



## Reader's Response to Achebe's Civil Peace



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**Abstract:** *This study aims to explore the personal interpretation of the reader of the short story "Civil Peace" using Norman Holland's Reader's Response vehicle. The study is based on a qualitative method, where the text of the story is subjected to the reader's interpretation to identify personality traits, familiar character traits, familiar plot events, and familiar settings. Findings reveal that the reader's interpretation is highly influenced by the major character of the story, Jonathan Iwegbu. The reader connects himself with Iwegbu at the first stage. In the second stage, Iwegbu's struggle seems similar to that of a person the reader knows, Ahmad. In the third stage, Iwegbu's response at moments of miracles and crises connects the reader with events in his personal life, showing unity with this character. Lastly, the reader appreciates Achebe's use of vernacular language as the best tool to depict real events in a realistic style. This study is a significant contribution to the current literature, providing insights into the reader's experience of "Civil Peace."*

**Key Words:** Civil Peace, Nigerian War, Postcolonial Literature, Reader's Response Theory

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### Introduction

Chinua Achebe is one of the most prominent figures in Postcolonial literature who has produced masterpieces. Gikandi (1991) stated that his novels are the amalgamation of the European style of novel and the African way of expression. He explained his themes as the representation of the colonial and post-colonial world and issues of national identity. Sivasankar and Ganesan (2015) observed that third-world countries, even after decolonization, seemed to suffer under new colonial rule, known as "neo-colonialism." In this era, when neo-colonialism is continuing the legacy of the past colonial world, many English writers from third-world countries

are writing to rid themselves of colonial culture and habits. Chinua Achebe is considered one of those intellectuals struggling to destabilize the colonial mindset and who made numerous efforts for the creation of his country, "New Nigeria," which is the main subject of this research as it describes and interprets the condition of post-colonial Nigeria.

Chinua Achebe is one of the greatest African writers of the colonial era, who wrote about the traumas, sufferings, and pains of the colonized in a very precise way. The major themes of his novels, as pointed out by Chandna (2022), are corruption, family, generation gap, and cultural conflict.



Achebe's writing themes mainly concern African tribes, concepts of nationalism, the advent of colonizers, colonial life, decolonization, internal and cultural conflicts, religion, post-colonialism, and corrupt practices. These themes are also visible in his African trilogy: "Things Fall Apart" (1958), "No Longer at Ease" (1960), and "Arrow of God" (1964). Other writings include "Man of the People" (1966) and "Anthills of the Savannah" (1987). He also wrote many short stories, including "Civil Peace" (1970), "Marriage Is a Private Affair" (1952), "Dead Men's Path" (1953), "The Sacrificial Egg and Other Stories" (1953), "The Voter" (1965), and many others. These themes are also visible in the work under analysis. His story 'Civil Peace' (1971) stands in the post-Nigerian war scenario when conditions start settling in Nigeria after Biafra separated. The story is written in the aftermath of the Civil War, which started in July 1967 because of the political conflict after the annexation of south-eastern provinces, which proclaimed them the "Republic of Biafra" (Atofarati, 1992), while Weber (2010) claimed that the conflict was the result of cultural, religious, and economic tensions. It is the story of a man who survived the war. Blessed with the survival of his family, he managed to reach his hometown, where he was blessed with a house that also survived the war. What remained evident throughout the story is his system of belief. He remained content in every circumstance, even after losing all the money he received for the egg rasher. All the events of the story appeal to the reader for interpretation; that is why the reader's response is taken to unveil interpretation at the person's level.

### **Problem Statement**

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The reader's response theory is one of the most interesting approaches that allows readers to engage with literature in correlation with their own lives. It draws insights into the mechanisms by which one's

interpretation is influenced by personal identification with characters, events, or settings. This kind of interpretation has often been neglected in academia due to a technical approach. However, this research aims to fill this gap by providing a reader's response to 'Civil Peace.' It has practical benefits in contributing a new interpretation to the existing literature.

