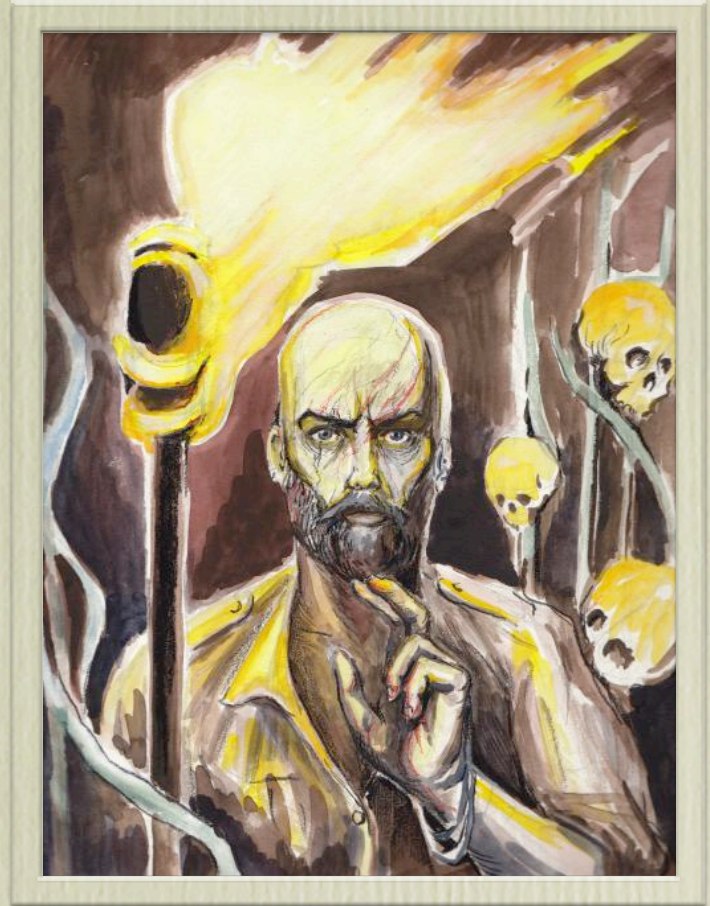


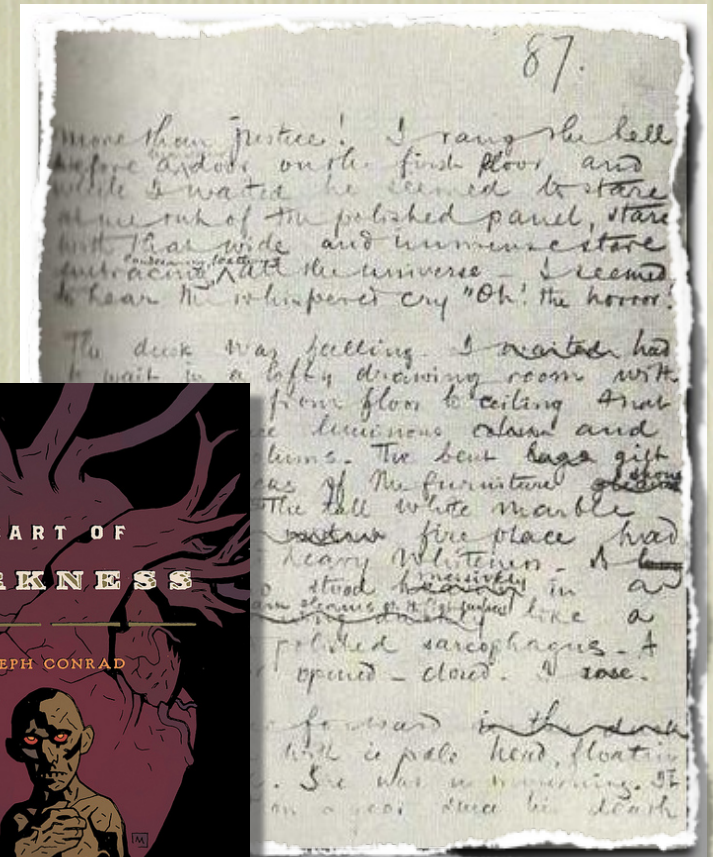
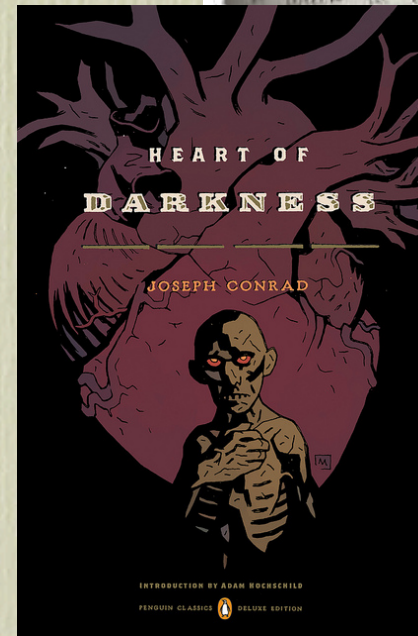
Heart of Darkness

