



HEART OF DARKNESS

by Joseph Conrad

Advanced Placement English Literature
Name: _____

The following are the opening paragraphs to Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. Read through the excerpt carefully. Mark and annotate specific passages that help answer the following questions:

- In these opening paragraphs, Conrad relies almost entirely on description to characterize the men on the boat. What types of details does he use? Which details strike you as especially effective?
- The tone of this passage is created through the use of diction, detail, and syntax. What is the tone of the writing? What specific words contribute to this? What prominent details also contribute? How would you describe Conrad's syntax?
- This opening establishes a frame for the main story in *Heart of Darkness*. Though few details about the main story are revealed here, what predictions can you make about the main story at this point?

On a separate sheet of paper, write a description, real or fictional, of at least 300 words that imitates Conrad's style and tone.

The Nellie, a cruising yawl, swung to her anchor without a flutter of the sails, and was at rest. The flood had made, the wind was nearly calm, and being bound down the river, the only thing for it was to come to and wait for the turn of the tide.

The sea-reach of the Thames stretched before us like the beginning of an interminable waterway. In the offing the sea and the sky were welded together without a joint, and in the luminous space the tanned sails of the barges drifting up with the tide seemed to stand still in red clusters of canvas sharply peaked, with gleams of varnished sprits. A haze rested on the low shores that ran out to sea in vanishing flatness. The air was dark above Gravesend, and farther back still seemed condensed into a mournful gloom, brooding motionless over the biggest, and the greatest, town on earth.

The Director of Companies was our captain and our host. We four affectionately watched his back as he stood in the bows looking to seaward. On the whole river there was nothing that looked half so nautical. He resembled a pilot, which to a seaman is trustworthiness personified. It was difficult to realize his work was not out there in the luminous estuary, but behind him, within the brooding gloom.

Between us there was, as I have already said somewhere, the bond of the sea. Besides holding our hearts together through long periods of separation, it had the effect of making us tolerant of each other's yarns—and even convictions. The Lawyer—the best of old fellows—had, because of his many years and many virtues, the only cushion on deck, and was lying on the only rug. The Accountant had brought out already a box of dominoes, and was toying architecturally with the bones. Marlow sat cross-legged right aft, leaning against the mizzen-mast. He had sunken cheeks, a yellow complexion, a straight back, an ascetic aspect, and, with his arms dropped, the palms of hands outwards, resembled an idol. The Director, satisfied the anchor had good hold, made his way aft and sat down amongst us. We exchanged a few words lazily. Afterwards there was silence on board the yacht. For some reason or other we did not begin that game of dominoes. We felt meditative, and fit for nothing but placid staring. The day was ending in a serenity of still and exquisite brilliance. The water shone pacifically; the sky, without a speck, was a benign immensity of

unstained light; the very mist on the Essex marshes was like a gauzy and radiant fabric, hung from the wooded rises inland, and draping the low shores in diaphanous folds. Only the gloom to the west, brooding over the upper reaches, became more somber every minute, as if angered by the approach of the sun.

And at last, in its curved and imperceptible fall, the sun sank low, and from glowing white changed to a dull red without rays and without heat, as if about to go out suddenly, stricken to death by the touch of that gloom brooding over a crowd of men.

Forthwith a change came over the waters, and the serenity became less brilliant but more profound. The old river in its broad reach rested unruffled at the decline of day, after ages of good service done to the race that peopled its banks, spread out in the tranquil dignity of a waterway leading to the uttermost ends of the earth. We looked at the venerable stream not in the vivid flush of a short day that comes and departs for ever, but in the august light of abiding memories. And indeed nothing is easier for a man who has, as the phrase goes, "followed the sea" with reverence and affection, than to evoke the great spirit of the past upon the lower reaches of the Thames. The tidal current runs to and fro in its unceasing service, crowded with memories of men and ships it had borne to the rest of home or to the battles of the sea. It had known and served all the men of whom the nation is proud, from Sir Francis Drake to Sir John Franklin, knights all, titled and untitled—the great knights-errant of the sea. It had borne all the ships whose names are like jewels flashing in the night of time, from the Golden Hind returning with her round flanks full of treasure, to be visited by the Queen's Highness and thus pass out of the gigantic tale, to the Erebus and Terror, bound on other conquests—and that never returned. It had known the ships and the men. They had sailed from Deptford, from Greenwich, from Erith—the adventurers and the settlers; kings' ships and the ships of men on 'Change; captains, admirals, the dark "interlopers" of the Eastern trade, and the commissioned "generals" of East India fleets. Hunters for gold or pursuers of fame, they all had gone out on that stream, bearing the sword, and often the torch, messengers of the might within the land, bearers of a spark from the sacred fire. What greatness had not floated on the ebb of that river into the mystery of an unknown earth! . . . The dreams of men, the seed of commonwealths, the germs of empires.

The sun set; the dusk fell on the stream, and lights began to appear along the shore. The Chapman lighthouse, a three-legged thing erect on a mud-flat, shone strongly. Lights of ships moved in the fairway—a great stir of lights going up and going down. And farther west on the upper reaches the place of the monstrous town was still marked ominously on the sky, a brooding gloom in sunshine, a lurid glare under the stars.

"And this also," said Marlow suddenly, "has been one of the dark places of the earth."

I think there should be a Dark Willard.

In the network's studio in New York City, Dark Willard would recite the morning's evil report. The map of the world behind him would be a multicolored Mercator projection. Some parts of the earth, where the overnight good prevailed, would glow with a bright transparency. But much of the map would be speckled and blotched. Over Third World and First World, over cities and plains and miserable islands would be smudges of evil, ragged blights, storm systems of massacre or famine, murders, black snows. Here and there, a genocide, a true abyss.

"Homo homini lupus," Dark Willard would remark. "That's Latin, guys. Man is a wolf to man."

Dark Willard would report the natural evils -- the outrages done by God and nature (the cyclone in Bangladesh, an earthquake, the deaths by cancer). He would add up the moral evils -- the horrors accomplished overnight by man and woman. Anything new among the suffering Kurds? Among the Central American death squads? New hackings in South Africa? Updating on the father who set fire to his eight-year-old son? Or on those boys accused of shotgunning their parents in Beverly Hills to speed their inheritance of a \$14 million estate? An anniversary: two years already since Tiananmen Square.

The only depravity uncharted might be cannibalism, a last frontier that fastidious man has mostly declined to explore. Evil is a different sort of gourmet.

The oil fires over Kuwait would be evil made visible and billowing. The evil turns the very air black and greasy. It suffocates and blots out the sun.

The war in the gulf had an aspect of the high-tech medieval. What Beelzebubs flew buzzing through the sky on the tips of Scuds and smart bombs, making mischief and brimstone? Each side demonized the other, as in every war: Gott mit Uns. Saddam Hussein had George Bush down as the Evil One. George Bush had Saddam down as Hitler. In most of the West, Hitler is the 20th century's term for Great Satan. After the war, quick and obliterating, Hussein hardly seems worthy of the name of evil anymore.

Is there more evil now, or less evil, than there was five years ago, or five centuries?