### **Significance of the Study**

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This study is significant as it introduces a new dimension of a reader's interpretation of a work, shedding light on the mechanisms by which one's self affects interpretation. Deep insights into the vehicles of generating a reader's response pave the way for other research in academia and encourage new perspectives.

### **Research Question**

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How does my reading response vehicle generate an interpretation of Achebe's 'Civil Peace'?

### **Literature Review**

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Literature Review is done at three levels:

### **Similar Literary Works**

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Many literary works show similar experiences, as depicted by Chinua Achebe's 'Civil Peace.' One of the most important aspects is post-war literature, which depicts the effects of war on people's psyches. In all ages and around the world, great pieces of literature are produced depicting the destruction caused by war. In British literature/English literature, (Fowler, 2014b), published after the English Civil War of 1642, is one such work. The work is often critiqued as Milton's own projection, as he, being a Puritan, was dissatisfied with the decline of the Commonwealth government established by Puritans at the hands of King Charles II, who returned to restore the monarchy.

Similarly, in the American context, Morrison's 'Beloved' (2006) tells the history of the Civil War and the post-trauma on the psyche of the people who suffered during the war. Similarly, (Sidhwa, 1989) depicts the trauma of partition as a result of communal riots. This depiction is most vividly explored in (Singh, 1956). In short, post-war literature usually depicts the impact of war on the psyche of the people.

### **Achebe's Representation of Nigeria and Igbo Culture**

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(Achebe, 1959) depicted the story of the colonization era and the suffering of Igbo society at the hands of British colonizers. The plot can be divided into three parts. The first part depicted the norms, culture, and traditions of Igbo society. The second part was filled with the efforts of Christians in spreading their religion. The third part seemed occupied with Okonkwo's realization that Igbo society had softened its stance towards the English people. That's why Igbo society is not idealized, yet depicted truthfully. Achebe's "No Longer At Ease" (1960) portrayed the story of Obi Okonkwo, the grandson of Okonkwo (the protagonist of "Things Fall Apart"), who aimed to continue his grandfather's efforts against the negative changes in society. He shared many characteristics of his grandfather, such as bravery, outspoken nature, and confrontational behavior. He aspired to reform the culture and eradicate corruption in Igbo society but ultimately became corrupt within the system when he received a bribe by the end of the novel. He was arrested and tried in court. Achebe's "The Arrow of God" (1964) also centered on themes similar to the other two novels in the trilogy and completed it by showing the missionary zeal to spread Christianity. Like Okonkwo and Obi, the protagonist in this novel is Ezeulu, who is the head priest of the Igbo in Nigeria. He was invited to work for the colonizers and their administrations in spreading Christianity,

which cost him a lot, and he faced infringement on his freedom for several months. He lost his credibility as he was blamed for famine during that time. Furthermore, Christian missionaries converted many people to Christianity from their former beliefs.

Another work by Achebe, "A Man of the People" (1966), presents the story of corruption, greed, and power. It followed Chief Nanga, who was formerly a teacher but became a Minister of Culture, wielding immense power yet being extremely corrupt. Instead of preserving the traditions of the country (which remains anonymous) and the culture, he became even more corrupt and malicious, adding to the woes of the people. Overall, the story depicts neo-colonial Africa and the prevailing corrupt system there. Achebe's "Anthills of the Savannah" (1987) is a commentary on the socio-political condition of the fictional Kangan state, which emerged from political upheaval and the termination of a dictator's rule. The story revolves around three friends: Chris, a Commissioner; Beatrice, an official in the Finance Ministry; and Ikem, a newspaper editor. It culminates in the assassination of Ikem and the murder of Chris.

### **Recent Literature on Civil Peace**

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'Civil Peace' is a neglected story, and not much literature is found on it. However, few researchers have explored it. Astuti (2017) explored 'Civil Peace' from the perspective of the history of the Nigerian Civil War. Her exploration is most concerned with the socio-political context of 1970s Nigeria and its effect on the story. Zamani and Haratyan (2016), using Maslow's hierarchy of needs, explored the story. She claimed that the poor class, like Iwegbu, internalizes the deficiencies and fears the impossibility of getting basic needs fulfilled, confining them to limited resources and restricting their ability to achieve higher status.

