

**A MARXIST READING OF *THINGS FALL APART*  
IN THE ESL CLASSROOM:**

*Exploring Colonial Socio-economic Exploitation in the Nigerian  
Context.*

**By: Arthur E. Nkalubo**

Supervisor: Roberto del Valle Alcalá

Södertörn University | School of Education and Communication

Individual Research Project 15 credits

English IV | Spring semester 2021



## ABSTRACT

This thesis aims to explore how a critical reading of the novel *Things Fall Apart* (1958) can provide valuable perspective for educators and students when examining socio-economic issues in a colonial context in the ESL classroom. The main issues being analysed are how the novel reveals and explores socio-economic forms of exploitation under colonialism, and how a critical reading of the novel can be used in teaching to inform and persuade learners about social injustices. To show this, the essay examines the novel from a Marxist perspective, and more specifically by drawing on the concept of primitive accumulation to understand and explain the changes brought about by the introduction of colonial rule. The changes in this context include the Igbo community's relation to land, its socio-economic and cultural aspects as well as the introduction of trade. The discussion and analysis of the novel centre on social injustices due to land expropriation, breakdown of traditional values and customs, and economic changes brought about by the arrival of Europeans in the context of colonialism. Expanding on this, the essay also reflects on the pedagogical implications of its arguments by showing how a critical reading of *Things Fall Apart* might provide an opportunity for teachers to underline issues of social injustice, material, and economic forms of exploitation under colonialism and beyond. This literary analysis also discusses and reflects on the practical challenges and possibilities of teaching such issues in the ESL classroom by using the concept of critical literacy.

**Keywords:** *Things Fall Apart*, Capitalism, colonialism, community, critical literacy, CLP, and ESL, land expropriation, Marxism, Primitive accumulation, socio-economic, social class

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>1. INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....</b>	<b>3</b>
2.1 Marxism.....	3
2.2 Marxism and Capitalism.....	4
2.3 Primitive Accumulation.....	4
2.4 A New Colonial Economy in the Nigerian context .....	6
<b>3. LITERARY CRITICISM AND <i>THINGS FALL APART</i>.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>4. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION.....</b>	<b>9</b>
4.1 Land Expropriation.....	10
4.2 Breakdown of Traditional Values and Customs.....	14
4.3 Economic Changes.....	18
4.4 <i>Things Fall Apart</i> , Critical Literacy, and the ESL Classroom.....	20
4.5 Practical Challenges and Possibilities for Teachers.....	22
<b>5. CONCLUSION.....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>6. WORK CITED.....</b>	<b>25</b>

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* has long been considered a literary classic from Africa describing precolonial and colonial African life and history, which is taught and read widely throughout the world (Chua and Pavlos 2). The novel was written and published in 1958. Achebe grew up in the Igbo town of Ogidi, Nigeria and studied English and Literature at University College, Ibadan (now University of Ibadan). He is an acclaimed author for his portrayal of social issues brought about by the imposition of western customs and values upon Africa. Achebe is further considered by many critics and teachers to be the most influential African writer of his generation and his works have helped re-define how African history and culture are perceived in the world (Chua and Pavlos 2).

This thesis aims to explore how a critical reading of the novel *Things Fall Apart* (1958) can provide valuable perspective for educators when examining socio-economic issues in the ESL classroom. The main issues I will analyse are how the novel *Things Fall Apart* reveals and explores issues of socio-economic exploitation in a colonial context, and how a critical reading of the novel can be used in teaching to inform and persuade learners about social injustices. To show this, the thesis is based on a Marxist perspective of *Things Fall Apart*, and more specifically draws on the concept of primitive accumulation to understand and explain Achebe's literary take on the social changes that occur in Igbo society with the introduction of colonial rule. The changes in this context include the Igbo community's relation to land, new forms of administration and trade from a perspective which considers socio-economic exploitation as a result of the colonial encounter. The discussion and analysis of the novel centre on social injustices due to land expropriation, breakdown of traditional values and economic changes which are aimed at imposing capitalist conditions upon the Igbo community by the Europeans in the context of colonialism.

Expanding on this, the thesis also reflects on the pedagogical implications of its arguments by showing how a critical reading of the novel might provide an approach for teachers to underline socio-economic issues and exploitation under colonialism and beyond. The literary analysis in this context discusses and reflects on the practical challenges and possibilities of teaching such issues in the ESL classroom by using the concept of critical literacy.

*Things Fall Apart* concerns itself with traditional Igbo life just before and after the arrival of the colonialists in Nigeria. The main character in the novel Okonkwo is exiled for seven

years from his society after having accidentally killed a fellow Igbo clan member which is considered a crime against the gods just before the arrival of the colonialists. Upon his return to his homeland from exile, Okonkwo fails to accept the changes that have occurred in his homeland due to the arrival of the Europeans which has led to the breakdown of the clan together with its many traditions and customs (Achebe 117). The title of the novel directly captures this aspect of the breaking down of community and its values in the context of Africa and colonialism. It is inspired by a poem published in early twentieth century called “The Second Coming” by the Irish poet W.B. Yeats who describes a collapsed society due to an internal flaw of humanity. Achebe uses the phrase “things fall apart” from Yeats’ poem since it depicts the horror of being colonised in Ireland (Wallace 30). Ireland suffered from colonial occupation by England and had been subjected to various forms of economic and social dispossession with lasting consequences (McGuire 19-20,23).

Transferred to a different context, the vision portrayed in *Things Fall Apart* seems to reveal that the breakdown of the Igbo society was due to change brought about by the Europeans (Chua and Pavlos 7). In seeking a new form of expressing African culture, Achebe seeks a way out of the prison house of colonialism in order to construct a new identity (Gikandi “Reading” 4). Yet as I will show in my analysis the reason for the “falling apart” of the Igbo community in the novel is not only due to the cultural forms of exploitation but also due to the new socio-economic relations which shift from a peasant to a capitalist economy established by the colonial order. In peasant societies, as Samir Amin mentions, workers only produced for subsistence means and therefore could not engage in capital accumulation as in capitalist relations (7), as shall be portrayed in the analysis of this novel.

From a pedagogical perspective, focusing on colonialism is beneficial for pedagogically reconstructing the historical and cultural memory of Africa in the ESL classroom and to strengthen the needs of culture and education, which postcolonial literature like Achebe’s takes to heart. The initiative to strengthen the needs of culture and education of Africa particularly amongst young Africans in the diaspora, which is significantly encouraged by (UNESCO), could apply to all students, especially students with backgrounds that are linked to colonial history in the ESL classroom. Through recognising different works of African descent, UNESCO aims at enabling young Africans in the diaspora to better understand and embrace their own history while determining their own future. As the author Achebe himself asserts in an interview with the Atlantic Magazine that, the novel’s exploration of the effects of colonialism is something that people from different parts of the world can relate to (Bacon).

There is need in the classroom to critically reflect on the general history of Africa free from racial prejudices deriving from colonialism and to promote an African perspective (UNESCO). The UNESCO initiative to free African history from racial prejudice of colonisation is also in line with the Swedish curriculum's requirements to combat issues of xenophobia and intolerance through knowledge, open discussion, and active measures (Skolverket 4).

