family to go and bring her back. Instead of going back home with them, Efuru persuades them to leave her in Adizua's house, sending a reassuring message to her father that the bride-price will be paid.

As she settles down in marriage, she decides to become a trader/businesswoman, instead of joining her husband in farming. Their farm is very far from the town and her husband has to live on the farm during the cropping season, visiting home once in a while. Efuru soon excels at trading and becomes a successful businesswoman. Before long, she helps her husband put together the bride price, and a visit to her father to pay it is arranged. As time goes on, she becomes pregnant and has a baby girl, who dies in infancy. Her husband leaves her and goes away with another woman. After some time, she gets married to another man, but try as she might, she does not get pregnant again. Two years later her mother-in-law starts fretting, and Efuru agrees that her husband should marry another wife who can produce children. Nkoyeni, the new wife, soon becomes pregnant. One day their husband goes on a journey and does not return.

It soon becomes clear as the novel goes on that Efuru is very unlucky in the choice of men she falls in love with. Also, in her quest for a child of her own, a dibia
traditional medicineman tells her, after consulting the oracle, that she will not bear another child because she has been chosen by the river goddess to be a honored worshipper. This does not help matters because childlessness is not condoned in the society. Although Efuru is well-respected because she is wealthy and gives to the less fortunate, her situation is still regarded as tragic because she has no child and is not successful in marriage.

THE BOYS AT THE BORDER

Wale Okediran’s The Boys at the Border is a contemporary novel about life in present day Nigeria. It is an adventure story that exposes the link between vicious smugglers, who will stop at nothing, including murder, to achieve their ends, and men of the Customs Department. The novel also reveals problems associated with military rule which the country has been plagued with over and over again. Political intrigue, blackmail, bribery, and corruption as well as tribalism, nepotism and examples of high-handedness by the military dictators are exposed.

When the novel begins, a customs officer, who happens to be the brother-in-law of the Director of Customs and Excise Department, has just been killed by smugglers on Nigeria’s notorious western border. Across this western border, much
of the country's export crops such as cocoa and groundnuts are smuggled into neighboring Benin Republic, with the active collusion of top customs and military officers. A new military dictatorship, which promises to rid the country of corruption and other problems, has just taken over power. With pressure mounting from the expectations of the people for some sort of action from the government, the Head of State calls a meeting of government department heads to find solutions to the problems of the country. The Department of Customs and Excise particularly comes under scrutiny about the loss of revenue from heavy smuggling activities along the country's borders. The Customs Director is told to get his men to tighten up the borders or be dismissed for ineffectiveness. As a result of ethnic rivalry between the director and some of his deputies, he receives very little cooperation in combating the problem. He also learns through one of the deputies that military officers are involved in smuggling activities, but he can do next to nothing about it.

At the next meeting with the Head of State, the director is accused of not making progress with the problem of smuggling. He gets angry and accuses the top military bosses of colluding with smugglers, a fact which the military rulers do not want the general populace to be aware of. In order to save their jobs, his deputies deny ever telling their boss about the smuggling activities of the military
and the director is dismissed from his job, even though he is close to retirement. As a result of his dismissal, he ends up having a stroke and is hospitalized. He is replaced by one of his uncooperative deputies from the north, who is also very corrupt and unwilling to stop the smuggling activities.

The former director’s wife, Gladys, decides not to let sleeping dogs lie. She vows to find a way of exposing the new director’s corruption and to find the smuggler who has killed her brother, since there appears to be no progress in catching the culprit. With the cooperation of the new director’s secretary, she plants a tape-recorder as well as a camera in the office and records a conversation in which the new director is paid a lot of money to instruct his men to allow smuggled goods across the border. She then leaks the information to the press, and a big scandal ensues. The new director is then fired by the Head of State.

In addition to exposing the director, the rest of the novel deals with how she puts in motion her plans to catch her brother’s murderer and expose the criminal activities of the smugglers. With the assistance of Peter, the Customs boss of the area command post on the western border who also happens to be Ibo like her, she succeeds in helping the police to catch her brother’s murderer.
FELICIA

Rosina Umelo’s Felicia is set in the eastern part of Nigeria just after the Nigerian civil war, which ended in January, 1970. The novel centers largely around Felicia, who returns home to her village after being on active Red Cross duty during the war. The schools are being re-opened after three years of war, and Felicia’s mother, widowed before the war, is anxious for her daughter to get back to school. Although Felicia is ill, her mother is counting on the usual support of Felicia’s uncles who had been paying her school fees before the war. Felicia’s mother approaches the uncles to solicit for the usual support, but she is surprised to find the uncles unusually non-committal. What Felicia’s mother does not know, which almost everyone in the village knows, is that the sickness which she has attributed to malaria fever is actually a pregnancy. Adaku, Felicia’s mother’s sister-in-law, points this fact out a few days later and all hell breaks lose. Traditionally, having a baby out of wedlock is taboo, and members of the extended family decide to find out who is responsible for the pregnancy and arrange a marriage quickly before Felicia’s condition becomes very obvious. But all attempts, including cajoling and threatening, fail to get Felicia to name the father of her baby. Tongues soon begin to wag and taunting songs begin
to emerge from the young musicians of the village. Still, Felicia chooses not to break her silence.

Shortly after this development, a member of the family, Madam Joy, who had spent the war years as a successful businesswoman in Lagos, the federal capital, arrives in the village with a lorry load of much-needed food, clothing and other supplies. On seeing Felicia’s plight, Madam Joy offers to take the girl back to Lagos. Felicia refuses because she has learnt that part of the successful hospitality business that Madame Joy has in Lagos includes a high-class prostitution ring. Madame Joy soon departs for Lagos, and Felicia’s mother becomes depressed.

After this, Adaku’s younger sister Ngozi, who is a nurse in Enugu, the state capital, comes to the village for a visit. Adaku persuades her to take Felicia back to Enugu to live with her, so that Felicia’s mother can have some peace of mind. Though the city had been heavily bombed during the war and there is a dearth of comfortable accommodation, Ngozi has been lucky to find a one-room apartment in a house which had minimal damage, with the landlord and his family living in another part of the house. Ngozi, knowing that her landlord is hesitant to allow wayward girls to live in his house, finds a cheap wedding band for Felicia, and she tells the landlord that Felicia’s husband is missing in action.
In Enugu, Felicia proves to be very helpful to Ngozi, doing housekeeping chores and cooking. After some months, she has her baby, and soon after she starts to braid other ladies' hair in order to make some money and be less dependent on Ngozi. All along, she is so well-behaved that it soon becomes obvious to everyone that her pregnancy must have been a genuine mistake.

After two years in Enugu, her uncles decide that Felicia should go back to school as she has made it obvious that she is not fooling around. So, they send her to boarding school while her mother looks after her child. At school, she copes well enough for a student who has missed school for several years. Towards the end of the novel, it is revealed that the father of her baby had been a university student who had joined the war effort but was killed just before the end of the war. When his family learned about Felicia in a letter written by the young man before his death, they come to Felicia's family to make amends.
ANALYSIS

PART ONE--CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES
CHAPTER 4

SOCIO-HISTORICAL AND COMMUNAL PERSPECTIVES

Many of the ten novels in the study give readers various perspectives and insights into several aspects of the history and culture of the communities portrayed in them. This chapter will highlight the social and communal viewpoints of some cultures in Nigeria as depicted in the novels. The fact that the novels portray different time periods, ranging from the pre-colonial and colonial in Things Fall Apart to the contemporary in The Boys at the Border is particularly good because they give a fairly accurate account of what life was like in the past and as it is now in contemporary times. Also, I have placed more emphasis in this chapter on those novels that focus more heavily on socio-historical and communal perspectives. The discussion begins with the novel that deals with and shows what life was like before the advent of colonialism and the introduction of foreign religions such as Christianity and Islam, and then moves through those that portray the colonial contemporary times.

Among the ten novels, the ones that focus most on traditional lifestyle, especially during pre-colonial and early colonial times are Things Fall Apart, The Joys of
Motherhood, The Bride Price and Efuru. Some of the others also touch on social or communal life and norms, but place their emphasis on other issues which will be dealt with in later chapters. References are made to incidents in the novels as appropriate for the issues under discussion.

As the only one out of the ten novels that deals with the pre-colonial and early colonial period, Things Fall Apart is an appropriate novel with which to begin an in depth examination of socio-historical and communal values. This is because it affords the reader the opportunity to see what the society was like before the advent of missionaries and colonialism. Although the novel covers many of the socio-historical and communal issues however, some issues concerning urban living arise in colonial times which are seen in some of the other novels such as The Bride Price and The Joys of Motherhood.

**THINGS FALL APART**

Published in 1958, Things Fall Apart was written specifically by Chinua Achebe in direct response to the negative image of Africa presented in acclaimed British novels such as Joseph Conrad’s Heart of Darkness, Rider Haggard’s Alan Quartermaine, and Joyce Carey’s Mr. Johnson, which were widely accepted in the literary circles of that time as accurate accounts of the lifestyles of some African
cultures and peoples. The novel also debunks the claim and the belief of colonialists that they brought cultural enlightenment and civilization to Africa. As noted by Okafor, Achebe has recreated in the novel

...an authentic and credible environment that has immortalized for the present and future generations what it was like to have lived at a time when British colonialism was imposed on a previously independent African nationality. (p. 437)

The Igbo society presented in the novel, though different from the British society, is no less complete. The people of the nine villages that comprise the Umuofia clan have organization, norms, laws, traditions, beliefs and festivals that are peculiar to them. It is an Igbo society that has stable and well-ordered social and political institutions that have worked well for them over generations. The people are dignified and ready to meet challenges from any quarter.

Umuofia was feared by all its neighbors. It was powerful in war and in magic, and its priests and medicine men were feared in all the surrounding country... And so the neighboring clans who naturally knew of these things feared Umuofia and would not go
to war against it without first trying a peaceful settlement. (pp. 15-16)

From the beginning of the novel, the societal values that guide the behavior and aspirations of individuals and even the community are established. The reader learns in the first chapter about those qualities that win fame and recognition for individuals in the society. Throughout the nine villages that make up Umuofia, Okonkwo is well-known, because of what the narrator refers to as "solid personal achievements" (p. 7). Though his father died a pauper, his fame has spread throughout the land because, by dint of hard work, perseverance and sheer determination, he not only becomes wealthy but is courageous and fearless in war. He is also well-known for his wrestling prowess. At the end of chapter one, the narrator tells us

And so although Okonkwo was still young, he was already one of the greatest men of his time. Age was respected among his people, but achievement was revered. (p. 12)

**POLITICAL SYSTEM**

One of the traditions of the society which helps to keep the society going and which was already in place before the advent of the British missionaries and colonial officers is the political system, which takes into account the
collective will of the people. Historically, democracy had been practiced by generations of Igbo people before outsiders came into their midst. They are unlike many other ethnic groups in Nigeria because those other groups had centralized systems of government and traditional rulers: the Hausa/Fulani had and still have emirs in the north, and the Yoruba in the southwest had and still have their kings and chiefs. As seen in some of the novels, among Igbo people, communal decisions are taken by consensus at clan meetings to decide on those issues that affect the welfare of everyone in the community.

In *Things Fall Apart*, the first missionaries to arrive in the area ask to see the king of the area, but the people tell them that there is no king. “We have men of high title and the chief priests and the elders” (p. 138). Elders and titled men are respected, and they usually direct such meetings. Anyone can express opinions, though those that have the gift of oratory and can express themselves through powerful and persuasive arguments usually carry the day. Throughout the novel there are several examples of how collective decisions are made at clan level.

In chapter two, a decision is made when a daughter of Umuofia is inadvertently killed at Mbaino, a neighboring clan. The town crier is sent round all the nine villages of
Umuofia to convene a meeting at the market place the following morning.

In the morning the market place was full. There must have been about ten thousand men there, all talking in low voices. At last Ogbuefi Ezeugo.... a powerful orator and was always chosen to speak on such occasions.... Many others spoke, and at the end it was decided to follow the normal course of action. An ultimatum was immediately dispatched to Mbaino.... (pp. 14-15)

Another example of communal decision-making occurs towards the end of the novel when a clan meeting is called to discuss the course of action to take against the colonial administrators and the Christians. The Christians have been at logger-heads with the clan and a conflict has been brewing for a while because the church condemns the traditional beliefs as heathen. Church members are encouraged to disregard the norms of the society, and the final straw for the clan happens when Enoch, a church member, commits an unpardonable crime against the society by unmasking an egwugwu, (one of the ancestors, who emerged at the festival in honor of the earth deity). The resultant clash and destruction of the church building leads to
punishment for the leaders of the clan by the colonial
government, represented by the British District
Commissioner. It is at this point that the clan calls a
meeting to decide the next course of action.

Whenever the clan reaches a decision, it is binding on
everyone, regardless of his/her status in the community.
Whoever does not abide will suffer the consequences. At the
beginning of the novel, the clan has asked Okonkwo to look
after Ikemefuna, the boy the people of Mbaneo sent to
compensate the people of Umuofia for the loss of one of
their daughters. Later on in the novel, when the clan
decides that it is time to get rid of the boy, Okonkwo has
no choice but to go along with the decision, though he has
become very fond of the boy. He realizes that his reputation
as a strong, fearless and courageous man would have been in
jeopardy, and he may lose the respect people have for him if
he does not go along with the decision of the community.

COMMUNAL LAWS AND RULES

The community also has its societal laws and rules in
place, and everyone, children and adults, know the
consequences of deviant behavior. Even those who
inadvertently or unwittingly break the norms of the society
know that the law will take its course. Fines are paid for
less serious crimes, but grievous offenses are dealt with
severely. Elders and priests rigidly enforce the law. When Okonkwo "broke the peace," beating his youngest wife during the Week of Peace, he is punished by Ezeani, the priest of the earth goddess, Ani, who tells him, "You will bring to the shrine of Ani tomorrow one she-goat, one hen, a length of cloth and a hundred cowries" (P. 32). But later on in the novel, when Okonkwo inadvertently kills a man with his dane gun at Ogbuefi Ezeudu’s funeral, he receives severe punishment. Though the shot is fired accidentally, he still has to pay the price for shedding the blood of a member of the clan. The societal laws demand that his compound be razed to the ground and that he and his entire family be banished into exile for seven years. Obierika and some of his other friends and family work throughout the night to remove most of the family’s valuables, and he has to flee with members of his family before dawn to his mother’s people at Mbanta. By daybreak Okonkwo’s houses and barns have been destroyed by a mob, which includes his closest friend, Obierika.

It was the justice of the earth goddess, and they were merely her messengers. They had no hatred in their hearts against Okonkwo.... They were merely cleansing the land which Okonkwo had polluted with the blood of a clansman. (p. 117)
In spite of his wealth and status in the community, Okonkwo still has to pay the price. Evidently, no one is above the laws of the community, however harsh the laws may be.

Similar societal laws affect Chike and Aku-nna in *The Bride Price*. The laws of the society dictate that Chike, being an osu, cannot marry Aku-nna. They decide to defy the community's laws, but the consequence is that they can no longer live in Ibuza and be with their extended family members. They can only flee to Ughelli, a town far away from Ibuza.

**TRADITIONAL FESTIVALS AND CEREMONIES**

The society portrayed in *Things Fall Apart* has set events and cycles for doing things, regulated by festivals, communal ceremonies and feasts. There are times and seasons for everything. In chapter four of the novel, the reader learns that the "Week of Peace," which is observed as the rainy season approaches and during which no work is done, precedes the planting season.