Joseph Conrad



Heart of Darkness

- ✿ ...a novel, ostensibly depicting British colonialism in 19th Century Africa, but also raising troubling questions the work of of mankind known as civilization...
- ✿ ...a story within a story, in which one narrator speaks to the reader, while a second narrator speaks to him and three others. But, who will see the truth?
- ✿ ...a journey of discovery into the deepest part of the human heart, to confront the true nature of man...



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

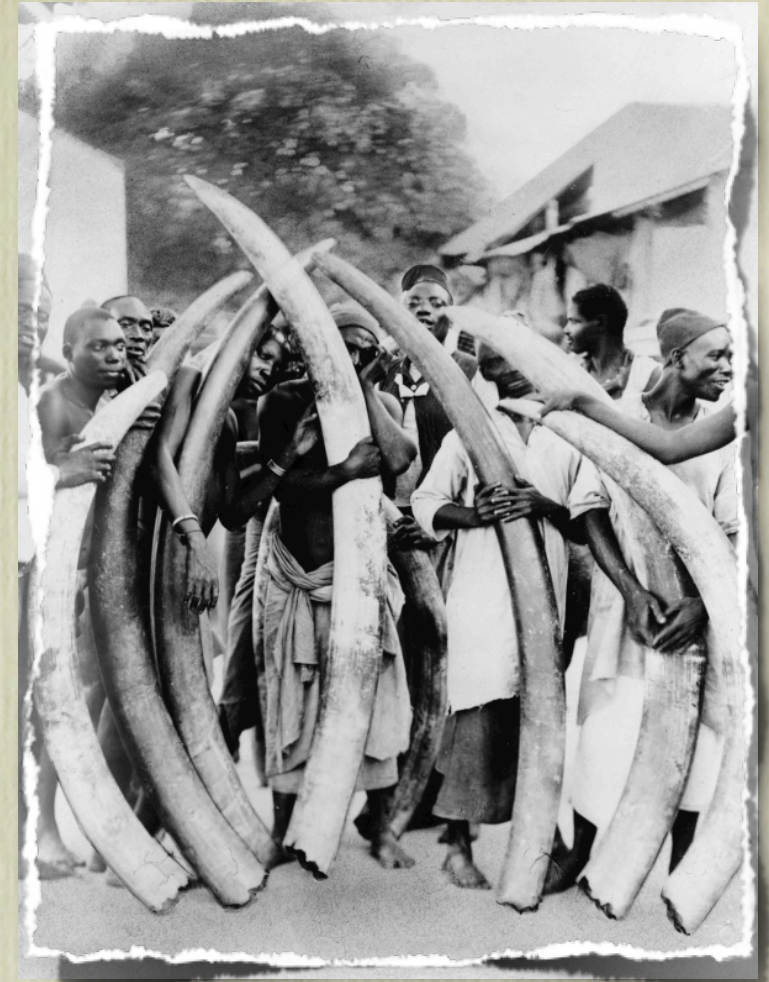
Heart of Darkness

- ✿ *Noble goals.* The narrator refers to the “sword” (expansion by military conquest) & the “torch” (the Christian missionary enterprise).
- ✿ *Practical matters.* The low cost of raw materials such as rubber, sugar, coffee, timber, ivory, & palm oil (for soap, candles, lubricants for machinery, etc.), and lots of cheap, available labor made Africa particularly attractive.
- ✿ *What’s wrong with this picture?* In 1875, when the “scramble for Africa” began, less than 10% of the continent was controlled by foreign interests; By 1895, only 10% of Africa remained independent.