Expanding on these points, in the following, I will analyse the novel by focusing on the socio-economic forms of exploitation and violence, embedded in the colonial rule of the Igbo society by using the concept and theories of primitive accumulation from a Marxist perspective. First, I will show how *Things Fall Apart* reveals and explores aspects of colonial exploitation which lie behind the cultural forms of violence that break up the Igbo community in the Nigerian context. Second, I will demonstrate the ways in which *Things Fall Apart* can be used in teaching to inform and persuade others about social injustices with relevance for the teaching of colonial history and its implications. Before getting into a discussion of these aspects however, I will provide a brief account of some of the main theoretical ideas and key terms which will form the basis of my analysis.

## **2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

In order to develop my analysis of how the Igbo community in *Things Fall Apart* breaks apart, I will use the Marxist theories of primitive accumulation vis-à-vis colonialism as a theoretical framework in this essay.

### **2.1 Marxism**

Marxism is a theory which critiques the power of the ruling capitalist classes whose ideas are dominant in society (Eagleton 5). The reason as to why Marxism is useful for a critical analysis of Achebe's novel in this context is because Marxism equips us with the tools to understand power structures while exposing the exploitative nature of these power structures in accumulating wealth and exploitation of the poor as in the case of colonialism (Coulthard). Further, Marxist criticism within literary studies aims at explaining literary works in detail with the focus on understanding the meaning of these works (Eagleton 3). Furthermore, Marxist literary criticism is part of a larger theoretical analysis of society rooted in the struggles of people for freedom from oppression while unmasking ideologies (Murchland 362). As a theory, Marxism has been described as response to the European industrial revolution (Rahayu and Supiastutik 1) and likewise deemed a systemic and systematic critique of capital and capitalism (Sinha and Varma 547).

## **2.2 Marxism and Capitalism**

Despite generating considerable prosperity in some parts of the world, capitalism produces inequality, social injustice, and an insensitive commercial culture (Lippit 4). However, in Marxism, “capitalism consisted of the relationship between the capitalist owner who owned the means of production and the worker who sold their labour in order to subsist thereby accumulating wealth socially” (Lippit 9-12). Walter Rodney mentions that, “capitalism was characterised by the means of production being concentrated in the hands of a few people and by unequal distribution of the human labour and its products making labour a commodity to be bought and sold” (7). Lois Tyson also states that, “in Marxism, the survival of capitalism relied greatly on consumerism which led to the constant demand for new markets leading to colonial socio-economic exploitation” (60-61). Consequently, large pieces of land were divided amongst different European powers in what came to be known as the scramble and partition of Africa (Koponen 117,119,128). According to Onur U. Ince, “capitalism was interdependent on colonisation and acquisition of increased capital and labour by way of primitive accumulation which constituted the pre-conditions for capitalism” (156-158). Primitive accumulation in Marxism refers to an historical and a continuous process within capitalism (De Angelis 1-2).

## **2.3 Primitive Accumulation**

The notion of accumulation was coined by Adam Smith who related accumulation of stock to division of labour even though Marx himself later connected primitive accumulation to a different theoretical meaning with emphasis on class relations rather than capital as stock (De Angelis 5-6). Accumulation of capital included “Enclosure Acts” under which common land during the transition from feudalism to capitalism was stolen from peasants while depriving them of their livelihood (Burns 22-23). The term “primitive” corresponds with the past, which becomes the condition for a capitalistic future (De Angelis 1-2) while “accumulation” in a historical sense refers to ownership of assets and transfer of ownership (De Angelis 4). Capital constitutes different forms including raw materials necessary for production (Burns 22). Primitive accumulation sets the stage and prepares the pre-conditions for capitalism leading to the transformation of non-capitalist forms of life into capitalist ones with the introduction of new forms of economic relations of power (Ince 158; Coulthard).

Examining Marx’s idea of primitive accumulation allows one to critically analyse and reformulate historical arguments especially in relation to peoples’ struggles for freedom and dignity (De Angelis 5). Despite Karl Marx’s discussion on primitive accumulation mainly

concerning itself with land enclosures in Western Europe, neo-Marxism connects primitive accumulation to Africa through slave trade as a capitalist mode of production. As De Angelis states that, “Marx’s discussion on primitive accumulation in England links the process of accumulation to the destruction of African communities and slavery” (10-11). Indeed, slavery and colonialism set the stage for the exploitation and expropriation of Africa’s natural resources like land through seizure for the commercial exploitation of the Europeans through trade and taxation under capitalism (Rodney 95-113). The end of slavery marks a new phase of exploitation under colonialism which deforms and fractures the economic set-up of Africa (Kalu and Falola 4).

Despite Karl Marx’s description of primitive accumulation emphasizing class rather than capital (Edelman et al. 69-70), it has also been defined as the same as accumulation by dispossession, which includes the forcible taking of land by the colonists (hereafter referred to as “ABD”). For instance, David Harvey’s interpretation of primitive accumulation and ABD covers specifically the issue of land grabbing by the European settlers through capitalism (Harvey 137). As a result of land grabbing under capitalism in England, traditional peasantry disappears affecting the rural economy. Similarly, capitalism significantly reduces dependence on domestic farming in the British colonies (Williams “Country” 2). The disappearance of peasantry and the eventual land expropriation creates the conditions of a capitalist market (De Angelis 3). According to Brown, the concept of primitive accumulation has also historically been linked to loss of land through settler colonial rule by way of economic exploitation under colonialism where peasants are dispossessed from their means of production (158-159).

Both primitive accumulation and ABD have been used to understand and analyse the use of extra-economic means of capital accumulation, such as land expropriation to advance capitalist relations (Edelman et.al 69-70, 82). Land expropriation under colonialism in turn leads to the breaking up of the community while raising questions about social justice (Brown 158). Similarly, colonial exploitation leads to the disruption of local customs and the transformation of the socioeconomic systems (Mamdani 10). According to Amin, “colonialism was inspired by capitalism which had a tendency of breaking down and causing disappearance of different pre-capitalist formations. These pre-capitalist formations which were heterogeneous in nature and involved cultural or communal modes of production, were impaired, broken and left without their true meaning where they remained” (7,8). Silvia Frederici mentions that, “the history of primitive accumulation past and present can be best understood from the perspective of the colonised (“*Friktion*”)”. In this context however,



primitive accumulation can be understood from the point of view of the colonised Igbo community of Nigeria as seen in *Things Fall Apart*.

#### **2.4 A New Colonial Economy in the Nigerian Context**

Historically, the forceful introduction of capitalism in the context of colonialism led to the development of new classes, new forms of class domination and struggle weakening or partly reinforcing the pre-existing relations (Lazarus 39). Nat J. Colletta and Michelle L. Cullen mention that, “cultural groups which supported the Europeans received socioeconomic advantages while those cultural groups which opposed colonialism faced socioeconomic injustices which further created class differences amongst these groups” (37-38). In the African context, the classes which have been created include a political and an intellectual class comprising mainly of church leaders influenced by western values according to Nicholas Brown (152). Similarly, Vernantius E. Ndukaihe mentions that, “the new Christian converts amongst the Igbo were forced to live according to two cultural settings which led to psychological and ethical effects because of dual or divided identities of neither being fully Christian nor African tearing apart the Igbo society. The colonisation of the Igbo society led to identity complexities where the religious converts were seen as having hated or denounced their own cultures while embracing western capitalist values” (357).