## Research Methodology

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The study stands on the constructivist paradigm as defined by Mertens (2010) in the words "knowledge is socially constructed by people active in the research process, and that researchers should attempt to understand the complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it (Mertens, 2010, p.16). This research is based on a qualitative method. Textual lines are subjected to the reader's response based on personal identification at various levels. Theoretical insights have been drawn from Norman Holland's Reader's Response Vehicle, quoted in Tyson's "Using Critical Theory: How to Read and Write about Literature" (2006).

## Theoretical Framework

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Norman Holland's Reader Response Vehicle, as described by Tyson, is divided into four stages. In each stage, seven questions are asked. Questions 1-5 need to be answered briefly in one line. Question 6 needs to be answered in detail. Question 7 requires the reader to give a rationale for choosing a particular identification at each stage.

## Personal Identification with the Character

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"Personal identification is the experience of seeing ourselves in a literary character" (Tyson, 2011, p.15). In this stage, we project ourselves onto the character and interpret it accordingly.

## Familiar Character Identification

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At this stage, we identify someone we know and are close to with the character we are identifying. It is described as "reminds us of someone we know, often someone important in our lives in the past or in the present, although we may not realize that this 'recognition' is taking place" (Tyson, 2011, p.15).

## Familiar Plot Event

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At this stage, our interpretation is based on our familiarity with the circumstances through which the character is passing. Tyson defined it as "an event that reminds us of something we have seen or experienced ourselves" (Tyson, 2011, p.15). At this stage, we are more concerned with the circumstances and happenings that influence the character's actions.

## Familiar Setting

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At this stage, we are concerned with the setting of the work, its region, its history, the sense of place in the form of vernacular languages, specific dressing, and lifestyle. In Tyson's words, "because its geographic location or physical appearance evokes memories of a place with which we associate important experiences that occurred there" (Tyson, 2011, p.15).

## Data Analysis

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### Personal Identification

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Personal Identification questions are asked in a row, but each question is not answered as per the demand of Norman Holland, which the reader employed.

**The character which the reader liked the most:** Jonathan Iwegbu is the character which the reader liked the most.

**The character which the reader disliked the most:** The character of Thieves reader disliked the most.

**Character for which the reader feels sorry:** Jonathan Iwegbu is the character for whom the reader feels sorry and sympathy.

**The character whom the reader admires the most:** Jonathan Iwegbu is the character whom the reader admires the most.

**Strongest emotional response to the character mentioned above:** Jonathan Iwegbu is the character for whom the reader

has the strongest emotional response.

**The portrayal of the Reader's Own Self in Character and Detailed Justification:** There are many points in the character of Iwegbu that are of universal appeal. Anyone who reads this story can find it relatable to himself. Points have been jotted down below for personal identification.

### Lucky- Survival in the Worst

Jonathan Iwegbu is a character who is lucky for the readers who read about him, but equally for himself, as he claimed. Achebe started the story with this description, "Jonathan Iwegbu counted himself extraordinarily lucky. 'Happy survival!' (Civil Peace, 1971). This is the first thing that can be counted about Iwegbu – he is lucky. He is obviously lucky as he will be getting blessed one after another incident, throughout the story. The reader projects himself into the character's dimension as the reader considers himself lucky, just like Iwegbu considered himself. The reasons may be different. Iwegbu considered himself for the blessing that he, his wife, and three out of four children came out of the war safely. War brings mass destruction, massacre, and violence. Surviving the war is no less than a great blessing. Considering the scenario, his claim for his luck is justified.

