

Worksheet 1.1. The Use of Similes in *Things Fall Apart*

Directions: Read the similes below. Explain the meaning behind each comparison.

| Simile | Meaning |
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| Okonkwo's fame had grown like a bush-fire in the harmattan. | Implies speed and impossibility of stopping it. The harmattan is a dry and dusty trade wind that often turns untended embers into fires. |
| [Fending for his father's house] was like pouring grains of corn into a bag full of holes. | Taking care of his father's house is a waste of time and resources. |
| The earth burned like hot coals and roasted all the yams that had been sown. | The heat and dryness ruined the new crops. Ironic, since yams are meant to be roasted when they are fully grown and ready for harvest. |
| The drummers took up their sticks and the air shivered and grew tense like a tightened bow. | The bow suggests readiness for military action as well as tension. |
| [Ikemefuna] grew rapidly like a yam tendril in the rainy season. | As a teenage boy, Ikemefuna grew rapidly, so that it seems he shot up almost overnight. Also implies vulnerability, since a tendril is fragile. |
| ...something seemed to give way inside [Nwoye], like the snapping of a tightened bow. | Okonkwo's son guesses that Ikemefuna has been killed and is devastated; he viewed him as an older brother. |
| [Okonkwo] drank palm-wine from morning till night, and his eyes were red and fierce like the eyes of a rat when it was caught by the tail and dashed against the floor. | Okonkwo is drinking to forget his role in Ikemefuna's death. The rat suggests his wrong behavior and the fact that he may have to pay for it. |
| [Okonkwo] felt like a drunken giant walking with the limbs of a mosquito. | He was a huge and strong man, but he was weak after two days without food or sleep, drinking palm wine. |
| Ezinma bubbled with energy like fresh palm-wine. | Suggests her lively disposition at times. Palm-wine is prized by the Igbo, as was Ezinma by her family. |
| "Agbala do-o-o-o! Agbala ekeneo-o-o-o-o," came the voice like a sharp knife cutting through the night. | The sharp knife suggests the fear that people would experience in the night. Also suggests pain, death. |