“European presence within the Igbo altered and reshaped the socioeconomic systems in the society. The Igbo community fell apart because urbanisation such as new transport systems and the condemnation of traditional Igbo practises by the Europeans eroded the cultural values of the Igbo including their dress code,” mentions Gloria Chuku (211). As Pal Ahluwalia notes that, “colonialism was perceived as modernity because of the economic changes it brought about and yet sustaining colonialism degraded the traditional cultural practices” (50). Ndukaihe further adds that, “increased colonial activity in the Igbo society caused the collapse of the Igbo family structure and culture because of the political and socio-economic innovations. For instance, the change in dress code which was mainly adopted by young women caused increased body consciousness, sexuality and even disrespect towards traditional clothes which were then regarded as backward” (357). According to Gloria Chuku, “the colonial administration did not only introduce strict laws but also employed men as colonial officials who worked long hours in places like the native courts and factories tearing apart the Igbo family structure” (216,218,219,223). Similarly, cultural traditions like title-taking amongst the Igbo change due to socioeconomic growth within the Igbo society. As

Vernantius E. Ndukaihe mentions, “traditional honorary titles such as “Eze”, “Nze” and “Ozo” which were recognitions for heroism or community contributions have now become a realm of the wealthy as money has become the determining factor in awarding such titles and not honesty” (354,355).

Today, the Igbo society is a juxtaposition of two domains which include the traditional society and the modern capitalist society consisting of a new elite with western Christian values. The latter seeks to dominate the former by trying to erase the earlier traditions such as the fear of the gods while capitalism creates a money and market economy. The Igbo society is now eager to accumulate as much wealth and power as possible because of the capitalist colonial economy (Ndukaihe 362,363). More so, churches have now become business centres, prayers have become commodities for sale with church leaders cashing in on the religious industry to accumulate wealth. Money and wealth are the new measures of value in Igbo land (Ndukaihe 348,349,350).

### **3. LITERACY CRITICISM AND *THINGS FALL APART***

*Things Fall Apart* is arguably the most widely read African novel which has become part of a global literary canon. The novel also occupies a significant place in both critical and cultural discourse (Okpewho 3). Most of the literary criticism surrounding the novel involves the context of post-colonial or colonial Africa and relates to aspects such as cultural conflict and violence, gender, as well as legal forms of administration and religion in the context of colonialism. To develop a sense of the wide-ranging analysis and scholarship regarding this novel, and to highlight the contribution of this study to existing criticism, I will briefly discuss some of the critical readings.

In his analysis of *Things Fall Apart*, Simon Gikandi focuses on the ways in which the novel powerfully dramatizes the disruption of African forms of social organisation as a result of colonial modernity while at the same time problematising the Igbo society and the received ideas of its cultural purity (“Encyclopaedia” 10-11). For Gikandi, African literature including Achebe’s novel still holds onto its colonial past, despite African literature trying to free itself from the impact of colonialism (“Encyclopaedia” xii). Literary works which seek to claim a perspective of cultural purity as a response to colonialism, as in the case of Achebe’s work, represent the Igbo culture as being static and not subject to change (Gikandi “Reading” 10). Related to this, John C. Ball mentions that the narrative in the *Things Fall Apart* reclaims the cultural history of the colonised from erasure or colonial bias (88). However, while re-affirming

Gikandi's view above, Ball adds further that Achebe's presentation of Umuofia as a myth creates a society that is historically static or petrified and only characterised by the arrival of the white man yet Umuofia could have had a different ancestral history beyond what is depicted in the novel (88-89). Gikandi further argues that despite its powerful dramatization of colonial disruption, the novel still fails to reclaim the integrity of African culture and to negotiate the forces blocking the progress of the African culture such as how it is portrayed within European discourse. Instead, the novel tries to reclaim African culture based on a European language and on western ideals, which is a repetition of a colonial disguise and structure of relations (Gikandi "Reading" 10).

Related to this, Ode Ogede responds to Gikandi's argument that although Achebe's works are about African subjects, they are mostly entrenched in western traditions since Achebe formally uses English a dominant language which does not entirely remove western influence in African literature (86). Similar to Ogede's point, Gikandi recognises the need to decolonise African literature from western influence ("Encyclopaedia" xii). Unlike Gikandi, Ogede however explores the ways in which the novel addresses the impact of colonial rule and its negative effects on Igbo culture (87). For Ogede, Achebe's choice of writing in English and in his style, adapts both African and European characteristics through the use of Igbo idioms and phrases in fiction integrating both worlds in African literature (95).

Unlike the above discussed critics, Chidi Amuta's work on *Things Fall Apart* focuses not only on the cultural aspects within the novel and colonialism, but also, similar to my study, on the economic issues where capitalism undermines the sanctity of the African traditional values and customs. Amuta identifies a clash between two systems namely, a pre-colonial Igbo society and the capitalist economy (130). He argues that the novel not only stresses the cultural aspects of colonialism but also shows how colonial exploitation of the Igbo culture and society is directly related to the economic structures keeping the society together (131). Although Amuta reads the novel from a Marxist perspective stressing economic issues, Amuta's criticism does not fully consider how socioeconomic exploitation such as land expropriation is the force that leads to the breaking down of community in the novel.

Adding to existing accounts and developing them, my analysis of the novel focuses on revealing and exploring aspects of colonial socio-economic exploitation that lead to other cultural forms of violence and exploitation in the Nigerian context. In the novel, these aspects of colonial exploitation are portrayed through land expropriation within the Igbo society, through the breakdown of traditional values and in the change of economic relations.

Some colonial economic policies and practises such as unfair laws led to dehumanising cultural dispossessions and oppression while entrenching colonial domination (McGuire 19-20). Indeed, Achebe himself in an interview with the Atlantic Magazine reflects on the issue of dispossession as being at the heart of colonialism (Bacon).

#### 4. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of this study which consists of different sections, is mostly focused on the chapters which highlight the life in the Igbo society after the arrival of the colonialists and the events which unravel afterwards. After the first three sections, two sections will follow discussing practical challenges and possibilities for teachers. Before the analysis of the novel, a brief overview of the historical context in which the novel was written will be included drawing on several relevant secondary sources.

*Things Fall Apart* is a novel set towards the end of the nineteenth century and portrays a systematic entry into an African society by a colonial power which enforces social change through unjust means (Okpewho 9). While the first part of the novel portrays the pre-colonial social life of the Igbo people, the second part portrays the traumatic experience of the Igbo culture losing its autonomy to a colonial power (Gikandi “Encyclopaedia” 10). The story in the novel portrays the first encounter between traditional Africa and colonial presence leading to a tragic confrontation of the traditional values of the Igbo society by the systems and ideals exemplified by the church and legal forms of power brought about by the Europeans (Okpewho 8; Bacon). The timeline of the novel is further extended to a time when colonial occupation becomes the main concern and challenge for the Igbo society (Rahayu and Supiastutik 1). The socio-economic conditions in the Igbo society can perhaps be best described by the following quotation in which the main character, Okonkwo returns from his seven year exile because of accidentally killing a clan member where he finds his clan radically transformed by the impact of colonial rule:

Okonkwo’s return to his native land was not as memorable as he had wished. It was ...but, beyond that, Umuofia did not appear to have taken any special notice of the warrior’s return. The clan had undergone such profound change during his exile that it was barely recognisable. The new religion and government and the trading stores were

very much in the people's eyes and minds. There was still many who saw these institutions as evil, but even they talked and thought about little else, and certainly not about Okonkwo's return. (Achebe 172)

From the passage above, the novel reveals how the socio-economic conditions within the Igbo community have reached a breaking point as society has totally changed due to the arrival of the colonialists as "the return of the village hero, the warrior, goes unnoticed" (Achebe 172). Okonkwo expects a triumphant return, but he is left disappointed, bitter, and jealous about the changes implemented by the Europeans in the Igbo society (Rahayu and Supiastutik 1). The mental and ideological impact of the changes is made clear when the narrator says that, "the new religion, government and trading stores were very much in the people's eyes and minds" (172). This passage strikingly captures how the new economic and social relations change the way the individual and the community relate to each other. To further develop my argument about how socio-economic exploitation impacts the Igbo community and how things break apart, I will discuss the issue of land expropriation as portrayed in the novel relating it to primitive accumulation.