Similarly, the reader counts himself lucky to be here now, studying in one of Pakistan's prestigious universities after passing a tough year of life without a father. It is the blessing of Allah who has helped me survive and strive. Another reason that the reader counts for the claim is that he is lucky to have recovered from anemia, which was diagnosed in 2018. The chances of his recovery were almost gone, and doctors were predicting it was blood cancer. Suddenly, he started recovering, and within days, he returned to normal. Reasons might be different for our luck, but both are lucky to be saved from death.

### Grateful

Another characteristic that Iwegbu and the reader share is being grateful for all the blessings of Allah. "Civil Peace" is the story of the time when everything got ruined because of war. Amid all the destruction and decay, the character of Iwegbu remained peaceful, calm, and, most importantly, grateful. He used to say, "Nothing puzzles God" (Civil Peace, 1971). This sentence is revised many times in the story, hinting at the strong belief system of Iwegbu. "Civil Peace," in this sense, also reflects the colors of belief inoculated by the missionaries during the era of colonization. Iwegbu's strong belief in his repetition of "nothing puzzles God" indicates the imprint of the Christian religion on their minds. Whatever religion inspired him to be grateful, this thing was more important than him remaining grateful, and in return for every praise, he got blessed again.

The reader finds this quality of Iwegbu in himself as he always connects to Allah whenever he feels stuck, dejected, and even blessed. His success is not his own, his prosperity is not his own, and even his life is not his own, so why shouldn't he be grateful? Iwegbu shows a grateful attitude, saying, "Nothing puzzles God" when he first finds his buried bicycle. In the same way, the reader always says *Alhamdulillah*. Moreover, this gratitude always blesses him with better things.

### Sincerity with the Family

Iwegbu's character is that of the head of the family, and he is most sincere to his family. The first example of his sincerity can be seen in his attitude towards life. However, his sincerity toward the family can be seen in his efforts to bring his family back to his house in Ogui. It is described as "He promptly utilized it as a taxi and amassed a modest stack of Biafran currency by transporting camp administrators and their family across

the four-mile distance to the closest paved road." (*Civil Peace*, 1971). It is not an easy job to do.

Moreover, Iwegbu's sincerity toward his family can be seen when he makes settlements with thieves. 'To God who made me; if you come inside and find one hundred pounds, take it and shoot me and shoot my wife and children. I swear to God. The only money I have in this life is this twenty-pound egg-rasher they gave me today...' (*Civil Peace*, 1971). It is clear that at the cost of all the money he has with him, he was ready to save his family's life, and he did it successfully. The reader can see himself in his character in terms of sincerity as well. He has a similar kind of affiliation with his family and his family members. He is striving to give them a better life and hoping to make their lives heaven."

### Conscious

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Iwegbu's character is one of consciousness, one who remains well aware of the circumstances and prepares himself to tackle them effectively. It is evident when Achebe wrote, 'insisted that the money had been in the other pocket, pulling it out too to show its comparative wholeness. So one had to be careful' (*Civil Peace*, 1971). It was the time when he got money and was deciding where to keep it in his pocket. He considered every tactic and decided to put it in the left pocket so that he could have his hand on the money. The reader also has a similar kind of conscious thinking before making any decision. For example, if it is an exam day, the reader will check himself properly before sitting so that no notes are left in his pocket, which could cause a problem during invigilation checks."

### Honest

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Iwegbu is honest and true to life. His honesty can be gauged as he told the truth about his money to thieves. He might have lied, but he

did not. He clearly said, 'I have this twenty-pound egg-rasher they gave me today in this life...' (*Civil Peace*, 1971). This shows his goodwill and honesty, which saved his and his family's life from thieves. These things are universal principles; who can reject them? That is why readers also see themselves in that aspect. Instead of making flimsy excuses, he usually goes with the bitter truth, no matter what it brings to him.

### Interpretation

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His interpretation of this character is directly influenced by the universal moral appeal it holds. It is the character through which we see how a person's luck can bring about good fortune. Readers also perceive how being grateful to God and sincere with family are supreme values that cannot be ignored at any cost. Moreover, honesty pays greater rewards than anything else on this planet Earth. All of these characteristics of the character influenced the reader's interpretation."

