

# reviews....



**the book worm**

**dave macrae**

## African Awakening

For the next couple of weeks we will take a look at two books by Chinua Achebe, the first of which is Things Fall Apart. This is a simple but poignant and sometimes even explosive novel about Okonkwo, a proud and impo-

rtant man in Obi society who is forced by his blindness into exile. When he returns he is unable to cope with the invasion of the White man who is repressing his society. Eventually he resorts to suicide as a result of his

too-rash actions against them. The setting is placed in Nigeria's Eastern Region (Biafra) about the turn of the century. Despite (or maybe because of) the fact that this is a fictional account it provides a wealth of information about a world which most Canadians know at best peripherally. There

is no reference to the white man and the "great events" in the outside world except as they affect the Ibo tribesman.

In fact the plot is a tightly closed system that slowly unveils a universe unknown to western eyes, one which you eventually realize (and the realization is of the heart, not the intellect) we entirely shoulder the blame for having been destroyed. And for the first time I have seen a tribal society is presented as a real world inhabited by real people, not just a bunch of curiosities to be poked and prodded un-

til they wither away, thus leaving us with the too-comfortable excuse that they never existed.

Aside from its value in showing us a world too little known to any but the most aware Canadian, Things Fall Apart is a literary masterpiece in its own right. It is one of the very few books that leaves you with a sense of deep, troubling, troubling that results from your desire to know why-the-jeezus it had to end the way it did and yet you know that there was no other way. The destruction of Okonkwo is the destruction of a society and in some certain sense the destruction of all of us.

This book is well-written, and very timely in a world where each of us is desperate to find his roots and to answer the question "how did we ever get into this mess?" It is well-worth putting on your reading list.

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