



# Multiple Critical Perspectives™

Teaching Joseph Conrad's

## **Heart of Darkness**

from

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by

Dan Welch



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## A Message to the Teacher of Literature

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**O**PEN YOUR STUDENTS' EYES AND MINDS with this new, exciting approach to teaching literature.

In this guide, you will find reproducible activities, as well as clear and concise explanations of three contemporary critical perspectives—feel free to reproduce as much, or as little, of the material for your students' notebooks. You will also find specific suggestions to help you examine this familiar title in new and exciting ways. Your students will seize the opportunity to discuss, present orally, and write about their new insights.

What you will not find is an answer key. To the feminist, the feminist approach is the correct approach, just as the Freudian will hold to the Freudian. Truly, the point of this guide is to examine, question, and consider, not merely arrive at “right” answers.

You will also find this to be a versatile guide. Use it in concert with our *Teaching Unit* or our *Advanced Placement Teaching Unit*. Use it along with our *Response Journal*, or use it as your entire study of this title. However you choose to use it, we are confident you'll be thrilled with the new life you find in an old title, as well as in your students.



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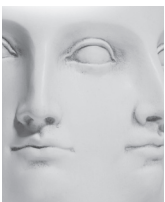
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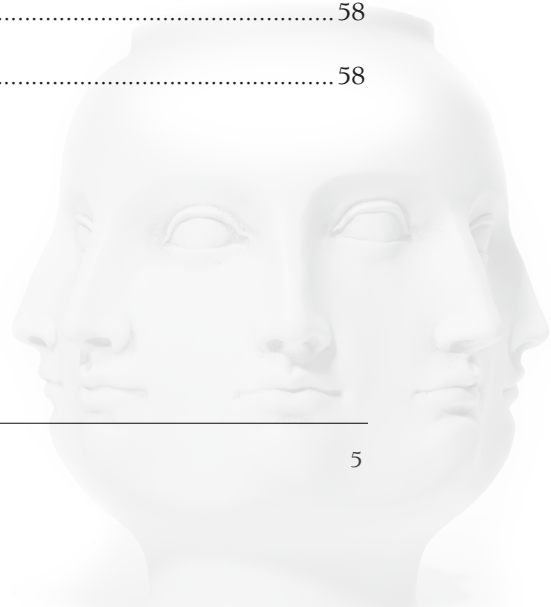
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## General Introduction to the Work

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### Genre

A NOVEL IS A LONG, fictional prose narrative. A **narrative** tells a story. For most of human history, long stories were told in verse rather than **prose**. **Fictional** means that the story comes from the imagination even though many novels seem to be clearly related to the actual life experiences of the author. There is some difference of opinion about what constitutes “long,” but in the case of *Heart of Darkness* the term “novel” is appropriate. The novel, traditionally, deals with real life or the possibilities of real life. Some critics would exclude such genres as fantasy or even science fiction from the category because they do not reflect life as it actually has been lived. For all its strangeness, the events of *Heart of Darkness* could have happened, and it therefore fits the narrowest definition of a novel.

### Joseph Conrad and His Times

Joseph Conrad was born to aristocratic Polish parents at a time when Poland was a part of the Russian empire. To avoid being drafted into the Russian army, he fled, first to France, and then to England. He did not learn English until he was twenty years old. He entered the Merchant Marine to continue a career at sea which he had already begun in France. He earned his certificate as a ship's officer and in a few years attained the rank of captain. His career at sea took him literally around the world, although most of his time was spent in Asia and the South Pacific. After a relatively short career as a sailor, health problems forced him into retirement, and friends encouraged him to become a writer.

Clearly Conrad's experience as a seafarer had a major influence on his works, but he did not only write about the sea. His major focus was the capacity of human beings to endure under extreme conditions in relation to the constant threat of the dissolution of human integrity and surrender to the darkness, which he saw as the essential heart of the entire universe. His works always focus on human beings under stress and yet he never comes to clear conclusions about why people behave as they do. This ambiguity is one of the traits that mark him as a transitional figure from mainstream nineteenth century novelists and the modern writers of the twentieth century who were influenced by him.

## Colonialism

Joseph Conrad's career as a sailor from approximately 1870 to 1900 coincided with the peak of the British Empire. British colonies circled the globe, and it was correctly said that the sun never set on British soil. The powerful British navy protected the sea lanes, but it was the British merchant marine that moved people and cargo throughout the empire. Imperial governments were primarily concerned with exploiting the natural resources of their colonies while using the colonies as markets for their manufactured goods. This situation was frequently a matter of oppressing native populations and taking advantage of their relative lack of sophistication. For the British, however, there was also the feeling that it was their duty to bring the fruits of civilization to the non-white populations they governed. The contradictions between the goals of greed and bringing culture, education, and scientific enlightenment to native peoples were things Conrad was very aware of from his experience, but it was a problem that many educated Europeans could not identify with. Conrad's works are in part an effort to make the people back home more aware of the problems and contradictions that the colonial enterprise entailed.



## List of Characters

In this book, Conrad has chosen to give only a few characters names. Most are described by their position or job.

**Marlow** – an old sea captain, apparently retired, who frequently tells long tales that do not always come to clear conclusions.

An **unnamed narrator** who is a part of an audience for Marlow's story. This audience includes the **Director of the Companies**, a **Lawyer**, and an **Accountant**.

**Marlow's aunt** – She uses her connections to get Marlow his position as captain of a steamboat in Africa.

**Two women** knitting at the headquarters of the Company employing Marlow.

**The Company doctor** – He is interested in the effects of the colonies on the men he sends there.

**The Swedish captain** of the steamboat that takes Marlow to the main station of the trading company.

**The black prisoners**, in chains, who are under the supervision of an armed native guard.

A group of **dying workers** who are lying under a large tree.

The Company's **chief accountant** who manages to maintain his appearance in spite of the heat and the jungle setting.

The **General Manager** of the station, who is not particularly efficient or effective but who maintains his position because he is unpredictable.

**The "pilgrims"**: a group of Europeans hoping for riches through the ivory trade, but lack specific plans or any signs of being practical.

**The manager's assistant** – a crafty young aristocrat scheming for ways to get ahead.

**The foreman of the mechanics** – a boilermaker who helps Marlow raise and repair his ship.

**The manager's uncle** – the leader of the Eldorado Exploring Expedition.

The boiler room fireman who helps Marlow tend the steamboat's engine.

The native crew on the steamboat whom Marlow refers to as “cannibals.”

The African helmsman who dies at Marlow's feet.

The young Russian adventurer who gives Marlow much information about Kurtz and his behavior at the upriver trading post.

Kurtz – the mysterious yet greatly admired ivory trader who, by himself, far upriver, has made a name for himself. He functions as the focal point of the story and what has happened to him and what he has become form the essential mystery of the story.

The magnificent African woman who seems to have strong relationship with Kurtz. She mourns his departure, but her relationship to Kurtz is never made clear.

The Intended – Kurtz's fiancée. She has a romanticized image of Kurtz as an idealist, who went out to save and civilize the world.