The past couple of years has brought a windfall of improvements in the world: the collapse of communism; the dismantling of apartheid; the end of the cold war and the nuclear menace, at least in its apocalyptic Big Power form. State violence (in the style of Hitler, Stalin, Ceausescu) seemed to be skulking off in disrepute. Francis Fukuyama, a former U.S. State Department policy planner, even proclaimed "the end of history." The West and democratic pluralism seemed to have triumphed: satellites and computers and ; communications and global business dissolved the old monoliths in much of the world. Humankind could take satisfaction in all that progress and even think for a moment, without cynicism, of Lucretius' lovely line: "So, little by little, time brings out each several thing into view, and reason raises it up into the shores of light." But much of the world has grown simultaneously darker.

Each era gets its suitable evils. The end of the 20th century is sorting out different styles of malignity. Evil has been changing its priorities, its targets, its cast of characters.

The first question to be asked, of course, is this: Does evil exist? I know a man who thinks it does not. I know another man who spent a year of his childhood in Auschwitz. I would like to have the two of them talk together for an afternoon, and see which one comes away persuaded by the other.

The man who does not believe in the existence of evil knows all about the horrors of the world. He knows that humanity is often vicious, violent, corrupt, atrocious. And that nature's cruelties and caprices are beyond rational accounting: Bangladesh does not deserve the curse that seems to hover over it. But the man thinks that to describe all that as evil gives evil too much power, too much status, that it confers on what is merely rotten and tragic the prestige of the absolute. You must not allow lower instincts and mere calamities to get dressed up as a big idea and come to the table with their betters and smoke cigars. Keep the metaphysics manageable: much of what passes for evil (life in Beirut, for example) may be just a nightmare of accidents. Or sheer stupidity, that sovereign, unacknowledged force in the universe.

The man's deeper, unstated thought is that acknowledging evil implies that Satan is coequal with God. Better not to open that door. It leads into the old Manichaeian heresy: the world as battleground between the divine and the diabolical, the outcome very much in doubt: "La prima luce," Dante's light of creation, the brilliant ignition of God, against the satanic negation, the candle snuffer. Those uncomfortable with the idea of evil mean this: You don't say that the shadow has the same stature as the light. If you speak of the Dark Lord, of the "dark side of Sinai," do you foolishly empower darkness?

Or, for that matter (as an atheist or agnostic would have it), do such terms heedlessly empower the idea of God? God, after all, does not enjoy universal diplomatic recognition.

Is it possible that evil is a problem that is more intelligently addressed outside the religious context of God and Satan? Perhaps. For some, that takes the drama out of the discussion and dims it down to a paler shade of Unitarianism. Evil, in whatever intellectual framework, is by definition a monster. It has a strange coercive force: a temptation, a mystery, a horrible charm. Shakespeare understood that perfectly when he created Iago in his secular and motiveless malignity.

In 1939, as World War II began, Albert Camus wrote in his notebook: "The reign of beasts has begun." In the past year or two, the reign of beasts seemed to end, in some places anyway: brilliant days, miraculous remissions. But as Jung thought, different people inhabit different centuries. There are many centuries still loose in the world today, banging against one another. The war in the gulf was in part a collision of different centuries and the cultural assumptions that those centuries carry with them. Camus's beasts are still wandering around in the desert and in the sometimes fierce nationalisms reawakening in the Soviet Union. They are alive and vicious in blood feuds from Northern Ireland to Sri Lanka.

Saddam Hussein raised atavistic questions about evil. But the West has grown preoccupied by newer forms -- greed, terrorism, drugs, AIDS, crime, child abuse, global pollution, oil spills, acid rain. The fear of nuclear holocaust, which not long ago was the nightmare at the center of the imagination, has receded with amazing speed.

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It is touching in this era, and rather strange, that nature, even at its most destructive, has clean hands. Humankind does not. For centuries nature's potential for evil, its overpowering menace, made it an enemy to be subdued. Today, at least in the developed world, nature is the vulnerable innocent. The human is the enemy.

New forms of evil raise new moral questions. Who is to blame for them? Are they natural evils -- that is, acts of God and therefore his responsibility, or acts of the blind universe and therefore no one's? Or are they moral evils, acts that men and women must answer for?

Padrica Caine Hill, former bank teller, Washington mother and wife, dresses her three children one morning, makes breakfast for them, smokes some crack cocaine and lets the kids watch cartoons. Then with a clothesline she strangles eight-year-old Kristine and four-year-old Eric Jr. She tries to strangle two-year-old Jennifer, but leaves the girl still breathing softly on the floor. When the police come, Padrica Hill says she loves her children. Why did she kill them? "I don't know," she answers in apparently genuine bewilderment. "I hadn't planned on it."

Who or what is responsible? The woman herself? She did smoke the crack, but presumably the effect she anticipated was a euphoric high, not the death of her children. The drug arrived like Visigoths in her brain and destroyed the civilization there, including the most powerful of human instincts, her mother love. The crack itself? The dealer who sold the crack? The others in the trade -- kingpins and mules who brought the cocaine up from South America encased in condoms that they had swallowed? The peasants in Colombia who grew the coca plants in the first place?

The widening stain of responsibility for evil on a constricting planet changes moral contexts. Microevil, the murder of an individual child, becomes part of the macroorganism: all the evils breathe the same air, they have the same circulatory system. They pass through the arteries of the world, from the peasant's coca plant in Colombia to the mother's brain in Washington, thence to her fingers and the clothesline that kills the children in the middle of morning cartoons.

Many writers have said that one of evil's higher accomplishments has been to convince people that it does not exist. Ivan Karamazov's bitter diabolism was a bit different: "If the devil doesn't exist, but man has created him, he has created him in his own image and likeness." In a nightmare, Ivan meets the devil, a character of oddly shabby gentility, who mentions how cold it was in space, from which he lately came, traveling in only an evening suit and open waistcoat. The devil speaks of the game of village girls who persuade someone to lick a frosted ax, to which of course the tongue sticks. The devil wonders idly, "What would become of an ax in space?" It would orbit there, "and the astronomers would calculate the rising and setting of the ax." Dostoyevsky's devil was prescient, speaking a century before bright metal began to fly up off the earth and circle round it. There is something spookily splendid about evil as an ax in space.

You must ask what evil would be if it did exist. What does the word evil mean when people use it?

Evil means, first of all, a mystery, the *mysterium iniquitatis*. We cannot know evil systematically or scientifically. It is brutal or elusive, by turns vivid and vague, horrible and subtle. We can know it poetically, symbolically, historically, emotionally. We can know it by its works. But evil is sly and bizarre. Hitler was a vegetarian. The Marquis de Sade opposed capital punishment.

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Evil is easier than good. Creativity is harder than destructiveness. Dictators have leisure time for movies in their private screening rooms. When Hitler was at Berchtesgaden, he loved to see the neighborhood children and give them ice cream and cake. Saddam Hussein patted little Stuart Lockwood's head with avuncular menace and asked if he was getting enough cornflakes and milk. Stalin for years conducted the Soviet Union's business at rambling, sinister, alcoholic dinner parties that began at 10 and ended at dawn. All his ministers attended, marinating in vodka and terror. Sometimes one of them would be taken away at first light by the NKVD, and never seen again.