### Familiar Character Identification

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**All Character Names:** There are only a few characters in the story. Jonathan Iwegbu is the main character (protagonist) of the story. The second character is his wife, Maria. The third characters from the family are their three children, who were not named. The fourth characters are the thieves.

Names of Familiar People who give a glimpse of the character of Iwegbu are the family of Ahmed, Sidra, and their three children.

**Pairing Characters with the People I Know:** Ahmed is paired with the character of Iwegbu, Maria's character is paired with Sidra, and the children are paired with the children's characters.

**Strong Emotional Response:** Reader has the strongest emotional response to the pair of Ahmed and Iwegbu.

**Things in Common between Character and Person:** There are lots of things both share in

terms of age, behavior, status, and attitude toward life.

### Age

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The first similarity that the reader draws is the similarity in their age group. Reader supposes that if Iwegbu is described as the father of three children, he must be in his 30s. Similarly, the person whom the reader knows and who resembles the character is in his 30s. So, age is the first factor that both characters share.

### Maturity

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Another major similarity is the mature approach towards life. Iwegbu, even after losing everything, says, "I count it as nothing," he told his sympathizers, his eyes on the rope he was tying. "What is an egg rasher? Did I depend on it last week? Or is it greater than other things that went with the war? I say, let the egg rasher perish in the flames! Let it go where everything else has gone. Nothing puzzles God." (Civil Peace, 1971). These lines show how firmly he believed in God and how maturely he behaved at the loss of money. Similarly, Ahmed's character shows patience and firm behavior when losing something important.

### Dedication

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Both are dedicated personalities. Iwegbu's dedication can be seen in three instances: his work as a driver to earn a livelihood for his family, which shows him as a person who does not take things for granted and pays himself in the service of those who really matter to him. The second incident is when he was working passionately to renovate his house for his family. Moreover, the third event is when he sacrifices all the money to save his family. Indeed, Iwegbu's character is the one who is truly dedicated to life."

### Interpretation

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The reader's interpretation of this pair is based on their leading roles as family heads. The way they carry their families is commendable and cannot be expressed in words. They make every effort to reconcile with the conditions and bring the best to their families. It is always the family heads who stand at the forefront when it comes to leading the family, dealing with problems, and raising standards. The characters of Iwegbu and Ahmed are the perfect leading examples. Their sincerity to their families and their maturity towards life makes them admirable for anyone."

### Familiar Plot Event

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**Plot Event that is Most Satisfying:** There are four events that the reader finds most enjoyable and satisfying. The first one is when Iwegbu finds his lost bicycle, the second is when he gets his house intact, and the third is when he finds the money from the egg rasher. The fourth is when he expressed satisfaction with life even after losing all the money. If one is to be chosen, the reader would choose the last one.

**Plot Event which is Most Disturbing:** When thieves came to rob Iwegbu's family, that event was the most disturbing.

**Plot Event which is Most Surprising:** The plot event that the reader finds surprising is when Iwegbu finds his house intact even after the war. It was no less than a miracle.

**Plot Event which is Not Much Important:** The time when he kept visiting the office for his job is the point in the story without which it would not lose its essence

**Strongest Feelings for Plot Event:** The reader has the strongest emotional response to all the plot events, which are enjoyable and satisfying.

**Relationship to Plot Events that are Satisfying and Enjoyable:** There is a strong relationship with the plot events. The plot events that the reader picked as most satisfying and enjoyable are those with universal appeal

that attract readers in a particular way.