...our forefathers ordained that before we plant any crops in the earth we should observe a week in which no man would say a harsh word to his neighbor. We live in peace with our fellows to honor our great goddess
of the earth without whose blessing our crops would not grow. (p. 32)

Another festival that is highly valued by the community takes place just before harvesting the crops. The Feast of the New Yam is held "to honor the earth goddess and the ancestral spirits of the clan. New yams could not be eaten until some had first been offered to these powers" (p. 37). The festival also signals the beginning of the new year and a season of plenty. It is marked with a lot of eating and merrymaking, visiting relations and wrestling in the village square, the ilo, which is watched by all, young and old, to the tunes of drumming and dancing.

As noted in Perspectives of Nigerian Culture, there are ceremonies marking important events in the life of individuals too. Beginning with the elaborate ceremonies that follow childbirth, nearly all Nigerians become involved in a lifelong cycle of traditional ceremonies that mark important events in their life, culminating in the final funeral rites that signal the end of their passage on earth (p. 11).

Examples of such ceremonies are found in the novels selected for this study. In The Joys of Motherhood Nnu Ego and Nnaife hold an elaborate naming ceremony when they have their first child. In The Bride Price Ezekiel Odia's funeral is held according to the customs of the Ibuza people.
Chapter thirteen of *Things Fall Apart* provides an example of how Umuofia people bury their dead, especially distinguished title holders, who also live to a ripe old age. In addition to the traditional rites at Ezeudu’s funeral, there is feasting, drumming and dancing, as well as the firing of guns, as is befitting to a noble warrior.

**BRIDE-PRICE/DOWRY**

One of the societal values seen in the novels and which is still widely practiced among many ethnic groups in Nigeria today is the issue of bride-price/dowry. The marriage contract is usually between the family of the bride-groom and that of the bride. To show appreciation for the girl, the bride-groom and his family have to bring gifts and a pre-agreed amount of money on a day that has been set aside for the ceremony. Some others bargain and finally agree on the bride-price at the ceremony as seen in *Things Fall Apart* when Obierika’s daughter’s suitor come to visit with his father and uncle. Amatokwu’s family also pays a heavy bride-price to Nwokocha Agbadi for Nnu Ego in *The Joys of Motherhood*.

In some ethnic groups, the bride-price is determined by the educational level of the girl. Many parents believe that the more highly educated the girl is, the higher the bride-price should be. In some cases, the value placed on the
girl’s head is determined by the fact that she is a cut above her mates in terms of education and training. One of the contemporary novels in the study, *The Boys at the Border*, reflects this practice. Mr. Emeka Emodi, the Customs boss, who the military later dismisses from office, pays a heavy bride-price for his wife, Gladys.

Emeka was her first husband, because her parents had insisted on her getting [an] education and a suitor from their village before getting married. The fact that Emeka was a widower and more than twenty years older than Gladys did not bother her parents, especially after securing a bride-price of over twenty thousand naira from the man. (p. 16)

In some groups, the prospective grooms are encouraged to bring monetary and other gifts to the prospective bride. The suitor with the most gifts is usually seen as the one who can really take care of the girl in marriage.

**HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES**

The novels also give glimpses of life at other time periods in the history of Nigeria. Just as *Things Fall Apart* and *The Joys of Motherhood* portray life as lived during the pre-colonial and early colonial times, *The Bride Price*, set
in Lagos of the 1940s and early 1950s, gives the reader a
glimpse of life in the southern part of Nigeria during the
latter part of the colonial period. At that time many old
ways were giving way to adoption of western ways, mainly as
a result of the activities of the missionaries in the
schools and churches, as well as the colonial administrative
system. The people, especially those in cities like Lagos,
are portrayed in the novel as mixing both the traditional
and western ways in their activities. They revert to the
traditional whenever it suits them, and resort to western
ways whenever the occasion demands for it.

Some of the novels also give a good account of specific
aspects of the historical experiences of the periods the
authors are writing about. The Bride Price touches on some
of the experiences of the Nigerian soldiers who were
conscripted into the West African Frontier Force, along with
soldiers from other British colonies in West Africa, to
serve in the British Army during the Second World War.
Ezekiel Odia, Aku-nna’s father, dies as a result of
lingering injuries he suffers in the jungles of Burma during
the war. The reader learns about the conditions of West
African soldiers from Aku-nna:

That stupid foot, .... It was the effect of
the war. That much she had been told by many
of their relatives, especially Uncle Richard
who... told the children that the white British could not bear the swamp in Burma and India and so they made West African soldiers stand in for them.... many African soldiers died, not from Hitler's bombs but from the conditions they were subjected to. They were either eaten up by the mosquitoes in the Burmese jungle or bitten up by water snakes in India.... (pp. 10-11)

The Bride Price and The Joys of Motherhood show the lifestyle of the lower classes in particular, mostly menial workers like Ezekiel Odia and Nnaife in the 1930s-1950s. At that time the capital and port city of Lagos, though in the southwestern predominantly Yoruba part of the country, attracted its fair share of people from other ethnic groups in the country. Though the capital has now been moved to Abuja, a new and well-planned city in the center, Lagos remains the commercial and industrial capital, still attracting migrants from all over the federation. The migrants of the early colonial period had very little choice in employment opportunities. Those portrayed in the novels work mostly in blue collar positions in government establishments such as The Railway corporation, like Ezekiel Odia, or as stewards, cooks or laundry boys for expatriates, like Nnaife does for Dr. Meers. As more Nigerians became
educated, they began to enjoy greater employment opportunities, taking over the jobs that expatriates used to do.

In *The Potter's Wheel* and *The Bottled Leopard* (set in 1947) Nigerians are portrayed as teachers in elementary and secondary schools. In *The Bride-Price*, the reader learns about the Ofulue family, who like many others have family members who have graduated from college. This development is not surprising because the history books tell us that the first university in the country was opened in 1948 at Ibadan, though many Nigerians previously had gone to Europe, especially Britain, and America for higher education. In *The Joys Of Motherhood*, Nnu Ego's children go to The United States and Canada for higher education.

**FAMILY SIZE AND CONSEQUENCES OF BARRENNESS FOR WOMEN**

During the periods depicted in these novels one aspect of traditional lifestyle which is highly valued is the number of the number of children in a family, especially male children. Women were expected to bear many children, and those who were barren or could not have several children were usually ridiculed and goaded to seek help wherever they could find it. In chapter one of *The Bride Price*, Ma Blackie, Aku-nda's mother is desperate to have more children, despite having a boy and a girl. Ma Blackie's
despair stems from the fact that, at that time, a very large family size was the order of the day. Women were expected to have many children, and those who have one or two, like Ma Blackie are usually ridiculed and held in contempt. Even Aku-nna had heard other women living in the same compound make songs of her Ma Blackie's childlessness. She had heard over and over again her Ma Blackie and her Nna quarreling over this issue of childlessness. (p. 9)

Ezekiel reminds Ma Blackie that he has paid a heavy bride price for her and has even married her in the Anglican church, but all he has to show for it is an only son, Aku-nna's brother, Nna-ndo. Their society values male children more than female, and until Ma Blackie has more children, especially male children, she will have no peace. Because the society is patrilineal, male children are seen as the ones to continue the family line and name, and female children are perceived as the property of their husbands' families as soon as they get married. The women too are brought up to believe that a barren woman is not fulfilling her destiny as a woman, hence the despair and the frustration that the women often experience.

There are several other examples of the pressure on women who are either barren or have few children in these selected
novels. In *Efuru* tongues begin to wag in the community when *Efuru* has not produced a child after one year of marriage to Adizua, and her mother-in-law, who loves her, finds herself defending her whenever unkind things are said about her. Because she knows the consequences of childlessness, *Efuru* herself begins to worry during the second year of her marriage, and she gets her father to take her to a dibia for help.

In *The Joys of Motherhood*, Nnu-Ego becomes despondent and experiences despair when she does not get pregnant. Having grown up in Ibuza, she knows the consequences of barrenness. Her first husband’s family pressures him to marry another wife who can produce children. His new wife becomes pregnant almost immediately. From that point on, Nnu-Ego is ill-treated and she eventually has to leave her first husband and move to far away Lagos to marry Nnaife. She even attempts suicide when her first child dies in Lagos. She only begins to know fulfillment as a woman when she begins to have children.

In *The Potter’s Wheel*, the issue of childlessness and its implications are seen in the anxiety that Teacher’s wife, Madam, experiences every month. The couple has been married for fifteen years, during which Madam has had neither a child or even a miscarriage. The reader soon learns that Teacher has done something about the situation.
For fear that his name would be forgotten after his death if he had no issue, Teacher had recently allowed himself to be persuaded to marry an illiterate wife for the sake of his aged mother in the village. This wife had already borne him a daughter.... (p. 135)

Even in the same novel, Obu’s mother spoils him and allows him to get away with the type of behavior that his sisters could not get away with because he is the only male child in the family. In *Things Fall Apart*, one of Okonkwo’s wives, Ekwefi, also suffers from despair because she has only one child, a daughter, in a polygamous family where the other wives have many children.

**COMMUNAL VALUES AND NORMS**

The patrilineal nature of many of the ethnic groups in Nigeria makes male dominance easy. In most households husbands rule their families with iron hands, and in the society at large, important decisions are made and carried out by men. The women have to acquiesce because that is the norm. In *Things Fall Apart* only men are present at the communal meeting called to decide what to do about the woman who has been killed by the people of Mbaino. “In the morning the market place was full. There must have been about ten thousand men there...” (p. 14). In another part of the
novel, Okonkwo talks about a clan meeting being for only men.

Whether it is rural or urban people who are being portrayed in each of the novels, the people hold on to and practice some of the communal values of their hometown communities. One communal practice which is evident in the novels is that of rallying round any family that needs help in times of need. Though no one condones Okonkwo’s offense in *Things Fall Apart* he receives much needed help when he has to go into exile. Before his compound gets destroyed, his belongings are removed and stored in his friend Obierika’s barns. During his seven years of exile in Mbanta, the same Obierika helps him to take care of the farmlands and seed yams, getting share-croppers for them, and faithfully bringing the money made from them to Okonkwo in Mbanta.

In *The Bride Price* Ibuza people in Lagos rally round Aku-nna and Nna-ndo, when their father, Ezekiel, dies and when Ma Blackie returns from Ibuza to Lagos. On the day of the family’s departure to Ibuza, they help to arrange transportation of the family’s belongings. Even other Ibo people who are not from their hometown respond to the need of the family. When Ma Blackie and the children head for Ibuza, they are given financial assistance and escorted to
the motor-park by both Ibuza ladies and representatives of the Ibo section of All Saints Church.

In *Juju Rock* Rikku receives assistance when he most needs it from the village-head of Dan Koma village, as well as from some of the people who had known his father in the area around the rock. Without their timely help he could have lost his life to either the secret cult members or the greedy treasure hunters. In *Efuru*, Efuru uses her wealth to give financial assistance to those who are less fortunate than herself. She herself receives a lot of assistance from Ajanupu, her mother-in-law’s sister, even when she is no longer married to their son.

Other examples of communal help are found in some of the other novels, even those set in contemporary times. As is evidently portrayed in these novels a true sense of community still prevails in Nigeria. Members of extended families, even cousins ten times removed, usually remember their blood ties when the occasion calls for it; and members of the same ethnic group, whenever they meet in foreign lands, usually band together and help each other whenever they can. Even if they have not known each other at home, the fact that they belong to the same ethnic group is the link that binds them together, ensuring that they always seek each other out and offer help when necessary. An example of such is in *The Boys at the Border* in which
Gladys, the wife of the Customs boss, receives extensive assistance from Peter, a fellow Ibo Customs officer.

Another cultural norm related to the idea of rallying round families in need of help is the way news, especially bad news, is broken to those concerned. Bad news is never related immediately when it happens. Usually extended family members are informed first, especially the older relatives. Then everyone gathers at an appointed time when the news is gently broken in the presence of family and friends so that much support and comfort can be given. In _The Joys of Motherhood_, when Cordelia notices that Nnaife and Nnu-Ego’s first child has died, she does not rush straight to Nnaife to break the news. She first looks for her own husband Ubani to tell him. It would have been improper for her to break the news directly. Another example is in _The Bride Price_. When Ezekiel Odia dies, extended family members and Ibuza people begin to gather at his house soon after. No one tells the children anything, but by late evening Aku-nna, the older child, realizes that it is unusual for many relations to visit the family at the same time. It then dawns on her that her father is dead. Aku-nna’s mother, Ma Blackie, who has been away in Ibuza when her husband dies, does not hear the news in Ibuza. Her husband’s older brother does not tell her, and when she arrives in Lagos, her cousin does not tell her immediately after her arrival. Everyone
wants her to reach her home before she learns of Ezekiel's death. Among many ethnic groups in Nigeria today, including the Yoruba people, this is still the normal way when someone dies.

Another communal norm which is highly valued in many ethnic groups in Nigeria, and which is demonstrated in The Bride Price is showing respect for elders. Generally, those who belong to a younger age group cannot by custom call those older by name. In chapters 2 and 3 as Aku-nna and Nnando interact with their many relations and compatriots from Ibuza, they refer to their older relations as "Uncle Richard," "Uncle Uche," and "Auntie Uzo." Also, children usually refer to females who are much older as "mother," and males as "father." The narrator points out,

To the Ibos and some Yorubas in Nigeria, a natural mother is not a child's only mother. A grandmother may be known as "big mother" or the "old mother", and one's actual mother may be called "little mother" if her mother or mother-in-law is still alive. This title is extended to all young aunts and elder sisters, in fact to any young female who helps in mothering the child.... It is very important that a child is the child of the community. (pp. 36-37)
In the same novel, Aku-nna's father is referred to as Uche's little father:

Among the Ibo people, an elderly male relative, who looks after you like a father, is referred to as your "big father" if he is older than your natal father. Nna was younger than Uche's father. (The Bride Price, p. 18)

Showing respect for elders is an important similarity in social and communal value that is seen over and over again in several of the novels. Respect for those older is also shared by many ethnic groups in Nigeria. Among the Yoruba people a younger male usually prostrates for those older, while younger females kneel down to greet elders. Younger people have to talk respectfully at all times when in conversation with older ones among many ethnic groups.

Another communal norm among the Igbo people especially, is the issue of the caste system which is dealt with in Things Fall Apart and The Bride Price. The descendants of slaves, known as the osu, are regarded as outcasts. It is an abomination for a descendant of a free-born to marry an osu. This is why Okoboshi's family could kidnap Aku-nna and get away with it in The Bride Price. Somehow they must have heard that Aku-nna has fallen in love with Chike, who is from an osu family. Since their son wants her for his wife, they take the bold, but not unprecedented step, of
kidnapping the girl, knowing that the whole community will be on their side. Rather than allowing two young people in love to marry, the people condone the kidnapping.

Also, the members of Aku-nna's extended family cannot believe that Chike, an osu, who should also be aware of the customs, would permit himself to fall in love with Aku-nna. Because of the shame and disgrace such a marriage would bring to the family, one of Okonkwo's sons by his senior wife even threatens to kill her if the rumors turn out to be true.

You mean Chike, the school teacher? But he is the son of slaves, Mother, and he knows his place... If this was true, it was the greatest insult that could befall a family like theirs, which had never been tainted with the blood of a foreigner, to say nothing of that of the descendant of slaves. (p. 79)

In Things Fall Apart we learn that osu people are outcasts. An osu is set apart for the gods, "a taboo forever, and his children after him" (p. 146). When the missionaries arrive, osu people are among the first converts because the missionaries accept them as being equal with everyone else. The young church is sorely tested over this issue and some converts go back to the clan, rather than attend the same gatherings with an osu. The firmness of the
church leaders saves the church from breaking up and the Christians have to accept the osu in their midst. In The Bride-Price Reverend Osborne preaches the same message of equality for all in the sight of the Lord. It also turns out that most "of the slaves the missionaries took in were to become the first teachers, headmasters, and later their children became the first doctors and lawyers in many Ibo towns" (p. 83).