Evil is the Bad elevated to the status of the inexplicable. To understand is to forgive. Evil sometimes means the thing we cannot understand, and cannot forgive. The Steinberg case in New York City, in which a lawyer battered his six-year-old foster daughter Lisa to death, is an example. Ivan Karamazov speaks of a Russian nobleman who had his hounds tear an eight-year-old boy to pieces in front of the boy's mother because he threw a stone at one of the dogs. Karamazov asks the bitter question that is at the heart of the mystery of evil, "What have children to do with it, tell me, please?"

Evil is anyone outside the tribe. Evil works by dehumanizing the Other. A perverse, efficient logic: identifying others as evil justifies all further evil against them. A man may kill a snake without compunction. The snake is an evil thing, has evil designs, is a different order of being. Thus: an "Aryan" could kill a Jew, could make an elaborate bureaucratic program of killing Jews. Thus: white men could come in the middle of the night in Mississippi and drag a black man out and hang him.

Getting people to think in categories is one of the techniques of evil. Marxist-Leninist zealots thought of "the bourgeoisie," a category, a class, not the human beings, and it is easy to exterminate a category, a class, a race, an alien tribe. Mao's zealots in the Cultural Revolution, a vividly brainless evil, destroyed China's intellectual classes for a generation.

Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge sent to the killing fields all who spoke French or wore glasses or had soft hands. The Khmer Rouge aimed to cancel all previous history and begin at Year Zero. Utopia, this century has learned the hard way, usually bears a resemblance to hell. An evil chemistry turns the dream of salvation into damnation.

Evil is the Bad hardened into the absolute. Good and evil contend in every mind. Evil comes into its own when it crosses a line and commits itself and hardens its heart, when it becomes merciless, relentless.

William James said, "Evil is a disease." But it can be an atrocious liberation, like the cap flying off a volcano. The mind bursts forth to explore the black possibilities. Vietnam taught many Americans about evil. Hasan i Sabbah, founder of a warrior cult of Ismailis in the 11th century in Persia, gave this instruction: "Nothing is true, everything is permitted." It is a modern thought that both charmed and horrified William Burroughs, the novelist and drug addict who like many in the 20th century somehow could not keep away from horror. During a drunken party in Mexico in 1951, Burroughs undertook to play William Tell, using a pistol to shoot a glass off his wife's head. He put a bullet in her brain instead.

Evil is charismatic. A famous question: Why is Milton's Satan in Paradise Lost so much more attractive, so much more interesting, than God himself? The human mind romances the idea of evil. It likes the doomed defiance. Satan and evil have many faces, a flashy

variety. Good has only one face. Evil can also be attractive because it has to do with conquest and domination and power. Evil has a perverse fascination that good somehow does not. Evil is entertaining. Good, a sweeter medium, has a way of boring people.

Evil is a word we use when we come to the limit of humane comprehension. But we sometimes suspect that it is the core of our true selves. In *Young Goodman Brown*, Nathaniel Hawthorne's Everyman goes to a satanic meeting in a dark wood, and the devil declares, "Evil is the nature of mankind. Welcome again, my children, to the communion of your race."

Three propositions:

1) God is all powerful.

2) God is all good.

3) Terrible things happen.

As the theologian and author Frederick Buechner has written, the dilemma has always been this: you can match any two of those propositions, but never match all three.

At the beginning of his *Summa theologiae*, Thomas Aquinas admitted that the existence of evil is the best argument against the existence of God.

Theologians have struggled for centuries with theodicy, the problem of a good God and the existence of evil. Almost all such exertions have been unconvincing. Augustine, speaking of the struggle to understand evil, at last wrote fatalistically, "Do not seek to know more than is appropriate." At the time of the Black Death, William Langland wrote in *Piers Plowman*: "If you want to know why God allowed the Devil to lead us astray . . . then your eyes ought to be in your arse."

The historian Jeffrey Burton Russell asks, "What kind of God is this? Any decent religion must face the question squarely, and no answer is credible that cannot be given in the presence of dying children." Can one propose a God who is partly evil? Elie Wiesel, who was in Auschwitz as a child, suggests that perhaps God has "retracted himself" in the matter of evil. Wiesel has written, "God is in exile, but every individual, if he strives hard enough, can redeem mankind, and even God himself."

Perhaps evil is an immanence in the world, in the mind, just as divinity is an immanence. But evil has performed powerful works. Observes Russell: "It is true that there is evil in each of us, but adding together even large numbers of individual evils does not explain an Auschwitz, let alone the destruction of the planet. Evil on this scale seems to be qualitatively as well as quantitatively different. It is no longer a personal but a transpersonal evil, arising from some kind of collective unconscious. It is also possible that it is beyond the transpersonal and is truly transcendent, an entity outside as well as inside the human mind, an entity that would exist even if there were no human race to imagine it." So here evil rounds back again into its favored element, mystery.

Perhaps God has other things on his mind. Perhaps man is to God as the animals of the earth are to man -- picturesque, interesting and even nourishing. Man is, on the whole, a catastrophe to the animals. Maybe God is a catastrophe to man in the same way. Can it

be that God visits evils upon the world not out of perversity or a desire to harm, but because our suffering is a byproduct of his needs? This could be one reason why almost all theodicies have about them a pathetic quality and seem sometimes undignified exertions of the mind.

An eerie scene at the beginning of the Book of Job, that splendid treatise on the mysteries of evil, has God and Satan talking to each other like sardonic gentlemen gamblers who have met by chance at the racetrack at Saratoga. God seems to squint warily at Satan, and asks, in effect, So, Satan, what have you been doing with yourself? And Satan with a knowing swagger replies, in effect, I've been around the world, here and there, checking it out. Then God and Satan make a chillingly cynical bet on just how much pain Job can endure before he cracks and curses God.

Satan wanders. Evil is a seepage across borders, across great distances. Herman Melville, in *Moby Dick*, wrote that a colt in rural Vermont, if it smells a fresh buffalo robe (the colt having no knowledge or experience of buffalo, which lived on the plains) will "start, snort, and with bursting eyes paw the ground in phrenzies of affright. Here thou beholdest even in a dumb brute the instinct of the knowledge of the demonism of the world."

Evil and good have probably been more or less constant presences in the human heart, their proportions staying roughly the same over the centuries. And perhaps the chief dark categories have remained constant and familiar. The first time that death appeared in the world, it was murder. Cain slew Abel. "Two men," says Elie Wiesel, "and one of them became a killer." The odds have presumably been fifty-fifty ever since. The Old Testament is full of savageries that sound eerily contemporary. (The British writer J.R. Ackerley once wrote to a friend, "I am halfway through Genesis, and quite appalled by the disgraceful behavior of all the characters involved, including God.")

Petrarch's rant against the papal court at Avignon in the 14th century sounds like a hyperbolic inventory of life in certain neighborhoods of the late 20th century: "This is a sewer to which all the filths of the universe come to be reunited. Here people despise God, they adore money, they trample underfoot both human laws and divine law. Everything here breathes falsehood: the air, the earth, the houses, and above all, the bedrooms."

Western thought since the Renaissance has considered that the course of mankind was ascendant, up out of the shadow of evil and superstition and unreason. Thomas Jefferson, a brilliant creature of the Enlightenment, once wrote, "Barbarism has . . . been receding before the steady step of amelioration; and will in time, I trust, disappear from the earth."

