

Grade 12 AP Summer Reading Assessment

Name: _____

Teacher: _____

Question 1

(Provided Time: 60 minutes)

In the following passage from *Things Fall Apart*, Chinua Achebe addresses the subject of accepting personal responsibility. Read the passage carefully and then write a well-developed essay in which you analyze how the author uses diction, repetition, contrast, rhetorical questions, and/or imagery to convey Okonkwo's inner struggle.

As Okonkwo sat in his hut that night, gazing into a log fire, he thought over the matter. A sudden fury rose within him and he felt a strong desire to take up his machete, go to the church and wipe out the entire vile and miscreant gang. But on further thought he told himself that Nwoye was not worth fighting for. Why, he cried in his heart, should he, Okonkwo, of all people, be cursed with such a son? He saw clearly in it the finger of his persona god or *chi*. For how else could he explain his great misfortune and exile and now his despicable son's behaviour? Now that he had time to think about it, his son's crime stood out in its stark enormity. To abandon the gods of one's father and go about with a lot of effeminate men clucking like old hens was the very depth of abomination. Suppose when he died all his male children decided to follow Nwoye's steps and abandon their ancestors? Okonkwo felt a cold shudder run through him at the terrible prospect of annihilation. He saw himself and his fathers crowding round their ancestral shrine waiting in vain for worship and sacrifice and finding nothing but ashes of bygone days,

and his children the while praying to the white man's god. If such a thing were ever to happen, he, Okonkwo, would wipe them off the face of the earth.

Okonkwo was popularly called the 'Roaring Flame.' As he looked into the log fire he recalled the name. He was a flaming fire. How then could he have begotten a son like Nwoye, degenerate and effeminate? Perhaps he was not his son. No! he could not be. His wife had played him false. He would teach her! But Nwoye resembled his grandfather, Unoka, who was Okonkwo's father. He pushed the thought out of his mind. He, Okonkwo, was called a flaming fire. How could he have begotten a woman for a son? At Nwoye's age Okonkwo had already become famous throughout Umuofia for his wrestling and his fearlessness.

He sighed heavily, and as if in sympathy the smoldering log also sighed. And immediately Okonkwo's eye was opened and he saw the whole matter clearly. Living fire begets cold, impotent ash. He sighed again, deeply.

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Question 2

(Provided Time: 60 minutes)

In the following excerpt from *Three Day Road* author Joseph Boyden establishes Niska's inherited role as a *windigo* killer. Analyze how Boyden's use of diction, metaphor and mood/atmosphere emphasizes Niska's isolation from others.

As soon as I saw the *askihkan* where the nephew lay, I pointed to it and said, "He's there." The old man nodded, his eyes telling me he wondered how I was so sure. But it was as if the *askihkan* glowed from within. An aura as bright to me as the North Lights pulsed from within it with great sadness. I realized then that sadness was at the heart of the *windigo*, a sadness so pure that it shrivelled the human heart and let something else grow in its place. To know that you have desecrated the ones you love, that you have done something so damning out of a greed for life that you have been exiled from your people forever is a hard meal to swallow, much harder to swallow than the first bite of human flesh.

The old man tried immediately to take me to the place where his nephew lay bound and guarded, but I told him I needed a place in which I could prepare and pray for a while. He led me to his shelter and I was left there, you quietly waiting nearby. I sat in the darkness a long time, not praying, not thinking even, just rocking on my haunches and waiting for the *ahcahk* of my father to come to me.

My mind was blank as I left the old man's *askihkan*, not full of light or strength or anything else. I told you to stay until I returned. The old man sat outside waiting for me, gazing off in to the bush. I saw the faces of a couple of small children peering out at me from the entryways of their *askihkans*, but hands quickly pulled them inside. The sickness of the *windigo* could spread as surely as the invisible sicknesses of the *wemistikoshiw*. I was the surgeon summoned to carve the illness from this small group, the one assumed to have the skill that others did not.

The old man led me to the lodge where the sick one lay, and in my numbness I couldn't help but feel like a prisoner being led to confinement. The pain emanating from the *askihkan* pulsed stronger as I approached. I felt as if I was walking against a strong current, as if I might be swept away at any minute. The old man pulled aside the hide covering and I stepped into the darkness, my eyes slow to adjust. Two men sat by the doorway, keeping watch over the form covered by a blanket. I asked them to remove the blanket. When they did I was

surprised by the smallness of the man left exposed, bound hand and foot, staring back at me with goose-black eyes. They didn't appear human at all, those eyes, looking at me with the inquisitiveness of an animal. And I watched as those eyes changed when they realized who and what I was. They went cold and lightless as a stone, and he turned his head toward the wall.

I had arrived with no plan, hoping that what I needed to do would come to me. I told the two men to untie him and to hold his arms above his head, knowing that this would make it more difficult for him to fight. Their eyes searched my face for just a second, they did as I asked. I told the old man to sit on the *windigo's* feet, to have his knife ready in the event it overpowered us. There was no struggle as the men untied his arms from his sides and then lifted them above his head, holding them there so that he was stretched out on the blanket. I pulled a stick from the fire-pit and my rope from around my waist and knelt beside him. He smelled sour, like he'd pissed himself, but there was a deeper musk too, one that I'd not smelled before and hoped not to again. I straddled his chest so that my slight weight was on him. Finally he turned his head to me and looked deep into my eyes.

I could see that he understood. I reached under his neck and placed the rope around it, wrapping both ends around the stick. All I had to do now was twist the stick around and around until the rope tightened and cut his breath off. I started to whisper a prayer to *Gitchi Manitou* and began twisting the stick with each sentence of my prayer. The rope bit into his neck and he began to struggle. I twisted more and prayed louder. His eyes flooded with an animal's panic, and he bucked me hard, trying to throw me from him. I squeezed my thighs tighter around him and kept twisting so that his eyes began

to widen and bulge. The men holding his arms strained against his strength, cursing and breathing hard. From the way the *windigo* writhed and flopped, I knew that the old man was holding on for his life.

The *windigo* began to pant and speak in a tongue I'd not heard before, the voice scratched. His eyes burned into mine and I realized that he was cursing me. I prayed louder to *Gitchi Manitou*, asking to deflect this curse, to carry it away on the smoke of the fire and out of the lodge into the sky. My hands stung from the work of twisting. The *windigo's* face had turned purple and I was afraid that his eyes would pop from his head. His words melted into a long groan and his thick tongue stuck out from his mouth.

With one last great shudder, he tried to throw me from him. My body and feet went into the air and, just before the point where I was about to flip off of him, my body's weight came back down hard onto his chest. With a great gush of spittle and blood, the last stinking air in his body left him and splattered onto my rough cotton shirt. His eyes remained open, the whites turned a deep red from the strangulation. The two men who'd held his arms fell back in a heap. I turned around and saw the old man crouched, looking at me.

I stood after a time, my legs shaking. I felt the warm trickle of my blood running down the insides of my thighs. A sound in the corner caught my attention. I turned quickly. You sat in shadow inside the lodge, watching us. You'd sneaked in, and I could tell by your face that you'd seen everything.