Another practice which the missionaries effectively put an end to over time, in the eastern part of Nigeria is that of regarding twins as abomination. Twin children were thrown away into the bush as soon as they were born. Historical data suggest that one real life missionary who did a lot to save twin children in the 18th century was Mary Slessor from Scotland. Her grave site is in Calabar in Cross River State. The practice of throwing twins away is mentioned in Things Fall Apart. Okonkwo's son, Nwoye has heard that "twins were put in earthenware pots and thrown away in the forest..." (p. 60). On the other hand, among the Yoruba people of the southwest twins are highly desired and welcome in families because it is believed that they bring good luck and prosperity into families that are lucky enough to have them. Whenever their mothers go out with them, people usually give them monetary and other gifts. I know this is the practice among the Yorubas because I am a Yoruba by birth.
To non-indigenes, some of the laws and customs discussed in this chapter and portrayed in the novels may seem unreasonable or even cruel, but these communities represent ethnic groups that have been in existence for centuries. The people of Umuofia and Ibuza represent the Igbo ethnic group in part of Delta state and the eastern states of Nigeria. Their laws, norms, and mores have kept their communities and clans together, ensuring law and order from generation to generation. The people have accepted them and live by them.

**DECLINE OF CUSTOMS**

However, many of the customs are no longer practiced, or are dying out, or are not as rigidly enforced as before. Many have been wiped out as more people became educated. Urbanization and official government intervention have also rendered some of them useless and outmoded. Osu people are no longer isolated in society as many live in areas other than their hometowns, where they are not known as osus or people do not care about such things. In some areas, though, many would still think twice about marrying an osu.

Another custom, that of inheriting brothers' wives, is no longer widely practiced, again mainly because of education and urbanization. Instead, widows and their children are taken care of and given the help they need by members of the extended family, who regard the children as children of the
family that must be helped to have a good start in life. An example of this sort of help is seen in Chike and the River where Chike's mother sends him to Onitsha to live with his uncle and go to school there, because she can no longer afford to pay his school fees. The same type of help is rendered to Felicia in Felicia. Her uncles have been paying her school fees since the death of her father. This practice is the more common pattern nowadays.

Table 2 gives an overview of Chapter 4.
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CHAPTER 5

FAMILY STRUCTURE/EXTENDED FAMILY

Family structure and the pattern of extended family relationships are similar in the novels as in real life, regardless of which part of the country or ethnic group is being portrayed. In Nigeria, polygamy has traditionally been the acceptable form of marriage among the various ethnic groups in the country and is still widely practiced in many areas, though the younger generation and Christians tend to shy away from it. Among the educated, especially in the urban areas and among Christians in particular, monogamy is usually the norm. Among the older generation, monogamy is the exception rather than the rule. Also, among the Muslims, polygamy is acceptable because, according to the Muslims I know, their holy book, the Koran, allows a man to marry up to four wives though he must strive to be fair and treat the women equally.

FAMILY PATTERN AND STRUCTURE

In the novels selected for this study, especially the ones portraying the pre-colonial and colonial periods,
polygamy seems to be the accepted practice, particularly in those novels about people in the rural areas. In *Things Fall Apart* families are in polygamous relationships, in which the husband is lord and master with his word as law. Okonkwo, the main character, has three wives. He "ruled his household with a heavy hand. His wives, especially the youngest, lived in perpetual fear of his fiery temper, and so did his little children" (p. 16). The novel shows how each family lives in large compounds, with the husband having his own hut. Each wife also has her own hut, where her children stay with her.

Two types of family structure are evident in *The Bride Price*. There is the nuclear/monogamous structure typical of urban areas, depicted in the first chapter of the novel. The reader is introduced to the Odia family, which consists of Ezekiel Odia, his wife, and two children—Aku-nna and Nna-nndo who live in the city of Lagos. Many of their kinsmen from the Igbo town of Ibuza, living in the city at that time, also have monogamous marriages.

In the other novels in the study, there is evidence that polygamy is not commonly practiced in the urban areas, nor is it common among Christians, especially in the novels about the later periods. With the advent of Christianity and colonial rule, changes in traditional family structure began to take place, especially as the missionaries discouraged polygamy. In both of Chukwuemeka Ike's novels, the parents
of the main characters have monogamous marriages. Mazi Lazarus in *The Potter’s Wheel* has only one wife, Mama Obu, though no one knows what might have happened if Obu, their only son out of seven children, had not been born. As fits the societal norm, Mazi Laza may have married another wife if Mama Obu had continued to have girls, as the opening pages of the novel suggests.

Obuechina was the only boy out of seven children born to Mazi Lazarus Maduabuchi and his wife.... With Obu’s arrival, his mother’s place [in the family] had been firmly secured; she could sleep in spite of thunder, no matter how many wives her husband decided to take. (p. 9)

Thus, in spite of Christianity societal traditions and norms still have a strong pull on the people. The society values lots of children in families, especially male children. Even Teacher in *The Potter’s Wheel*, who is a member of the Anglican Church, cannot resist temptation of having children out of wedlock, since his wife has not had a child in fifteen years of marriage. He has a daughter by another woman, whom he secretly marries.

In *The Bottled Leopard* the main character, Amobi, is also from a monogamous family. As members of the church, his parents would suffer reprisals if they were involved in acts
that are considered unchristian. It might be the Christianity factor that keeps Amobi's father from marrying other wives. Even when Amobi's father consults a dibia to solve the problem of leopard-possession, he has to do it secretly. The reader learns in the opening paragraph of chapter eighteen that, "Every member of the family [Amobi's father's extended family] had become a Christian, and so could not identify openly with the shrine for fear of reprisals" (p. 133).

In the more contemporary novels, the pattern of those in urban areas remaining monogamous is also evident. In *Felicia* the landlord of the house in the city of Enugu is monogamous, and in *The Boys at the Border*, Emeka Emodi, the Customs Department Director, has only one wife, Gladys. But Baba Lati, the head of the smugglers and some of the other smugglers, who have their base in a rural town on the western border are polygamous.

The more common family pattern and structure in the rural areas is the polygamous/traditional family. After the death of Ezekiel in *The Bride Price*, Ma Blackie and her children move to back to rural Ibuza because the family no longer has a breadwinner in Lagos, the big city. At Ibuza, Ma Blackie, inherited by Ezekiel's brother Okonkwo, becomes his fourth wife, as tradition demands. Thus, Aku-nna and Nna-ndo, used to monogamous family life in Lagos, are suddenly thrust into
the intricacies of a polygamous household, and they have to get used to the rural lifestyle in Ibuza with its customs and traditions. But they have no choice because their mother accepts that tradition demands she be inherited by her late husband's brother. At Ibuza they become subjected to rivalry by Mgbeke, Okonkwo's most senior wife, who feels that Ma Blackie and her children are being given special treatment by Okonkwo. In Ibuza, Ma Blackie, like each of the other wives, has her own hut, which her children share with her.

In The Joys of Motherhood Nnu Ego's father, Nwokocha Agbadi, also has many wives. Nnu Ego's mother, Ona, is Agbadi's concubine.

...he had many women in his time.... He married a few women in the traditional sense.... Two of Agbadi's wives came from Ibuza, two from his own village of Ogboli, three were slaves he had captured during his wanderings; and he also had two mistresses.

(pp. 10-11)

Later in the novel, Nnaife, Nnu-Ego's husband inherits his late brother's wife, and when the second wife leaves during the war, he marries a young girl from the village as soon as he returns from the war.

Even in the novels that are about people from other parts of the country and the ones about contemporary times,
polygamy is presented as normal. The village chief who helps Rikku in _Juju Rock_ has many wives, as is the practice of Moslems in the northern part of the country. In _The Boys at the Border_ the head of the Traders’ Association, Baba Lati, who in reality controls the cocoa smuggling ring along the western border, also has many wives. In addition, one of the smugglers, Atere, who gets the association into trouble with the Customs Officers by killing the Director’s brother-in-law, gives polygamy as the cause of his troubles. “He needed money to marry a third wife, he had decided to spirit out three trucks of cocoa, without tipping off the customs” (p. 18). He shot Samuel when the officer interfered with the smuggling plans.

EXTENDED FAMILY

Among the various ethnic groups, a great value is placed on blood ties. In addition to members of one’s immediate family, whether polygamous or monogamous, anyone with blood ties, no matter how many times removed the relationship, is regarded as extended family.

The extended family and communal help system exist in almost all the novels, with similarities in the way the system is practiced. In _The Bride Price_, the reader is informed that the Ibuza people have what is called,
... the group mind. They all help each other when in trouble or in need, and the extended family system still applied even in a town like Lagos, hundreds of miles from Ibuza. They are a people who think alike, whose ways are alike, so much so that it would not occur to anyone of them to think or act differently. Even if Nna had not told his nephew Uche, it would have been Uche's responsibility to find out and take care of his young cousins.... (p. 16)

All blood relations help one another whenever they are in the position to do so. Extending a helping hand to a relation is a cultural requirement; everyone is brought up to help relations whenever one is in a position to help. Uche is in Lagos either because Ezekiel decided to bring him from Ibuza or someone requested him to, in order to give the boy a start in life. The novel explains how it usually works:

As a young man of fifteen or so, you would go to live with a bachelor relative, maybe an uncle or cousin. You would clean, cook and wash for him, and by way of payment, you were fed, clothed in your master's cast-offs and, if you were lucky, would attend evening
classes to learn a trade that would see you through life.... (p. 21)

As soon as Ezekiel’s death is announced, the first set of people to go to the children’s aid are their cousins and extended family members. First to arrive are Uncle Uche and Uncle Joseph, who are really Aku-nna’s father’s cousins, but because she is younger, Aku-nna cannot call them by name. Next to arrive are Auntie Uzo, followed by Auntie Mary, one of her father’s relations, who has not been a frequent visitor to their home, because she lives far away in another part of the city.

There are additional examples of extended family members rendering assistance to relations in the other novels. Those who are in the position to help and who can afford to help usually do so. In *Things Fall Apart*, when Okonkwo has to leave his fatherland, he makes his way to Mbanta, where his mother’s people live, certain of the fact that his mother’s kinsmen will render every assistance in their power for him and his family. In chapter fourteen, the reader learns that “Okonkwo was well received by his mother’s kinsmen in Mbanta. The old man who received him was his mother’s younger brother, who was now the eldest surviving member of that family” (p. 119). Knowing that Okonkwo and his family have arrived with very few material goods because they had to flee from Umuofia in haste, the members of the extended
family help him to have a new start, since Okonkwo and his family will be in exile for seven years.

Okonkwo was given a plot of ground on which to build his compound, and two or three pieces of land on which to farm during the coming planting season. With the help of his mother’s kinsmen, he built himself an obi (his own dwelling) and three huts for his wives... Each of Uchendu’s sons contributed three hundred seed-yams to enable their cousin to plant a farm.... (pp. 119-120)

The kinsmen help all they can because they know that Okonkwo would have done as much for them if the situation had been reversed.

In the opening pages of *Chike and the River*, the reader learns that Chike is going to Onitsha to live with his uncle and attend school. His widowed mother has had to work very hard to feed, clothe and pay the school fees of Chike and his two sisters, and it must have been a big relief for her when the boy’s uncle agreed to take him to Onitsha to live with him.

Felicia in *Felicia* also receives the same kind of assistance from her uncles. Soon after the civil war ends, Felicia’s mother, a widow, pays a visit to "her husband’s elder brothers to propose formally that they should resume
their sponsorship of her daughter in secondary school” (p. 13). Her mother does not see anything wrong in asking the uncles to resume their sponsorship of Felicia in school; it is the norm of the society. If she had had the means, she would have done the same for another member of the extended family. Later in the novel, Felicia goes back to school with the help of her uncles.

In the same novel, Felicia is taken to Enugu to live with Nurse Ngozi, Adaku’s sister, to avoid embarrassment to the family. She needs help and as tradition dictates, as long as someone needs help, another member of the family always comes up with a solution to the problem. Another example of such assistance is Madame Joy’s goodwill gesture soon after the end of the war. She had left the village in anger years before as a result of her husband’s ill-treatment of her because of her barrenness. But she arrives with timely assistance for her family members and the villagers, a lorry load of scarce commodities such as foodstuffs and clothing.

Towards the end of the novel, the family of the father of Felicia’s child seek her family out to pledge their readiness to do all they can for Felicia and her child. Although their son has died just before the end of the war and they have just found out about Felicia and the child, they have the obligation to do what they can because the child carries their family blood in his veins.
In *The Boys at the Border* Mr. Emodi, the Customs boss, makes sure he helps Samuel, his wife's brother, to get a job in the Customs Department, though he tries not to show any favoritism to Samuel as his wife wanted. Knowing that the western border was a dangerous sector to work in because of the ruthless smugglers, Gladys has repeatedly begged Emeka to transfer her brother back to Lagos, but he wants him to serve the mandatory three years of rural assignment. As fate would have it, Samuel has three days left on his rural posting, when he is gunned down at the border for challenging one of the smugglers, Atere. The fact that Samuel has a job as a Customs Officer through his brother-in-law's influence is not frowned upon. It is an acceptable practice to help relations get jobs. Even though it may be regarded as nepotism, everyone does it. Those who are fortunate to have good jobs and are in a position to help others are expected to do so.

An analysis of the novels from those that represent pre-colonial and colonial times such as *Things Fall Apart*, *The Bride Price*, and *The Joys of Motherhood* to those that present contemporary times such as *Felicia* and *The Boys at the Border* shows that some aspects of the culture remain constant, regardless of which ethnic group and which part of the country are being discussed. Polygamy is still practiced, though not as widely practiced as before, and the
extended family system is still firmly entrenched in the
cultural practices and norms of the different ethnic groups.

Table 3 gives an overview of Chapter 5.
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CHAPTER 6

RELIGIOUS BELIEFS

In many of the novels, there are several similarities in the religious beliefs and practices of the communities and people portrayed. Evident in almost all of the novels is the strong pull of traditional religious practices. The general trend tends to be for people who claim to be Christians or Moslems to turn to traditional religious practitioners and priests whenever they have problems or are in trouble. They keep going back to the faith and the gods of their fathers to find solutions to their problems. Furthermore, this mixing of faiths with traditional religious practices when people are confronted with problems occurs among the adherents of both Christian and Islamic faiths.

TRADITIONAL RELIGIOUS PRACTICES

*Things Fall Apart*, the only novel of the ten selected for this study that is set in pre-colonial times, shows the traditional religious beliefs and practices of the people. The Igbo people of Umuofia and its environs have well established traditional religious beliefs and practices.
Things begin to change with the advent of Christian missionaries and colonial officers. In chapter 21, one of the elders explains the traditional religious outlook of the clan to Mr. Brown, one of the missionaries: "There is one supreme God who made heaven and earth... We also believe in Him and call Him Chukwu. He made all the world and the other gods... messengers so that we could approach Him through them..." (p. 164). In the novel, the reader learns about the different gods and goddesses and their responsibilities. Ani is

the earth goddess and the source of all fertility. Ani played a greater part in the life of the people than any other deity. She was the ultimate judge of morality and conduct. And what was more, she was in close communion with the departed fathers of the clan whose bodies have been committed to earth. (p. 37)

The Week of Peace is observed every year before the planting season to honor the earth goddess because the people believe that without Ani's blessing crops will not grow. When Okonkwo breaks the peace during the Week of Peace, Ezeani, the priest of Ani, is the one who visits him to tell him the punishment and fines he has to pay for committing an abomination. Another annual festival held to honor and give
thanks to Ani and the ancestral spirits of the clan is the Feast of the New Yam. Celebrated with great feasting, pomp and pageantry, this festival signifies the beginning of a new year, and it takes place before the crops are harvested.