### **Contentment After Losing Everything**

When Iwegbu remarks, "I count it as nothing," he told his sympathizers, his eyes on the rope he was tying. "What is an egg-rasher? Did I depend on it last week?" (*Civil Peace*, 1971). This plot event is the most satisfying and enjoyable, as it shows a man who has nothing but belief. His belief system, his rationality, and his attitude towards life force us to connect with him. The plot event seems depressive, but in actuality, his response made it satisfying for the readers as he ended this event at the end of the story with the words, "Nothing puzzles God" (*Civil Peace*, 1971). A personal connection to this plot event is that there came a time when the reader lost his academic form. It was the time when he opted for the same approach towards life, which helped him overcome difficult times very easily. His remarks and this plot event actually portray the transient nature of everything. Everything is temporary.

### **Miracle**

Another event that is most satisfying and enjoyable is when he finds his house intact after the war. War destroyed even buildings, but his little house was not damaged. "This newest miracle was his little house in Ogui Oversight. Indeed, nothing puzzles God!" (*Civil Peace*, 1971). This is not less than a miracle for him as most of the buildings around were destroyed but "Jonathan's little zinc house of no regrets was built with mud blocks that were quite intact!" (*Civil Peace*, 1971). This event is something relatable to the reader. He feels that such a miracle has happened to him many times. Last year, he almost lost hope of getting admission to an M.Phil. He was almost hopeless. There was tough competition among students. When the merit list got uploaded, and his name was in the opening merits, for him, it was no less

than a miracle. These two plot events are familiar and show some similarity in the response mechanism of the character and reader to particular circumstances."

### **Familiar Setting**

#### **Country, Region, and Climate of Setting**

This story is set in Nigeria, an African country. This becomes evident when Achebe wrote, "Biafran money" (*Civil Peace*, 1971). The story is set in Biafra, a state that rebelled in a civil war against Nigeria and got separated from it. The setting shifts to Enugu, a city where he returns to his house after the Civil War. As the house of Iwegbu is in Ogui Oversight, Enugu, it confirms that the setting is rural because the Ogui community comprises villages. Moreover, the weather could be predicted as summer because "His children picked mangoes near the military cemetery" (*Civil Peace*, 1971).

### **Time Period of Literary Work**

The literary work has been published in the post-modern age. For countries like Nigeria, it is in the post-colonial age, as the literature published after decolonization is known as post-colonial literature. If the temporal setting of the work is observed, it is the time of the Post-civil war, approximately 1970.

### **Elements of Setting Associated with Class**

Many elements in the story depict class. For example, Iwegbu's bicycle is an indication of his social class. Moreover, his profession as a coal miner confirms him as a member of the poor working class. His house description also makes it clear that he is a member of the poor class. Achebe describes it in the words, "And here was Jonathan's little zinc house of no regrets built with mud blocks quite intact! Of course, the doors and windows were missing and five sheets off the roof. But what



was that?" (Civil Peace, 1971). Moreover, his wine shop also indicates him as a member of the poor class.

### Elements that Give a Sense of Place

According to Holland, one of the most important elements of a sense of place is the character's use of vernacular language. This thing is very evident in 'Civil Peace.' In 'Civil Peace,' the whole conversation between Iwegbu and the thieves happens in the regional dialect of English, which is distorted, informal, and different from actual English. When the thieves first time conversed with Iwegbu in reply to who was knocking, "Na tief-man and him people," came the cool reply. "Make you open de door" (Civil Peace, 1971).

### Strongest Emotional Response

The setting of the place and the sense of place are the things that have the strongest emotional appeal to the reader.

### Personal Relation to the Aspects of Setting

Third-world Country Story: As the story is set in the third-world country of Nigeria, it has the strongest emotional appeal to the reader. It has similar turmoil and lawlessness, as he can see in the context of Pakistan. There are many factors related to the story that he can relate to. The weather of the setting is depicted as summer. This aligns with the weather of his city, which, in most months of the year, remains hot and dry.

Moreover, it is shown as a rural area, but the reader can still connect with it as the setting is natural and reminds him of his village. The use of the local language is another relatable thing. Although the local language is used here in moments of danger, panic, and crisis, it still reminds him of our habit of speaking our local language at any time. It simply reminds him of how we talk to the other locals in our language more

precisely and more friendly.

