

**Module 6: Identifying One's Strengths and Weaknesses**  
**Topic 11 Content: "The White Man's Burden" Analysis**

**Stanza #1**

**"The White Man's Burden" Analysis**

TAKE up the White Man's burden—  
Send forth the best ye breed—  
Go bind your sons to exile  
To serve your captives' need;  
To wait in heavy harness,  
On fluttered folk and wild—  
Your new-caught, sullen peoples,  
Half-devil and half-child.

This stanza explains the overall mindset that the colonizing nations had about themselves. They placed their race above all others and considered themselves the best. The last line of the stanza compares other races and cultures to "half-devil and half-child." In *Things Fall Apart*, the British treated the Ibo tribe as if they were savages. They felt they were a superior race.

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**Stanza #2**

**"The White Man's Burden" Analysis**

Take up the White Man's burden—  
In patience to abide,  
To veil the threat of terror  
And check the show of pride;  
By open speech and simple,  
An hundred times made plain,  
To seek another's profit,  
And work another's gain.

This stanza mentions that colonizing nations have a great deal of pride. This pride gives the nations a sense that they must protect society from other cultures besides the white man. The stanza discusses that the colonizing country has a moral obligation to help countries better themselves. In *Things Fall Apart*, you wonder if the Ibo really wanted change, or if the tribe was "fine" before the missionaries arrived.

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**Stanza #3**

**"The White Man's Burden" Analysis**

Take up the White Man's burden—  
The savage wars of peace—  
Fill full the mouth of Famine  
And bid the sickness cease;  
And when your goal is nearest  
The end for others sought,  
Watch Sloth and heathen Folly  
Bring all your hope to nought.

This stanza compares other cultures to a disease. The second line of this stanza is an oxymoron. This line uses the contradictory terms war and peace in conjunction. This line shows that war is not just about killing. War can also be used to prove a point.

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**Stanza #4**

**"The White Man's Burden" Analysis**

Take up the White Man's burden—  
No tawdry rule of kings,  
But toil of serf and sweeper—  
The tale of common things.  
The ports ye shall not enter,  
The roads ye shall not tread,  
Go make them with your living,  
And mark them with your dead.

This stanza explains that no matter the damage caused to other countries, they must be controlled. In *Things Fall Apart*, as soon as Okonkwo begins questioning the British, he is handcuffed and jailed. No matter the harm caused to the tribe, the British were going to control the African village.

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**Stanza #5**

**"The White Man's Burden" Analysis**

Take up the White Man's burden—  
And reap his old reward:  
The blame of those ye better,  
The hate of those ye guard—  
The cry of hosts ye humour  
(Ah, slowly!) toward the light:—  
"Why brought ye us from bondage,  
Our loved Egyptian night?"

The final lines of this stanza are a biblical reference to Exodus 16:3 where the children of Israelites are complaining against Moses. Moses leads them out of Egypt where they were enslaved. Once free and in the wilderness, they find themselves going hungry. The Israelites are asking for death rather than life in poor conditions. The tragic hero in *Things Fall Apart*, Okonkwo, commits suicide because he considers death a better option than living in improper conditions.

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**Stanza #6**

**"The White Man's Burden" Analysis**

Take up the White Man's burden—  
Ye dare not stoop to less—  
Nor call too loud on Freedom  
To cloak your weariness;  
By all ye cry or whisper,  
By all ye leave or do,  
The silent, sullen peoples  
Shall weigh your Gods and you.

This stanza tells the colonizing nation not to abandon the task because they will be judged by what they are weary of and by what they fail to do.

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**Stanza #7**

**"The White Man's Burden" Analysis**

Take up the White Man's burden—  
Have done with childish days—  
The lightly proffered laurel,  
The easy, ungrudged praise.  
Comes now, to search your manhood  
Through all the thankless years,  
Cold, edged with dear-bought wisdom,  
The judgment of your peers!

The final stanza advises any colonizing nation not to entertain any immature notions about earning easy praise for their efforts. Their true worth as men will be judged by equal peers.

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