In arguments with missionaries, some of the other gods of the clan are mentioned. Another old man asks,

Which is this god of yours... of the earth, the god of the sky, Amadiora or the thunderbolt... How else could they say that Ani, Amadiora are harmless? And Idemili and Ogwugwu too? (pp. 135-136)

The people also consult with powerful oracles through the priests whenever the people have problems. One such oracle, which people come from far and near to consult, is the Oracle of the Hills and Caves also known as Agbala, whose priestess proclaims the oracle's will at its shrine.

They came when misfortune dogged their steps or when they had a dispute with their neighbors. They came to discover what the future held for them or to consult with the spirits of their departed fathers. (Things Fall Apart, p. 19)

The Oracle of the Hills and the Caves is also consulted whenever the whole clan has an important decision to make. For example, whenever the clan has a dispute with another
clan, the oracle must be consulted. The clan never goes to war without consulting the oracle, and it must give the go-ahead, otherwise Umuofia would not go to war. *Things Fall Apart* shows that Umuofia
never went to war unless its case was clear and just and was accepted as such by its Oracle -- the Oracle of the Hills and the Caves. And there were indeed occasions when the Oracle had forbidden Umuofia to wage a war. If the clan had disobeyed the Oracle they surely would have been beaten.... (p. 16)

Another oracle mentioned in the novel is the Afa Oracle, whose diviner is also the medicineman that Okonkwo consults when one of his wives, Ekwefi, loses her second child. The reason for consulting this oracle is to ascertain the reason for the loss of the baby.

In addition to worshipping the gods and goddesses of the clan, each family usually has a shrine within the compound for the personal gods of the family. Okonkwo has his shrine near the barn in his compound, in which the wooden symbols of his personal god and of his ancestral spirits are kept. "He worshipped them with sacrifices of kola-nut, food and palm-wine, and offered prayers to them on behalf of himself,
his three wives and eight children” (Things Fall Apart, p. 18).

Apart from consulting the oracles for problems, the people consult dibias or medicinemen for illnesses, infertility, childlessness, infant mortality and like problems. The people also believe in the existence of a chi, a personal god more like a guardian angel, who is a controller of personal destiny. In Things Fall Apart Okonkwo’s rise from great poverty to success and wealth is not attributed to luck: “...one could say that his chi or his personal god was good... Ibo people have a proverb that when a man says yes, his chi says yes also. Okonkwo said yes very strongly; so his chi agreed” (p. 29). But in The Joys of Motherhood, Nnu Ego’s chi is blamed for her childlessness in her first marriage and earlier in her second marriage, and her father makes expensive sacrifices to appease her chi. In The Potter’s Wheel, chi is defined as a “personal God as distinct from the God of the community. Sometimes used to refer to fate” (p. 218).

CHRISTIAN MISSIONARY ACTIVITIES

The arrival of the missionaries in Things Fall Apart, and the conversion of people to the Christian faith, begins the erosion of the traditional religious beliefs in Umuofia and its outlying areas. The missionaries condemn and preach
against the people’s belief in the many gods and goddesses of the land, as well as against taboos such as osu outcasts and twin babies.

There are several reasons for the success of the missionaries. The fact that the outcasts and other undesirables join the church but are not struck down by the gods leads more people to join the church. It also seems that the Christian God is more powerful than the gods of the land. When the missionaries first arrive, the elders do not take them seriously, believing that the gods of the clan will protect them from the foreign religion. To test the faith of the missionaries and the power of their God, the clan gives the missionaries the evil forest, which no right thinking member of the clan would accept. But, to the amazement of everyone in the community, the church thrives and nothing sinister happened to its members. More converts then join the church believing that the Christian God must be very powerful, because the Christians continue to dwell on the land given to them without any harm. As more people become converted though, many of them try to hold on to aspects of their culture which suit them. However, the leaders of the church ban the participation of converts in traditional ceremonies and rituals.
MIXING OF RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL PRACTICES

In the novels some of the people practice Christianity while some of the people practice the traditional beliefs; but by and large, the majority practice a mixture of both. Several examples of this type of religious mix occur in The Bride Price. First, the Odias, who "had their marriage sanctified by Anglicanism" (p. 9) do not rely on the prayers of the church when Ma Blackie cannot conceive more children. She goes home to Ibuza to consult a traditional medicine man and to appease the Oboshi river goddess for more children. Her husband dies while she is away. In the novel, the reader is informed that, in his lifetime,

... Ezekiel Odia was a typical product of this cultural mix. He would preach the gospel on Sundays, he would sing praises to the European Living God, he would force his children to pray before and after meals; but, all this did not prevent him calling in a native medicine-man when the occasion arose.... (p. 29)

At Ezekiel's funeral there is confusion as to which group will conduct the funeral ceremonies, though the Christians prevail in the end. Some of the Ibuza people want a traditional funeral, while some want Christian rites. Therefore, Nna-nndo being the only male child, is asked,
"...do you want your father to be in heaven with the angels, or down in the earth?" (p. 41). The poor boy, who had seen beautiful pictures of heaven in his Sunday school classes, of course wants his father in heaven. Because of his decision, the Christians conduct the funeral services, but the Ibuza people ensure that several traditional practices are observed at the burial.

The people do not see anything wrong with this mix of cultures. It seems as if tradition wins each time there is a conflict between traditional and Christian beliefs. The people continue to mix traditional and religious values whenever it suits them, regardless of what their spiritual leaders say. The osu caste system is an example of an issue in which tradition takes precedence over religious requirements. Although Rev. Osborne preaches equality of all human beings, societal laws decree that it is an abomination for osu people to marry the descendants of the freeborn. "We are all equal in the sight of the Lord." This statement had been hammered into Chike's ears by the Reverend Osborne right from the time Chike was a little boy. Yet, the society says he is an outcast. The osu issue also causes a rift in the young church at Umuofia in Things Fall Apart. Some of the people cannot separate their beliefs in indigenous practices from those of their new Christian faith. They believe they will be the laughing stock of the people of the
clan if it is known that the church members have osu people in their midst. "You do not understand,... What will the heathen say to us when they hear that we receive osu into our midst? They will laugh." (p. 146).

One traditional norm which the church frowns upon but has not been quite successful in totally eradicating is polygamy. Even the prosperous and highly educated Ofulue family, who are supposedly Anglicans, are not left out. The senior Ofulue, Chike's father, has four wives although Christians are supposed to marry only one wife. Men would marry more wives at the slightest excuse, especially when a wife is barren, or has one or two children, or no male children at all. The societies portrayed in these novels do not tolerate childlessness at all. Usually, a husband of a childless woman will marry another wife at the urging of his family. Because Teacher in The Potter's Wheel finds himself in such a situation -- he has no child after fifteen years of marriage -- he decides to marry a wife for the sake of his mother, to bear children for the family as the only surviving male. In his discussion with Mama Obu Mazi Laza notes, "Everybody, of course, knows that the woman with Teacher's mother is meant for teacher. The church will stop him from teaching if he takes a second wife or changes wives" (pp. 93-94).
In some of the other novels, characters claiming to be Christians run to diviners and medicinemen whenever they have problems. In *The Joys of Motherhood* Nnu Ego consults with a dibia to protect her son, Oshia, from Adaku, Nnaife’s second wife, when the boy tells her that he had seen Adaku in his dreams the previous night. Yet, she attends Saint Jude’s Church every Sunday.

A similar pattern occurs in *The Bottled Leopard*. Although he is a Christian, Mazi Eze takes his son Amobi to a powerful dibia in order to solve the problem of Amobi’s leopard-possessing powers. Later in the novel, the dibia assures Mazi Eze that the proper rites have been performed. However, he can only take the dibia’s word that the situation is under control because he can be excommunicated from the church for participating in such heathen practices. “Every member of the family had become a Christian, and so could not identify openly with the shrine for fear of reprisals” (*The Bottled Leopard*, p. 133). Even the dibia has mixed beliefs; a full plate color portrait of the Virgin Mary and her son Jesus Christ decorates his living room.

Obu’s parents have the same dilemma in *The Potter’s Wheel*. Mama Obu, ever anxious and protective of her only son, has decided that her son is an *ogbanje*, one of those children that are believed to torment families. It is believed that an *ogbanje* child is “capable of being born
over and over again to the same parents or to different parents. Literally, [it means] he who goes and comes several times” (The Potter’s Wheel, p. 218). Mama Obu secures the services of a medicine woman, believed to be a specialist in curing an ogbanje. Her husband, however, initially opposes the idea because of what their church leader, the catechist, will say. Though a husband’s word is usually the law in the society, this time Mama Obu does not budge for fear of losing her only son and the repercussions sure to follow. She tells her husband: “The catechist should not push his mouth into something he knows nothing about... If he can remove ogbanje, let him tell us; if he cannot, he should... stop interfering with those to whom God has given the power to do so” (p. 44).

Realizing that his wife is determined to go ahead with her plans, Mazi Laza agrees that the ceremony should be performed. On the day the medicine woman comes to their house to carry out the rites to expunge the ogbanje from Obu, Mazi Laza arranges an alibi for himself, traveling out of town on a two-day business trip. If the church teacher or someone else later takes him to task for allowing a pagan ritual in his house, he can claim that he has been out of town. Although he is a member of the church committee, “he had seen enough evidence to convince him that ogbanje existed, but since the church preached against it, he had no
option but to dissociate himself openly from the ritual” (p. 62).

Later in the novel the same Mama Obu, whose faith in a traditional healer’s ability to cure her son’s ogbanje had been unshakable earlier, bursts into songs of praise for God and Jesus Christ, along with the other women of the village, for bringing her son back to Umuchukwu on vacation. The women sing thus,

“Ebele Jesu erika
Onwelu onye Jesu n’ememolu ebele
Ebele Jesu erika
Onwelu onye Jesu n’ememolu ebele”
(The Potter’s Wheel, p. 202)

The translation of the song is as follows,

“Jesus Christ’s mercies are super abundant,
Is there anyone on whom he has not lavished them.”

Even the novels about contemporary times show evidence of the mixing of religious practices by the people. In The Boys at the Border the chief of the smugglers, Baba Lati, as well as some of the members of the traders’ association, are Moslems, but they rely heavily on Agadagidi, the traditional medicineman for magical/supernatural protection from Customs officers. The Customs officers are not left out either. Peter (obviously a Christian name) Ikoku, the chief officer of the Customs command post for the area, agrees to bring in
a herbalist for consultation and protection for the officers against the antics of the smugglers.

Another example is seen in Juju Rock. In the dead of the night, Rikku runs to a Mallam, who is a seer/sage, before the final leg of the journey to the rock. In that district, Mallam Yahaya is well-known for his accurate prophecies. Rikku tells him, “Thanks be to Allah...You are the only man who can help me. I want you to ‘look’ for me...the process of ‘looking’ which means trying to see what the future holds for a client” (p. 45).

In Felicia Felicia’s mother, who proclaims to be a Christian, clandestinely consults with a dibia when Felicia’s uncles agree to send her back to school to continue her education that had been interrupted by the civil war and her pregnancy just before end of the war. “It was impossible for such a well-known Christian to admit that she had traveled early that day to the distant house of a dibiah to ask him about Felicia and her child...” (p. 85).

Many people are still like Felicia’s mother today, secretly consulting traditional medicine men when they feel that there is need for them to do so. Some others are like Mama Obu in The Potter’s Wheel, who feels that some problems are beyond the powers of the catechist of her church and that only the traditional practitioners can cure or solve certain problems. Apart from the Christians, many of those
who profess the Islamic faith also mix religious practices, just like Rikku in *Juju Rock*, when he consults with a seer in Dan Koma village, about the expedition to the rock.

In those novels about the earlier periods, the religious emphasis is on the traditional beliefs, practices and superstitions, and in those about the later times and contemporary, the emphasis is mixed. But one fact stands out and remains very clear: whenever the people have to make a choice between the practices of their adopted religions, whether Christianity or Islam, they almost always revert back to the traditional.

Table 4 gives an overview of Chapter 6.
### Table 4 - Religious Beliefs

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PART TWO -- ADOLESCENT CONCERNS IN THE NOVELS
CHAPTER 7

GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES AND CONFLICTS

IN THE NOVELS

Like all young adults everywhere, the young adults in the selected novels have to cope with the problems associated with growing up. The adolescent period is the time young adults go through the process of learning to conform with the societal customs and norms which will help them become responsible members of the society. At this stage of their lives, they are confronted the many problems young adults face adjusting to the demands of adolescence. They try to cope with young adulthood while losing their identity as children at the same time. Parents and other adults expect them to comply with laid-down societal traditions and norms, but their own instincts and desires usually pull them in directions different from what the adults want. This difference in opinion and outlook leads to constant conflicts and differences between the older generation and the younger members of the society.
CONFLICTS WITH PARENTS/PROBLEMS WITH NORMS

Many of the adolescents in the novels face the problem of having interests and desires that are in conflict with the cultural norms of their parents and other significant adults in their lives. Such conflicts usually arise because the adolescents find certain societal norms unacceptable. They either seek alternatives or sometimes choose to be defiant, break the rules and face the consequences. Chike and Aku- franca in *The Bride Price*, Nwoye in *Things Fall Apart*, Nnu-Ego’s sons in *The Joys of Motherhood*, Chike in *Chike and The River*, Amobi in *The Bottled Leopard*, Obuechina in *The Potter’s Wheel*, and Felicia in *Felicia* -- all at one time or the other find it difficult to accept some of the norms of their communities and the expectations of the adults in their lives.

In *Things Fall Apart* the problems of Nwoye, Okonkwo’s first son, begin with Okonkwo’s discovery that Nwoye does not enjoy the same activities that thrill and excite him. Early in the novel, after Ikemefuna has lived with the family for a while, Okonkwo cannot help but notice that Ikemefuna has those qualities he wants to see in his son, Nwoye. Okonkwo’s desire is to have a son who will be bold, fearless, hardworking: qualities that are associated with manliness in the society. Okonkwo becomes troubled by the boy’s behavior, so he tries to stamp out the “disquieting
signs of laziness which he thought he could saw in him" (p. 34). Instead of trying to understand the boy, he tries to bully him into submission: "I will not have a son who cannot hold up his head in the gathering of the clan. I would sooner strangle him with my own hands..." (p. 34). Nwoye turns out to be a disappointment to his father because, among other reasons, he cannot quite live up to the expectations of his father.

Furthermore, Nwoye finds some of the clan's practices and traditions highly distasteful and unacceptable. The distaste he has for the society's practice of getting rid of twins as soon as they are born and the killing of Ikemefuna to appease the gods leads him eventually to abandon the gods of the clan. He chooses to leave his home to become a Christian because the message of the missionaries about their God stirs a chord in him. The message of the Christian missionaries seems to "answer a vague and persistent question that haunted his young soul -- the question of twins crying in the bush and the question of Ikemefuna who was killed..." (Things Fall Apart, p. 137)

Taking responsibility for his own future, Nwoye joins the missionaries and goes away to school, thus severing family ties. He realizes that the ultimate price of joining the Christians is having to leave his family, because his father is already set in his ways and no amount of reasoning
and explaining can win Okonkwo over. To Okonkwo, however, Nwoye has committed the unpardonable sin: "to abandon the gods of one's father and go about with a lot of effeminate men clucking like old hens was the very depth of abomination..." (p. 142). He just cannot forgive the boy for choosing the strangers and their ways, especially when the new ways have disrupted the traditional norms of the society. Like Okonkwo, many among the older generation resent the fact that their society is being torn apart by the new religion and ways, which their children are drawn to. Unlike him however, they are not prepared to fight the British as they realize that societal change is inevitable.