## Synopsis

The opening setting is a yacht on the English River Thames at twilight. As crew and passengers wait for the tide to turn, the old seaman Marlow tells a tale to an audience of successful gentlemen, including an unnamed narrator who warns the reader that Marlow's tales raise more questions than they answer. Marlow describes his boyhood dreams of adventure, exploring the great blank spaces on the maps of the world. He tells how, with his aunt's help, he got a position as a steamboat captain on a far-off African river. He tells of his travels to get to the steamboat which has sunk in shallow water and needs to be repaired. On his way he encounters instances of foolishness and incompetence by the European colonizers and misery in the native population. He learns from a company accountant of a remarkable man up the river who is a successful ivory trader named Kurtz.

After raising and repairing his steamboat, he heads up river with the stationmaster, a group of Europeans he mockingly terms "pilgrims," and a native crew. The intention is to rescue the ailing Kurtz and/or his valuable ivory. As they approach Kurtz's station, they are attacked by natives and Marlow's helmsman is killed. Arriving at the station, Marlow encounters a young Russian admirer of Kurtz and observes a magnificent native woman linked to Kurtz. Marlow follows Kurtz into the jungle at night and brings him back to the steamship. As they head downriver, Kurtz dies, and Marlow himself comes close to death. After arriving back in Europe, Marlow visits Kurtz's fiancée, and, by lying to her, shields her from the truth about Kurtz's encounter with the wilderness.

### The Novel's Themes

Conrad's view of the world is that there are dark, chaotic forces that continually threaten to destroy individuals and whole civilizations. The only protection from this is the resolute steadfastness of men and their stubborn reliance on each other no matter how hopeless the situation or how powerful the forces of darkness may appear. In physics this would be like the principle of entropy which states that the tendency of all organized systems is toward dissolution and decay. People die, bodies decay, civilizations fall, and only constant effort and attention to preservation can halt these forces and then only temporarily. In philosophy, Conrad can be seen as a precursor of the Existentialists, who likewise believed that the inevitable fate of each individual was darkness and oblivion, but that humans must not surrender to these destructive impulses.

There are some, like Kurtz's Intended, who could not face the true nature of the darkness at the center of the world and not only do not comprehend it, but would be destroyed by the knowledge if they were forced to confront it. Conrad believed that to truly understand the world, people have to confront the true destructive heart of the universe, but they do so at great risk. Kurtz is destroyed by it, but Marlow sees it, partially understands it, and is able to resist the dark power of destruction. He sets his story in what was still, in his time, one of last great stretches of unknown territory in the world. His voyage is away from the bright, artificial world of civilization, into a place that is still a large unmarked area where civilization completely disappears. As his voyage progresses, we see him traveling through almost endless scenes of disintegration and decay until at last he arrives in the "heart of darkness."

## Narrative Layers

Conrad learned from the American novelist Henry James a new technique called the “ambiguous narrator,” which permitted the novelist to better represent how uncertain we must always be about the words, actions, and motivations of others. Earlier novelists had used an “omniscient narrator” who knew what each character was thinking and feeling and why he or she acted in a particular way, but our actual experience of life is very different. In *Heart of Darkness*, Conrad increases the distance between the key character in the story (Kurtz) and the reader by adding several layers of narrative isolation.

Conrad did accept one “fresh-water command” in his career: a steamboat expedition up the Congo River, which clearly seems to be the unnamed river in the story. Certainly some of his experiences and memories of this trip must have been the basis for the character of Marlow. However, we also have the narrator who is listening to Marlow’s story and who is not identified as anyone like Conrad, and who has probably not had anything like the experience Marlow relates. Marlow also does not claim to understand the complete meaning of what he is telling, even though he relates it to earlier experiences on the edges of civilization. His stories are, after all, “inconclusive experiences.” To reach the truth about Kurtz, the reader has to go on his or her own since we are so removed from the actual experience and even Marlow is not sure what to make of what of his story. ■

## List of Theories to be Applied

- Mythological/Archetypal
- New Historicism
- Psychological/Freudian

## Mythological/Archetypal Applied to *Heart of Darkness*



### Notes on the Mythological/Archetypal Approach

MYTHOLOGICAL, ARCHETYPAL, AND PSYCHOLOGICAL CRITICISM are all closely related. This is because Freud formulated many theories around the idea of the social archetype, and his pupil, Carl Jung, expanded and refined Freud's theories into a more cross-cultural philosophy.

Critics who examine texts from a mythological/archetypal standpoint are looking for symbols. Jung said that an archetype is "a figure... that repeats itself in the course of history wherever creative fantasy is fully manifested." He believed that human beings were born innately knowing certain archetypes. The evidence of this, Jung claimed, lay in the fact that some myths are repeated throughout history in cultures and eras that could not possibly have had any contact with one another. Many stories in Greek and Roman mythology have counterparts in Chinese and Celtic mythology, developed long before the Greek and Roman Empires spread to Asia and northern Europe. Most of the myths and symbols represent ideas that human beings could not otherwise explain (the origins of life, what happens after death, etc.). Every culture has a creation story, a-life-after-death belief, and a reason for human failings, and these stories—when studied comparatively—are far more similar than different.

When reading a work looking for archetypes or myths, critics look for very general recurring themes, characters, and situations. In modern times, the same types of archetypes are used in film, which is why it has been so easy for filmmakers to take a work like Jane Austen's *Emma* and adapt it into the typical Hollywood film *Clueless*. By drawing on those feelings, thoughts, concerns, and issues that have been a part of the human condition in every generation, modern authors allow readers to know the characters in a work with little or no explanation. Imagine how cluttered stories would be if the author had to give every detail about every single minor character that entered the work!

Three main points of study:

- archetypal characters
- archetypal images
- archetypal situations

### 1. Archetypal Characters

- the HERO: a figure, larger than life, whose search for self-identity and/or self-fulfillment results in his own destruction (often accompanied by the destruction of the general society around him). In the aftermath of the death of the hero, however, is progress toward some ideal. While this applies to modern superheroes such as Superman (Clark Kent searching for the balance between his super self and his mortal self), it also applies to the Christian faith's Jesus Christ (a mortal man who comes to terms with his destiny as the Messiah), and thousands of other literary and religious figures throughout history.

Variations of the HERO figure include the “orphaned” prince or the lost chieftain's son raised ignorant of his heritage until he is rediscovered (King Arthur, Theseus);

- the SCAPEGOAT: an innocent character on whom a situation is blamed—or who assumes the blame for a situation—and is punished in place of the truly guilty party, thus removing the guilt from the culprit and society.
- the LONER or OUTCAST: a character who is separated from (or separates him or herself from) society due to a physical impairment or an emotional or physiological realization that makes this character different. Jesus goes into the desert to discern his destiny; Buddha leaves society to come to terms with his philosophy. Victor Frankenstein travels to remote locales to avoid people when he realizes that he has created a monster. Often, the Hero is an outcast at some point in his or her story.

Two common variations of the LONER are:

- the UNDERDOG, the smaller, weaker, less-worldly-wise character, who usually emerges victorious at the end of the story;
- the guilt-ridden figure in search of redemption.



- the VILLAIN: the male or female personification of evil. Note that, while nearly all literature has an antagonist to provide conflict with the protagonist, not all antagonists are villains. Villains are indeed personifications of evil. Their malice is often apparently unmotivated, or motivated by a single wrong (or perceived wrong) from the past. The villain's malice is often limitless, and rarely is the villain reformed within the context of the story. Examples of archetypal villains are Satan, and Loki (from Norse mythology).