/ In the 20th century, Lucretius' shores of light vanished like the coasts of Atlantis, carried under by terrible convulsions. The ascendant civilizations (the Europeans, Americans, Japanese) accomplished horrors that amounted to a usurpation of the power of God over creation. The world in this century went about a work of de-creation -- destroying its own generations in World War I; attempting to extinguish the Jews of Europe in the Holocaust, to destroy the Armenian people, the Ukrainian kulaks and, much later, the Cambodians -- all the reverberating genocides.

In any case, the 20th century shattered the lenses and paradigms, the very mind, of reason. The universe went from Newton's model to Einstein's, and beyond, into absurdities even more profound. An underlying assumption of proportion and continuity in the world

perished. The proportions between cause and effect were skewed. A minuscule event (indeed, an atom) could blossom into vast annihilations. Einstein said God does not play dice with the world. But if there was order, either scientific or moral, in God's universe, it became absurdly inaccessible.

If evil is a constant presence in the human soul, it is also true that there are more souls now than ever, and by that logic both good and evil are rising on a Malthusian curve, or at any rate both good and evil may be said to be increasing in the world at the same rate as the population: 1.7% per annum.

The world is swinging on a hinge between two ages. The prospect awakens, in the Western, secular mind, the idea that all future outcomes, good or evil, are a human responsibility. John Kennedy said in his Inaugural Address, "Here on earth, God's work must surely be our own." When there will no longer be any place to hide, it becomes important to identify the real evils and not go chasing after false evils. It is possible that people will even grow up on the subject of sex.

Religions over many centuries developed elaborate codifications of sin and evil. The Catholic Church, for example, identified Sins that Cry to Heaven for Vengeance, (oppression of the poor, widows and orphans, for example, or defrauding laborers of their wages), Sins Against the Holy Spirit, and so on, sins mortal and venial, virtues cardinal and sins deadly.

With the emergence of a new world will come a recodification of evils. Obviously offenses against the earth are coming to be thought of as evils in ways we would not have suspected a few years ago. The developed world, at least, is forming a consensus that will regard violence to the planet to be evil in the way we used to think of unorthodox sexual practices and partnerships as being outside the realm of accepted conduct.

A Frenchman named Jean Baudrillard recently wrote a book called *The Transparency of Evil*. We live, says Baudrillard, in a postorgiastic age, in which all liberations have been accomplished, all barriers torn down, all limits abolished. Baudrillard makes the (very French) case that evil, far from being undesirable, is necessary -- essential to maintaining the vitality of civilization. That suggests a refinement of an old argument favored by Romantics and 19th century anarchists like Bakunin, who said, "The urge for destruction is also a creative urge." It is not an argument I would try out on Elie Wiesel or on the mother of a political prisoner disappeared by the Argentine authorities.

And yet . . . and yet . . . evil has such perversities, or good has such resilience, that a powerful (if grotesque) case can be made that Adolf Hitler was the founding father of the state of Israel. Without Hitler, no Holocaust, without Holocaust, no Israel.

Scientists working with artificial intelligence have a fantasy -- who knows if it is more than that? -- that eventually all the contents of the human brain, a life, can be gradually emptied into a brilliant, nondecaying, stainless, deathless sort of robotic personoid. And when the transfer of all the vast and intricately nuanced matter of the mind and soul has been accomplished, the memories of the cells etched onto microchips, the human body, having been replicated in a better container, will be allowed to wither and die.

Will evil be transferred along with good and installed in the stainless personoid? Or can the scientists sift the soul through a kind of electronic cheesecloth and remove all the ancient evil traces, the reptilian brain, the lashing violence, the tribal hatred, the will to

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murder? Will the killer be strained out of the soul? Will the inheritance of Cain be left to wither and die with the human husk, the useless flesh?

If so, will grace and love, evil's enemies, wither too? The question goes back to the Garden. Does the good become meaningless in a world without evil? Do the angels depart along with the devils? If the stainless canister knows nothing of evil, will Mozart sound the same to it as gunfire?

I. Before you read the article, write down your definition of “evil”. As best you can, explain what in life has caused you to define “evil” as you have.

II. Now, read the article making sure you mark important or interesting ideas and quotations as you read.

III. Before we discuss the article, please do the following:

1. Write a summary of the article.
2. Indicate what you think the most important or interesting ideas are.
3. Why do you think they are important or interesting?
4. Indicate the most important or interesting quotations from the article.
5. Explain why those quotations are important or interesting.
6. What relevant questions do you have concerning the ideas in the article?
7. What relevant questions would you like to ask Lance Morrow, the author of the article?

1 *The Heart of Darkness* passages

Passage #1

The *Nellie*, a cruising yawl, swung to her anchor without a flutter of the sails, and was at rest. The flood had made, the wind was nearly calm, and being bound down the river, the only thing for it was to come to and wait for the turn of the tide.

The sea-reach of the Thames stretched before us like the beginning of an interminable waterway. In the offing the sea and the sky were welded together without a joint, and in the luminous space the tanned sails of the barges drifting up with the tide seemed to stand still in red clusters of canvas sharply peaked, with gleams of varnished sprits. A haze rested on the low shores that ran out to sea in vanishing flatness. The air was dark above Gravesend, and farther back still seemed condensed into a mournful gloom, brooding motionless over the biggest, and the greatest, town on earth.

The Director of Companies was our captain and our host. We four affectionately watched his back as he stood in the bows looking to seaward. On the whole river there was nothing that looked half so nautical. He resembled a pilot, which to a seaman is trustworthiness personified. It was difficult to realize his work was not out there in the luminous estuary, but behind him, within the brooding gloom.

Between us there was, as I have already said somewhere, the bond of the sea. Besides holding our hearts together through long periods of separation, it had the effect of making us tolerant of each other's yarns—and even convictions. The Lawyer—the best of old fellows—had, because of his many years and many virtues, the only cushion on deck, and was lying on the only rug. The Accountant had brought out already a box of dominoes, and was toying architecturally with the bones. Marlow sat cross-legged right aft, leaning against the mizzen-mast. He had sunken cheeks, a yellow complexion, a straight back, an ascetic aspect, and, with his arms dropped, the palms of hands outwards, resembled an idol. The director, satisfied the anchor had good hold, made his way aft and sat down amongst us. We exchanged a few words lazily. Afterwards there was silence on board the yacht. For some reason or other we did not begin that game of dominoes. We felt meditative, and fit for nothing but placid staring. The day was ending in a serenity of still and exquisite brilliance. The water shone pacifically; the sky, without a speck, was a benign immensity of unstained light; the very mist on the Essex marsh was like a gauzy and radiant fabric, hung from the wooded rises inland, and draping the low shores in diaphanous folds. Only the gloom to the west, brooding over the upper reaches, became more sombre every minute, as if angered by the approach of the sun.

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2 *The Heart of Darkness* passages

Passage #2

The sun set; the dusk fell on the stream, and lights began to appear along the shore. The Chapman lighthouse, a three-legged thing erect on a mud-flat, shone strongly. Lights of ships moved in the fairway—a great stir of lights going up and going down. And farther west on the upper reaches the place of the monstrous town was still marked ominously on the sky, a brooding gloom in sun shine, a lurid glare under the stars.

"And this also," said Marlow suddenly, "has been one of the dark places of the earth."