#### **4.1 Land Expropriation**

One of the central socio-economic issues which indicates the changes that the Igbo go through in the novel is the expropriation of land which leads to tensions between the colonialists and the Igbo society. Amongst the Igbo, social relations and the economy are closely bound with their relationship to land. Land expropriation not only makes it possible for the colonialists to establish their religion and administration, but it underlies the material disempowerment of the Igbo. The critical stance that the novel registers against land expropriation becomes clear when the missionaries arrive in Umuofia:

They asked for a plot of land to build their church...a piece of land to build their shrine...The missionaries had come to Umuofia. They had built their church there, won a handful of converts and were already sending evangelists to the surrounding towns and villages. That was a source of great sorrow to the leaders

of the clan; but many of them believed that the strange faith and the white man's god would not last. (Achebe 135)

Even though in the novel the clan seems to be giving away land voluntarily, giving away the land of sickness, or the "Evil Forest" for the building of the shrine or church (Achebe 135) furthers socio-economic changes within the Igbo society in a broader context. The passage above is important because it highlights the exact moment the Europeans enter the Umuofian community. When the Europeans enter Umuofia, they gradually start to dispossess the natives of their land by building a church and establishing a colonial administration to exploit Igbo resources. As seen in the passage above, "the missionaries build a church and win more converts" (Achebe 135). Consequently, the church here reveals itself as a form of exploitation and a ploy by the Europeans to convert many people within the Igbo society to Christianity and further acquire more land to extend colonial influence.

In fact, Achebe writes, "The white man came quietly and peacefully with his religion, we allowed him to stay and now has won our brothers and our clan can no longer act as one. He has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart" (166). Religion in this context and as discussed by several critics, typically functions as a way of breaking up the community. As Isidore Okpewho argues historically that the Africans evangelizing Igbo land showed more enthusiasm in destroying African religion than the white missionaries they served (17). Indeed, Achebe describes "Enoch one of the converts as being over-zealous and seemingly more devoted than Mr. Brown that he was named, the outsider who wept louder than the bereaved" (175) which further shows how religion was instrumental in breaking the psyche of the converted Igbo natives to justify land exploitation. Significantly, land expropriation by the colonialists resonates with and can further be elaborated on in relation to Marx's idea of primitive accumulation, which relies on separating people from their means of production (De Angelis 2). In the context of the novel, the building of the church marks the beginning of the Igbo community losing control over their farmland critical for growing yam (Achebe 135, 31).

Losing control over the Igbo land marks a shift from pre-capitalist formations to the start of new economic relations based on capitalist formations. In chapter twenty, a passage offers insight into the changes which have occurred in the Umuofian village upon Okonkwo's return from exile. The Europeans on arrival not only take away land to build a church but they

also undermine the Igbo customs on land. For instance, the white man's court makes decisions on a land dispute involving Nnama's family with undue regard to the Igbo land customs which irritates Okonkwo (Achebe 135,166). In fact, an elder mentions that, "the white man does not understand our customs just as we do not understand his" (Achebe 180). In a conversation with his friend Obierika, Okonkwo confides in him about how he despairs for his village after many of their kinsmen had joined the white man's government (Achebe 163-166). Okonkwo's sadness can be summed up in the following quotes:

"But I cannot understand these things you tell me. What is it that has happened to our people? Why have they lost the power to fight?" (Achebe 165). "What has happened to that piece of land in dispute?" asked Okonkwo. "The white man's court has decided that it should belong to Nnama's family, who had given much money to the white man's messengers and interpreter." (Achebe 166)

As the passage above shows, capitalism gradually reshapes the social relations of the community by deciding who owns the land or the material means of production where it is the social class with the wealth which gets the land. According to Samir Amin, "the dominant nature of capitalism ignored issues of land such as the control of the soil but rather focused on class and profit yet to a peasant, land was everything. For the peasant, there was no rent, no landowners and land was an instrument of labour" (8). The white man does not "understand" the community's "custom about land" as Okonkwo says, "yet he makes decisions on the same land he does not understand". The white man's law is not only governed by money and wealth but also brings wealth to the colonial agents (Achebe 166). Land expropriation becomes key to the colonialists since land serves as the underlying factor which furthers the colonial agenda of exploitation and domination.

According to Walter Rodney, "colonial land expropriation was a direct way of sucking the African continent, a characteristic of primitive accumulation, backed by new legal and governance structures" (22). Nicholas Brown also states that, "the arrogance of land expropriation by dispossessing the peasants' means of production was the original sin of

African colonialism” (158). Indeed, land expropriation can be perceived as a “sin” committed by the colonialists as it leads to the breakdown of the social values within the Igbo community as portrayed in the novel. The passage above is also crucial because it helps us understand exactly how land expropriation leads to divisions amongst the Igbo. As indeed, Okonkwo the main character remarks in the same scene that “the white man had put a knife on the things that held Umuofia together hence the community falling apart” (Achebe 166).

Unlike under colonialism where social relations are determined by capitalist modes, the clan’s relation to the land, as one of the elders in *Things Fall Apart* explains, is dependent not on “money” and “wealth” but on kinsmen: “We do not ask for wealth because he who has health and children will also have wealth. We do not pray to have more money but to have more kinsmen” (Achebe 156). Before the arrival of the colonialists, land is a uniting factor, a source of livelihood and justice to the community both socially and economically. “The Igbo ancestors were committed to “Mother Earth” and the Igbo market-place functioned as a place for clan gatherings, meetings and for the annual worship of the earth goddess” as Achebe writes (176-177). Any offence against the earth goddess or land is punished by the clan. When Okonkwo commits a crime against the earth goddess, he is banished into exile by the elders who do it because they have to appease the gods by cleansing the land which Okonkwo has “polluted” with the blood of a clansman (Achebe 116-118). Functions such as the New Yam festival are held every year before the harvest begins to honour the gods. The New Yam festival is an occasion for joy in the community (Achebe 35-36). However as seen in one of the passages above, when Okonkwo returns from exile, the Igbo society has already been transformed with part of the land being turned into “trading stores” and an “administration” has been established (Achebe 164,172).

For Okonkwo, the loss of land to the colonialists is unbearable as his friend Obierika tells him about the colonialists’ influence and new control over land in a neighbouring village (Achebe 165). The village functions as a symbol of communal organisation of life (Frederici “Enclosures” 11). Therefore, Okonkwo’s despair over land is understandable because as the story further evolves, we see that land expropriation creates new capitalistic forms within the Igbo community such as “trade” characterised by increased prices of palm oil (Achebe 168). Obierika shares the same disappointment but Okonkwo unlike Obierika wants to fight back, to which however, Obierika responds, “it is already too late” (Achebe 165, 172). It is indeed late as land in their neighbouring village is already being economically transformed into trading centres by the colonialists (Achebe 164).