Some variations of the VILLAIN figure include:

- the “mad scientist”
- the bully
- the TEMPTRESS: the female who possesses what the male desires and uses his desire (either intentionally or unintentionally) as a means to his ultimate destruction. Examples are Eve, Juliet, Lady Macbeth.
- the EARTH MOTHER/GODDESS: Mother Nature, Mother Earth—the nurturing, life-giving aspect of femininity.
- the SPIRIT or INTELLECT: the often-unidentified feminine inspiration for works of art and literature. Examples include Dante's Beatrice, Shakespeare's Dark Lady, etc.
- the SAGE: largely of Eastern origin, the Sage is the elderly wise man; the teacher or mentor. Examples from Western literature include Merlin and Tiresias. Yoda from *Star Wars* and Gandalf from *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* are contemporary derivations.

Some variations of the SAGE include:

- the wise woman, the witch. Note that, while the male SAGE's wisdom is usually spiritual or philosophical (often with political or military applications), the wise woman's wisdom tends to be more an understanding of the workings of nature, thus the connection of the wise woman with witchcraft, and all of the associated superstitions.
- the stern, but loving authority figure.
- the oracle: male or female prophet, fortune-teller, sooth-sayer.

## 2. Archetypal Images

- **COLORS:** red as blood, anger, passion, violence; gold as greatness, value, wealth; green as fertility, luxury, growth; blue (the color of the sky) as God-like holiness, peace, serenity; white as purity; etc.
- **NUMBERS:** three for the Christian trinity; four for the four seasons, the four ancient elements (earth, water, fire, air); twelve for the months of the solar year; etc.
- **WATER:** the source of life and sustenance; cleansing or purification; baptism.
- **FIRE:** ambiguously both protective and destructive; on an archetypal level, fire symbolizes human knowledge and industry (Prometheus stole fire from the gods and gave it to humankind when there were no other gifts left to give).
- **The FOUR ANCIENT ELEMENTS:** fire, water, air, and earth.
- **GARDENS:** natural abundance; easy, beautiful life; new birth, hope; Eden, the original Paradise from which humankind was expelled.
- **GEOMETRIC SHAPES:** a triangle for the trinity; a circle for perfection and eternity, wholeness, union.
- **CELESTIAL BODIES:** the sun (masculine) is both the giver and destroyer of life; the moon (feminine) marks the passage of time and controls the course of human events. Seedtime, harvest, etc., are all determined more by the phases of the moon than the phases of the sun.
- **MASCULINE IMAGES/SYMBOLS:** columns, towers, boats, trees, etc.
- **FEMININE IMAGES/SYMBOLS:** bodies of water, caves, doorways, windows.
- **CAVES:** ambiguously can represent the womb (the source of life) and the grave; often represent the entrance to the underworld (related to the grave); as well as to the unexplored regions of the human soul.
- **YIN AND YANG:** any scheme that suggests that each of a pair of opposites partakes of the other's nature, complements the other, and essentially completes the other; without balance, the world would erupt into chaos.



### 3. Archetypal Situations

- the QUEST: the hero's endeavor to establish his or her identity or fulfill his or her destiny.

Variations on the QUEST can include:

- the Faustian bargain: the selling of one's soul to the devil (metaphorically representing the notion that one would "give anything" in order to ...) in exchange for unlimited power, knowledge, wealth, etc. Examples include King Midas.
- the pursuit of revenge for a real or perceived wrong.
- the descent into the underworld. (Note that this is usually one part of the quest rather than the entire quest itself.)
- the RENEWAL OF LIFE: death and rebirth, resurrection as seen in the cycle of the seasons, the phases of the day, sleeping and waking. Examples are "Sleeping Beauty," "The Secret Garden," etc.
- INITIATION: coming of age, rites of passage. Some examples include the first hunt, weddings, teenage angst films.
- THE FALL: any event that marks a loss of innocence, a devolution from a paradisiacal life and viewpoint to a tainted one.
- REDEMPTIVE SACRIFICE: any voluntary loss, especially a loss of life, that results in another's gaining or regaining a desired state.
- the CATALOG OF DIFFICULT TASKS: (labors of Hercules, Cinderella's treatment by her step-mother and stepsisters, etc.).
- the END OF THE WORLD: usually apocalyptic, involving warfare, a huge battle, a metaphoric final battle between good and evil.

Variations on the end of the world include:

- Armageddon: the final battle between good and evil according to the Christian New Testament (book of Revelation), in which evil is finally vanquished, evildoers receive their eternal punishment, and God reigns over a newly-created Heaven and Earth;

- Ragnarok: the final battle between two feuding segments of the Norse pantheon. Both sides are largely decimated, as is the human race. Two humans survive to repopulate the human world and worship a new pantheon formed of the gods who survived the battle.
- the Great Flood
- the TABOO: the commission of a culturally forbidden act (incest, patricide), often unknowingly or inevitably. Any act or attitude that could be seen as “unnatural,” a crime against the ways Nature is supposed to operate.
- the BANQUET: fellowship; nourishment of the body and soul; display of wealth; often used as a symbol for salvation, Heaven. ■

**Essential Questions for A Mythological/Archetypal Reading**

1. Examine all of the characters—major and minor— and their situations. What archetypes seem to be present?
2. How do any of the characters change over time? What events or people make them change?
3. What is suggested in the setting (time of day, season of year, location—garden, body of water, etc.) that might suggest an archetypal reading?
4. What types of symbols are used? What do they represent?
5. How are the symbols in this work different from the traditional uses of those symbols? What is significant about this difference?
6. What myths are at work in different parts of this work? What features of the story are reminiscent of other stories you know?

**Focus of Study**

- Examine the text for evidence of the effect of the quest journey on Marlow's understanding of the world.
- Consider how Conrad uses archetypal references to enrich the story.
- Analyze the actions and characters of the story in terms of the Apollonian and Dionysian dichotomy between reason and emotion.
- Look for examples of the heroic in the characters of Kurtz and Marlow either as successes or failures.

## Activity One

### Examining Marlow's Journey as the Quest

1. Distribute copies of the *Heart of Darkness*: Archetypal Activity One: Information Sheet and *Heart of Darkness* Archetypal Activity One: Graphic.
2. Have students, either individually or in pairs, consider Marlow's journey upriver and complete the graphic to indicate which events and characters correspond to the elements of the hero's quest.
3. As a class, discuss how students have compared Marlow's journey to the quest, and then discuss the following questions:
  - What are the motivations for Marlow's journey? Do these motivations change? If so, how and why?
  - Is the snake metaphor for the river an ominous one? Why or why not? What archetypal qualities are associated with snakes?
4. Paraphrase the description of the river and its surroundings. How does Marlow cope with the physical and mental difficulties he faces?
5. As Marlow gets rid of his blood-soaked shoes, he realizes the object of his quest. Why does Conrad frame Marlow's thoughts on Kurtz in the bloody shoe context?
  - What does Marlow admire about Kurtz's death?
  - What is the result of Marlow's journey as the story ends?

**Heart of Darkness: Archetypal Activity One****Information Sheet**

There are certain steps or stages into which the Quest can be divided:

**The Call:**

Typically the Hero is challenged to embark on the Quest or is called to it by a god or god-figure. Usually there is a sense of destiny associated with the call to the Quest—this is the Hero's purpose; it will be his or her defining moment.