He was the only man of us who still "followed the sea." The worst that could be said of him was that he did not represent his class. He was a seaman, but he was a wanderer, too, while most seamen lead, if one may so express it, a sedentary life. Their minds are of the stay-at-home order, and their home is always with them—the ship; and so is their country—the sea. One ship is very much like another, and the sea is always the same. In the immutability of their surroundings the foreign shores, the foreign faces, the changing immensity of life, glide past, veiled not by a sense of mystery but by a slightly disdainful ignorance; for there is nothing mysterious to a seaman unless it be the sea itself, which is the mistress of his existence and as inscrutable as Destiny. For the rest, after his hours of work, a casual stroll or a casual spree on shore suffices to unfold for him the secret of a whole continent, and generally he finds the secret not worth knowing. The yarns of seamen have a direct simplicity, the whole meaning of which lies within the shell of a cracked nut. But Marlow was not typical (if his propensity to spin yarns be excepted), and to him the meaning of an episode was not inside like a kernel but outside, enveloping the tale which brought it out only as a glow brings out a haze, in the likeness of one of these misty halos that sometimes are made visible by the spectral illumination of moonshine.

His remark did not seem at all surprising. It was just like Marlow. It was accepted in silence.

Passage #3

"A narrow and deserted street in deep shadow, high houses, innumerable windows with venetian blinds, a dead silence, grass sprouting right and left, immense double doors standing ponderously ajar. I slipped through one of these cracks, went up a swept and ungarnished staircase, as arid as a desert, and opened the first door I came to. Two women, one fat and the other slim, sat on straw-bottomed chairs, knitting black wool. The slim one got up and walked straight at me—still knitting with downcast eyes—and only just as I began to think of getting out of her way, as you would for a somnambulist, stood still, and looked up. Her dress was as plain as an umbrella-cover, and she turned round without a word and preceded me into a waiting-room. I gave my name, and looked about. Deal table in the middle, plain chairs all round the walls, on one end a large shining map, marked with all the colours of a rainbow. There was a vast amount of red—good to see at any time, because one knows that some real work is done in there, a deuce of a lot of blue, a little green, smears of orange, and, on the East Coast, a purple patch, to show where the jolly pioneers of progress drink the jolly lager-beer. However, I wasn't going into any of these. I was going into the yellow. Dead in the centre. And the river was there—fascinating—deadly—like a snake. Ough! A door opened, a white-haired secretarial head, but wearing a compassionate expression, appeared, and a skinny forefinger beckoned me into the sanctuary. Its light was dim, and a heavy writing-desk squatted in the middle. From behind that structure came out an impression of pale plumpness in a frock-coat. The great man himself. He was five feet six, I should judge, and had his grip on the handle-end of ever so many millions. He shook hands, I fancy, murmured vaguely, was satisfied with my French. Bon Voyage.

Heart of Darkness, Chapter 1

Plot questions

1. Where is the *Nellie*? Who are the 5 people lounging on her deck? Who's telling the story?
2. Marlow describes the first Romans' experiences in Britain—what were they like?
3. What does Marlow think of colonization?
4. Who tells the “story within a story”?
5. What is the mood established here in the beginning?
6. What does Marlow find especially fascinating? What is the continent he's going to? What river?
7. Who helps Marlow find a job with the ivory company?
8. What does Marlow think of women?
9. What became of Fresleven, Marlow's predecessor?
10. What simile does Marlow use to describe the river? What does this foreshadow?
11. What is the color of the wool the women are knitting? Who do they symbolize?
12. What reactions do the people in the office have towards Marlow's going to the dark continent?
13. As Marlow leaves, he feels he is setting out on a journey to ____.
14. How does Marlow get to the continent? Describe his mood on the journey.
15. How many men a day are dying on the French man-of-war?
16. What explanation is given for the Swede's suicide?
17. Describe the company buildings and surroundings.
18. Who is in the grove of trees? What does this show about the white men's treatment of the native workers?
19. Contrast the accountant with the black men. Describe his office.
20. Whose name is first mentioned by the accountant? (Notice Marlow's progressive interest in the name.)
21. How many native carriers leave with Marlow? How heavy is the load each carries? Is there anyone else on the trek?
22. When Marlow finds a dead black man in the road, how had the man been killed?
23. Where is the steamer Marlow is to pilot?
24. How far has Marlow walked the day he arrives at the Central Station? In what way is the Manager rude to him?
25. Describe the Manager. How has he managed to keep his position?
26. What the Manager tell Marlow about Kurtz? How long will it take for the steamer to be raised?
27. Describe the painting Marlow sees. What might it symbolize?
28. What are the Company's plans for Kurtz?
29. Discuss the fire, who is accused of it, his guilt or innocence.
30. What or who is Mephistopheles?
31. What is the general attitude of the men at the Station towards blacks?
32. What is the real reason Marlow can't get rivets?
33. What is the Eldorado Expedition? Who is the leader? Describe him.
34. Are Marlow's listeners on the *Nellie* attentive?
35. How does Marlow release his pent-up frustrations with the events he's put up with (scene w/Boilermaker)?

Discussion Questions

1. What is the purpose of Marlow's meditation on the Roman conquest of Britain? Point out the places where the author makes it clear that Marlow is telling the story. What effect does that knowledge have on the reader?
2. What is the significance of the account of Fresleven? Of the two knitting women and the map of Africa? Of the Company doctor?
3. Explain the irony of calling African natives “Enemies, Workers, Criminals.”
4. What is the significance to Marlow of the Chief Accountant?
5. Clearly explain Marlow's attitude toward women and toward telling lies. How are these attitudes related to the way in which he tells the story?
6. What does Marlow learn in his interview with the Manager?
7. Indicate clearly what Marlow learns about Kurtz in Chapter 1. Does he have any reason to think that Kurtz is anything other than the prodigy he is described as? Explain.

Heart of Darkness, Chapter 2

Plot Questions

1. Why does the Manager fear and hate Kurtz?
2. Why has the Manager delayed and avoided sending food or supplies to Kurtz?
3. Why is the Manager's excuse for this neglect false and invalid?
4. Why does the Manager find Kurtz' success at obtaining ivory infuriating?
5. What is Marlow's reaction to the Manager's treatment of Kurtz? Is Marlow classed with Kurtz? Why or why not?
6. It is mentioned that all the donkeys of the Eldorado Expedition died. Marlow says that he never learned the fate of the "less valuable" animals. Explain who they were.
7. How long did it take the steamer to reach Kurtz?
8. Summarize Marlow's description of the trip up the river?
9. What were the twenty men enlisted to help? What is Marlow's opinion of them? What did they bring with them to eat? How were they paid?
10. To Marlow, the steamer crawls towards what one goal?
11. A main theme of the novel is expressed in this section—"No, they were not inhuman." Explain.
12. What is Marlow's excuse for not going ashore "for a howl and a dance"?
13. Why does the black Fireman stay on board instead of going ashore to clap and dance?
14. What is the book Marlow finds in the hut? Who do they think has lived in the hut?
15. Why is the Manager "beautifully resigned" to the slower pace up the river?
16. When they are eight miles below Kurtz' station, what new problem slows their progress?
17. Why do the black crewmen grin when the steamer is attacked? Why does Marlow sympathize with them?
18. How have these crewmen been abused? Who does Marlow feel is the more self-controlled—the blacks or the whites?
19. Do the natives sound more sorrowful or warlike? Why?
20. How does Marlow react to the death of the black Helmsman?
21. What does Marlow know is unique and most powerful in Kurtz? How important has Kurtz become to Marlow?
22. Describe Kurtz' physical appearance. How much ivory has Kurtz collected?
23. What makes Kurtz an uncommon man? What is his postscript (p.s.) to his paper for the International Society for the Suppression of Savage Customs?
24. How does Marlow feel towards the black Helmsman? What does he do with the body? Why?
25. What really causes the retreat of the natives?
26. Marlow describes the Inner Station. What does he think (at first) is on each pole?
27. Why does Marlow think of a harlequin when he meets the Russian?
28. What is the Russian's attitude towards Kurtz? Why does Conrad portray him as a fool?
29. Why do the pilgrims go to Kurtz' house heavily armed?
30. Why is the recovered book symbolic?