Colonialism

Heart of Darkness



The “Scramble for Africa”

Heart of Darkness

I want my slice
of the pie...



- ☀ King Leopold II of Belgium becomes interested in central Africa, specifically the regions surrounding the Congo River, at that time a blank space on the map.
- ☀ In 1878, the famous British explorer and journalist Henry M. Stanley enters Leopold's service. Over the next several years, he opens the country and establishes a chain of stations along the length of the river.
- ☀ In 1885, at the Berlin Conference, the Congo Free State is established under Leopold's personal sovereignty. The King subsidized the state (with the help of the Belgian government) and declared all its products, mainly rubber and ivory, state property. Leopold remains the only man to own a colony as his own private property.



The Belgian Congo

Heart of Darkness

- ✿ Joseph Teodor Konrad Nalecz Korzeniowski (!) born in Poland, 1857
- ✿ Poland is occupied by Russia, Germany, & Austria; father exiled for political crimes
- ✿ Mother dies in 1864, father in 1868; Joseph placed in care of uncle
- ✿ As a child, learns French & reads Dickens & Shakespeare in translation
- ✿ Dislikes public school; travels to Marseilles and becomes a sailor in 1874 at age 17
- ✿ Wild times and failed love leads to a suicide attempt in 1878
- ✿ Visits England in 1879; learns the language & joins the British merchant Navy
- ✿ Becomes a British subject in 1886; **visits the Belgian Congo in 1890**
- ✿ Settles in England in 1894 at age 37; begins writing novels; marries in 1896
- ✿ *Lord Jim* (1900); *Heart of Darkness* (1902); *Nostromo* (1904); *Victory* (1915)
- ✿ In all, Conrad writes 16 novels in English
- ✿ Dies in 1924 at age 63



As you can see, I write
off the top of my head.

Joseph Conrad

Heart of Darkness

- ✿ Introductory Matters
- ✿ 1.1 The setting is described; Marlow tells of visiting company headquarters
- ✿ 1.2 The “grove of death” and the 200-mile trek to the Central Station
- ✿ 1.3 The manager, the boat, and more about Kurtz
- ✿ 2.1 Overhearing and observing: Marlow heads downriver
- ✿ 2.2 Attacked! Arriving at the Inner Station
- ✿ 2.3 A pause in the tale: reflections on Kurtz; meeting the harlequin
- ✿ 3.1 Ivory, shrunken heads, and Kurtz’s “magnificent” mistress
- ✿ 3.2 The midnight search for Kurtz
- ✿ 3.3 “The Horror! The Horror!” and the return to England
- ✿ Review
- ✿ Test



Class Schedule

- ☼ Describe the contrasting views of Colonialism that emerge in the two narrators' commentaries. What is Marlow's definition of it?
- ☼ What are the implications of Marlow's description of his visit to the company headquarters?
- ☼ The impact of Marlow's tale so far: (1) it corrects the narrator's (and likely the contemporary reader's) naive views; (2) it suggests the Colonial enterprise is a personal ordeal that tests and reveals an individual's character; (3) it places the rise and fall of civilizations in proper perspective. Look for ways these ideas are expanded upon as his tale continues.
- ☼ How are the elements of this part of the story both real and symbolic? How does this sense of double meaning impact the unfolding theme?
- ☼ What is significant about Marlow's tone? Give examples of key statements.
- ☼ How does Conrad create tension in this section?
- ☼ What are your impressions of the manager and the brickmaker? What might each represent?
- ☼ Marlow' says (1) "out there there are no internal checks" and (2) only work keeps a man focused on "the redeeming facts of life." How are these ideas supported by his view of events?