### Interpretation

The reader's interpretation of the story is influenced by the setting of the story, which is set in a third-world country in which the system is corrupt and malevolent. The absence of law and injustice rules everywhere. This represents the ways of almost every third-world country. Moreover, the physical features of the setting reminded him of the natural scenery and rural life of the village. Lastly, the use of regional language is something that made him think of the work as a true representation of one's culture and ways of life."

### Discussion

The findings of this research are contrasting with those of the existing literature. According to the reader's personal interpretation through identification at all stages, it is claimed that Iwegbu's character is content with what he has, which contrasts with what Zamani (2016) claimed in her study of hierarchical needs. Moreover, this study is supported by the idea of depicting history as a colonial subject as discussed by Astuti (2017). The reader finds unity with the character at the personal identification stage. Even though a familiar plot, familiar setting, and familiar characters are present in 'Beloved' (1987), my personal interpretation shows them as contrasting pieces of work. In terms of character, Iwegbu's character is portrayed as lucky, content, patient, calm, and composed. However, if the reader interprets 'Beloved's' character, Sethi, his interpretation will contrast with his interpretation of Iwegbu, as she is haunted, stressed, panicked, and depressed. The findings of the research are supported as well as contrasted by other fictions of Achebe, including his trilogy. In "Things Fall Apart" (1958), readers seem to identify the character of Okonkwo as completely contrasting with

the character of Iwegbu. Okonkwo is powerful and raises his voice against society; however, Iwegbu is polite, grateful, and submissive. Apart from that, there are similarities in the plot, as both face crises. In "Things Fall Apart," Igbo's society seems to flourish before colonization but is devastated and assimilated in their culture and religion by the end, which is similar to Iwegbu's condition at the start, which worsens by the end of the novel. Moreover, there is a similarity in the setting, as both works are set in Nigeria. The findings of the study are supported by Achebe's "The Arrow of God," (1964) as both the characters show a similar attitude towards life. Both Iwegbu and Ezeulu are courageous and grateful. There is a similarity in the plot as Ezeulu seems abandoned by society when he rejects the White men's offer. Similarly, Iwegbu's conditions were good at the start, but he experiences the worst by the end as he loses everything and remains grateful for the five heads of his family. There is also a similarity in the setting as "The Arrow of God" seems to be set in an African country. The findings also receive support from the familiar and similar plot identification and setting of Achebe's "Anthills of the Savannah" (1987). The political turmoil and absence of the rule of law seem similar in both works. In "Civil Peace," the time after the civil war is depicted, and similarly, in "Anthills of the Savannah," the story is set after political upheaval and turmoil in Kangan. Our findings contrast with the character and plot identification in "A Man of the People" (1966). In contrast to Iwegbu, Chief Nanga

character is extremely powerful, and in terms of plot, it is entirely different as Chief behaves corruptly throughout the novel while Iwegbu behaves beautifully. Similarly, in Achebe's "No Longer at Ease" (1960), the character Obi is contrasting in nature to Iwegbu. Obi aspires for change but becomes corrupt. On the other hand, Iwegbu remains grateful throughout the story. Overall, the reader's response to this work is both supported and contradicted by existing literature, contributing to the ongoing discourse.

## **Conclusion**

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This study explored Achebe's 'Civil Peace' story through the Reader's Response Vehicle as proposed by Norman Holland. The character of Iwegbu is seen as similar to the reader and influences the reader's interpretation of him as a positive character. Similarly, his attitude towards life reminds him of Ahmed, influencing his interpretation in the second stage. Thirdly, his goodwill at losing everything is the event that helps the reader relate to events he has gone through, influencing his interpretation. Finally, the sense of place, especially the use of vernacular language, is another element through which the reader can relate more, as the writer uses it to make the story more relatable through the tool of language. After all stages of interpretation, the reader concludes that Iwegbu's character is the tool used by Achebe to convey the message that one should be calm, peaceful, and happy as the nature of the world is temporary and transient.

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