As highlighted in the novel, land expropriation thus, demonstrates clear tensions between the Igbo and the colonialists. The colonialists' arrival drastically alters the socio-economic power dynamics over Igbo land leading to the breakdown of traditions and customs. Ultimately, land expropriation in *Things Fall Apart* is presented as an underlying factor that leads to socio-economic tensions between the colonialists and the Igbo society.

#### **4.2 Breakdown of Traditional Values and Customs**

Another prominent theme in the novel, is the breakdown of traditional values and customs which is portrayed in the novel after the coming of the colonialists and their introduction of Christianity. This theme of the breakdown of traditional values and customs is directly connected to the falling apart of "community" as discussed in the previous section. The title itself, *Things Fall Apart* indicates disintegration, breaking into pieces, disorderliness, and disruption due to the arrival of the white man and his different values alien to a stable Igbo community (Alimi 121). Early on in *Things Fall Apart*, the Igbo society is presented in a rural setting with intact morals and traditions consisting of a different religious system of gods, priestesses, and oracles such as "Agbala" the oracle of the hills and caves (Achebe 16-17, 54). Respect for gods, goddesses and ancestors is very paramount and keeps the Igbo society united (Achebe 27-29). Amongst the Igbo, farming is the main activity with yam and palm fruits as the staple crops (Rahayu and Supiastutik 3). Having subsequent yam harvests is considered prestigious in the Igbo community (Achebe 31-32). However, this social structure starts to breakdown when the colonialists introduce Christianity. The colonialists despise the supreme god of the Igbos as exemplified in the novel when Mr. Brown despises the Igbo god "Chukwu". Mr. Brown tells Akunna, "there are no other gods but one supreme God who made heaven and earth" (Achebe 169). Similarly, the missionaries in Mbanta village preach that there is only one true God and claim that the Igbo gods are just pieces of wood and stone (Achebe 137-138). Christianity further undermines the cultural authority of the Igbos by empowering the village "outcasts" in disregard to Igbo customs (Achebe 166), which I will later reflect on.

Further, "colonialism greatly disrupted the cultural life of conquered people through the banishment of native customs and the introduction of new laws which bred resentment among the natives" (Williams and Chrisman 45-46). Amongst the Igbo society, commitment to one's values and traditions means a lot. In the novel, this commitment is revealed when Okonkwo says, "We come together because kinsmen do so...But I fear for you young people because you do not understand how strong the bond of kinship is" (Achebe 156-

157). In chapter twenty, a passage offers insight into how traditional values and customs within the Igbo society have broken down due to the colonialism:

But apart from the church, the white man had also brought a government. They had built a court where the district commissioner judged cases in ignorance. He had court messengers who brought men to him for trial. Many of these messengers came from Umuru on the bank of the Great River, where the white men first came many years before and where they had built the centre of their religion and trade and government. These court messengers were greatly hated in Umuofia because they were foreigners and also arrogant and high-handed.  
(Achebe 164)

In the passage, the novel increases our understanding regarding the separation of the Igbo natives from running their own local affairs which are now being run by the Europeans and their agents. This type of dispossession where justice is now being administered by the messengers from other communities on behalf of the colonialists is characteristic of accumulation by dispossession. The fact that justice is no longer administered by the community elders, but colonial agents irritates Okonkwo to which he exclaims, “worthy men are no more” (Achebe 189). In fact, Achebe writes that “the Europeans had built a court which judged cases in ignorance and all the court messengers were from another village. They were hated in Umuofia because they were arrogant and high-handed” (164). Interestingly here, the dispossession is not in terms of stealing land, but it extends to the enclosure of the actual administration of justice by the white man. These enclosures just like in the dispossession of land, break up pre-existing communal relations under primitive accumulation” (“Enclosures” 11). According to Silvia Frederici, primitive accumulation is a continuous process and it can take different forms, such as through unfair laws targeting the marginalised (“*Friktion*”). The law contributes to the ideological reproduction of social relations which function as a tool of domination and as a tool of furthering ideology (De Sutter 102). Consequently, justice which had been carried out by the village elders on behalf of the earth goddess amongst the Igbo is

now being carried out by the colonial agents to promote the interests of the colonialists (Achebe 117-118,164).

Further, the colonial agents who are themselves empowered “outcasts” or converted Africans are hated in Umuofia; their function is to enforce the white man’s rule which breeds internal divisions within the community (Achebe 164). Even though the recruitment of “outcasts” into the community by the church or as colonial agents might seem positive to the reader, it creates a new social class to serve the interests of the colonialists. In addition, Mr. Brown builds a school in Umuofia where the villagers go to learn after being enticed by bribes of gifts like singlets and towels (Achebe 171). As noted in the passage below from chapter twenty-one, the school trains colonial agents to work in the courts which might seem modern to the reader, but this new school seeks to serve the needs of the colonial administration at the expense of the traditional justice system in a shift of power relations. In this passage, many people flock to the school started by Mr. Brown to acquire formal education:

More people came to learn in his school, and he encouraged them with gifts of singlets and towels. They were not all young, these people who came to learn. Some of them were thirty years old or more. They worked on their farms in the morning and went to school in the afternoon... Mr. Brown’s school produced quick results. A few months in it were enough to make one a court messenger or even a court clerk. Those who stayed longer became teachers; and from Umuofia labourers went forth into the Lord’s Vineyard. New churches were established in the surrounding villages and a few schools with them. From the very beginning religion and education went hand in hand (Achebe 171).

In the passage above, the villagers who go to Mr. Brown’s school after working on their farms in the mornings (Achebe 171), signify the beginning of division of labour and the further breakdown of traditional customs amongst the natives: they are educated to become “labourers” for the colonial rule. Education here is a form of ideological enclosure aimed at controlling labour so as to reproduce a labour force dependent on a waged economy and class

divisions (Frederici “Enclosures”11). Accordingly, education forms an enclosure because it is considered as part of the continuous process of primitive accumulation (De Angelis 15). Further, education forms an enclosure because part of Igbo land for farming is grabbed for the construction of Mr. Brown’s school to create a waged labour force which includes teachers and court messengers to suit the interests of the colonialists (Achebe 172,164). “This form of exploitation caused by capitalist accumulation arose from the enclosure of land where land from peasants was grabbed through privatisation for profit”, as noted by Silvia Frederici (“*Friktion*”). “Enclosure Acts were part of accumulation of capital under capitalism. Enclosures broke up communal relations by depriving people of their livelihood because they included the forcible taking away of land”, according to Burns (22-23). “Education was both repressive and ideologically aimed at reproducing class relations of the ruling class”, as noted by Grant Banfield (Banfield 51). Achebe notes that, the school is able to ideologically “persuade” the natives with colonial ideas (171,172). “More people came to learn in Mr. Brown’s school... A few months in it were enough to make one a court messenger or even a court clerk” (Achebe 171). The creation of new educated classes, with no other means of livelihood but their labour power to be sold on the labour market is key to capitalism (De Angelis 1). This introduction of formal education has an underlying factor to create more wealth for the colonialists. According to Rodney, “many skilled people were essential to make the colonial economy function which was key to capitalism” (18). Likewise, in the neighbouring villages schools and churches are built leading to more converts and as the passage says, religion and education in this context go hand in hand (Achebe 171).

