Chapter 20
Okonkwo returns to Umuofia and is determined to regain his former status within the community and secure husbands for his daughters Ezinma and Obiageli.

1. How does Okonkwo feel about the prospect of returning to his homeland? What are his hopes for the future?
2. How has Umuofia changed since Okonkwo’s departure?
3. What systems of justice have been set up by the District Commissioner?
4. Obierika says: ‘He [the white man] has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart.’ Why does Obierika feel so pessimistic about the ability of the clansmen to defeat the white man?

Chapter 21
Christianity has taken hold within the community as they benefit from the trade and prosperity which it brings with it.

1. Why is Mr Brown, the head of the Christian church, respected by the clan?
2. What do you learn about the beliefs of the Ibo religion from Akunna’s conversations with Mr Brown?
3. What role does education play within the community?
4. How do you explain Okonkwo’s feelings of grief at the end of the chapter?

Chapter 22
Reverend James Smith takes over the church from Mr Brown and unlike his predecessor, he is unwilling to compromise with the clan.

1. What action does Enoch commit during the annual worship of the Earth Goddess?
2. What are the repercussions of his actions for the Christian church?

Chapter 23
The tribal leaders from Umuofia are sent to negotiate with the District Commissioner. This is a trick and they are imprisoned.

1. Why does Okonkwo feel satisfied at the beginning of the chapter? What does this show about his character?
2. The District Commissioner speaks of ‘justice’ in this chapter? What is your view of the justice administered by the white man?
Chapter 24
The clan gather to decide on their plan of action and Okonkwo kills the court messenger who interrupts the meeting.

1. How has Okonkwo been affected by his ordeal at the hands of the District Commissioner and court messengers?
2. What is the atmosphere at the market-place when the clansmen gather for their meeting?
3. What is Okonkwo’s attitude to these proceedings?
4. Why do you think Okonkwo reacts with such violence to the arrival of the court messengers?

Chapter 25
The District Commissioner and his court messengers arrive at Okonkwo’s compound and Obierika takes them to the place where he has hanged himself.

1. Obierika describes Okonkwo has ‘one of the greatest men in Umuofia’ and says that the white man ‘drove him to kill himself.’ What is your assessment of Okonkwo’s character?
2. How do you explain the tragedy of his death?
3. The novel shifts to the point of view of the District Commissioner at the end. What do you think of the District Commissioner’s ironic view that the story of Okonkwo might warrant ‘a reasonable paragraph’ in his book?
4. What message does Achebe leave us with at the end of the novel about the influence of the white man in this part of Nigeria?
Tasks on the novel as a whole

1. The characters of OBIERIKA and NWOYE are both used as direct contrasts to the character of OKONKWO. Make detailed notes about these characters, supported by textual references.

2. Make notes on the female characters in the novel, supported by textual references. What are your views about the way that the women are treated within the society that is portrayed?

3. Practice extract style exam questions (Page references are taken from the Heinemann New Windmills edition):
   - Find the extract which begins, ‘Obierika was sitting outside…’ on page 57 to ‘I would neither dispute it nor be the one to do it” on page 58.
     What does the writer make you feel about the character of Obierika in this part of the novel and elsewhere.
   - Find the extract which begins ‘One morning …’ on page 133 to ‘Okonkwo, would wipe them off the face of the earth’ on page 134.
     Comment on the way that Okonkwo’s relationship with his son Nwoye is presented here and elsewhere in the novel.
   - Find the passage which begins ‘Three days later …’ on page 170 to ‘Okonkwo was choked with hate’ on page 172.*
     How does the writer make you feel about the behaviour of the District Commissioner and his messengers? Comment on:
     The way that the preparations for the meeting are described
     The District Commissioner’s speech
     The way that the court messengers’ actions are described
     The effect upon the clansmen, especially Okonkwo
     Use quotations to support your points.

4. Group discussion:

   This novel was first published in 1958 and has been widely read and studied for almost half a century. What arguments would you put forward to justify its place on the GCSE set text list?