In *The Joys of Motherhood* Nnu Ego's first son, Oshia, becomes disgusted with his father, when, in spite of the family's poverty, Nnaife goes to Ibuza with the pension money given to him for fighting in the war and marries a young girl to "help" Nnu-Ego. Children do not normally talk back to their parents, and they usually do what their parents ask them to do. But after years of suffering through poverty, with too many children in the family and too little income, the boy has to speak out. His outspokenness is prompted by Nnaife's choice to spend most of his army pension money on the bride price for Okpo, the new wife, who soon becomes pregnant. Adim, the second son cannot help but comment, "I don't understand these adults. First we do not
have enough, yet they keep adding to the family..." (p. 192). As soon as the boys manage to finish their high school education, they put as much distance as they can between their family and themselves. They both gain admission to colleges abroad -- Oshia to the United States and Adim to Canada. Although their parents expect them to come back and help with the payment of school fees for the younger children, they do not return.

Another reason for the conflict between parents and children is the way children are brought up in the society. Traditional values are increasingly becoming eroded by the constant exposure of the younger generation to other influences such as western education, religion and culture. In The Bride Price Aku-nna, only thirteen years old at the beginning of the novel, is already getting to know the norms of her Ibuza heritage although she has been raised in Lagos. Sometimes her urban upbringing is in conflict with the traditional norms, but she knows some of the rules and expectations that guide the behavior of everyone. Just before her father leaves for the hospital early in the novel and her mother is still away at Ibuza, Aku-nna would like to ask her father about the time he will return from the hospital, since he is leaving her and her younger brother alone at home. But she knows that it would be rude and she that she is not supposed to tell him that she is scared: "in
Nigeria you are not allowed to speak that way to an adult, especially your father. That is against the dictates of culture..." (p. 11).

After Aku-nna’s family’s move to Ibuza, she has to learn to adjust to living in a rural area. She finds out that some of the customs and laws of Ibuza society are in conflict with the norms and mores she has learned from her urban upbringing in Lagos. For instance, even though she recognizes that she may not have the chance to pursue higher education, she does not understand why she cannot marry Chike. The implications of marrying into an osu family does not dawn on her because she feels that the caste system should not matter. On top of all her problems, she comes to recognize that her mother, in the quest for more children, no longer has time for her. Ma Blackie is so busy complying with the dictates of her new husband, formerly her brother-in-law, that her children’s interests have become secondary.

Also in The Bride Price Chike feels the humiliation and pressures of belonging to the osu caste. The constant taunting and innuendoes finally get to him. Losing self-control one evening in Aku-nna’s mother’s house, Chike gives Okoboshi a thorough beating. He, the headmaster of the local school, cannot understand why Okoboshi, a former student of his, should have the right to publicly disrespect him just because he comes from an osu family. But Okoboshi parents
have earlier asked Aku-nna's step-father for her hand in marriage for their son. Having gotten Okonkwo's tacit approval, Okoboshi feels justified in publicly displaying his courtship of Aku-nna. He comes calling in the evenings, without any objection from the girl's mother. Yet, Chike, whom she really loves but dares not accept any open display of affection from, could only watch in silent agony and rage whenever Okoboshi fondles Aku-nna.

Things come to a head one evening in Aku-nna's mother's house when Okoboshi taunts Chike, saying in the presence of others, "Imagine the son of a free man not being able to sit where he likes because Europeans have come to pollute our land..." (p. 120). This statement refers to the laws put in place by the colonial officers to end discrimination against the osu people. Reverend Osborne, the missionary in Ibuza, also preaches that everyone is equal in the sight of God, yet the tradition continues. In the end Chike and Aku-nna have to go to Ughelli to escape the discrimination as well as the wrath of Aku-nna's family and the townspeople. Aku-nna's family's outrage and humiliation are understandable only if one knows how the society raises its children and expects them to behave.
PARENTAL CONTROL AND EXPECTATIONS

Many of the novels reflect the philosophy underlying the upbringing of children. These novels also clearly define the place of the child in society. In most cases children are expected to be strictly obedient to their parents' wishes. Boys remain under the authority of parents, mainly their fathers, till they set up their own homes. But they are allowed to have some freedom once they reach puberty, especially from their mothers and older sisters.

In the communities depicted in the novels, children are expected to be unquestioningly obedient to their parents, guardians and older members of the extended family. In Chike and the River, Chike's desire to be like his friends almost lands him in trouble. He wants to experience what they have experienced in the city. The thrill of crossing the big river on the ferry like his friends makes him forget his mother's injunction to him not to go near the River Niger, for fear of drowning. He agonizes over how to obtain the fare for the ferry. He cannot write to his mother for the one shilling because of her warning about the river. His uncle also would not give him any money because of his belief that children should always spend their time studying. When he eventually gets the money he needs for the fare, Chike chooses to disobey his mother and cross the river.
Parents, however, are particularly strict with their female children. They remain under the authority of parents, especially their fathers, until they are given in marriage to husbands chosen by their fathers. In *The Joys of Motherhood* Nwokocha Agbadi, Nnu-Ego's father, is the one who agrees that Nnu-Ego should marry Amatokwu, her first husband. When that marriage does not work out, he consents for her to go to Lagos to become Nnaife's wife.

Later in the same novel, Nnaife gets into trouble for failing to recognize that the society is changing and that some of the younger generation do not want to adhere strictly to the customs of their parents' generation. In Nnaife's generation, fathers normally choose their daughters' husbands; therefore, he has set his mind on choosing husbands for his twin girls, who, at fifteen years old, are ripe for marriage. One of the twins readily agrees to marry the man chosen for her, but the second twin, Kehinde, flatly refuses his choice: "I am not marrying that man" (p. 204). Nnaife is shocked because his attitude and that of his generation towards their children is that "One planned for and had sleepless nights over boys; girls, on the other hand, were to help in running the house and be disposed of as soon as possible..." (p. 204).

Unlike the first twin Taiwo, who has agreed to marry an Ibuza man living in Lagos, Kehinde wants to marry someone
from another ethnic group and religion, "a Yoruba man from a Muslim family" (p.204). Nnaife becomes so enraged that he takes his machete and heads for the boy’s home. After he is disarmed, the boy's father points out that a girl should not be prevented from marrying someone she likes. Nnaife’s response is "We don’t do so in my hometown Ibuza. I will choose husbands for all my girls. They are too young to know their minds" (p. 210). Nnaife is later arrested, found guilty of assault in court, and sent to prison for five years. Kehinde’s desire to break with the tradition of marrying a man chosen for her causes conflict between her and her father. For trying to solve the problem with force, in the manner of his ancestors, Nnaife pays dearly with five years of his life spent in prison.

REASONS FOR GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES/CONFLICTS

Similar generational conflicts arise in The Bride Price. The people of Ibuza fail to adjust to societal changes. They become rigid and inflexible concerning the osu issue, a problem which leads to Aku-nna and Chike’s elopement. After Chike helps Aku-nna escape from Okoboshi’s family that has kidnapped her, they both elope to Ughelli. But the people of Ibuza take their revenge on the Ofulue family by destroying Chike’s father’s cocoa and oil-palm plantation. When the case gets to court, the people of Ibuza band together as
witnesses against the Ofulue family. "But the law was based in English justice which did not make allowance for slaves, so Ibuza people lost the case and were ordered to compensate the Ofulue family..." (p. 155). The failure of the people in the community to adjust to the changing times leads to a collision between the old way of handling grievances, and the new judicial system, set up by British colonial officials. This failure to adjust and the unwillingness to abide by the norms of the older generation leads the younger generation to experience the pain of exile from their families.

Judging from the many examples of generational conflicts in the selected novels, a major source of the problem between parents and their children is the inability of the older generation to adjust to the dynamics of societal change within the culture. In many cases, the strict upbringing and the rigid societal norms are also the major sources of problems and conflicts between the older generation and the younger. The missionaries and colonial officers also have their own share of the blame, for not taking the time to introduce their religion and culture slowly. If they had done so, the clash of cultures that ensued, leading to generational differences and conflicts, might have been avoided.

Table 5 gives an overview of Chapter 7.
### Table 5 - Generational Differences and Conflicts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Conflict with parents</th>
<th>Problems with norms and customs</th>
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<td>Felicia</td>
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CHAPTER 8

PEER GROUP RELATIONSHIPS/FRIENDSHIP

Like adolescents in many young adult novels, peer group relationships are very important to the young adults portrayed in the novels. Normally during the adolescent period, young adults generally begin to break away from the influence of their family circles. They begin to assert their independence, and they want to interact more with their peers and less with members of their families. It is also at this time that adolescents begin to either clash or disagree with the opinions of their family members over issues that concern them. They want to satisfy their friends rather than their parents and guardians, or to satisfy their own desires regardless of the societal norms.

FORMATION OF AGE-GROUPS/PEER GROUPS

In order to understand the role and influence of peers in the lives of the young people in the novels, it is necessary to understand the way some of the societies portrayed in the novels set up peer groups, especially those novels that depict life in the rural areas. In some cases, the cultures portrayed have semi-formal systems of setting up peer
groups, also known as age groups/age grades, which form the bases of the different social groups in the communities. This detailed description of how age grades are formed appears in The Bride Price:

Age groups were created at three-year intervals, each one characterized by an important incident. (Children born during the civil war would become known as the children of Biafra, and when babies born at that time grow into adolescence they would hold meetings, organize dances, in the big Eke market; they might have special dances which will take years of practice for the Christmases of their youth or the Ifejoiku yam festivals). (p. 100)

Members of such groups usually do things together, especially during times of communal festivities such as yam festivals or at Christmas. At fifteen years old, Aku-nna and her friends are still unmarried. However, they know that the next Christmas will be their last in their parents’ homes because they will be married off soon after. They, therefore, turn their energies to planning and practicing some activities to entertain the people during the Christmas festivities. The activities include the formation of a dance group to show off their skills in the intricate steps of their chosen dance.
So instead of going out to play in the moonlight, or amusing themselves in their mother's huts with the local youths, they all spent the evenings learning their special aja dance. (pp. 101-102)

In *The Potter's Wheel* Obuechina's age group is comprised of boys born around the same period. Obu and his age group's plan is to have a masquerade to entertain the people of Umuchukwu during the Yuletide festivities. Under the able leadership of David, a boy born the same week as Obu, they secretly hold meetings and contribute sixpence each towards an operating fund, from which they buy musical instruments and other necessary materials.

In some cases, especially where the young adults live outside of the area of influence of their ethnic group or where the family lives in an urban area with several ethnic groups mingling together, the young people just come together and form friendships. In *The Joys of Motherhood* children from different ethnic groups in Lagos play together. Nnu Ego's children who are Ibo, interact with Yoruba children so much so that Kehinde makes up her mind to reject the Ibuza man Nnaife chooses for her. In *The Bride Price*, Aku-nna does not take part in age group activities while living in Lagos, but in Ibuza she joins in her age group's activities. Also in *Chike and the River*, after Chike
leaves his village for Onitsha, he makes friends at school. Because he lives in an urban area, he has no opportunity to join his age group in his village. Instead he has a group of friends at school with whom to play soccer and other activities.

Children born around the same period frequently go through initiation ceremonies about the same time. Amobi in The Bottled Leopard is initiated into the spirit cult in his last term in primary school because his father believes that a boy’s maturity will make the initiation more meaningful for him. Through the initiation ceremony, Amobi becomes a member of a group.

PEER PRESSURE

The experiences of the adolescents and their peers in these novels is similar to that of adolescents in other parts of the world, in that they too face peer pressure. The pressure on the young people to be like their friends often leads to conflict with their parents or guardians. At such times, the young adults find themselves torn between being obedient to their parents or guardians and/or societal norms and going along with the wishes of their friends.

In Chike and the River Chike’s desire to be like his friends, who keep boasting about how easy it is to cross the big river, leads to his disobeying his mother’s injunctions.
His friends make him feel like an inexperienced rural boy because he has never been on the ferry. He is torn between his desire to go on the ferry, and his promise to his mother. Peer pressure also pushes him to seek a way to obtain money for the ferry fare and he almost gets into trouble in the process. "Chike was so anxious to find the money for his trip across the river that he very nearly went into bad ways" (p. 15). He tries to follow the bad example of Ezekiel and five other friends of his, who write deceitful letters to penpals in England to obtain money in exchange for leopard skins. Having grown up in an urban area, none of the other boys has ever seen a leopard skin, so they have no way of fulfilling such a promise. Chike is saved from writing his own letters because he has no money for postage stamps. Fortunately for him, before he can obtain the money for stamps, the letters are intercepted in England by the headmaster of their penpals' school. That headmaster then writes to the headmaster of Chike's school and the boys are punished in front of the whole school.

Soon after the leopard skin incident, Chike almost gets into trouble again for following the advice of Samuel, another friend of his. On his way home from school one day, Chike finds a six-pence coin. Since he needs two six-pence coins (one shilling) for the ferry fare, Samuel advises him to go to a con artist who claims to be a money-doubler. The
man takes the money and gives Chike a worthless ring that is supposed to turn into a lot of money overnight if it is put under the pillow. Chike realizes that he has been duped the following morning when the ring does not turn into money. Chike returns to the man with Samuel, but the man denies ever seeing Chike before. When the boys insist on getting the money back, the con artist threatens them with his machete.

When Chike eventually gets the money to cross the river to the other side, he is disappointed with Asaba. He has been led to believe that Asaba is a big town with a lot of attractions. From this disappointment and another incident Chike learns that peers are not always right. Just before the end-of-term examinations, three foolish boys who have not studied think that they can use "brain pills," which a dishonest trader sells to them. The trader tells them that they will remember whatever they read once they take the pills. Instead, the boys end up in the hospital because they become incoherent. They spend five days in the hospital and, of course, fail the examinations. Although Chike does not take part in the incident, he realizes that there is no substitute for hard work. He studies and does well in the examinations.
PEER LOYALTY AND ASSISTANCE

Like friends everywhere, many of the young people in the novels demonstrate their friendship and loyalty to one another. They look out for each other, helping out when there is need for it and sticking together in times of trouble. For example, in *The Bride Price* Chike and Aku-nna have to flee to Ughelli, where they receive assistance from Chike’s former schoolmate, Ben Adegor, and his wife. They readily and willingly provide shelter and all necessary assistance for Chike and Aku-nna. Having been a classmate of Chike’s at Saint Thomas’s Teacher Training College in Ibuza in the late forties and having lived at Ibuza, Ben Adegor knows the risk for Chike, an *osu*, to remain in Ibuza. So, in addition to providing shelter, he and his wife help Chike and Aku-nna to settle down in a strange town. There is no reason for Ben to treat Chike as an outcaste because there is no mention in the novel of *osu* people in Ughelli. Unlike Ibuza, which is an Ibo town, Ughelli is a Urhobo is a town.

In *The Potter’s Wheel* the boys and girls living with Teacher Zaccheus Kanu and his wife, Madam, always band together. They usually help each other to stay out of trouble in order to survive the harsh ordeals of the household. After Obu’s mother takes him to Teacher’s house, he gets into trouble a few days later. Ada, the oldest of the girls, “undertook to familiarise him with the ropes, and
Monday, (the oldest boy in the household) urged everyone to help him find his feet" (p. 100).

The young adults in The Bottled Leopard also help each other. Amobi and Chuk get into trouble in the novel for raiding their boarding school’s orchard, a place out of bounds for students. In front of the assembly of all the students and teachers, the principal recounts how, "Amobi and Chuk had sneaked out of their dormitory long after lights out to steal the fruits... The punishment for an offense of this magnitude is outright expulsion..." (pp. 98-99). Some of the teachers make a plea on their behalf, so the principal decides to send them home on suspension for a two-week period. But Amobi comes to Chuk’s rescue by taking him home to Ndikelionwu because Chuk’s parents are far away in America, and his guardians are far away in the city of Port-Harcourt. In order to ensure that Amobi’s father’s will not get angry if he learns the true reason for their being sent home, Amobi decides to lie to protect himself and Chuk from Mazi Eze’s wrath.