Mr. Brown’s school adds to our understanding of the connections between the different structures of exploitation in the novel, which, in this case, takes the form of exploitation of the mind of the natives in the Igbo society. The school “influences” the natives with colonial ideas while disrupting the Igbo peasant lifestyle. Indeed, Achebe mentions that, “the new religion, government and trading stores were very much in the peoples’ eyes and minds because many saw these institutions as evil” (172). When Okonkwo returns from exile expecting to re-start his life, he is disappointed when he discovers that his clan has undergone transformation and he despairs for both his clan and community. Worse still, his son Nwoye converts to Christianity and changes his name to Isaac (Achebe 172-173). Okonkwo’s despair can be summed up by the following passage:

Okonkwo was deeply grieved. And it was not just a personal grief. He mourned for the clan, which he saw breaking up and falling apart, and he mourned for the warlike men of Umuofia... (Achebe 173)

This passage from chapter twenty-one is important because it makes us understand the extent to which things in the Igbo society break. Indeed, the coming of the white man and his new religion does not only break down the values and customs of the Igbo society but also family ties are broken. For example, Nwoye's change of names in a way reflects a change of values and symbolises family divisions (Achebe 172). Ultimately, all these divisions begin with the colonialists encroaching upon Igbo land, which leads to consequences such as the break-up of community ties. From a Marxist perspective, as Tyson argues, the rise of a capitalist economy in a colonial context raises concerns relating to human values since the economic capitalist system is more concerned with capital or money than with community and kinship. (59). "Kinsmen and kinship, and not wealth", as mentioned earlier, form the basis of Igbo society, as an elder in Umuofia asserts (Achebe 156). In the novel, the Igbo social structures are broken down by the colonialists through force and by exerting fear amongst the majority. As expressed by a quote from the passage when the elders and villagers who meet to discuss how to act against the colonial entrenchment are disrupted: "The white man whose power you know too well has ordered this meeting to stop" (Achebe 194). This scenario clearly portrays the loss of agency and power of the community to the colonialists.

In conclusion, the breakdown of traditional values and customs in the Igbo society reveals the extent of the exploitative nature of colonialism since it breaks social relations and stirs up divisions amongst the Igbo society. These divisions within the Igbo society permeate not only the traditional family as the basic unit of society, but the divisions extend to economic ties.

### **4.3 Economic Changes**

As discussed so far, in the novel, we are acquainted with different kinds of exploitation as a direct effect of colonialism where the Igbo are exploited by the Europeans both socially and economically. Consequently, some of these socio-economic changes divide the Igbo natives leading to bitterness towards the Europeans. In fact, when Okonkwo returns from exile,

his community is too engaged with “the new religion and the trading stores” to notice his return which disappoints Okonkwo (Achebe 172). In this passage from chapter twenty-one of the novel below, aspects of trade and commercialisation of palm-oil are revealed:

The white man had indeed brought a lunatic religion, but he had also built a trading store and for the first time palm-oil and kernel became things of great price, and much money flowed into Umuofia. And even in the matter of religion there was a growing feeling that there might be something in it after all, something vaguely akin to method in overwhelming madness. (Achebe 168)

As a result of commerce, the increase in prices creates bitterness amongst the Igbo natives who perceive trade as a form of exploitation to which Achebe writes, “for the first time palm-oil and Kernel became things of price” (Achebe 168). Amongst the Igbo, Palm-wine, and palm-oil are used in festivities such as the traditional Igbo marriages (Achebe 104). Because of increased commerce, trading stores are built which marks the end of the traditional Igbo market as a source of livelihood and unity within the community. The Igbo market-place had always been used for clan meetings and different festivities (Achebe 168,177,190). All this ends because of the increased urge for land brought about by economic changes. Indeed an elder at a clan meeting in Umuofia cannot hide his disappointment when he says that “some of the sons of Umuofia have broken the clan and gone their ways, deserted the village and joined a stranger to soil their fatherland” (Achebe 193). According to Frederici, “the colonialists expropriated big parts of land and displaced many peasants off their land to increase crop production and boost the colonial economy hence, breaking up the pre-existing communal land relations” (“Enclosures” 11-12). This land expropriation starts with the building of churches but later expands into trading stores to effectively exploit the Igbo community (Achebe 168). From a historical context, this scramble and partition of Africa’s natural resources like land was based on the economic potential in the colonies (Koponen 128). Eric Williams states that, “for colonial capital, possession of a colony, which produced staple goods on a large scale for the export market, was fundamental (2-4).

In the context of the novel, capitalism then replaces a barter trade system in which goods are exchanged for other goods thus, affecting the rural peasant economy (Tyson 59).

Amongst the Igbo peasant community, palm-oil, kola nuts and yams are the staple goods (156-157). According to Walter Rodney, under capitalism, “trade became the actual ownership of the means of production by citizens of another country that is, the colonisers at the expense of their trading partners who were the colonial subjects” (22). Similarly, “the colonial economy evolved around the cash crop economy where goods produced by Africans were exported to Europe at the expense of the labouring Africans who received less for their efforts” (Kalu and Falola 5-6). The economic changes such as the increased commodity prices (of palm-oil for instance), reflect some of the excesses of capitalism necessary for the colonialists to entrench themselves in the Igbo society.

Further, the Igbo justice system is also affected by the economic changes brought about by the colonial administration. As Okonkwo frustratingly states, “the white man’s court makes decisions on a land dispute in favour of Nnama’s family which had given a lot of money to the court messenger”. Okonkwo’s frustration arises from the white man ignoring the Igbo customs on justice (Achebe 166). In fact, when some elders in Umuofia including Okonkwo are arrested after a church is destroyed in Umuofia, the court messengers ask the Umuofian villagers to pay a fine of two hundred and fifty cowries for securing their release (Achebe 185). Although the money is later collected and by the community, it is just to appease the white man. However, fifty bags of cowries collected go to the court messengers who release the elders (Achebe 185-187).

While the economic changes may seem like a positive force of modernisation and development to the reader, what the novel reveals is that these changes serve the capitalistic interests of the colonialists who profit from trade essential in promoting their colonial agenda. In summary, these economic changes seem to be a significant ingredient of the colonial powers’ exploitation of the Igbo society.

#### **4.4 *Things Fall Apart*, Critical Literacy, and The ESL Classroom**

The discussion has so far focused exclusively on interpreting socio-economic forms of colonial exploitation in *Things Fall Apart*. As briefly discussed earlier, addressing these aspects of the novel provides valuable perspectives on teaching in the ESL classroom especially by making use of critical literacy. Critical literacy ensures that students have the right skills and qualities to critically analyse the world around them (Ko and Wang). By definition, “critical literacy refers to the analytical practices of reading literary and cultural texts with an eye to revealing how they might be carrying dominant ideologies and discourses, by identifying and understanding that language and texts are not neutral but always entangled with larger

structures of power” (Borsheim-Black et al.123). Teaching *Things Fall Apart* pedagogically and critically in this context can provide valuable insights into the impact of socio-economic exploitation towards colonised communities as well as helping students to understand social injustices within society.