Heart of Darkness Questions, Chapter 3

1. How as the Russian managed to survive? How does Marlow feel about meeting him? What does Marlow think of the Russian's devotion to Kurtz? What do the cannibals think?
2. How did Kurtz manage to raid the country alone? Could anything stop Kurtz from "killing whom he jolly well pleased"?
3. Why is Marlow uneasy during his conversation with the Russian?
4. What does the Russian admit to Marlow about Kurtz' condition?
5. What does Marlow discover about the "knobs" on the ends of the stakes? What does Marlow decide Kurtz lacks?
6. Kurtz is ___ at the core. Why?
7. Which is more intolerable to Marlow—the heads or the native chiefs crawling into Kurtz' presence? Why?
8. Why has there been no medicine or food at the station?
9. How does Marlow describe Kurtz' speech to the wailing natives? Is Kurtz successful in his speech? Explain.
10. What does *kurtz* mean in German? Why is this ironic?
11. What does Kurtz first say to Marlow? Why? What is so remarkable about Kurtz?
12. Describe the gorgeous native woman who has been Kurtz' mistress. How does the Russian feel about her? Why?
13. What is the atmosphere around the Manager like to Marlow? What is Marlow's mood here?
14. Who orders the attack on the steamer? Sum up what you know now about Kurtz.
15. What does Marlow discover at midnight?
16. Marlow delivers a confusing report of what happens next. A few certainties do appear—what is Marlow certain Kurtz will do when he reaches the natives? What does Marlow experience when he hears the drums?
17. Do Kurtz and Marlow fight physically? Explain.
18. What do the commonplace words hide (what are their implications)?
19. How low has Kurtz's soul descended?
20. The next day the white men get out their guns and start their "little fun." Who is shot?
21. On the trip back what is the Manager's mood?
22. On the boat, how does Marlow now look upon Kurtz? Why hasn't he paid more attention to Kurtz?
23. What are Kurtz' last words? What has he seen? How do these words affect Marlow?
24. Why does Marlow say "And then they very nearly buried me?"
25. After Marlow returns to Brussels, he has 3 visitors inquiring about Kurtz. Each reveals something about Kurtz which shows that Kurtz was versatile and gifted. What did each visitor contribute about Kurtz?
26. Contrast Kurtz' "Intended" with his native "Mistress."
27. What lie does Marlow tell Kurtz' Intended? Why?
28. How does Marlow feel about lying? What does he expect to happen? How does he feel when it doesn't?
29. Is Kurtz deserving of the Intended? Why or why not?
30. What part of himself has Marlow discovered in Kurtz? What group of people in the book typifies truth and reality? What group typifies the blackness of man's soul? Explain the irony.
31. Has the Director understood or appreciated Marlow's story? Why or why not?

1 *Heart of Darkness*

Part I

Name _____ Date _____ Period _____

Introduction: Possibly the most interesting parts of the novel happen at the very beginning. Much of the mindset of the novel occurs here.

Quotes. Find the following quotes as you read. Who said them, and why do you think they're important? Identify page numbers as you read.

1. "And this also...has been one of the dark places of the earth."
2. "We live in the flicker...may it last as long as the old earth keeps rolling."
3. "They were men enough to face the darkness."
4. "Imagine the growing regrets, the longing to escape, the powerless disgust, the surrender, the hate..."
5. "Du calme, du calme, adieu."
6. "These were strong, lusty, red-eyed devils, that swayed and drove men – men, I tell you. But as I stood on this hillside, I foresaw that in the blinding sunshine of that land I would become acquainted with a flabby, pretending, weak-eyed devil of a rapacious and pitiless folly."
7. "I've been teaching one of the native women about the station. It was difficult. She had a distaste for the work."
8. "When one has got to make correct entries, one comes to hate those savages, hate them to the death."
9. "He was obeyed, yet he inspired neither love, nor fear, nor even respect. he inspired uneasiness."
10. "The word "ivory" hung in the air. You would think they were praying to it."
11. "He is a prodigy...We want for the guidance of the cause entrusted us by Europe, so to speak higher intelligence, wide sympathies, singleness of purpose."
12. "You know, I hate, detest, can't bear a lie."
13. "No man here bears a charmed life."
14. "It was reckless without hardihood, greedy without audacity, and cruel without courage; there was not an atom of...serious intention among them."

2 *Heart of Darkness*

Part I

Questions. Answer the following questions as best you can. Identify page numbers where the answers can be found when appropriate. Questions with a * will be discussed in class- try to answer them on your own!

1. What is the setting of this story?

*Why is it important that the tide has just turned?

2. How is Marlow different from everyone else on that ship?

Is the audience listening to the story civilized?

Is Marlow?

3. How did the Romans react to England?

What did England look like then?

How was it a "dark place"?

4. According to Marlow, what redeems "the conquest of the earth"?

*Why do you suppose he breaks off?

5. To what does Marlow keep comparing the river?

6. Besides knitting, what do the two women do in the office?

*How might Conrad's Victorian English audience react to this?

7. Why did Fresleven go nuts?

Why did he die?

Why did the village become abandoned?

8. Marlow's aunt calls her nephew an "emissary of light."

What does she imagine her nephew is about to do?

Why doesn't he correct her?

9. Describe the Company's station.

*Why do you suppose the natives allowed themselves to get bullied about so much?

10. Describe the accountant.

Why is he a "miracle"?

*Marlow clearly admires him. Why?

*Is he a victim of the weak-eyed devil?

11. Describe the station manager.

What was his supreme gift?

Why doesn't Marlow like him?

*What might be the other meaning of having no "entrails"?

12. What is the brick maker doing?

What is he waiting for?

13. Describe Kurtz's painting.

What do you suppose it means?

3 *Heart of Darkness*

Part I

14. The station manager and the brick-maker are both upset at Kurtz's preeminence. Why? What does this say about them? How has Marlow lied to this man?

15. What is the problem with the rivets? What does that show about this enterprise? *Why would the station manager not want the rivets to make it out?

15. What is wrong about the Eldorado Exploring Expedition?

16. Discuss some aspects of Conrad's writing style. What do you like and/or dislike about it? Be specific.

Name _____

Date _____

Period _____

Heart of Darkness

Part II

Introduction The trip carries on, deeper and deeper into the Heart of Darkness

Quotes Find the following quotes as you read. Who said them, and why do you think they're important? Identify page numbers as you read.