The school asked me to take him home to learn how ndi Igbo live... because he has a white American mother and has lived all his life in America, he finds it difficult to do things our own way. He keeps breaking the rules in the school... he does not know our ways of life...
The school wrote to his father in America and it was agreed that the best thing would be to send him to an Igbo village for a short period...
(pp. 101-102)

If Amobi’s father had been educated, he may have seen through such a lie immediately because it is highly improbable that boarding school authorities would entrust a student into the care of another student outside of the school premises for two whole weeks. Also, the boys are able to carry it through because of their friendship. They help each other out at a time of trouble.

ACCEPTANCE OF NORMS

Some of the young people in the novels are like adolescents everywhere in wanting to assert their independence and satisfy their friends. But sometimes there are those who depart from the norm. In certain instances, when some get into trouble, they find that they are on their own because some of their friends do not want to break from the traditions and norms of the land. In The Bride Price, after Aku-nna is kidnapped by the Obidi family, she lies to Okoboshi, saying that Chike has slept with her. Without verifying the truth, Okoboshi and his family immediately change their attitudes towards her. They humiliate her, and with their gestures and actions, they ensure that the people
in the community know that she has not kept herself for her wedding night. When they are sure that the news has spread round the community, they send her to the stream to fetch water. To Aku-nna’s surprise, members of her age grade who have been friends with her before the kidnapping, will not have anything to do with her. Some avoid making eye contact, refusing to talk with her. Without hearing her side of the story, they have already condemned her, just from hearsay.

These young people do not know that Aku-nna has figured correctly, that Okoboshi will not want her anymore if he believes that she has ‘given’ herself to Chike, an osu, first. The thought of a freeborn giving herself to a descendant of a slave is enough to condemn her in the eyes of the Ibuza society. The only choice she has left is to escape with Chike to Ughelli. The fact that members of her age group would condemn her also, without verifying the truth shows that some of the young adults are deeply entrenched in the traditional ways of the land, especially those who are not as well educated as Chike and Aku-nna. Aku-nna’s urban upbringing in Lagos and Chike’s education may have insulated both of them from the pervasive influence of traditional practices. They, therefore, find it easy to break with traditional values, risking the wrath of the Ibuza community.
REJECTION OF ADULT INSTRUCTIONS AND CUSTOMS

Some of the young people also generally seem to enjoy what has been forbidden, either by the traditions of the land or by their parents and other adults responsible for them. Amobi and Chuk in *The Bottled Leopard* seem to enjoy their breaking of the school rules when they make "for the uppers" (the school orchard), as much as eating the fruits they get from the orchard. Chike in *Chike and the River* could not rest until he eventually crosses the river his mother has warned him about. Felicia in *Felicia* disappoints her mother and her extended family by getting pregnant during the civil war. Though she redeems herself later, she keeps her own counsel throughout the novel. Rikku in *Juju Rock* also does not heed the advice of the seniors in his school before going off to Juju Rock. They all do what has been forbidden, choosing to follow their own desires instead.

There seems to be a pattern in the novels concerning the influence of peers and friends on the behavior of the adolescents. Those who grow up and live all their lives in the rural communities like Ibuza tend to conform more to the cultural traditions and norms of their communities. On the other hand, those young adults who live or have lived in the urban areas, away from the influence of rural traditions, tend to have less regard for the norms; and they are more
responsible for their actions. They make decisions that suit their needs and satisfy their own desires, rather than what the community wants. With the exception of Nwoye in Things Fall Apart, those young adults who have been in their communities all their lives tend to conform to the traditions of their parents. There is a similar trend in Nigerian society today. With urbanization and educational levels on the increase, young people tend to make decisions that are not tied to their ethnic and cultural traditions. They are breaking ethnic and class barriers in all areas of life, including marriage.

Table 6 gives an overview of Chapter 8.
<table>
<thead>
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<th>Title</th>
<th>Peer pressure</th>
<th>Formation of age-groups</th>
<th>Acceptance of urban norms</th>
<th>Acceptance of rural norms</th>
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CHAPTER 9

COURTSHIP/MARRIAGE PREPARATIONS AND GENDER ROLES

In the communities portrayed in the selected novels, there are established societal norms that guide relationships and interactions between young men and women. Courtship and choice of spouses are also guided by customs and mores. Usually, young men and women do not choose their partners by themselves, unlike in some other parts of the world where young men and women generally make their own decisions about dating and courtship and where they basically exercise the freedom to choose their spouses.

In the novels with more contemporary settings, the girls are encouraged by their parents to finish their education first, before settling down in marriage, though their parents may have been doing so in the hope of getting bigger bride prices. In The Boys at The Border Gladys' parents insist on her getting an education before she gets married to Emeka, the Director of the Customs and Exercise Department. But they also receive a huge bride price of twenty thousand naira for her. Also in Felicia, Felicia's family is disappointed that she gets pregnant before she can finish her education. They do send her back to school,
however, when they realize that she is not a wayward girl.
Education seems to be a big concern for the girls’ families,
a reflection of the trend today, especially in the southern
part of the country. Like boys, girls are encouraged to go
as far as they can educationally before they get married, as
long as their parents or guardians can afford to pay for
their education or if they obtain scholarships.

TRADITIONAL COURTSHIP AND MARRIAGE

In the novels set in the earlier periods it appears that
girls are ready for marriage at about age sixteen. In The
Joys of Motherhood Nnu Ego is given out in marriage by her
father soon after she turns sixteen. In The Bride Price,
Aku-nna’s age group members know that at age sixteen they
are spending their last Christmases in their fathers’ homes.
They too will soon be given out in marriage. Also, Aku-nna
has just turned sixteen when she is kidnapped for Okoboshi
by his family. In Things Fall Apart the reader learns that
Obierika’s daughter, Akueke is ready for marriage at age
sixteen, as her suitor’s family visit her father to
negotiate her bride price at this time.

In many of the communities portrayed in the novels, a
young man and a young woman do not just develop a liking for
each other and start courting. The two families have to
agree on the choice of partners. After this, the young man’s
family has to approach the young woman’s family with a formal proposal for the young woman’s hand. If the girl’s family has nothing against the young man’s family, then the next set of procedures will begin. Usually the girl’s family will try to find out as much as they can about the young man and his family, since the girl will become part of her husband’s family once she gets married. Her family wants to know whether their daughter will be taken care of and loved and whether the young man’s family has a good record of taking care of the wives in the family. In *The Joys of Motherhood* Nnu Ego’s father is persuaded by his friend Idayi to allow his daughter to marry into the Amatokwu family:

> They are not bad people, the Amatokwus. And that son has been a great help to his father during the past year. I don’t see why he should not make a good husband for Nnu Ego.... (p. 30)

The girl’s family has to be satisfied that their daughter will not be mistreated, but there is really no guarantee that the girl will not suffer, as some societal norms and conditions sometimes work against the woman’s interests. The main problem with which a wife must cope is the family interference in their son’s marriage if they perceive their family interests are not being met.

*Things Fall Apart* shows some of the activities that normally take place before a young man can marry a young
woman. Such activities take place when Okonkwo's friend, Obierika and his family give their daughter Akueke out in marriage to Ibe, her suitor. At age sixteen, Akueke is considered ripe for marriage according to Umuofia customs. Ibe, a young man of about twenty-five, his father and his uncle take the first step in formally asking for the Akueke's hand in marriage. Obierika's family must have agreed to the date as they are ready and waiting when the suitor and his family arrive. At the meeting though only men are present: Obierika the bride's father, his two older brothers, Maduka, his sixteen-year-old son, and Okonkwo, his closest friend. The women only come in when the men have finished the business at hand. Initially at the gathering, the men drink palm-wine and "talked about everything except the thing for which they have gathered. It was only after the pot had been emptied that the suitor's father cleared his voice and announced the object of their visit" (p. 69).

The aim of this first formal visit is to determine the amount of bride price the suitor and his family will pay to the girl's family. After some haggling, "Akueke's bride-price was finally settled at twenty bags of cowries" (p. 70). It is only after the bride-price has been fixed and agreed upon that Akueke's mother and the women are asked to bring food to entertain the guests. Later in the novel, the
entire neighborhood is in a festive mood on the day Obierika's daughter's uri is celebrated.
It was the day on which her suitor (having already paid the greater part of her bride-price) would bring palm-wine not only to her parents and relatives but to the wide and extensive group of kinsmen called Umunna. (p. 104)
Later that evening, Obierika's older brother formerly presents the bride to the suitor's family, and they take her home to spend the next seven market weeks with them.

SOCIETAL EXPECTATIONS FOR THE UNMARRIED

There is also the practice, seen in The Bride-Price, of allowing and encouraging young men who want to be suitors to come courting in the evening, but the girl's mother must be close by, and the suitors must not cross the line of decent behavior. But a prospective groom who feels that he is the choice of the girl's family will sometimes take liberties, like Okoboshi does with Aku-nna. In The Joys of Motherhood, young men have started calling on Nnu Ego before her father finally agrees to give her to Amatokwu in marriage.

In the contemporary novels, there is no mention of suitors taking liberties with the girls they are courting. Instead, in Felicia there does not seem to be any tolerance for such behavior among young people. Felicia's family is disappointed that she let them down by getting pregnant
before finishing her education. The people of the village condemn Felicia for getting pregnant because tongues begin to wag as soon as the people in her village get to know about her pregnancy. Felicia comes under a lot of scrutiny and the young men even make up songs about her and her condition.

In the novels, young women are expected to stay chaste until they get married. They bring shame and dishonor to their families if they are not virgins on their wedding nights. The reader learns in *The Bride Price* that the blame usually went to the girls. A girl who had had adventures before marriage was never respected in her new home; everyone in the village would know of her past, especially if she was unfortunate enough to be married to a egocentric man. (p. 84)

Chastity before marriage is so valued that Aku-nna, though chaste at the time she is kidnapped by Okoboshi's family and taken into their house to marry their son, pretends to have lost her chastity to Chike. This enables her to spend the first night in Okoboshi's house unscathed, though she knows the consequences--disgrace for her and her family. That is the price she is willing to pay till her escape with Chike to Ughelli to start a new life. She plays on the fact that Okoboshi's pride as a free-born will keep him from
ascertaining the truth for himself as he will not want to touch her after an osu has. The fact that Okoboshi will not ascertain the truth for himself, however, does not stop him from giving Aku-nna a thorough beating.

On the other hand, young men are expected to sow their wild oats before settling down in marriage. "In Ibuza, every young man was entitled to his fun.... [They]... still expect the women they married to be as chaste as flower buds..." (p. 84). Even then, men can marry more than one wife and even have concubines, if they have the means. In The Joys of Motherhood, Nwokocha Agbadi, Nnu-Ego's father, being a wealthy chief, has several wives and is still able to have Ona, Nnu-Ego's mother as his concubine. Also in The Bride Price, Chike's father does not scold him for his philandering. "Chike's parents knew of his indulgences, but did not try to curb him, he has the money and the freedom to choose his pleasures" (p. 84). The only thing that bothers the old man is the consequences of an osu getting involved with the child of a free-born, and he warns Chike not to bring disaster to Aku-nna.

**ROLES AND EXPECTATIONS FOR WIVES**

As seen in many of the novels, the family of the man almost always interferes in his marriage if the couple has not been blessed with children, especially male children.
The husband’s family will find another wife for him, and the barren woman is harassed that she may leave of her own accord or be chased out of her husband’s house. Nnu-Ego suffers this fate. “She was not surprised when Amatokwu told her casually one evening that she would have to move to a nearby hut kept for older wives because his people had found him a new wife” (p. 30). Despite Idayi’s reassuring words to Nwokocha Agbadi about the Amatokwu family in The Joys of Motherhood, Nnu Ego is harassed when she does not get pregnant. Her husband’s family get another wife for him, and Nnu Ego eventually leaves Amatokwu.

Even in cases where the barren woman is not chased out, the man’s family will actively encourage him to get another wife. In Efuru, when Efuru does not get pregnant after two years of marriage, her mother-in-law begins to fret. She asks her son, “What are you going to do about Efuru’s state?” In The Potter’s Wheel Teacher Kanu’s mother finds another wife for him though Madam is allowed to remain in his house. Even in Felicia, a fairly contemporary novel, Madam Joy, a barren woman, is harassed, and her husband marries a new wife to produce children for him. When she can no longer live in the situation, she packs her belongings and leaves for Lagos, where she becomes a successful businesswoman. When she comes back to the village with a lorry (big truck) load of relief supplies at the end of the
civil war, the fact that she has been harassed and chased out of the family is conveniently forgotten.

Husbands' families also expect their wives to have lots of children, especially males. Those wives who do not bear many children or those who have only females, no matter how many, usually have a lot to worry about. They go through a lot of mental torture and agony because they know that their husbands' families might take steps to get other wives for their sons. In *The Bride Price*, Ma Blackie is driven to despair because she has only two children, a male and a female. Her husband, Ezekiel Odia,

had sent her to all the native doctors he could afford in Lagos, but still no more children. He even encouraged her to join the Cherubim and Seraphim sect.... but to no avail... In despair, she decided to go home to their town, Ibuza, to placate their Oboshi river goddess into giving her some babies. (p. 8)

Mama Obu in *The Potter's Wheel* also experiences the same kind of despair. In her own case, she has seven children, but only one boy, Obuechina, the sixth child. "After the birth of her fifth daughter, her husband's family had intensified their pressure on him to marry another wife who could give him male issues." (p. 9). Although Mazi Laza, her husband, does not marry another wife, probably out of fear
of sanctions from his church leader, Mama Obu becomes so protective of Obu that she spoils him rotten. Mazi Laza, fearing for the boy’s future, removes him from his mother’s influence, sending him to live with Teacher Kanu and his wife, Madam.

PAYMENT OF BRIDE-PRICE

The custom of paying bride price to the bride’s family is a common practice, mentioned in those novels in which courtship and marriage take place, even the contemporary ones. In The Bride Price, the issue is first raised by Akunna’s aunts soon after her father’s death. “The pity of it all...is that they will marry her off very quickly in order to get enough money to pay Nna-nndo’s school fees” (p. 38). Later in the novel, Okonkwo allows Akunna to continue with her schooling because he hopes to demand a high bride price for her, as educated girls usually fetch higher bride prices than uneducated girls. Akunna unwittingly dashes his hopes of getting a high bride price for her when she runs away with Chike, an osu. Okonkwo cannot accept any bride price from Chike’s family because of the taboo on osu people marrying children of the free-born.

Nnu-Ego’s father also receives bride price from her husband’s people in The Joys of Motherhood, as Obierika does from Akueke’s husband in Things Fall Apart. Even in The Boys
At the Border, the most contemporary of the novels, Gladys' parents receive a bride price of twenty thousand naira from her husband. Also, one of the smugglers, Atere, gets into trouble with the Customs officers because he needs money to pay the bride price for a third wife. These examples show that the practice of paying bride price is still common.