As James Phelan explains, literary criticism and theory have the potential to improve the students’ self-understanding as well as their critical skills in relation to historical factors such as colonialism and its effects (527). Literary criticism could further provide new ways of analysing texts and showing students how different knowledge can be formed and reformed via literature (Phelan 527). In analysing non-dominant perspectives with students in a classroom, teachers could also utilise texts which represent other racial perspectives to help students imagine other viewpoints (Steiss 438). Similarly, critical literacy also involves students’ critically reading a text interrogating the possible social injustices embedded in the text and the social systems which uphold such social inequalities and injustices (Ko and wang). When students interact with texts this way, they use their knowledge of other texts and their real-life experiences to construct their own reality. Therefore, in constructing text worlds as social worlds, the students question and rethink the norms, beliefs and other traditions based on their knowledge of historical and cultural forces (Beach et.al).

Additionally, the issue of selection regarding which novels one should teach is in this context crucial. Many critical literacy educators in the past few years have developed curricula challenging students to engage with different texts and discourses with a view to including diversity and other cultural contexts (Borsheim-Black et al.124). Teaching Achebe’s novel with a focus on issues of colonialism, socio-economic changes and class in this context might participate in these efforts. The novel presents a nuanced and critical perspective on the process of colonization in the Igbo society which can help counter the essentialist and panoramic view of the history of colonised people. Focusing on the novel from a point of view that considers issues of exploitation of a marginalised Igbo community, one can teach students in the ESL classroom forms of critical literacy.

Similarly, to justify teaching of issues on colonial exploitation, it is important to consider the national guidelines in the curriculum. The Swedish curriculum provides for the students to be given an opportunity to develop knowledge of social issues and cultural features in different contexts and parts of the world where English is used (Skolverket, 2012). Indeed, the Swedish curriculum provides the need to combat issues of xenophobia and intolerance



through knowledge, open discussion, and active measures (Skolverket 4) providing the basis for analysing socio-economic issues in the novel to enable change and social action.

Apart from discussing socio-economic exploitation in the aftermath of colonialism in the Igbo society in Nigeria, *Things Fall Apart* addresses other, connected themes central to society in general such as justice, religion and class struggle, which makes the use of this novel essential from a broader pedagogical point of view. The issues addressed by the novel and analysed here relate to social injustices due to land expropriation, breakdown of traditional values and economic changes, which are all highly relevant for teaching students to analyse, think critically and reflect on the literature's role in addressing historical forms of violence and exploitation. The novel presents a tragic story of exploitation within the Igbo community by the colonialists which could inspire the students' desire to focus on social justice issues in the ESL classroom.

#### **4.5 Practical Challenges and Possibilities for Teachers**

Given the previous discussion about *Things Fall Apart* and critical literacy in an ESL classroom, the question of how the novel could be valuable in teaching to persuade and inform others about social injustices needs to be addressed.

One significant tool in teaching critical literacy in an ESL classroom is Critical Literature Pedagogy (hereafter referred to as "CLP") since it raises issues of simplifying hidden ideologies, themes, and criticisms within literary texts (Borsheim et al. 124,125). As students consider different texts for their curriculum, they could also examine works from other cultural groups they are unfamiliar with in their curriculum (Borsheim et al. 127). Further, CLP asks students to read against texts and examine how such texts are embedded in or shaped by ideologies. Similarly, when the students focus on the theoretical and pedagogical aspects of critical literacy or read against texts, this challenges them to consider both what is written and not written in the text (Borsheim et al. 124,125). Indeed, some of the issues addressed by Achebe's novel relate to unequal distribution of power through land ownership, primitive accumulation of capital and struggles between the individual and their own society, which could be relevant for the students to analyse, think critically and reflect on the literature's role in addressing historical forms of injustice.

In responding to literature, students construct text worlds as social worlds meaning that even though what they read is fiction, they form ideas and make observations which are relevant to and are entrenched in the real social world (Beach et al.). Teaching critical literacy and students to read against texts could sometimes prompt resistance from the students who

may question ideas, they have held to be true, constant, or normal. For teachers, resistance could be a sign of learning and an opportunity of engaging with critical learning which teachers could take advantage of (Borsheim et al. 132). Consequently, for students interpreting the literary work's response to and interpretation of historical realities might serve as a starting point for their own interpretation of their own reality or social worlds that they can relate to. Relating the students' beliefs and values to their CLP approaches to the literary text is important in a classroom context (Borsheim et al.124,125).

Indeed, teaching *Things Fall Apart* in an ESL classroom could help both teachers and students confront some of the received ideas and stereotypes about what they perceive as not being their own reality. Therefore, teachers should help students when analysing texts to understand how background, social status and other characteristics could influence understanding of texts from around the world in implementing CLP (Steiss 434,440). Social injustices as in the *Things Fall Apart* exist within our society and despite the novel being a work of fiction, it could offer connections to the students' social worlds and other people's experiences through CLP. Further, teaching Achebe's novel through CLP while focusing on colonial exploitation amongst the Igbo could provide positive discussions about social injustices and the impact of colonialism as an ideology.

Furthermore, by working with the novel, students might be able to construct their text worlds as social worlds based on their experiences (Beach et al.), which can be connected through their own experiences with racism or xenophobia when discussing colonisation and its effects in society. As a suggestion, teachers in the ESL classroom need to consider colonialism as a reflection of the history of colonised people to create awareness about issues of diversity and integration as per the Swedish curriculum. Consequently, teachers need to focus on how socioeconomic issues are manifested in the novel to ascertain whether such issues compare with the students' own experiences.

For teachers, teaching literature also feels close and personal since what goes on in the classroom reveals the deepest aspects of people's lives such as minds, psyche, and personality (Showalter 449). Literary imagination is an essential component of an ethical stance that requires us to empathise with other people whose lives are different from ours by fostering appreciation of inclusion, sympathy, and voice (Nussbaum xvi) as in the Swedish curriculum (Skolverket 4). In this sense also, the novel presents a productive source for critical pedagogical methods offered by the uses of critical literacy.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This study has focused on examining colonial socioeconomic exploitation and its effects on the Igbo community in *Things Fall Apart* through a Marxist theoretical framework. Based on the literary analysis, this study has also attempted to reflect on the practical challenges and possibilities for teachers when examining social inequities and colonial exploitation using the CLP framework and critical literacy in the ESL classroom. The main focus of the literary analysis of the novel was to reveal and explore aspects of colonial socio-economic exploitation inherent in capitalism within the Nigerian context, and in CLP terms how the novel can be valuable in teaching about colonial injustices.

In analysing colonial injustices in the novel, it can be concluded that *Things Fall Apart* portrays how colonial socio-economic exploitation centres on capitalism. This study seeks to consider land expropriation amongst the Igbo of Nigeria within a broader context of capitalism but more specifically drawing on the Marxist concept of primitive accumulation. Further, this study argues that primitive accumulation and ABD are the modes of exploitation the colonialists use by setting up new economic relations which dispossess and separate the Igbo community from peasantry. Land expropriation is presented from a critical perspective as an embodiment of the brutal effects of colonial exploitation, breaking apart the Igbo society. Similarly, economic changes brought about by the Europeans in a colonial context contribute to the breakdown of values within the Igbo society.

Finally, this study has also sought to add to the pre-existing understandings of the novel and reflected on the practical challenges and possibilities for reading it critically for pedagogical purposes in the ESL classroom. Achebe condemns colonial exploitation in his narrative relating to the events that tear apart the Igbo society. Likewise, colonialism can be productively addressed in the ESL classroom focusing on issues such as land grabbing, class, xenophobia, and African colonial history. In the end, although this is in many ways a tragic novel, it exposes in detail issues of colonial, socio-economic exploitation in the Igbo context, which encourages the reader to respond to and reflect on such historical injustices and violence in a classroom context.