**The Decision:**

The Hero makes an intentional decision to accept the challenge of call and pursue his (or her) destiny. There is usually a sense that this decision is irrevocable—the ship sails, the bridge burns, the home planet is destroyed, etc. At this point, the Hero must go forward; there is no turning back.

**The Preparation:**

This is a period during which the Hero learns what he or she needs to know in order to complete the Quest. He or she develops the skills, builds the strength, gathers the tools and other materials, and collects the allies he or she will need to succeed. Often the Hero will meet a MENTOR, an older, wiser individual who has the knowledge and skills the Hero needs. This MENTOR may or may not be supernatural.

**The Obstacles:**

This is the Quest itself, the journey to the place where the treasure is hidden or the captive is imprisoned. It is a long trip. It is a dangerous trip. Many of the Hero's allies (met during the Preparation) will desert him, be rendered incapable of continuing, or die. The Hero will lose many, if not all, of the tools and weapons collected during the Preparation and will have to continue the Quest alone. Some of the Obstacles encountered might be in the form of persons:

- the TEMPTOR/TEMPTRESS or SEDUCER/SEDUCTRESS who is able to offer the Hero something he or she deeply desires (often a hidden or secret desire) so that the Hero is (almost) willing to abandon the quest.

- the SHADOW, an evil figure who actually mirrors those things the Hero most fears or dislikes about himself/herself.

Some of the Obstacles encountered might be geographical:

- difficult terrain.
- remote locations.
- seemingly insurmountable mountains, oceans, rivers, etc.

Some of the Obstacles encountered might take the form **mythical or legendary animals and beings**.

#### **The Climax:**

This is, of course, the moment when the Hero is at the point of either succeeding or failing. The failure might be physical, emotional, or psychological. The Climax also involves the moment when it becomes obvious that the Hero will succeed.

#### **The Return:**

After the successful Quest, the Hero always returns home, *but he or she always returns a changed person*.



**Heart of Darkness: Archetypal Activity One**

**Graphic**

In the spaces provided, list the specific character, event, etc., from *Heart of Darkness* that corresponds to the indicated stage of the Quest.

If you do not find a correspondent, leave the space blank, and consider why Conrad may have chosen to admit this aspect from his hero tale.

**The Call:**

god or god-figure: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**The Decision:**

decision made irreversible by: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**The Preparation:**

mentor(s): \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

acquired knowledge or skills: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

allies: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



**The Obstacles:**

tempter/temptress: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

shadow: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

difficult terrain: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

remote locations: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

seemingly insurmountable mountains, oceans, rivers, etc.: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

mythical or legendary animals and beings: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**The Climax:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**The Return:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
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## Activity Two

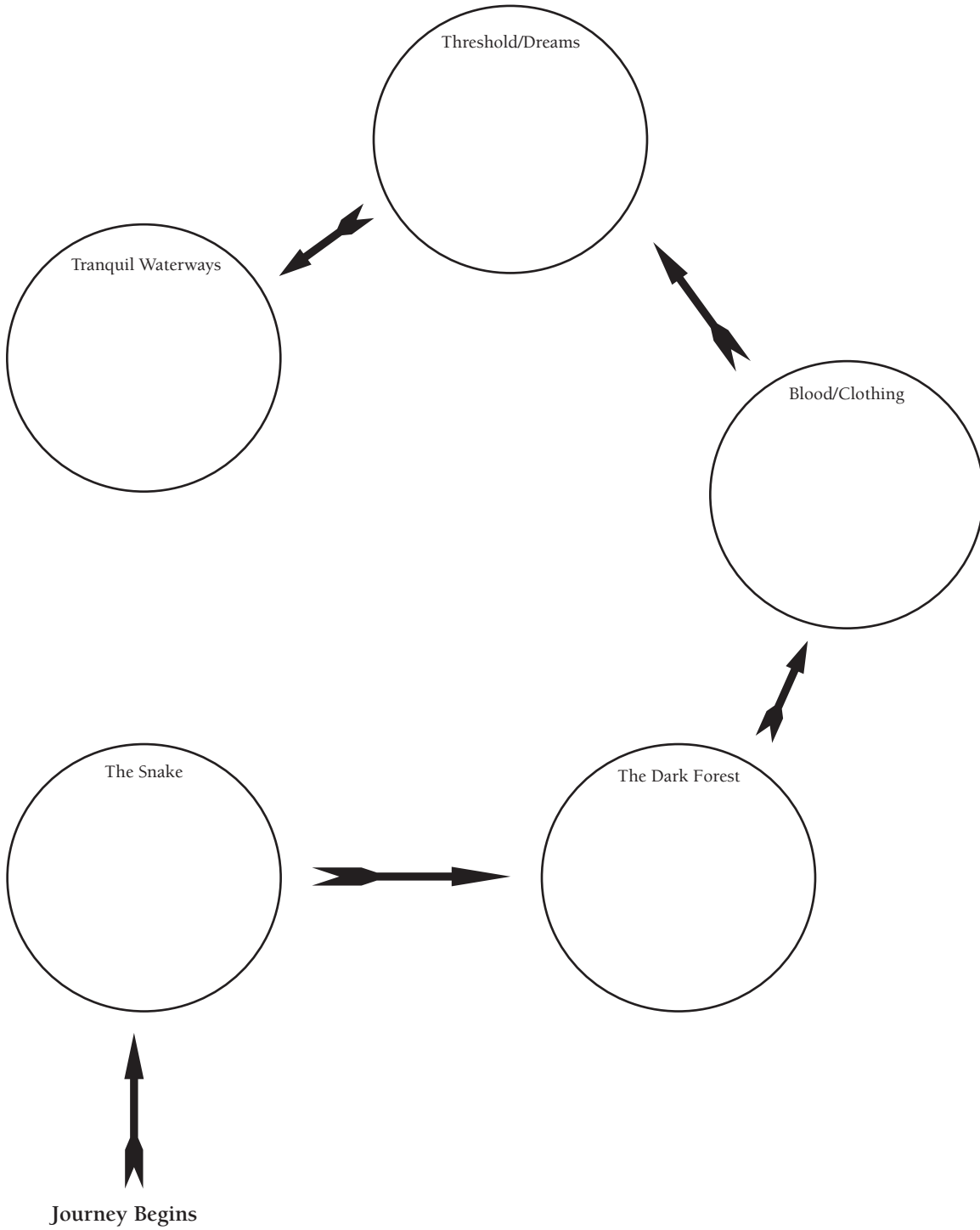
### Summarizing Archetypal Images and Settings in A Graphic Format

1. Divide the class into pairs or small groups and have each group review the following passages:
  - p. 13 “Now when I was a little chap...the snake had charmed me.”
  - p. 35 “Going up that river...drowned all the pilgrims.”
  - p. 46 “We two whites...impenetrable darkness.”
  - p. 67 “True, he had...and silly dreams.”
  - p. 72 “‘His end,’ I said...immense darkness.”
2. Copy and distribute *Heart of Darkness: Archetypal Activity Two Graphic*. Have each group study the book and indicate in each of the labeled circles descriptive phrases and their connotations as they apply to each archetypal symbol or setting.
3. The following questions may provide direction for these group discussions.
  - How does the map of Africa change as Marlow grows from a boy to a man?
  - Is the snake metaphor for the river an ominous one? Why or why not? What archetypal qualities are associated with snakes?
  - How does Conrad use the concept of traveling through time?
  - Give examples of the theme of light and darkness used in this book.
4. Reconvene the class and have each pair or small group report. Discuss any differences in the groups' findings, but remember that it is not important for the class to come to consensus.



