Socratic Seminar Prewrites

*Half a Yellow Sun*

Due: Tues, April 28th

45pts

Respond to **four** of these questions. Each response should be a well-developed paragraph (or more) including **at least two pieces of textual evidence** to support your position. Please properly cite quotations. (Ex: When Conrad writes, “She came forward, all in black, like a pale head, floating towards me in the dusk” (p 57), he is showing us that…)

1. Ugwu is only thirteen when he begins working as a houseboy for Odenigbo, but he is one of the most observant characters in the novel. How does Ugwu manage the transition from village life to the intellectual and privileged world of his employers? How does his presence throughout affect the reader’s experience of the story?

2. Adichie touches very lightly on a connection between the Holocaust and the Biafran situation [p. 62]; why does she not stress this parallel more strongly? Why are the Igbo massacred by the Hausa? What tribal resentments and rivalries are expressed in the Nigerian-Biafran war? In what ways does the novel make clear that these rivalries have been intensified by British interference?

3. Consider the conversation between Olanna and Kainene on pp. 130-131. What are the sources of the distance and distrust between the two sisters, and how is the rift finally overcome? What is the effect of the disappearance of Kainene on the ending of the story?

5. Discuss the ways in which Adichie reveals the differences in social class among her characters. What are the different cultural assumptions—about themselves and others—made by educated Africans like Odenigbo, nouveau riche Africans like Olanna’s parents, uneducated Africans like Odenigbo’s mother, and British expatriates like Richard’s ex-girlfriend Susan?

6. Excerpts from a book called The World Was Silent When We Died appear on pp. 103, 146, 195, 256, 296, 324, 470, and 541. Who is writing this book? What does it tell us? Why is it inserted into the story in parts?

12. How does being witnesses to violent death change people in the story—Olanna, Kainene, Odenigbo, Ugwu? How does Adichie handle descriptions of scenes of violence, death, and famine?

14. The novel is structured in part around two love stories, between Olanna and Odenigbo and between Kainene and Richard.  It is “really a story of love,” Adichie has said (Financial Times, September 9, 2006). How does Adichie handle romantic and sexual love? Why are these love plots so important to a novel about a war?

16. How is it fitting that Ugwu, and not Richard, should be the one who writes the story of the war and his people?

**Required Questions (Turn These in, too!):**

Generate at least **four questions that you can pose to your peers during the Socratic Seminar**. They could be questions that will help you understand the material more clearly, open-ended questions to inspire discussion, etc. Please have them composed and with you, ready to reference, for our Seminar.

**Grading:**

A+ =All four questions are answered with two pieces of textual evidence (correctly cited) to support each answer. Four or more questions have been generated to pose to peers during the Socratic Seminar.

B+= Three questions are answered with two pieces of textual evidence (correctly cited) to support each answer. Four or more questions have been generated to pose to peers during the Socratic Seminar.

C+= Two questions are answered with two pieces of textual evidence (mostly correctly cited) to support each answer. Three or more questions have been generated to pose to peers during the Socratic Seminar.

D+= One question is answered with two pieces of textual evidence (somewhat correctly cited) to support. Two or more questions have been generated to pose to peers during the Socratic Seminar.