## 6. WORKS CITED

- Achebe, Chinua. 1958. *Things Fall Apart*. Penguin classics. Print.
- Ahluwalia, Pal. 2001. *Politics and post-colonial Theory: African Inflections*. Routledge
- Alimi, A. S. 2012. "A Study of the use of proverbs as a literary device in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*." *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, Volume 2, Issue 3
- Amin, Samir. 2014. *Theory is History*. Springer
- Amuta, Chidi. 1989. *Theory of African Literature: Implications for practical criticism*. Zed books
- Bacon, Katie. "An African voice" *The Atlantic online*, August 2000  
<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2000/08/an-african-voice/306020/> Accessed 13 April 2020
- Ball, C. John. 2015. *Satire and the Postcolonial Novel: V.S. Naipul, Chinua Achebe, Salman Rushdie*. Routledge
- Banfield, Grant. 2016. *Critical Realism for Marxist sociology of Education*. Routledge
- Beach et al. 2006. *Teaching literature to adolescents*. Lawrence Erlbaum, Associates, Inc., Publishers
- Borsheim-Black, Carlin., Macaluso, Michael and Petrone, Robert. 2014. "Critical Literature Pedagogy: Teaching Canonical Literature for Critical Literacy" *Journal of adolescent & Adult literacy*, Volume 58, Issue 2, pp.123-133
- Brown, Nicholas. 2005. *Utopian Generations: The political Horizon of Twentieth- Century Literature*: Princeton University Press
- Burns, Emile. 1939. *What is Marxism?* Red Star Publishers
- Chua, John & Pavlos, Suzanne. 2001. *CliffNotes on Achebe's Things Fall Apart*. Cliff Notes
- Chuku, Gloria. *Igbo Women and Economic Transformation in South-eastern Nigeria, 1900-1960*. Routledge

- Colletta, J. Nat, Cullen, L. Michelle. 2000. *Violent conflict and the Transformation of Social Capital. Lessons from Cambodia, Rwanda, Guatemala, and Somalia*. Volume 795. The World Bank Washington.
- Coulthard, S. Glen. 2014. *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition*. University of Minnesota
- De Angelis, Massimo. 2001. "Marx and Primitive Accumulation: The Continuous Character of Capital's 'enclosures'" *The commoner*, Issue N.2
- De Sutter, Laurent. 2013. *Althusser and the Law*. Routledge
- Eagleton, Terry. 1976. *Marxism and Literary Criticism*. Routledge
- Edelman, Marc, Oya Carlos, and Borrás Jr, M. Saturnino. 2015. *The Global Land Grabs: History Theory and method*. Routledge
- Frederici, Silva. 2017. "On Primitive Accumulation, Globalization and Reproduction" 09 sept 2017. *Friktion Magasin* 12 April 2020.
- Frederici, Silvia. 1990. "The Debt Crisis, Africa and The New Enclosures"  
<https://libcom.org/library/the-debt-crisis-africa-and-the-new-enclosures-silvia-federici>  
 Accessed 21 April 2020
- Gikandi, Simon. 2003. *Encyclopaedia of African Literature*. Routledge
- Gikandi, Simon. 1991. *Reading Chinua Achebe: Language and ideology in Fiction*. East African Educational publishers
- Harvey, David. 2003. *The New Imperialism*. Oxford University Press
- Ince, U. Onur. 2018. *Colonial capitalism and the Dilemmas of Liberalism*. Oxford University Press
- Kalu, Kenneth and Falola, Toyin. 2019. *Exploitation and Misrule in Colonial and postcolonial Africa*. Palgrave Macmillan
- Ko, Mei-yun, Wang, Tzu-Fu. 2012. "EFL Learners' Critical Literacy Practises: A Case Study of Four College Students in Taiwan" *The Asia-pacific Education Researcher*, Volume 22, 13 sept 2012, pp. 221-229

- Koponen, Juhani. 1993. "The Partition of Africa: A Scramble for a Mirage" *Nordic journal of African studies*, Volume 2(1) pp.117-135
- Lazarus, Neil. 2011. *The Postcolonial Unconscious*. Cambridge University press
- Lippit, D. Victor. 2015. *Capitalism*. Routledge
- Lois, Tyson. 2014. *Critical Theory Today: A user-friendly Guide*. Routledge
- Mamdani, Mahmood. 1996. *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the legacy of late Colonialism*. Princeton University Press
- McGuire, George, Thomas. *Seamus Heaney and the Poetic(s) of violence*. Diss. University of Michigan, 2004. Web. 8 Apr. 2020.
- Murchland, Bernard. 1977. "Marxism and Literary Criticism" *Philosophy and literature*, Volume 1, Number 3, Fall 1977, pp. 361-363 (Review)
- Ndukaihe, Emeka, Vernantius. 2006. *Achievement as Value in the Igbo/African Identity: The Ethics*. Transaction Publishers
- Nussbaum, Martha. 1995. *Poetic Justice: The literary imagination and Public Life*. Boston: Beacon Press
- Ogede, Ode. 2007. *Achebe's Things Fall Apart*. Continuum
- Okpewho, Isidore. 2003. *Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart: A case study*. Oxford University press
- Phelan, James. "On Teaching Critical Arguments: A matrix of Understanding" *Pedagogy*, Volume 1, Issue 3, Fall 2001, pp. 527-531
- Rahayu, Isnani. Pujiati, Hat. Supiastutik. "The Issue of social class in Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart" *English Department*. Jember U, 2013. Web. 15 April 2020.
- Rodney, Walter. 1981. *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. East African Educational Publishers
- Showalter, Elaine. "Teaching in Public: A Modest Proposal" *Pedagogy*, Volume 1, Issue 3, Fall 2001, pp.449-455
- Sinha, Subir and Varma, Rashmi. "Marxism and Postcolonial Theory: What's left of the debate?" *Sage in critical sociology*, Volume 43, Issue 4-5, December 2015, pp.1-15

Skolverket.se. 2020. Curriculum for upper secondary school (online) Available at:

<https://www.skolverket.se/getFile?file=2975> Accessed 8 April 2020

Skolverket.se. 2020. English. Aims of the Subject (online) Available at:

<https://www.skolverket.se/download/18.4fc05a3f164131a74181056/1535372297288/English-swedish-school.pdf> Accessed 8 April 2020

Steiss, Jacob. 2019. "Dismantling Winning Stories: Lessons from Applying Critical Literature Pedagogy to the Odyssey" *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, Volume 63, Issue 4, 14 Aug 2019, pp. 433-441

UNESCO. 2020. A General History of Africa (online) Available at:

<https://en.unesco.org/general-history-africa> (Accessed 8 April 2020)

UNESCO. 2020. Teaching of the general History of Africa, A Vision for the Future (online)

Available at: <https://en.unesco.org/general-history-africa/teaching> (Accessed 8 April 2020)

Wallace, Deborah. "Things Fall Apart". *The Lancet* Volume 372, Issue 9632, 5-11 July 2008 p.30

Williams, Eric. 1994. *Capitalism and slavery*. The University of North Carolina press

Williams, Patrick and Chrisman, Laura. 2013. *Colonial Discourse and Post-colonial Theory: A Reader*. Routledge

Williams, Raymond. 1973. *The Country and the City*: Oxford University Press, New York