

Applied Practice
in
Heart of Darkness
PRE-AP/AP**

By Joseph Conrad
RESOURCE GUIDE

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APPLIED PRACTICE
Resource Guide
Heart of Darkness
Pre-AP*/AP* Version

Teacher Notes

A Note for Teachers 2

Teaching Resources

Strategies for Multiple-Choice Questions..... 4
Strategies for Free-Response Questions 5
Glossary of Literary Terms 6
Vocabulary Lists by Passage..... 14

Student Practices

Multiple-Choice Questions 18
Free-Response Questions 44

Answer Key and Explanations

Multiple-Choice Answer Key 51
Multiple-Choice Answer Explanations 53
Free-Response Scoring Guide..... 67

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GLOSSARY OF LITERARY TERMS

- absolute**—a word free from limitations or qualifications (“best,” “all,” “unique,” “perfect”)
- adage**—a familiar proverb or wise saying
- ad hominem* argument**—an argument attacking an individual’s character rather than his or her position on an issue
- allegory**—a literary work in which characters, objects, or actions represent abstractions
- alliteration**—the repetition of initial sounds in successive or neighboring words
- allusion**—a reference to something literary, mythological, or historical that the author assumes the reader will recognize
- analogy**—a comparison of two different things that are similar in some way
- anaphora**—the repetition of words or phrases at the beginning of consecutive lines or sentences
- anecdote**—a brief narrative that focuses on a particular incident or event
- antecedent**—the word, phrase, or clause to which a pronoun refers
- antithesis**—a statement in which two opposing ideas are balanced
- aphorism**—a concise statement that expresses succinctly a general truth or idea, often using rhyme or balance
- apostrophe**—a figure of speech in which one directly addresses an absent or imaginary person, or some abstraction
- archetype**—a detail, image, or character type that occurs frequently in literature and myth and is thought to appeal in a universal way to the unconscious and to evoke a response
- argument**—a statement of the meaning or main point of a literary work
- asyndeton**—a construction in which elements are presented in a series without conjunctions

VOCABULARY LIST FOR *HEART OF DARKNESS*

Note: Vocabulary from the literary passage is listed first, followed by vocabulary from the questions and answers.

Passage 1

imperceptible
profound
uttermost
venerable
interlopers
commonwealths
fairway
ominously
sedentary
immutability
propensity

ephemeral
imperialism

Passage 2

ebb
inconclusive
navigation
culminating
somber
hankering
afar

mundane
exhilarating
paradoxical
exploration

Passage 3

effaced
abandonment
shudder
legality
uncongenial
moribund
worsted
propitiatory
contorted
alpaca
varnished
parasol
penholder
demoralization
trickle

apparitions
connotative
mystification
bemusement
imperialism

Directions: This part consists of selections from *Heart of Darkness* and questions on their content, form, and style. After reading each passage, choose the best answer to each question.

Note: Pay particular attention to the requirement of questions that contain the words NOT, LEAST, or EXCEPT.

Passage 1, Questions 1-8. Read the following passage from Part I carefully before you choose your answers.

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."

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.

1. The first paragraph creates a mood that could best be described as
 - (A) deadly
 - (B) fatalistic
 - (C) dull
 - (D) profound
 - (E) somber

2. The first three sentences of the second paragraph (lines 6-15) depict the river as
 - (A) vivid and ephemeral
 - (B) dull and deep
 - (C) serene and revered
 - (D) beloved and profound
 - (E) memorable and ethereal

3. A man who has “followed the sea” (line 17) is a
 - I. naval historian
 - II. sailor
 - III. merchant
 - IV. knight
 - (A) I only
 - (B) II only
 - (C) II and III only
 - (D) II and IV only
 - (E) II, III, and IV only

4. The second half of the second paragraph (beginning line 23) contains all of the following EXCEPT
 - (A) allusion
 - (B) simile
 - (C) personification
 - (D) understatement
 - (E) absolutes

5. The phrase “bearing the sword, and often the torch” (lines 40-41) is an example of
 - (A) metonymy
 - (B) synecdoche
 - (C) metaphor
 - (D) polysyndeton
 - (E) apostrophe

6. The phrase “a spark from the sacred fire” (line 42) most likely symbolically refers to
 - (A) capitalism
 - (B) knowledge
 - (C) deism
 - (D) imperialism
 - (E) military dominance

