Achebe utilizes fire imagery and establishes an angry tone to convey that change is an inevitable force. The passage focuses on Okonkwo’s mental anguish after he realizes his son is leaving their ancestral faith in order to embrace the “white man’s god.” Words like “crime”, “abomination”, and “the prospect of annihilation” highlight the severity of this offense and its future consequences. Nwoye’s “crime” is also the tribe’s crime and “the prospect of annihilation” foreshadows how much of the tribe’s identity will be obliterated by a foreign culture. This is a change that Okonkwo wants to resist with every fiber of his being. He is willing to lie to himself about his son’s parentage or even “wipe” his traitorous relatives “off the face of the earth” if necessary. Fire imagery is woven throughout the passage to emphasize the cycle of change. Okonkwo envisions a future where nothing remains but lonely neglected ancestral sprits and “ashes of by gone days.” He tries to resist this fate by evoking memories of his nickname “Roaring Flame.” In many ways, Okonkwo lives up to his namesake. Like fire, he is consumed by passion and a single objective, to achieve greatness by honoring tradition at all costs. Fire is also often associated with anger and destruction, which Okonkwo embodies when he feels his back is against the wall. It leads him to do things like beat his wife during the week of peace and sacrifice his favorite son. In a cruel twist of fate, Okonkwo is forced to see his life’s work literally become a pile of ashes. Ultimately, he questions why a “flaming fire” like himself has not produced a son who burns brightly. However, “the smoldering log” reminds him that ultimately “Living fire begets cold, impotent ash.” No fire can burn forever without fuel to sustain it. Ironically, Okonkwo spends his whole life resisting his father and then wonders why his own son doesn’t follow his path. The fire and ash imagery shows the inevitability of change for a father and son and an entire culture.

Directions-Write a style analysis paragraph in response to the following question:

How does Achebe use imagery and diction to convey a theme in the passage?

(Note: You should be writing about the passage assigned to your group.)

Make sure you do the following:

* Topic sentence: imagery + diction/tone 🡪 Theme

Theme: a statement, universal, involves an abstract concept

* Embed quotes
* Analyze relationship between quotes + theme
* Make connections to the text as a whole