**“The Second Coming” (1920)**

**By William Butler Yeats**

Turning and turning in the widening gyre  
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;   
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;   
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,   
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere  
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;   
The best lack all conviction, while the worst  
Are full of passionate intensity. 

Surely some revelation is at hand;   
Surely the Second Coming is at hand.   
The Second Coming! Hardly are those words out  
When a vast image out of *Spiritus Mundi*  
Troubles my sight: somewhere in the sands of the desert  
A shape with lion body and the head of a man,   
A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,   
Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it  
Reel shadows of the indignant desert birds. 

The darkness drops again; but now I know  
That twenty centuries of stony sleep  
were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle,   
And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,  
Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?

NAMES:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Things to consider:**

* **Gyre: spiral**
* **Falcon/falconer= “slave”/“master”**
  + **But there is a unique and very close relationship between the two.**
* **Spiritus Mundi= collective spirit of humanity**
* **The description in stanza two is of a sphinx**
  + **Originally it was a woman’s head in Greek mythology, but the Egyptians changed it to a man’s head.**
* **Bethlehem= where Jesus was born**
* **Historical Connection:**

The poem was originally written in 1920, not too long after the end of World War I. Even though many thought it was the war to end all wars, Yeats seemed to prophecy something different about the future.

**Making Connections to *Things Fall Apart*:**

1. How would you describe the **mood** of “The Second Coming”? In the first stanza, what vision of the world does the poet express? How does he describe the state of things? (mood=general atmosphere created by the author)

2. Who might the “falcon” and the “falconer” be representative of in *Things Fall Apart*? This is stated in lines: “The falcon cannot hear the falconer; / Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;” (2-3).  Explain.

3. Who might “the best” and “the worst” be representative of in *Things Fall Apart*? This is stated in the lines: “the best lack all conviction, while the worst, / Are full of passionate intensity” (7-8). Explain your reasoning.

4. Write an analysis explaining the parallels that can be drawn from Yeats’ poem “The Second Coming” and Achebe’s novel *Things Fall Apart*? (write out this answer on the back of this page)