## Heart of Darkness: Archetypal Activity Two

### Graphic



### Activity Three

#### Interpreting Characters from the Viewpoints of Apollo and Dionysus

1. Copy and distribute “The Apollonian and the Dionysian.”
2. Allow students to read handout (or assign it for homework the night before this activity).
3. Divide the class into three groups, or a number of groups divisible by three. Assign each group (or let each choose) one of the sets of characters below:
  - Marlow’s aunt, native helmsman, Russian adventurer
  - Beautiful African woman, General Manager, Kurtz
  - The Intended, chief accountant, Marlow
4. Each group debates whether each character in its set is motivated more by Apollonian or Dionysian impulses and then examines the novel for support.
5. Reconvene the class and have each group report. Discuss as a class any disagreements. *NOTE: It is not important for the class to come to consensus.* Among the questions to be considered in small-group and full-class discussion are:
  - Which characters or events reflect that part of the human psyche that is illustrated by the Apollonian impulse?
  - Which characters or events reflect that part of the human psyche that is illustrated by the Dionysian impulse?
  - Which impulse is strongest in Marlow? How does he deal personally with the implied conflict between the two?
  - How does the social world of the novel deal with or attempt to control these two impulses?

### **Heart of Darkness: Archetypal Activity Three**

#### **The Apollonian and the Dionysian**

Although the ancient Greeks never saw any conflict or contention between Apollo and Dionysus, thinkers and writers of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries used the two as a metaphor for the human condition and therefore a way to analyze literary works. Apollo was the Greek god of light and is associated with the sun. In addition to being the god of music, poetry, and prophecy; he was also the god of medicine, reason, and self-restraint. Dionysus, on the other hand, was a god of wine. He was born each year and quickly attracted a group of ardent followers who drank wine, danced wildly, and went into frenzies while Dionysus played his flute. At the end of the year, in a final wild celebration, his followers would seize him and rip him to pieces in an uncontrollable religious passion. He is associated with the moon, with loss of control, and with the absence of restraint.

In the nineteenth century, the German philosopher Nietzsche used these two ancient gods as metaphors to examine works of literature, especially the genre of tragedy. His ideas, in many ways, are also found in the theories of Freud. The Apollonian impulse is for rationality, thought before action, and self-restraint. The Dionysian impulse is toward irrationality, giving in to impulse, and the removal of all boundaries.

Freud and Nietzsche both thought that these tendencies existed to a greater or lesser degree in each individual. Each of us has the capacity to understand consequences, to evaluate our potential actions, and to show self-restraint. We can respond to the music of a string quartet or to the contemplation of a great painting. Freud attributed this ability to the Superego's control over the powerful impulses of the subconscious. On the other hand, we also have the ability to let ourselves go, losing any sense of self or responsibility in wild dancing, in loud music, and in orgiastic pleasure. Freud called this part of our consciousness the Id.

Conrad is in no way writing a Freudian work as some later writers did, but the dichotomy described here fits very nicely with the action of *Heart of Darkness*. The Intended is clearly dominated by the Apollonian aspect of human possibilities. Her appearance at the end of the novel is restrained, controlled, and intellectual. Marlow says that she (and others like her) is not capable of seeing the deeper, darker potential of human beings. Kurtz, obviously, has surrendered to the Dionysian forces of the jungle. The chanting and dancing of the natives both on the trip up the river, and in the night when Marlow pursues Kurtz suggest this, as does the magnificent native woman they see on the shore when Kurtz leaves.

Marlow functions as a bridge between these two worlds, seeing not only the bright promise of the world suggested by the promise of civilization and progress but also its fragility as symbolized by the Intended. At the same time he has an uneasy sense that he, like Kurtz, is not immune to the temptation to give in to the pursuit of pleasure, power, and wealth without restraint.



### Discussion Questions

1. Discuss the metaphorical meanings of various journey stories. You may use any books, films, poems, or fairy tales. What motivates or forces the hero to begin his journey? What new or unusual difficulties does he face? How does the journey change him? What is the ultimate result of the successful quest?
2. Consider whether Conrad has altered the traditional understanding of archetypal images, including the snake, water, blood, trees, color, pilgrims and women.

### Essays or Writing Assignments

1. Compare Marlow's journey to another journey story in terms of motivation and outcome. Summarize a possible metaphorical meaning for the story.
2. Conrad's deliberate ambiguity influenced many 20<sup>th</sup> century writers. Discuss this use of ambiguity in terms of the themes of dark and light, and archetypal images such as the river and blood.



Multiple Critical Perspectives

# Heart of Darkness



## New Historicism Applied to *Heart of Darkness*



### Notes on New Historicism

A COMMON TENDENCY IN THE STUDY of literature written in, and/or set in, a past or foreign culture is to assume a direct comparison between the culture as presented in the text and as it really was/is. New Historicism asserts that such a comparison is impossible for two basic reasons.

First, the “truth” of a foreign or past culture can never be known as established and unchangeable. At best, any understanding of the “truth” is a matter of interpretation on the parts of both the writer and the reader. This is most blatantly evident in the fact that the “losers” of history hardly ever get heard. The culture that is dominated by another culture is often lost to history because it is the powerful who have the resources to record that history. Even in recent past events, who really knows both sides of the story? Who really knows the whole of the Nazi story? Or the Iraqi story? New Historicists argue that these unknown histories are just as significant as the histories of the dominant culture of power and should be included in any world view. Since they often contradict “traditional” (i.e., the winner’s) history, there is no way to really know the absolute truth.

Second, while the text under consideration does indeed reflect the culture in which it was written (and to some degree in which it is set), it also *participates* in the culture in which it is written. In other words, its very existence changes the culture it “reflects.” To New Historicists, literature and culture are born of one another. For example, although Harper Lee’s *To Kill a Mockingbird* certainly reflected the culture of the south during the mid-20th century, it also became a tool to raise awareness of and change certain elements of that culture.

