

## *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.