1. "Wood for you. Hurry up. Approach cautiously."
2. "I authorize you to take all the risks."
3. "I laid the ghost of his gifts at last with a lie."
4. "You don't talk with that man—you listen."
5. "This man has enlarged my mind."

Questions: Answer the following questions fully. Identify page numbers where the answers can be found when appropriate. Questions with a * will be discussed in class- attempt to answer on your own first! Highlight any questions about which you are unsure.

1. How does the station manager survive?

How does he plan to "beat" Kurtz?

2. Who was the crew of the steamboat?

How were they more civilized than the pilgrims?

What, then, is the definition of civilized here?

3. What do the drums symbolize?

4. What does the phrase "The earth seemed unearthly" mean? Of what literary term is this an

example?

*What does the phrase "that was the worst of us, the suspicion that they weren't inhuman" seem to mean/indicate?

5. What book do they discover?

What is admirable about the book?

6. When they wake up, eight miles from the station, what has happened?

What color is the fog?

*Why do you suppose that is?

7. Why does *Marlow* say the natives will not attack?

8. How does the helmsman die?

How does Marlow drive the natives away?

9. What is Kurtz's head like?

How does Conrad make that significant?

11. What was Kurtz's paper about?

*What is odd about it?

What does he compare the scribble with at the end?

12. What role does the harlequin have?

1 *Heart of Darkness*

Part III

Introduction: The following quotes come from the final section of *Heart of Darkness*. Look for repeated themes or words with double meanings.

Quotations:

Find the following quotes as you read. Who said them, and why do you think they're important? Identify page numbers as you read.

1. " He made me see things--Things!"
2. He would "forget himself amongst these people....forget himself."
3. "I! I! I am a simple man. I have no great thoughts. I want nothing from nobody. How can you compare me to..."
4. "I'll carry my ideas out yet-I'll show you what can be done. You with your peddling little notions."
5. "Mr. Kurtz' reputation is safe with me."
6. "Oh, he enlarged my mind."
7. "You will be lost--Utterly lost."
8. "The horror, the horror."
9. "Mistah Kurtz, he dead."
10. "I had all his noble confidence. I knew him best."
11. "Yes, his example. I forgot that."
12. "The last word he said--was your name."

2 *Heart of Darkness*

Part III

Questions:

Answer the following questions fully. Identify page numbers where the answers can be found when appropriate. Questions with a * will be discussed in class- try to answer if you can!

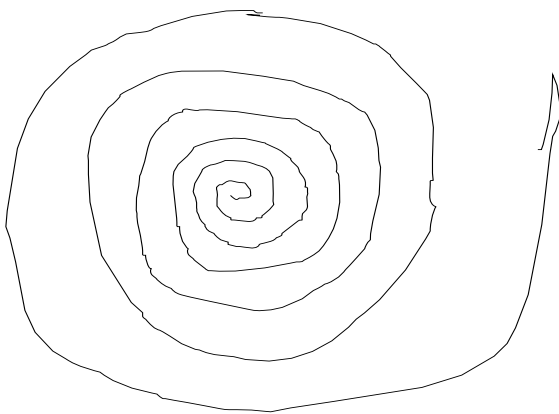
1. Describe the "harlequin." How old is he? Why is he still alive?
2. What was on the stakes outside of Kurtz's compound? Which way were they pointed? Who had they been?
3. How does Kurtz come to the boat? How does Marlow describe him? *What symbols does Marlow use to describe Kurtz?
4. What weapons does Kurtz bring with him? *Why does he bring them?
5. Who is the "wild and gorgeous apparition of a woman"? *What does Conrad pair her with?
6. What happens to Kurtz right before he dies? *What do his last words mean? (probably) *Why does Marlow blow out the candle? Why won't Marlow leave the dining room?
7. What does it mean "he had something to say"? *Why were Kurtz's last words "a victory"?
8. What does Marlow learn about Kurtz back in the city?
9. What does Marlow want to give up? How has he gone about doing that?
10. Describe the Intended. Earlier Marlow says that women live in beautiful worlds that we shouldn't disturb. How is that true here? *How is that feeling his downfall?
11. Did the Intended know Kurtz truly? What didn't she know? Why doesn't Marlow tell her the truth? Why do you suppose she cries out "I knew it" at the end?

Should he have said something else to the Intended? Explain your answer.

So what, then, is the heart of darkness?

Learning Is Really Basket-Weaving

Learning is the process of gaining understanding of the world around us by connecting new experiences to those which we understand. We make every experience, both real and vicarious, part of our previous experience, just as one makes a coiled basket:



The meaning of Conrad's works is not in the works of Conrad. The meaning is revealed to the reader by the story. That meaning may be a personal meaning, different from the meaning perceived by another reader - those two readers have different *baskets*.

Marcia Hilsabeck 2002

Ingress to the *Heart of Darkness*

by: Walter F. Wright

In the following excerpt, Wright suggests that the scene in which Marlow conceals the nature of Kurtz's death "is really a study of the nature of truth. "

The tragedy of Kurtz and the education of Marlow fuse into one story, since for Marlow that tragedy represents his furthest penetration into the heart of darkness. As Marlow enters the forest to intercept Kurtz on the way toward the ceremonial blaze he senses the fascination which the savage ritual possesses. In the light of Conrad's other tales we know that it is because he is guided by well-established habits that he is able to complete his mission and carry Kurtz back to his cot, though not before he himself has apprehended the lure of the primitive. He has duplicated in his own experience enough of Kurtz's sensations to have good reason to wonder what is real and what is a false trick of the imagination. It was this fascination and bewilderment that Conrad aimed to suggest, and the presenting of Kurtz at the most intense moment of his yielding to it was to transcend time and bring a unity of impression.

When Marlow, soon after, hears the dying pronouncement, "the horror, the horror!" he has more than a mere intellectual awareness of what the words mean; and as we have vicariously shared Marlow's quasi-hysterical emotion on the trip toward the camp fire, we feel likewise the completeness with which Kurtz has savored degradation. He is a universal genius because he has had both the dream of sweetness and sacrifice in a cause shared by others and the disillusionment of being, in the very midst of the savage adoration, irretrievably alone, devoid of all standards, all hopes that can give him a sense of kinship with anything in the universe. Now, as he faces the last darkness of all, he cannot even know that Marlow understands and that he feels no right to condemn....

Conscious will was, in the novelist's opinion, not merely fallible, but often dangerous. Reliance upon it could lead one completely away from human sentiments. In *Heart of Darkness* itself Kurtz twice replies to Marlow that he is "perfectly" conscious of what he is doing; his sinister actions are deliberate. This fact does not in the least, however, mean that Conrad wished for a condition devoid of will. He believed that man had the power to pursue the interpretation of experience with deliberate intent and by conscious endeavor to reduce it to proportions. The imagination would bring up the images and incidents, but the reason could help select and arrange them until they became the essence of art. In his trip up the Congo and in his rapid descent Marlow is protected by habits which tend to preserve sanity, but the experience is of the Imagination and emotions. Were he to stop short with the mere sensations, he would have no power to distinguish reality from the unreal, to speculate, with touchstones for reference, about life. What we are coming to is the obvious question, If Kurtz's dictum represents the deepest penetration into one aspect of the mind, why did Conrad not stop there; why did he have Marlow tell the girl that Kurtz died pronouncing her name? Is the ending tacked on merely to relieve the horror, or has it a function in the conscious interpretation of life in the proportions of art? ...