Main areas of study/points of criticism:

- Traditional history is, by its nature, a subjective narrative, usually told from the point of view of the powerful. The losers of history do not have the means to write their stories, nor is there usually an audience interested in hearing them. Most cultures, once dominated by another, are forced to forget their past. To maintain its sovereignty, the culture of power simply does not allow the defeated culture to be remembered.
- Traditional history is not only subjectively written, it is also read and discussed subjectively. Although modern readers say they take history at face value, no one can help but compare the past to the present as a means of understanding it, which makes it subjective.
- The powerless also have “historical stories” to relate that are not to be found in official documents, mostly because they played no hand in creating them.
- No reader can claim to have the “truth” of a text or event, or even that an understanding of the “truth” is possible. At best, one can acknowledge the “truth” of a particular point of view.
- The questions to ask are not: “Are the characters based on real people?” “Are any characters or events in the text drawn from the author’s life and experiences?” or “Is the text an accurate portrayal of the time period in which it is set?” Instead, ask “What view or understanding of the relevant culture does this text offer?” and “How does this text contribute to or shape the understanding of the culture it represents?”
- The text, rather than being a static artifact of a definable culture, is a participant in a dynamic, changeable culture. Every time someone reads it, he or she brings a unique set of experiences and points of view that change the meaning of the text, however slightly. ■

**Essential Questions for A New Historicist Reading**

1. What events occurred in the writer's life that made him or her who he or she is? What has affected his or her view of life?
2. Who influenced the writer? What people in his or her life may have helped him or her form this world view?
3. What did the writer read that affected his or her philosophy?
4. What were the writer's political views? Was he or she liberal? Conservative? Moderate?
5. In what level in the social order was the writer raised? How did his economic and social situation affect him or her?
6. At what level in the social order did the writer *want* to be?
7. From what level in the social order did the writer's friends come? How were they employed?
8. How powerful was the writer socially?
9. What concerned the writer about society? What did he or she do about it?
10. What type of person was the writer in his or her society?
11. What was happening in the world at the time the book was written? What was occurring during the time in which it is set?
12. What were some major controversies at the time the book was written? The time in which it is set?
13. Who was on either side of the controversy? Who were the powerful? Who were the powerless?
14. Why were the powerful in their positions of power? What qualities did they have? What events transpired to get them to their positions?
15. What is similar about the views and "facts" of this book and other books written in or about the same era? What is different?

16. How did the public receive the work when it was first published?
17. How did the critics receive the work when it was first published?
18. Did any change in culture result from the work? What changed?
19. What different perspectives of history does this text represent?
20. How does this text fit into the rules of literature in the era in which it was written?

### **Focus of Study**

- Examine the text for insight into the African experience of colonization.
- Examine the text as a participant in the English culture of the early 1900s.
- Examine Conrad's use of humor, pathos, and irony in the portrayal of characters.
- Examine the text for representations and criticisms of the corporate world of the early 1900s.



## Activity One

### Inferring the African Point of View

1. Have students individually or in pairs or small groups reread the following passages, focusing on the indicated characters. Note: Within groups, students may want to select individual characters to focus on, as long as every character is covered somewhere in the group.

- pp. 18-21 “The idleness of a passenger...out of sight somewhere.”

- prisoners, guard
- Marlow
- dying worker
- chief accountant

- pp. 40-42 “I went forward...my days at that time.”

- cannibal headman
- Marlow
- pilgrims

- pp. 44-46 “An athletic black...impenetrable darkness.”

- helmsman
- attacking villagers
- Marlow

- pp. 56-59 “Dark human shapes...before she disappeared.”

- beautiful native woman
- Marlow
- young Russian

2. Copy and distribute *Heart of Darkness: New Historicism Activity One Work Sheet*.
3. In their discussions, have the groups consider the following questions (on handout):
  - What are the examples of contrast between Europeans and Africans?

- How does Marlow's attitude toward the natives evolve from pity to admiration?
  - How might the African characters feel about Marlow? About Kurtz? About the "pilgrims"?
  - Describe the first Africans Marlow sees on his journey. What might their thoughts be about Europeans?
  - How are the prisoners differentiated from the dying workers? How are they the same? What is the contrast between them and the Chief Accountant?
  - Why were the cannibals not interested in eating the "pilgrims"?
  - Describe the helmsman. What is his response to the attack on the boat? What do you think is his response to the Europeans, particularly Marlow?
4. Reconvene the class and either have individual groups report or discuss the above in full-class discussion.

**Heart of Darkness: New Historicism Activity One**

**Worksheet**

1. What are the examples of contrast between Europeans and Africans?  
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\_\_\_\_\_
2. How does Marlow's attitude toward the natives evolve from pity to admiration?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. How might the African characters feel about Marlow? About Kurtz? About the "pilgrims"?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
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4. Describe the first Africans Marlow sees on his journey. What might their thoughts be about Europeans?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
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5. How are the prisoners differentiated from the dying workers? How are they the same? What is the contrast between them and the Chief Accountant?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
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6. Why were the cannibals not interested in eating the "pilgrims"?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. Describe the helmsman. What is his response to the attack on the boat? What do you think is his response to the Europeans, particularly Marlow?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Activity Two

### Inferring the European Point of View

1. Copy and distribute *Heart of Darkness: New Historicism Activities Two and Three Historical Background Information Sheet and Timeline*.
2. Divide the class into six groups (or a number of groups divisible by six) and assign to each a character or pair of characters below (or allow each group to choose):
  - Marlow
  - Kurtz
  - the General Manager and the Chief Accountant
  - the Pilgrims
  - the Russian trader
  - the Fiancée and the Aunt
3. Have each group decide whether its character would support European imperialism or not. Then have them examine the novel and note evidence to support their inferences.
4. Reconvene the class and have each group report. Discuss.

*NOTE: As with the other activities, it is not important for the class to come to consensus as long as each group supplies valid evidence of its inference.*



### Activity Three

#### Inferring Conrad's Point of View

1. Copy and distribute *Heart of Darkness: New Historicism Activities Two and Three Historical Background Information Sheet and Timeline*.
2. Have students, individually or in pairs, hypothesize whether Conrad himself supported British imperialism in Africa.
3. Then have each student/pair examine the book for evidence. Warn students to especially consider:
  - To what extent does Marlow speak for Conrad?
  - Where or when in the book is Conrad being humorous? How do you know?
  - Where or when in the book is Conrad being ironic? How do you know?
  - With which characters does Marlow seem to sympathize the *most*? How do you know?
  - With which characters does Marlow seem to sympathize the *least*? How do you know?
4. Reconvene the class and discuss.

*NOTE: Again, it is not necessary for the class to arrive at consensus, as long as appropriate support is provided.*

5. As a class, discuss whether the original publication of *Heart of Darkness* in 1899 was likely to have changed British/European attitudes towards imperialism. Why or why not?

## **Heart of Darkness: New Historicism Activity Two and Three**

### **Historical Background Information Sheet and Timeline**

- In 1857, in a province of Poland that was controlled by the Russian Czar, Apollo and Ewa Korzeniowski had a son whom they named Jozef Teodor Konrad.
- By 1870, both parents were dead, and the youth went to sea with the French and then British Merchant Marines.
- In 1886, he received British citizenship and took the name Joseph Conrad. His journey to the Congo was in 1890, and in 1894 he left the sea to pursue a writing career.
- He married in 1896 and had two sons.
- *Heart of Darkness* was published as a magazine serial in 1899 and as a book in 1902.
- Conrad died in 1924 of a heart attack.

#### **Timeline of Europe's Colonialism of Africa:**

- European colonialism began with the appropriation of trading posts along ancient trade routes, beginning with the Portuguese capture of a key destination in the trans-Saharan trade route in 1415. The Portuguese then went on to establish further holdings as they explored the coasts of Africa, Arabia, India, and Southeast Asia, hoping to increase their lucrative spice trade.
- The ivory trade began in the early 1400s.
- When Europeans first discovered the Congo, there were 250 ethnic groups.
- A Portuguese explorer sailed 100 miles up the Congo River and found the Yellala Cataract, a 300-foot waterfall. There are many more cataracts for the next 200 miles farther upriver.

