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Things Fall Apart: Rhetorical Analysis

Many people may struggle with their relationship with their father, Nwoye and Okonkwo from the novel *Things Fall Apart* give us an example of this. Nwoye has beliefs that conflict with his father's very traditional Igbo views. This results in a very strained relationship as Nwoye runs away from home. In *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe, Okonkwo uses pathos and ethos to maintain his traditional Igbo beliefs and try to prevent his son from converting; however, Okonkwo fails to prevent this, which conveys the overall theme of father-son conflict about the clash between tradition and change in colonial Nigeria.

Okonkwo uses pathos to maintain his traditional Igbo beliefs and prevent his son's embrace of the new religion. Okonkwo's use of pathos is seen when he interacts with Nwoye and proclaims:

Nwoye struggled to free himself from the choking grip. "Answer me," roared Okonkwo, "before I kill you!" He seized a heavy stick that lay on the dwarf wall and hit him two or three savage blows.... "Leave that boy at once!" said a voice in the outer compound. It was Okonkwo's uncle, Uchendu. "Are you mad?" (151)

Achebe introduces the first big conflict that starts the father-son conflict with this excerpt. His use of Okonkwo's aggressive response is an example of Okonkwo's firm stance in his culture and starts to show the real divide made by the white missionaries.

Okonkwo uses ethos to maintain his traditional Igbo beliefs and prevent his son's embrace of the new religion. Achebe answers the question of how Okonkwo uses ethos with the excerpt "'Leave that boy at once!' says a voice in the outer compound. It is Okonkwo's uncle, Uchendu. 'Are you mad?' Okonkwo does not answer. But he leaves hold of Nwoye, who walks away and never returns." Okonkwo uses ethos to try to get Nwoye to stay by showing Nwoye that Okonkwo is a man, but after Okonkwo attacks him, Okonkwo is "outmanned" by Uchendu and gives Nwoye an opportunity to get away. Due to the very traditional beliefs of the Igbo people, being seen as a man or as powerful is very important. While Nwoye doesn't completely agree with these traditions, due to him being raised in the Igbo society by his very traditional father, he takes this as seeing Okonkwo as less than and no longer his father.

Okonkwo's strategies fail due to his lack of love and credibility he's shown Nwoye. Okonkwo not only cannot show the reasons behind his Igbo beliefs, he also cannot show himself as the man he frames himself as, because there has always been another man in charge of him. Okonkwo's failure is shown in the text when it explains, "'Leave that boy at once!' said a voice in the outer compound. It was Okonkwo's uncle, Uchendu." This example of the text explains how Okonkwo cannot prove he is in charge of Nwoye, which gives him the power to leave home. Achebe is showing the theme of father-son conflict through the clash between tradition and change in colonial Nigeria. This theme is illuminated in the text when it describes Nwoye interacting with Obierika, "'How is your father?' Obierika asked, not knowing what else to say. I don't know. He is not my father," said Nwoye, unhappily." This shows the theme by proving the gap that is created by the clash between tradition and change in colonial Nigeria. Sons are completely separating from their families due to this clash.

In *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe, Okonkwo fails to prevent his son, Nwoye, from converting to Christianity, even though Okonkwo uses rhetorical devices like pathos and ethos to convince him to stay. This conveys the overall theme of father-son conflict about the clash between tradition and change in colonial Nigeria. Okonkwo failing to keep his son converting shows how tradition can not stop change, and the result of the conflict will be a complete separation of the two groups. The themes in *Things Fall Apart* are conveyed through rhetorical devices used by the respective characters. These rhetorical devices show the widening gap between the groups in colonial Nigeria.