Part I: Episodes 1, 2, & 3

Heart of Darkness

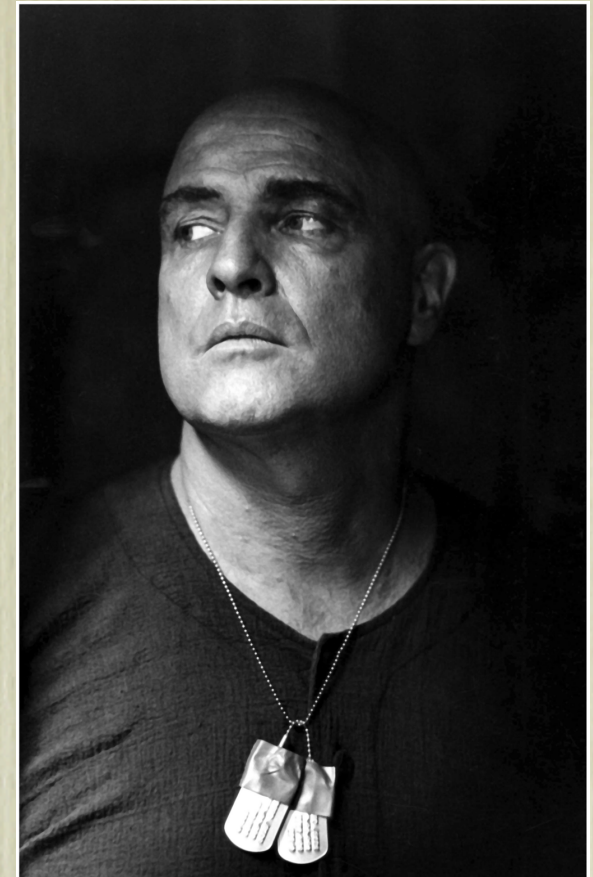
- ☼ Interpret the meaning of this in a written commentary:

We must naturally appear to them in the nature of supernatural beings—we must approach them as with the might of the deity. By the simple exercise of our will we can expect a power for good practically unbounded. As King Leopold so rightly said, “Our refined society attaches to human life (and with reason) a value infinitely greater than barbarous communities, when our directive will is implanted among them its aim is to triumph over all obstacles, and results which could not be attained by lengthy speeches may follow the beneficent influence. But if, in the view of this desirable spread of civilisation, we count upon the means of action which confer upon us the dominion and the sanction of right, it is not less true that our ultimate end is a work of peace.

- ☼ Discuss in groups; choose someone to explain your ideas to the class.



- ✿ What indications are there to show the reader that Marlow's journey toward the Inner Station is also metaphorical in nature?
- ✿ What does Marlow mean by "inborn strength" and "deliberate belief" and why is this important?
- ✿ Compare and contrast the behavior of the white men and the natives during the attack; what does this suggest?
- ✿ What does the sigh from one of Marlow's listeners mean to Marlow? What does it mean to you?
- ✿ What is Marlow's initial assessment of Kurtz? What is your assessment, based on the information we have about him at this point?
- ✿ What is the lesson in Marlow's digression concerning living conditions in Europe and Africa?



Part II: Episodes 1, 2, & 3

Heart of Darkness

- ✿ How do you explain the harlequin's attraction to Kurtz, in light of his conversation with Marlow?
- ✿ Reconstruct the activities of Kurtz in the Congo. What is Marlow's theory about why Kurtz has surrendered to the wilderness?
- ✿ Why does Marlow call Kurtz's mistress "savage and superb"?
- ✿ Why is Marlow glad to have "a choice of nightmares"? Which does he choose, and why?
- ✿ What is the meaning of Kurtz's enigmatic response ("Do I not?") to Marlow's question regarding the frenzy on the shore?
- ✿ What is the meaning of Kurtz's last words? Why does Marlow say they represent "complete knowledge"?
- ✿ Explain Marlow's attitude and behavior upon returning to Brussels?
- ✿ Why does Marlow lie to The Intended? What role does she play in understanding the novel?



Part III: Episodes 1, 2, & 3

Heart of Darkness



- ☼ Explore the ways in which Marlow's tale has affected the Narrator.
- ☼ In several places, Marlow refers to Kurtz in terms of a "voice." What might Conrad be saying about the power of words in general, and the power of story in particular, in *Heart of Darkness*?



Hmm... These are provocative questions indeed...



Unit Assessment Options:

Heart of Darkness