#### **Triangular trade (1440 to about 1900):**

- The first side of the triangle was the export of goods from Europe to Africa in exchange for slaves captured in wars between African kingdoms and chiefdoms, or from Africans who were in the business of capturing fellow-Africans and selling them.

- These captives were shipped to the Americas and sold as slaves.
- The third and final part of the triangle was the return of goods from the Americas to Europe. The goods were the products of slave-labor plantations: cotton, sugar, tobacco, molasses and rum.
- From the beginning of the slave trade, some church leaders condemned slavery as against Christian teachings, but others used church teaching to support the economically beneficial trade. They introduced the concept that black men were expected to labor in exchange for the “blessings” of European civilization, including salvation through Christianity.
- There were over 173 city-states and kingdoms in the African regions affected by the slave trade between 1502 and 1853.
- Britain banned the slave trade in 1807.
- The United States outlawed the importation of slaves on January 1, 1808, the earliest date permitted by the constitution for such a ban.
- Some historians estimate that 12 million Africans **arrived** in the new world (while many more died during the voyage), making it one of the largest forced migrations in human history.
- Others estimate that the number is as high as 25 to 40 million.
- In 1862, American president Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, freeing (in rebellious southern states only) people who had been sold into slavery through the African slave trade.
- In 1866 explorer David Livingston made a journey into the heart of the Africa to find the source of the Nile River. He was also a missionary intent on converting the natives to Christianity. He was out of touch with any Europeans for three years. Explorer Henry Morton Stanley embarked on an expedition and found him in 1871 (“Dr. Livingston, I presume”). This brought Africa to the world’s attention.
- The doctrine of racial superiority, which claimed that the subjugated peoples were incapable of governing themselves and “needed” European “protection,” arose.
- Many Christian groups sent missionaries to the Congo, hoping to bring the blessings of civilization as well as converting the natives. Seventeen percent of these missionaries were from Sweden.

- In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the newly industrialized nations of Europe began an intense competition for colonies in the undeveloped worlds of Africa and southeast Asia that would provide them with cheap raw materials and new markets for their manufactured goods.
- The industrial revolution of the 19th century led to what has been called the era of New Imperialism, when the pace of colonization rapidly increased, the height of which was the Scramble for Africa.
- In 1875 the two most important European holdings in Africa were French controlled Algeria and Britain's Cape Colony.
- By the beginning of World War I in 1914, only Ethiopia and the republic of Liberia were free of formal European control.
- In 1884 the Congo was "recognized" as the "personal property" of King Leopold of Belgium.
- In the Congo, the major export was rubber, until a railway that was started in 1887 and completed in 1898 gave access to copper, diamonds, gold, and other minerals. The slave trade established under Arab traders flourished under European rule.
- Native laborers were so badly mistreated that an international commission was appointed to examine conditions in the colony. The commission confirmed brutal and often horrible treatment of the native population. Rubber production quotas were enforced with the use of the chicotte, a hippo-hide whip. The chicotte became the symbol of Leopold's administration.
- Between 1885 and 1914, Britain took nearly 30% of Africa's population under its control.
- Disputes over European control in Africa were among the central factors causing World War I.

## Discussion Questions

1. Is Conrad consistent in his portrayal of the European employees of the company? What do you infer from the use of the term “pilgrim”?
2. Are Conrad’s descriptions of the wilderness and the company stations believable? Do you infer that they are based on Conrad’s own experience?
3. List the principle issues confronted by Conrad in the novel. Does he provide or suggest solutions?

## Essays or Writing Assignments

1. Create a tale that could be told by an African village storyteller about the long-ago arrival of the European ivory traders.
2. In a well-constructed essay, explore how a twenty-first century American would react differently to the novel’s situations and issues than an English reader in 1901.
3. Discuss Conrad’s views on colonialism as expressed through any three of the following: humor, pathos, irony, or descriptive language.



## Psychological/Freudian Approach Applied to *Heart of Darkness*



### Notes on the Psychoanalytic Theory

THE TERMS “PSYCHOLOGICAL” OR “PSYCHOANALYTICAL” and “Freudian Theory” seem to encompass essentially two almost contradictory critical theories. The first focuses on the text itself, with no regard to outside influences; the second focuses on the author of the text.

According to the first view, reading and interpretation are limited to the work itself. One will understand the work by examining conflicts, characters, dream sequences, and symbols. In this way, the psychoanalytic theory of literature is very similar to the Formalist approach to literature. One will further understand that a character’s outward behavior might conflict with inner desires, or might reflect as-yet-undiscovered inner desires.

#### Main areas of study/points of criticism of the first view:

- There are strong Oedipal connotations in this theory: the son’s desire for his mother, the father’s envy of the son and rivalry for the mother’s attention, the daughter’s desire for her father, the mother’s envy of the daughter and rivalry for the father’s attention. Of course, these all operate on a subconscious level to avoid breaking a serious social more.
- There is an emphasis on the meaning of dreams. This is because psychoanalytic theory believes that dreams are where a person’s subconscious desires are revealed. What a person cannot express or do because of social rules will be expressed and done in dreams, where there are no social rules. Most of the time, people are not even aware what it is they secretly desire until their subconscious goes unchecked in sleep.

- According to psychoanalytic theory, there are three parts to the subconscious, which is the largest part of the human personality. The three parts are:
  1. **The id** – the basic desire. The id is the fundamental root of what each person wants. There is no sense of conscience in it, thus making it everyone’s “inner child.” Children, before they are taught social skills, operate entirely through the id. They cry in public, wet their diapers, and demand immediate gratification of their needs and desires.
  2. **The superego** – the opposite of the id. This is the repository of all socially imposed behavior and sense of guilt. While the id is innate, the superego is learned through parental instruction and living in society. Humans develop a superego by having parents scold them and other members of society criticize or teach them.
  3. **The ego** – reality. The balance between the id and the superego. The ego takes the desires of the id, filters them through the superego, and comes up with an action that satisfies both entities. The ego realizes that the id must be satisfied but that there are certain socially acceptable ways to achieve satisfaction.

#### Main areas of study/points of criticism of the second view:

According to the second view, an essential relationship exists between the author of the work and the work itself. This view is in direct contrast to the Formalist approach to literature. In order to understand a work, one must fully understand the author’s life and emotional stance, and vice versa. Though a work might not be blatantly autobiographical, psychoanalysts argue that there is always something of the author in the work, whether it is a character, character trait, theme, or motif. Often, authors will satirize people they dislike or will be overtly sympathetic to people they do like. This author bias often has an effect on the reader, which is exactly what the author wants. When reading, people are very vulnerable to the author’s chosen point of view (the only way they hear the story is through the author’s narrator). This aspect of the psychoanalytic view is a very subjective and controversial approach to literature, but the psychoanalysts of the world argue that it is a valid and important type of literary study.

This type of psychoanalytic reading includes the following:

1. Reference to what is known or surmised about the author’s personality is used to explain and interpret a literary work. For example, Charles Dickens grew up poor and later wrote books very sympathetic to boys who grew up poor.