7. The third paragraph (beginning in line 47) serves primarily
 - (A) to mark the end of the author’s commentary and the start of the narrator’s tale
 - (B) to return the reader’s focus to the river itself
 - (C) as a transition from the positive tone of the second paragraph to the negative tone of the fourth paragraph
 - (D) as a summation of the preceding narrative paragraph
 - (E) to maintain the chronological ordering of the passage as a whole

8. In the last two paragraphs, the descriptions of both Marlow and seamen are presented in terms that are
 - (A) mysterious
 - (B) prosaic
 - (C) simplistic
 - (D) quixotic
 - (E) paradoxical

Question 1

(Suggested time--40 minutes)

Read the following passage from Part I of *Heart of Darkness*. Then, in a well-organized essay, discuss how the author characterizes both the narrator and the station manager through his narrative techniques and selection of details.

He had no genius for organizing, for initiative, or for order even. That was evident in such things as the deplorable state of the station. He had no learning, and no intelligence. His position had come to him--why? Perhaps because he was never ill . . . He had served three terms of three years out there . . . Because triumphant health in the general rout of constitutions is a kind of power in itself. When he went home on leave he rioted on a large scale--pompously, Jack ashore--with a difference--in externals only. This one could gather from his casual talk. He originated nothing, he could keep the routine going--that's all. But he was great. He was great by this little thing that it was impossible to tell what could control such a man. He never gave that secret away. Perhaps there was nothing within him. Such a suspicion made one pause--for out there there were no external checks. Once when various tropical diseases had laid low almost every 'agent' in the station, he was heard to say, 'Men who come out here should have no entrails.' He sealed the utterance with that smile of his, as though it had been a door opening into a darkness he had in his keeping. You fancied you had seen things--but the seal was on. When annoyed at meal-times by the constant quarrels of the white men about precedence, he ordered an immense round table to be made, for which a special house had to be built. This was the station's mess-room. Where he sat was the first place--the rest were nowhere. One felt this to be his unalterable conviction. He was neither civil nor uncivil. He was quiet. He allowed his 'boy'--an overfed young negro from the coast--to treat the white men, under his very eyes, with provoking insolence.

"He began to speak as soon as he saw me. I had been very long on the road. He could not wait. Had to start without me. The up-river stations had to be relieved. There had been so many delays already that he did not know who was dead and who was alive, and how they got on--and so on, and so on. He paid no attention to my explanations, and, playing with a stick of sealing-wax, repeated several times that the situation was 'very grave, very grave.' There were rumours that a very important station was in jeopardy, and its chief, Mr. Kurtz,

was ill. Hoped it was not true. Mr. Kurtz was . . . I felt weary and irritable. Hang Kurtz, I thought. I interrupted him by saying I had heard of Mr. Kurtz on the coast. 'Ah! So they talk of him down there,' he murmured to himself. Then he began again, assuring me Mr. Kurtz was the best agent he had, an exceptional man, of the greatest importance to the Company; therefore I could understand his anxiety. He was, he said, 'very, very uneasy.' Certainly he fidgeted on his chair a good deal, exclaimed, 'Ah, Mr. Kurtz!' broke the stick of sealing-wax and seemed dumfounded by the accident. Next thing he wanted to know 'how long it would take to' . . . I interrupted him again. Being hungry, you know, and kept on my feet too, I was getting savage. 'How can I tell?' I said. 'I haven't even seen the wreck yet--some months, no doubt.' All this talk seemed to me futile. 'Some months,' he said. 'Well, let us say three months before we can make a start. Yes. That ought to do the affair.'

I flung out of his hut (he lived all alone in a clay hut with a sort of verandah) muttering to myself my opinion of him. He was a chattering idiot. Afterwards I took it back when it was borne in upon me startlingly with what extreme nicety he had estimated the time requisite for the 'affair.'

"I went to work the next day, turning, so to speak, my back on that station. In that way only it seemed to me I could keep my hold on the redeeming facts of life. Still, one must look about sometimes; and then I saw this station, these men strolling aimlessly about in the sunshine of the yard. I asked myself sometimes what it all meant. They wandered here and there with their absurd long staves in their hands, like a lot of faithless pilgrims bewitched inside a rotten fence. The word 'ivory' rang in the air, was whispered, was sighed. You would think they were praying to it. A taint of imbecile rapacity blew through it all, like a whiff from some corpse. By Jove! I've never seen anything so unreal in my life. And outside, the silent wilderness surrounding this cleared speck on the earth struck me as something great and invincible, like evil or truth, waiting patiently for the passing away of this fantastic invasion.