**ROLES AND EXPECTATIONS FOR MALES**

Like everything else in the communities, gender roles are dictated by the traditional norms and customs. Right from childhood children are brought up with a strict understanding of the expectations for each sex, as depicted in the novels. The communities portrayed are definitely patriarchal because the men appear in control at both the individual family and communal levels. In *Things Fall Apart*, the reader learns that "Okonkwo ruled his household with a heavy hand" (p. 16). Men are unquestionably the bosses in the homes and decisions concerning family members are usually made by fathers and husbands as heads of the families. Decisions concerning children are almost always made by the fathers. In *The Porter's Wheel*, the decision to send Obu to live with Teacher Kanu and his wife is made by Mazi Laza, despite the objections of his wife. He is convinced that it is in the boy's best interests to send him away. Once he has made up his mind, his wife has to comply.
When Obu comes home on school holidays and complains about Teacher and Madam's harshness, Mama Obu feels that the boy should not go back to Teacher's house. Mazi Laza overrides her objections and sends him back. He believes strongly that Obu needs the dose of harshness to improve his ability to survive and be successful later on in life. He also knows that Mama Obu cannot do anything about his decision. In their society, a wife cannot override her husband's decision. She can only attempt to persuade him; and in this case she tries but is not successful.

In *The Bottled Leopard* the decisions concerning Amobi are made by his father, Mazi Eze. His initiation into the spirit cult takes place only when his father feels he is old enough -- in his last term in the primary school. He argues "that a boy needed some maturity before his initiation, if it was to be meaningful to him" (p. 31). Also, he does not take his son to a *dibia* for consultation, until he is convinced. His wife has earlier asked him to take the boy the *dibia*, but he refused, accusing her of "talking like a woman" (p. 121).

Even in *Felicia* a similar situation occurs. The decision to send Felicia back to school is made by her uncles. They have to pay the school fees anyway, but Felicia's mother has to wait for them to make up their minds. Also, as noted earlier, the fathers usually make decisions about the choice of spouses for their daughters. In *Things Fall Apart* the
reader learns about "the day Obierika celebrated his daughter's uri," not the day he and the girl's mother celebrate their daughter's uri, because the men give daughters out in marriage. That is the reason Nnaife in The Joys of Motherhood is uncontrollably angry and almost commits murder when his daughter Kehinde emphatically rejects the man he has chosen for her.

Just as fathers make all the important decisions in families, the men also make all the important communal decisions. In Things Fall Apart the communal meetings are attended by men only. In chapter two, when a communal meeting is called to decide on what to do about the Mbaino problem, only the men are present. "There must have been about ten thousand men there" (p. 14).

In some of the novels, males sometimes display arrogant and nonchalant behavior when dealing with women, even those older than they. An example of this type of behavior is seen in The Bride Price. Okonkwo's older sons refuse to tell their mother Mgbekes what they have discussed with their father concerning Aku-nna. In response to her inquiries, the older one answers arrogantly, "It is talk between men" (p. 76). Later, though, after their mother has fed them their evening meal, they reluctantly disclose their father's decision.
Women are brought up with specific views of masculinity. Society expects men to be strong, fearless and bold like Okonkwo in *Things Fall Apart*. Certain jobs are regarded as masculine while others are for women. In *The Joys of Motherhood*, Nnu Ego has a hard time accepting the type of job her husband, Nnai fe, does for a living because in Ibuza men do not wash clothes for a living. What makes it all the more difficult for her to accept is the fact that Mrs. Meers controls Nnai fe, and he washes her clothes too. In Ibuza men normally will not wash clothes for women. Forgetting that Nnai fe has a living to earn, Nnu Ego feels that Nnai fe’s work situation in Lagos, far away from Ibuza, has robbed him of his manhood. When she complains to Cordelia, the wife of Nnai fe’s co-worker, Cordelia tells her the plain truth; it is a situation she Nnu Ego can do nothing about.

You want a husband who has time to ask you if you wish to eat rice, or drink pap with honey? Forget it. Men here are too busy being white men’s servants to be men... Their manhood has been taken away from them. The shame is that they don’t know it. All they see is the money, shining white man’s money.

(p. 51)

In the communities also males are made to feel special from childhood. They are obviously valued more than female
children, judging from the experiences of the women who fail to have male children or have only one. For example, in The Potter's Wheel the names given to Obu's sisters reveal the society's attitudes towards female children.

"Obuechina was the only boy.... The names of the five girls who preceded him...Nkiru (that which is yet to come is greater), ..showed with how much anxiety and faith his parents had awaited his coming" (p. 9).

On the other hand, Obu's names reveal how much he is valued. The meaning of Obuechina (the compound must not revert to bush) refers to the fact that the family now has an heir to continue the family name. The meaning of his middle name is also very revealing; Nwokenagu means "a male issue is desirable." (p. 9).

A similar attitude appears in The Bride Price. Ma Blackie desperately tries to have more children. Although she has a girl and a boy, everyone, especially Ezekiel, her husband continues to pressure her. He complains that he has paid a heavy bride price for her, and "having paid this heavy bride price he had their marriage sanctified by Anglicanism. And what had he to show for it all--an only son!" (p. 9).

In the communities depicted in the novels, everyone has been brought up to know what to expect. By and large, they all try to conform with the traditions and the norms.
Okonkwo’s wives in *Things Fall Apart* do not complain about his harshness; that is the only way of life they know. Likewise in *The Joys of Motherhood* Nnu Ego’s emphases are on the traditional roles and expectations for men and women.

The societal views of gender roles depicted in these novels are accurate for the historical periods they are set in. However, such attitudes are no longer as prevalent today. Because of educational awareness and enlightenment girls can aspire to any level of education or occupation they want. They have more personal freedom than their predecessors. Yet men still have an edge, because the Nigerian society remains largely patriarchal and patrilineal.

Table 7 gives an overview of Chapter 9.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Courtship</th>
<th>Marriage</th>
<th>Defiance of norms</th>
<th>Bride price</th>
<th>Male roles</th>
<th>Female roles</th>
<th>Male children valued</th>
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<tr>
<td>The Boys at the Border</td>
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CHAPTER 10

A SYNTHESIS OF THE SOCIO-CULTURAL PRACTICES
AND ADOLESCENT CONCERNS IN TEN NIGERIAN
YOUNG ADULT NOVELS

This study presents a selection of young adult literature from Nigeria, suitable for use in a high school multicultural and global curriculum, as well as teacher preparation courses, especially adolescent literature courses. The novels can serve as alternatives to the books about African countries currently available in bookstores and school libraries, many of which are not up-to-date and are mostly filled with generalizations and inaccuracies. The novels present a broad spectrum of experiences, including descriptions of family lifestyle and routines, customs and beliefs. The novels also vary in their geographical locations so that both rural and urban settings are presented.

In the study, the first part of the analysis focuses on the cultural perspectives of the Nigerian societies depicted in the novels, which American teachers and students will normally not be familiar with. These cultural perspectives include social, communal, family values and religious
practices peculiar to the cultures portrayed. The second part of the analysis deals with young adult concerns and issues raised in the novels which young adults in the United States as well as in other parts of the world would be familiar with.

The novels generally fall into two groups -- the ones about the pre-colonial and colonial periods and the ones about the contemporary period. The ones about pre-colonial and colonial times present the norms, customs, traditions and practices of certain ethnic groups before the advent of the British missionaries and colonial officers. The novels about contemporary times present the post-independence period.

The contemporary novels show that some norms and practices which appeared in the novels about the earlier periods of Nigerian history have changed, while some aspects of life have remained constant over the years. Some of the socio-cultural practices of the past are still being practiced and some have been modified. The practices and norms that are common to both periods as well as those that are no longer practiced or have been modified are discussed in the dissertation.
IMPORTANT OF EXTENDED FAMILY

One of the norms of the pre-colonial and colonial periods, which is also commonly practiced in the contemporary novels, is the practice of extended family members and blood relations helping each other out whenever assistance is needed. In Things Fall Apart Okonkwo receives a lot of assistance from his mother’s kinsmen at Mbanta when he is forced to go into exile after he inadvertently kills a man at Ogbuefi Ezeudu’s funeral. They help Okonkwo and his family to make a fresh start, having left Umuofia with nothing but their lives and little else. Without apportioning blame or asking unnecessary questions, his mother’s relations give him some land to build a compound for his family. They also give him some farmland and seedlings to plant on the new farm. Examples of such assistance in the other novels show that support from extended family is widely accepted and practiced.

In one of the contemporary novels, The Boys at the Border, Emeka, the director of the Customs and Excise Department helps his brother-in-law, Samuel to get a job. Another example occurs in Felicia, when Madam Joy comes back to the village from Lagos with a lorry load of relief supplies as soon as the civil war ends.
Members of the same clan who live and work in another city or another part of the country, as well as members of a community also help each other whenever there is a need for such help to be rendered. In Things Fall Apart Okonkwo's best friend, Obierika, looks after Okonkwo's interests in Umuofia during the seven-year period of compulsory exile. In The Boys at the Border Peter, a fellow Ibo Customs officer assists Gladys, the wife of the former Customs Director, to track down the smuggler responsible for her brother's death.

PAYMENT OF BRIDE PRICE

Another practice which is common to both the pre-colonial and contemporary periods is that of paying bride-price to the bride's family. The tradition of paying bride price by a groom and his family is a cultural practice which American young adults would normally not be familiar with. But this is a tradition which has been and is still the norm in many Nigerian cultures. Marriage among Nigerians is usually preceded by elaborate betrothal ceremonies which include payment of bride price. According to Perspectives of Nigerian Culture,

Such ceremonies usually involve visits by a delegation of the would-be bridegroom's relatives to the family of the prospective bride, in the course of which specified gifts indicative of the

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desire to contract marriage are presented. (P. 11-12)

As seen in some of the novels, pre-colonial and contemporary alike, payment of bride price is widely practiced. Obierika receives bride-price from his daughter’s suitor in Things Fall Apart, and in The Boys at the Border Gladys’ parents receive a large sum from Emeka for the hand of Gladys in marriage. In The Bride Price Aku-nna’s uncle and step-father allows the girl to remain in school because of the high bride-price he could receive from a future suitor. As far as the issue of bride price goes, the novels are generally accurate and realistic. As in pre-colonial and colonial times, a bride’s family even today expects a groom and his family to pay some bride price or dowry.

COMBINING RELIGIOUS PRACTICES

Another practice which has not changed from the time of arrival of the first Christian missionaries is that of combining traditional religious practices with either the Christian or Moslem faith. In Things Fall Apart missionaries at Mbanta could not persuade some of the new converts to abandon some of their traditional religious beliefs. The people’s beliefs about the osu actually cause a rift in the young church. In The Bride Price Ma Blackie abandons All Saints Church in Lagos, and heads for her hometown of Ibuza.
to consult the Oboshi river goddess in her quest for more children. In *The Bottled Leopard* Amobi's father, who professes to be a Christian, clandestinely takes his son to a *dibia* to find out what is wrong with him. In *The Joys of Motherhood* Nnu Ego would go to church on Sundays, but would not hesitate to consult a *dibia*, a traditional medicineman on behalf of her beloved children.

This mixing of religious practices is not limited to Christians. In *The Boys at the Border* the members of the smugglers' association, who are Moslems, consult with and receive assistance from Agadagidi, a traditional medicineman. Also, the practice of combining religious practices is not limited to colonial times. As the contemporary novels *Felicia* and *The Boys at the Border* show, the practice still goes on today in rural and urban areas as well. Felicia's mother also consults a medicineman in *Felicia* and in *The Boys at the Border*, both the smugglers and the customs officers consult with medicinemen.

**MODIFIED AND CHANGING SOCIO-CULTURAL PRACTICES**

While some norms and customs such as those enumerated above are still practiced even in contemporary times, some others seen in the novels about the earlier periods are either no longer practiced, or not as widely practiced as
before. Also, some have been modified and they are not as harshly enforced as before.

INHERITANCE LAWS

One practice which is not as widely found today is that of brothers inheriting widows, children and property of their late brothers as seen in *The Bride Price*. In that novel, Ma Blackie and her children leave Lagos and return to Ibuza after the death of her husband. According to the customs of Ibuza, Ezekiel’s brother, Okonkwo, is to inherit his wife and children. This is to ensure that the widow and children of the deceased are taken care of by Ezekiel’s family. Ma Blackie becomes his fourth wife and is recognized in the society as the children’s father.

Currently, the laws of inheritance in many parts of the country favor the wife and children of the deceased. Widows and their children are usually the beneficiaries of the estates of deceased husbands and fathers. In many cases, if the widow is poor, members of her late husband’s family give assistance from time to time. An example occurs in *Felicia*. Although Felicia’s mother is a widow, none of her late husband’s relations inherit her and her daughter. Instead, her husband’s family assists with the payment of Felicia’s school fees, thus ensuring that she receives an education. In other cases, if the woman has a good job and is able to
take care of her children financially, she is free to do as she likes. She can remarry anyone of her choice, but her children will be encouraged to interact closely with their father's extended family. This is because the children will always be regarded as children of the family.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

In the past, families valued male children more and males dominated the societies portrayed in the novels about pre-colonial and colonial periods. Although males still control a large percentage of public life in the Nigerian society, complete male dominance is greatly reduced. Female children are valued more and there are equal opportunities in education and employment. As seen in Felicia, most families now educate girls and boys equally and women are becoming more visible in government, the public sector as well as in corporate headquarters.

OTHER CHANGING PRACTICES

Other practices which have been modified include the osu caste system among the Igbos, as well as the payment of heavy bride-price. Osu people are no longer as widely discriminated against as before, and many state governments have put in place laws regulating the payment of bride-
prices so that families would not go into bankruptcy because their sons want to get married.

Unlike in the colonial times, polygamy is another practice that is not as widespread today, except in the Islamic north where the religion allows a man four wives if he can treat them fairly and equally. That is not to say that polygamy is not practiced in the southern part of the country, but, monogamy is more widely accepted. As seen in The Boys at the Border, Baba Lati, who is a Moslem, has more than one wife. But generally, economic considerations as well as the problem of population explosion have largely rendered polygamy impracticable. Monogamy and small family sizes are generally the norm in urban areas because the cost of living is higher than in rural areas. In The Bride Price Ma Blackie remains committed to her monogamous marriage to Ezekiel while living in Lagos. But as soon as her husband dies, she heads back with her children to her rural hometown of Ibuza, where she becomes her brother-in-law’s fourth wife. It is also noted in Perspectives of Nigerian Culture that “polygamy was widely practiced in Nigeria .... At present however, monogamy tends to be the norm as a result of exposure to western culture ... ” (p. 12).

Apart from government intervention and urbanization, other reasons for the change and modification of cultural practices include education, enlightenment and migration.
People now move to and work in parts of the country other than where their ethnic groups dominate. In order to fit into the way of life of the area they live in, modification of beliefs and cultural practices occur. For example, those who are regarded as osu in their place of birth would not be recognized as such in another part of the country which does not have such a caste system. In The Bride Price Aku-nna and Chike had to flee from Ibuza to Ughelli, a non-Igbo town, in order to get married. In Ibuza, Aku-nna’s family had flatly rejected Chike as a suitor for Aku-nna because of his family’s osu status. But in Ughelli, the couple is free from persecution because the osu caste system is not the norm in that part of the country. In the larger cities like Lagos, it would even matter less. In The Boys at the Border which is a contemporary novel and where most of the action takes place in Lagos, there is no mention of the osu issue at all.

UNIVERSAL YOUNG ADULT ISSUES IN THE NOVELS

As seen in the second part of the analysis, the behavior, concerns and expectations of young adults in the cultures depicted in the novels are similar to those of their American counterparts. Universal young adult issues such as generational differences and conflicts, peer group pressure, dating and courtship found in the Nigerian novels
used in this study are similar to those found in American young adult novels such as Mildred Taylor’s *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*, Cynthia Voigt’s *Izzy Willy Nilly*, Katherine Paterson’s *Park’s Quest*. Although there are differences in cultural practices, norms and customs, young adult behavior tends to be similar regardless of where young adults are. They date, succumb to peer group pressure and they will have their conflicts and differences with their parents, guardians and other significant adults in their lives.