2. Reference to a literary work is made in order to establish an understanding of the mind of the author. For example, judging by Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*, one might reasonably conclude that Harper Lee herself was sympathetic to the plight of black Americans.
3. Studying the literary work of an author is a means of knowing the author as a person. The more novels by Charles Dickens one reads, the clearer idea one can infer about the author's beliefs, values, hopes, fears, etc.
4. An artist may put his or her repressed desires on the page in the form of actions performed by characters. Pay attention to behaviors that are not socially "normal" to see if there is any evidence of the id at work. For example, an author who consistently writes stories in which his female characters are weak, dependent, or unintelligent might be expressing latent misogynist tendencies. ■

**Essential Questions for A Psychoanalytic Reading**

1. What are the traits of the main character?
2. How does the author reveal those traits?
3. What do you learn about the character through the narrator?
4. What do you learn about the character from the way other characters relate to him or her?
5. What do you infer about the character from his or her thoughts, actions, and speech?
6. What discrepancies exist between the author's portrayal of the character and how other characters react to him or her?
7. What discrepancies exist between the author's portrayal of the character and the reader's inferences?
8. Is the main character a dynamic character (does he or she change throughout the course of the story)? If so, how and why?
9. How does the character view him or herself ?
10. What discrepancies exist between a character's view of him or herself and other characters' reactions, the author's portrayal, and/or reader inference?
11. How do the characters view one another?
12. Is there any discrepancy between a character's personal opinion of himself and how others think about him?
13. What types of relationships exist in the work?
14. What types of images are used in conjunction with the character? What do they symbolize?
15. What symbols are used in the course of the story? What do they symbolize?
16. Do any characters have dreams or inner monologues? What is revealed about a character through dreams that would not otherwise be revealed?

17. Are there any inner conflicts within the character? How are these conflicts revealed? How are they dealt with? Are they ever resolved? How?
18. Do any characters perform uncharacteristic actions? If so, what? What could these actions mean?

### **Focus of Study**

- Explore the behavior of Marlow and Kurtz from a psychoanalytical viewpoint.
- Examine the text for Conrad's understanding of the conflict between the allure of the wilderness and the rules of civilization.
- Explore the conflict between the id and the superego.

**Activity One****Exploring Freudian Interpretations of Marlow's Thoughts and Actions**

1. Copy and distribute *Heart of Darkness*: Psychoanalytic Activity One Discussion Questions.
2. Divide the class into small groups and have each group review one of the following passages.
  - pp. 16-17 “The old doctor...center of the earth.”
  - pp. 61-63 “I glanced...loose of the earth.”
  - pp. 70-72 “She carried...too dark altogether.”
3. Using the following questions as guides (on handout) evaluate the state of Marlow's psychological balance and how others may be trying to influence it.
  - What advice does the doctor give Marlow?
  - How does Marlow react to the doctor's questions?
  - What advice does the aunt give Marlow?
  - What is Marlow's reaction?
  - Interpret Marlow's feeling of being an imposter in terms of the superego.
  - What does Marlow do when he discovers Kurtz is missing?
  - How does the activity of the natives affect Marlow?
  - How does Marlow deal with his feelings of anger toward Kurtz?
  - Marlow feels he is “battling the spell of the wilderness.” What does this mean?
  - Describe this passage in terms of a parent-child relationship.
  - What is Marlow's initial reaction to the Intended's look of sorrow?
  - How does Marlow respond to the Intended's questions about Kurtz?
  - What were Kurtz's last words?
  - What does Marlow tell the Intended that Kurtz's last words were?
  - Interpret Marlow's lie in terms of the superego and id.



## **Heart of Darkness: Psychoanalytic Activity One**

### **Discussion Questions**

1. What advice does the doctor give Marlow?
2. How does Marlow react to the doctor's questions?
3. What advice does the aunt give Marlow?
4. What is Marlow's reaction?
5. Interpret Marlow's feeling of being an imposter in terms of the superego.
6. What does Marlow do when he discovers Kurtz is missing?
7. How does the activity of the natives affect Marlow?
8. How does Marlow deal with his feelings of anger toward Kurtz?
9. Marlow feels he is "battling the spell of the wilderness." What does this mean?
10. Describe this passage in terms of a parent-child relationship.
11. What is Marlow's initial reaction to the Intended's look of sorrow?
12. How does Marlow respond to the Intended's questions about Kurtz?
13. What were Kurtz's last words?
14. What does Marlow tell the Intended that Kurtz's last words were?
15. Interpret Marlow's lie in terms of the superego and id.

**Activity Two****Examining the Text for Clues Concerning Conrad's Psyche**

1. Copy and distribute *Heart of Darkness: Psychoanalytic Activity Two Discussion Questions*.
2. Divide the class into pairs or small groups. Each is to come up with a list of reasons why Marlow is Conrad and why he is not, including examples relating to the following questions (on handout).
  - How does Marlow's work history parallel Conrad's?
  - How does Conrad structure the novel to distance himself from Marlow?
  - Examine characters who make brief appearances in the story and suggest why he has chosen these particular characters when he could have chosen others.
  - Give examples of Marlow's encounters with Africans. Is there a consistency that could reflect Conrad's perspective?
  - Give examples of Marlow's encounters with Europeans. Who does Marlow admire and why?
  - Does Conrad deliberately create ambiguity in Marlow's responses? Why or why not?
3. Reconvene the class and discuss.

## **Heart of Darkness: Psychoanalytic Activity Two**

### **Discussion Questions**

1. How does Marlow's work history parallel Conrad's?
2. How does Conrad structure the novel to distance himself from Marlow?
3. Examine characters who make brief appearances in the story and suggest why he has chosen these particular characters when he could have chosen others.
4. Give examples of Marlow's encounters with Africans. Is there a consistency that could reflect Conrad's perspective?
5. Give examples of Marlow's encounters with Europeans. Who does Marlow admire and why?
6. Does Conrad deliberately create ambiguity in Marlow's responses? Why or why not?

### Activity Three

#### Examining Kurtz as the Id, Marlow as the Ego, and the Fiancée as the Superego

1. Copy and distribute *Heart of Darkness* Freudian Activity Three, Graphic.
2. Divide the class into groups of three.
3. Within each group, assign one student to study each of the above characters.
4. Individually or in groups, students complete the graphic. NOTE: Students might find it helpful to review their findings on “*Heart of Darkness* Archetypal Activity Two Graphic.”
5. Reconvene the class and have each group report its findings.





**Heart of Darkness: Freudian Activity Three**

**Graphic**

Character	Incident: Associated Images or Symbols	Page #	Significance	Other Characters' Response
Kurtz as Id				
Fiancee as Super-ego	Requests expedition to find Kurtz			Marlow leads expedition.
Marlow as Ego	Goes to find Kurtz—fiancee cannot			

### Discussion Questions

1. How does the theme of dark and light enhance our understanding of Marlow's responses?
2. List some metaphors and descriptive language that help convey Marlow's responses.
3. What words or actions would suggest that Kurtz is insane?
4. What words or actions would suggest that Marlow will not accept the fact that Kurtz has lost touch with reality? Why does he refuse to do so?
5. Does Conrad reveal more about himself in the minor characters or in Kurtz and Marlow?

### Essays or Writing Assignments

1. Compare Marlow's emotional responses in each of the three passages discussing the conflict between the id and the superego.
2. Is Marlow changed by his journey? Why or why not?
3. Which of the characters Marlow encounters would you most like to meet? Why?
4. In what ways is the conflict between the id and the superego irreconcilable? Or is it possible for some kind of resolution of this conflict?