The fact is that Conrad, fully capable of building to a traditional climax and stopping, wanted to put Kurtz's life in the perspective which it must have for Marlow *sub specie aeternitatis*. Marlow does not have a final answer to life, but after we have shared with him the steady penetration to the brink of degradation we have almost forgotten what life otherwise is like. It is now that Conrad's method of chronological reversal is invaluable. We are quickly returned to Europe, where the marvel of Kurtz's genius still remains, as if he had left but yesterday.

The scene in which Marlow conceals from the girl the nature of Kurtz's death is really a study of the nature of truth. If he had told the girl the simple facts, he would have acknowledged that the pilgrims in their cynicism had the truth, that goodness and faith were the unrealities. Marlow appreciates this temptation, and we are hardly to suppose that sentimental weakness makes him resist it. He does not preach to us about the wisdom he has achieved, in fact he deprecates it, and now he says merely that to tell her would be "too dark altogether." He is still perplexed as to the ethics of his deception and wishes that fate had permitted him to remain a simple reporter of incidents instead of making him struggle in the realm of human values. Yet in leaving in juxtaposition the fiancée's ideal, a matter within her own heart, and the fact of Kurtz's death, Marlow succeeds in putting before us in his inconclusive way the two extremes that can exist within the human mind, and we realize that not one, but both of these are reality.

When Marlow ends his monologue, his audience [is] aware that the universe around them, which, when we began the story, seemed an ordinary, familiar thing, with suns rising and setting according to rule and tides flowing and ebbing systematically for man's convenience, is, after all, a thing of mystery. It is a vast darkness in that its heart is inscrutable. What, then, has Marlow gained, since he has ended with this conclusion which we might, *a priori*, accept as a platitude? He has certainly helped us eliminate the false assumptions by which day to day we act as if the universe were a very simple contrivance, even while, perhaps, we give lip service to the contrary. Moreover, instead of letting one faculty of the mind dominate and deny the pertinence of the others, he has achieved a reconciliation in which physical sensation, imagination, and that conscious logic which selects and arranges have lost their apparent qualities of contradiction. He has achieved an orderly explanation, conscious and methodical, of the strange purlieu of the imagination. Because those recesses harbor shadows, the exploration must not be labeled conclusive; but the greatness of the darkness, instead of leaving a sense of the futility of efforts to dispel it, has drawn the artist to use his utmost conscious skill. Life itself, if we agree with Conrad, may tend to seem to us as meaningless and chaotic as were many of Marlow's sensations at the moment of his undergoing them, and the will may often appear to play no part at all, or a false part, in guiding us. But the genius of art was for Conrad that it accepted the most intense and seemingly reason-defying creations of the imagination and then discovered within them, rather than superimposed upon them, a symmetry coherent and logical.

Through Marlow's orderly narrative, with its perfect identity of fact and symbol, with its transformation of time and space into emotional and imaginative intensity, the shadows have contracted, and we are better able than before to speculate on the presences which seem to inhabit the very heart of darkness. Time is telescoped and we have as if in the same moment the exalted enthusiast and the man who denied all except horror; and we realize that they are and always have been the same man. We perceive that Africa itself, with its forests, its heat, and its mysteries, is only a symbol of the larger darkness, which is in the heart of man.

Source: Walter F. Wright, "Ingress to the *Heart of Darkness*," from *ills Romance and Tragedy in Joseph Conrad*, University of Nebraska Press, 1949, reprinted in *Conrad's Heart of Darkness and the Critics*, edited by Bruce Harkness, Wadsworth Publishing Company, Inc, 1960, pp. 153-55

The great spokesperson for American imperialism, ironically, was the British writer Rudyard Kipling, whose "[The White Man's Burden](#)" appeared in February 1899, just as the newly founded Philippine Republic declared war upon the United States. The U.S. had refused to withdraw its troops following the surrender of Spain and also had refused to recognize the new Republic.

Rudyard Kipling, "The White Man's Burden" published in *McClure's Magazine*, Feb. 1899

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.

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.

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.

Take up the White Man's burden--
No iron 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.

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?"

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 will or whisper,
By all ye leave or do,
The silent sullen peoples
Shall weigh your God and you.

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.

-
- Kipling insisted that the "white man" acquired imperial possessions to "serve" his "captive's needs." What, according to Kipling, were these "needs"? Choose specific images from the poem to illustrate your points.
 - Imperialism, Kipling maintained, was a thankless task. He wrote:

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?"

Why then should the "white man" take up this burden?

- How well does this cartoon, reprinted in the *Literary Digest* from a Detroit newspaper, capture the meaning of the poem? Again, cite specific features of the cartoon as well as specific images and passages from the poem.



THE WHITE MAN'S BURDEN.— *The Journal, Detroit.*

“The Black Man’s Burden”: A Response to Kipling

In February 1899, British novelist and poet Rudyard Kipling wrote a poem entitled “The White Man’s Burden: The United States and The Philippine Islands.” Among the dozens of replies to Kipling’s poem was “The Black Man’s Burden,” written by African-American clergyman and editor H. T. Johnson and published in April 1899.

Pile on the Black Man’s Burden.
'Tis nearest at your door;
Why heed long bleeding Cuba,
or dark Hawaii’s shore?
Hail ye your fearless armies,
Which menace feeble folks
Who fight with clubs and arrows
and brook your rifle’s smoke.

Pile on the Black Man’s Burden
His wail with laughter drown
You’ve sealed the Red Man’s problem,
And will take up the Brown,
In vain ye seek to end it,
With bullets, blood or death
Better by far defend it
With honor’s holy breath.

The Poor Man's Burden

(After Kipling)

Pile on the Poor Man's Burden—
Drive out the beastly breed;
Go bind his sons in exile
To serve your pride and greed;
To wait in heavy harness,
Upon your rich and grand;
The common working peoples,
The serfs of every land.

Pile on the Poor Man's Burden—
His patience will abide;
He'll veil the threat of terror
And check the show of pride.
By pious cant and humbug
You'll show his pathway plain,
To work for another's profit
And suffer on in pain.

Pile on the Poor Man's Burden—
Your savage wars increase,
Give him his full of Famine,
Nor bid his sickness cease.
And when your goal is nearest
Your glory's dearly bought,
For the Poor Man in his fury,
May bring your pride to naught.

Pile on the Poor Man's Burden—
Your Monopolistic rings
Shall crush the serf and sweeper
Like iron rule of kings.
Your joys he shall not enter,
Nor pleasant roads shall tread;
He'll make them with his living,
And mar them with his dead.

Pile on the Poor Man's Burden—
The day of reckoning's near—
He will call aloud on Freedom,
And Freedom's God shall hear.
He will try you in the balance;
He will deal out justice true:
For the Poor Man with his burden
Weighs more with God than you.

Lift off the Poor Man's Burden—
My Country, grand and great—
The Orient has no treasures
To buy a Christian state,
Our souls brook not oppression;
Our needs—if read aright—
Call not for wide possession.
But Freedom's sacred light.

Source: George McNeill, "The Poor Man's Burden," *American Federationist* (March 1899).