In the Nigerian novels, there are several reasons for the generational differences and conflicts. In some cases, conflicts arise because of the inability of the older generation to adapt to social changes brought about by colonialism and the introduction of another religion. Okonkwo’s attitude and actions in *Things Fall Apart* exemplify such inability to adapt to social changes.

After his return to Umuofia from his seven-year compulsory exile in *Things Fall Apart*, he observes that the clan has undergone a lot of societal changes in his absence. “The new religion and government and trading stores were very much in the people’s minds .... Okonkwo was deeply grieved. He mourned for the clan which he saw breaking up and falling apart ...” (p. 167-168). He tries to move the people to action, but is unsuccessful because he fails to note what the other elders of the clan have; that some
changes are inevitable. He decides to take matters into his hands and single-handedly take on the colonial administrators and their agents, though some of the other elders of the clan advise caution. When a communal meeting is interrupted by the colonial administrator’s court messenger, Okonkwo draws his machete and kills the messenger. The meeting breaks up in confusion as everyone makes a run for it. He eventually commits suicide in order to escape the wrath of the District Commissioner. He thus loses his life in a futile attempt to resist social change. Okonkwo’s strong desire to preserve the cultural practices handed down to them by previous generations ends in failure.

Another example of the older generation’s inability to adapt to social changes is seen in Nnaife’s attitude in The Joys of Motherhood. He and his family have lived in Lagos for a long time, and his children have been raised among Yoruba people. Yet, he cannot reconcile himself to the fact that his daughter, Kehinde refuses to marry the man he has chosen for her. He says “We don’t do so in my hometown Ibuza ...” (p. 210).

In some other cases of generational differences in the novels, conflicts are caused by the inability of the young adults themselves to be flexible in their rejection of some societal norms they perceive as unjust. Okonkwo’s son, Nwoye, in Things Fall Apart runs away from home to join the
Christians because he finds the killing of twins, as well as Ikemefuna's death unacceptable and unjust. Some other conflicts are caused by the young adults’ desire to adopt new ways of life introduced by interactions with people of other cultures. Such conflicts and differences are seen in Aku-nna and Chike's rejection of the osu system in The Bride Price and in Onwulum children's rejection of their parents' behavior and suggestions in The Joys of Motherhood.

As I conclude this chapter, I ponder about some questions which have arisen in my mind as a result of the study and this summary chapter in particular. People come to the United States from all over the world, including Nigerians and Africans. It might be interesting to study the reactions and responses of the young adults in multicultural classroom to the cultural perspectives portrayed in these novels. A comparison of the pattern of socio-cultural change over historical periods, as portrayed in the literary works of both United States and Nigeria might also be interesting, as students will be able to see similarities and differences in cultures more clearly. Finally, I wonder whether those Nigerian socio-cultural practices that have not changed, such as the extended family support and communal help will remain unchanged as time goes on. I also wonder whether there are important factors that have kept certain socio-cultural practices from changing. If so, what is the status
of those factors currently? Though currently unchanged, are these socio-cultural practices, being subjected to some influences that will likely result in significant future changes? Colonialism and missionaries effectively brought social change in the cultures portrayed in the novels. It can safely be assumed that increasing global communication and interaction, international interdependence and economic considerations will inevitably cause additional cultural changes, sooner or later.

I have presented a summary of the background and reasons for the study and the analysis in this chapter. A summary of observations from the study have also been presented with the hope that teachers, librarians and trainee teachers will find the study useful in multicultural classrooms. In Appendix A, some suggestions for teaching and using the novels in the classroom are provided. Table 8 summarizes this chapter.
Table 8: Socio-Cultural Practices in Different Historical Periods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Socio-Cultural Practices</th>
<th>Pre-Colonial Period</th>
<th>Contemporary Period</th>
<th>Changing or Modified Practices</th>
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<td>Mixing Religious Practices</td>
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APPENDIX

TEACHING THE NOVELS: Some Strategies

for Using Them in the Classroom

One of the aims of encouraging the use of literature from other cultures and countries in the classroom is to help teachers foster cross-cultural understanding in their students. In order to be effective with international literature in particular, the teacher's choice of instructional approach and strategies is crucial because, usually, the students will find the cultural practices and perspectives in such works unfamiliar. It is important, therefore, that the teacher uses an instructional approach that is student-centered with strategies that encourage active student participation and response. Frank C. Cronin notes that teachers find it difficult to "resist the temptation to lecture. But if students rely only on us for an official interpretation of book, then their own personal interpretations may never develop" (1992, p. 165). Teachers need to find ways of encouraging students to be more involved in how they learn.
RESPONSE BASED APPROACH

One approach to teaching literature that enhances students' understanding and enjoyment is the response-based approach, which emphasizes interaction and discussion between students as they respond to the text. The teacher becomes the classroom manager and guide who does his/her best to encourage the active participation and sharing of ideas and insights about the text being studied in a group setting. As noted by Robert Probst, students have the opportunity to invite others into the private exchange between work and self. Other readers can help tremendously by calling attention to different readings, alternatives that might otherwise have not been noticed. (1988, p. 38)

Using their prior knowledge and experience, the students generate their own ideas and meanings about the text. They thus learn to have confidence in their own abilities to make meaning, instead of seeing literary works through the perspective of their teachers and/or other critics. Also, by having the opportunity to learn and share ideas from each other through the use of various reader response activities, students come to recognize that there really is not one way of interpreting a text. They learn through the exposure to other views, especially their peers', to develop tolerance
for other opinions and perspectives, which they have the choice to accept or reject. In addition, students also get to share their perspectives on issues such as cultural and gender issues, multicultural and international issues with those who have not had such experiences prior to studying the text. By sharing the experiences of others, they all build their store of knowledge about things that have not affected them before. Thus, the students are able to reach outside their limited cultural and social experiences, especially while studying international literature.

In order to be more effective, teachers need to desist from the traditional style of teaching literature, the lecture mode, in which the teacher usually stays in front of the class, transmitting his/her knowledge about literary characteristics and techniques of the books being studied to students. In this approach, students in turn reproduce what they have been taught when answering examination questions. Cronin also cautions against this approach. "... teachers should avoid giving definitive interpretations that students can merely copy into their notebooks and memorize for a test" (1992, p. 165)). This approach does not encourage initiative on the part of students because they learn to suppress their feelings about the text, telling teachers what they want to read while answering examination questions and writing papers. Also, the traditional approach makes
students passive learners, waiting for the teacher to tell them everything they need to know about the texts they are studying. Students need an approach that takes into consideration "the interests and satisfactions of the average reader" (Probst, 1988, p. 3).

**SUITABILITY OF THE NOVELS FOR RESPONSE-BASED APPROACH**

The ten novels in this study can expose students to another country's cultural groups. The novels are also suitable for use in a literature class that uses a response-based teaching approach, enabling students to explore cultural practices portrayed in the novels as well as concerns of adolescents of some ethnic groups in Nigeria. The novels also cover different issues as well as several historical periods, thus giving an insight into how life was lived during the periods depicted. The novels' settings cover the pre-colonial through to the contemporary periods. Thus, there should be enough issues to generate and sustain the interests of teachers and students studying them. Although teachers can use the books in any order, I suggest teaching them in a chronological/historical order. This approach will facilitate students' understanding of the cultures and the history of Nigeria over time. Otherwise, students may end up being confused by some of the customs and traditions, which will no doubt seem strange to them.
INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES

There are several instructional activities that teachers frequently use to motivate students to learn literature, and these would work very well with the novels in this study. The activities require students to respond personally to issues in the text in writing, as well as cooperate with each other in small and large group discussions. Students also can work individually and either in pairs or in small groups on projects to help them understand better the issues about the cultures and the country depicted in the novels. Personal response, discussion and cooperation are key elements as these strategies are applied to studying other cultural contexts. Cronin notes that "Lots of questions, lots of discussion, small discussion groups and journal entries provide students with the opportunity to develop their own views..." (1992, p. 165).

In order to prepare students for a novel about a culture that is different from theirs, a pre-reading activity is very important. The teacher can set things up before the students read the first novel by having the students divide into small groups. Students in each group might discuss what they know about the African continent, and then all the students come together to share what they know. This activity enables the teacher to discern both the accuracy of ideas and the erroneous information students have about
Africa. Each group then does some library research to discover up-to-date information about the continent in general and Nigeria in particular. Groups then share their information with the whole class as a way of correcting the errors exhibited in the previous discussion. Such a pre-reading activity should help students be better prepared for the differences in the cultural practices they will find as they read the different novels.

Another activity that can be carried out before the students actually read any of the novels is to have a Statement Guide. In this activity, the teacher writes ten or twelve short but catchy sentences which state common facts and stereotypes about Africa. Examples of such statements include "Africa is inhabited by only black people"; Nigeria is in West Africa"; Africa is covered by Sahara desert" and similar statements. The teacher makes his or her own list, mixing up facts and misconceptions. Students then respond to each by putting a 'yes' or 'no', agreeing or disagreeing with each statement. Students have to give reasons for their decisions on each statement. This activity can help prepare students to read novels about a different country and culture. The activity also helps them rethink and modify pre-conceived notions about Africa and its negative portrayal in the media. The statement guide can also be used while a novel is being studied or even after the students
have finished reading a particular novel. The statements can be about the information presented in the novel, thus helping to generate and facilitate discussion on the text. This approach provides students an opportunity to rethink and modify their own opinions, feelings and interpretations about the text.

As students read a particular novel, the teacher can encourage them to generate topics of in-depth discussion within small groups and by the whole class. In addition, students can write their impressions and feelings about the novel in their journals. They can also work together in small groups to discuss the cultural values and practices presented in a novel like *The Bride Price*, such as the Osu caste system, laws of inheritance, payment of bride price, and polygamy. Similarities and differences in cultural practices may also be major points of discussion.

While studying these novels about Nigeria, students can also discuss issues such as peer group organization, upbringing and education of children as well as gender roles. Most students will be able to identify and empathize with Aku-nna and Chike who are from a different culture but who face some of the same concerns that young adults everywhere face. Some of the issues that concern young adults in the novels include cultural practices that the young ones do not want to comply with, such as the tradition
that forbids marriage between the descendants of the free-born and the Osu descendants of slaves. Because of the influence of modern education, Chike and Aku-nna believe that such traditions are outmoded. Another issue that the students may want to discuss may is the right of parents to choose marriage partners for their children whether they like or love the chosen partner or not.

Other issues that can generate discussion in group settings in the classroom include the conflict that comes about in *Things Fall Apart* as a result of the introduction of another culture and religion; Amobi's confusion between the traditional ways and his exposure to scientific ways in college in *The Bottled Leopard*; and religious beliefs in the novels generally. Discussing and writing down their responses to these issues might also help clarify the students' feelings as well as help them to see some of the similarities and differences between their culture and Nigerian culture. Writing also provides a forum for students to raise concerns not expressed in class discussions, as well as to agree or disagree with some points of view raised in class.

In addition to group discussion and written responses, teachers can use other interactive and cooperative strategies to help students deal with the foreignness of the cultural practices portrayed in the novels. One strategy
that can help students clarify their thoughts and help them to make meaning of events in the novel is readers theatre, in which students work together in groups to select and perform portions of the novel.

This reader-response approach not only provides oral performance possibilities for students but also encourages them to discuss in depth a literary selection in order to know what 'interpretation' they want to get across to an audience. (Kelly, 1992, p. 84)

Students need not prepare costumes as for a stage production. Instead, in readers theatre they sit or stand and use their voices to reflect the personalities of the characters they are portraying. Some class time may be allocated for students to prepare and present the portion of the novel they have chosen. In addition, students meet frequently outside of class time to plan and write their scripts based on the portions they have chosen. They then present to the whole class during class time. The whole procedure should be carried out in a very relaxed manner so that the students are able to focus on the meaning they are trying to make out of the text. The emphasis should not be on the acting abilities of the students, otherwise those who do not have the flair for acting may not be able to enjoy the exercise.
Many scenes in these novels are suitable for readers theatre, but students should be encouraged to choose their own scenes. For example, in *The Bride Price* the conversation between Aku-nna and her cousin Ogugua, on the road between Asaba and Ibuza, which reveals Aku-nna's naïveté about rural lifestyle and traditions is ideal for readers theatre (.pp. 63-65). Other suitable scenes include the scene between Okonkwo and his sons in chapter 2; the scene between Aku-nna and Chike in which they realize their love for each other in chapter 7; and the scene in chapter between Chike and his father, in which his father reminds him of the tradition which forbids marriage between him, an osu and Aku-nna, a free-born. The students will find their favorite portions of these novels to use in readers' theatre performance.

The teacher can also encourage students to put together a Reader Support Kit.

While some packages may consist of written materials assignments or copies of newspaper and magazine articles, the more effective Reader Support Kits contain a wealth of materials designed to move new readers into the proper context for the novel they are about to begin -- pictures, puzzles, questionnaires, appropriate objects. (Small and Kenney, 1978-79)
Students can work individually, or in pairs, or in small groups to put together kits that contain information about Nigeria as a country and the Ibo culture. Kits might contain objects and materials such as maps, art-works and curios, clothing, photographs, video programs, musical tapes. The aim of doing this project is to provide students with the opportunity to learn more and discover on their own as much information as they possibly can about Nigeria and the different cultural groups and the historical periods portrayed in the novels. Sharing reader support kits can also enhance other readers' understanding of the novels. The students may feel a sense of accomplishment and may even recommend the novels to their friends, proudly presenting the kits to friends as a way of encouraging them to read the novels too.

Using these instructional activities will definitely help and encourage young adult students to understand Nigerian literature better. Also, by involving students in classroom activities that demand their active participation as they make their own interpretation and meaning of literary works, they will begin to enjoy reading literature books within and outside of their culture, thereby cultivating the culture of reading for life. These are just a few activities. As teachers become more comfortable with a response-based teaching approach, they will discover more
ways to increase the appeal of the Nigerian novels used in this study as well as other Nigerian and African literature for young adults.

RESOURCES

In addition to teaching strategies, teachers can also explore avenues available in their local communities for resources that can be used to enhance the students' understanding and class participation as the novels are studied. They may have to request some resources from available sources, but local librarians usually provide excellent assistance. The libraries of nearby colleges or universities may offer many resources as well.

Teachers can contact television stations which have aired good documentary programs on Nigeria in the past and arrange to have the tapes shown to their students. These programs include documentaries such as the PBS Travel Series documentary on Nigeria and PBS Africa Series narrated by Ali Mazrui. Information pamphlets and booklets can also be obtained from The Nigerian Embassy in Washington, D.C., Nigeria Consulate in New York, Nigerian Universities Commission in Washington, D.C. and The Nigerian Mission at The United Nations in New York.
Teachers can also invite Nigerians and Africans living in the local community to the classroom to share information and answer students' questions about the practices they have read in the novels. Guest speakers should be encouraged to bring with them pictures, slides, artifacts, clothes and other products from Nigeria they can show the students. In addition, teachers need to obtain current and up-to-date, detailed maps of Africa and Nigeria so that the students can have accurate knowledge of the geographical location of the country and the locations of the places mentioned in the novels. These should be available in nearby libraries and bookstores.

The instructional materials and strategies described in this chapter should be of help to teachers using these novels in a multicultural and global curriculum. Teachers will also benefit from using the novels and materials as part of the multicultural and global curriculum. By exploring the different aspects of the cultures portrayed in the novels with their students, they themselves will become better informed about Nigerian cultural practices. In addition, the exposure to the cultures described in the novels can further foster cross-cultural understanding for both teachers and students. Such literary experiences make it possible for students and teachers alike to become more
knowledgeable about the culture of another part of the world.
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