

## Worksheet 2.1. The Palm-Oil of Conversation

The proverbs to be found in Chapters 3 and 4 are listed below. Answers interpreting their meaning will vary.

### *Chapter 3*

"Let the kite perch and let the eagle perch too. If one says no to other, let his wing break."

"A man who pays respect to the great paves the way for his own greatness."

"A toad does not run in the daytime for nothing"

"An old woman is always uneasy when dry bones are mentioned in a proverb."

"The lizard that jumped from high iroko tree to the ground said he would praise himself if no one else did."

"Eneke the bird says that since men have learned to shoot without missing, he has learned to fly without perching."

"You can tell a ripe corn by its look"

"A proud heart can survive a general failure because such a failure does not prick its pride. It is more difficult and more bitter when a man fails *alone*."

### *Chapter 4*

"Looking at the king's mouth, one would think he never sucked at his mother breasts"

"Those whose palm-kernels were cracked for them by a benevolent spirit should not forget to be humble."

"When a man says yes his *chi* says yes also."

"They called him the little bird *nza* who so far forgot himself after a heavy meal that he challenged his *chi*."

Here are some additional proverbs from *Things Fall Apart* if you wish to extend this activity:

"Our elders say that the sun will shine on those who stand before it shines on those who kneel under them." (Chapter 1)

"If a child washes his hands he could eat with kings." (Chapter 1)

"When the moon is shining the cripple becomes hungry for walk." (Chapter 2)

"A child's fingers are not scalded by a piece of hot yam which its mother puts into its palm." (Chapter 8)

"A chick that will grow into a cock can be spotted the very day it hatches." (Chapter 8)

"If one finger brought oil it soiled the others." (Chapter 13)

"Mother is supreme." (Chapter 14)

"Never kill a man who says nothing." (Chapter 15)

"There is nothing to fear from someone who shouts." (Chapter 15)

"Living fire begets cold, impotent ash." (Chapter 16)

"A child cannot pay for his mother's milk." (Chapter 19)

"I cannot live on the bank of a river and wash my hands with spittle." (Chapter 19)

"Men have learned to shoot without missing their mark and I have learned to fly without perching on a twig." (Chapter 24)