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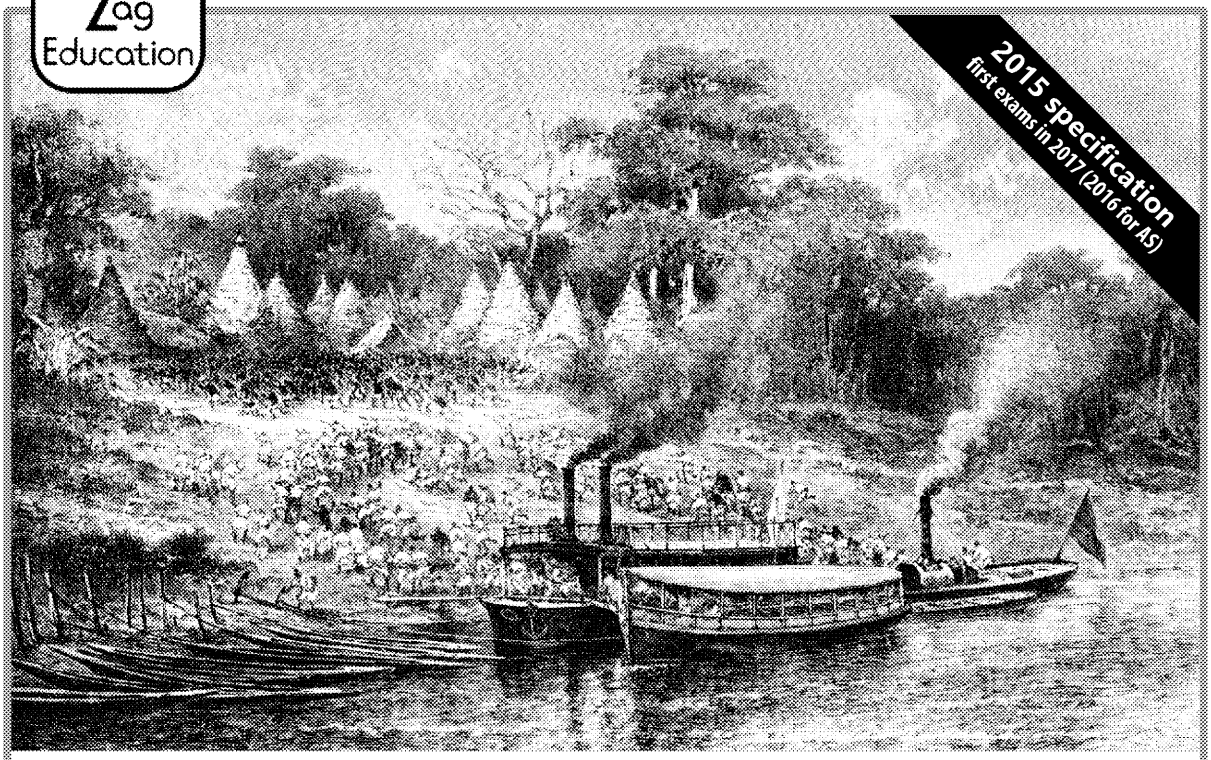
English Literature AS and A Level | Edexcel | 8ET0/9ET0



Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*

Comprehensive Guide for AS and A Level English Literature

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Contents

Teacher's Introduction

A chilling insight into the brutality of nineteenth-century colonialism, Joseph Conrad's critically acclaimed *Heart of Darkness* is often considered to be one of his most famous novellas. Beginning in turn-of-the-century London, the protagonist is Marlow, an adventuring sailor. Anchored on the Thames and awaiting the tide, Marlow relates his experiences of journeying to the heart of colonial Africa aboard a steamship. Marlow's object and obsession is Kurtz, a mysterious ivory hunter who has effectively made himself a god amongst a village of African natives. Conrad's powerfully evocative tale questions the nature of civilisation and of Western social convention as he describes Marlow's efforts to return Kurtz to British soil and the 'civilised' world. The novella has seen many adaptations and versions in popular culture, famously including Francis Ford Coppola's modernised portrayal of man's duality set during the Vietnam War, in the 1979 motion picture *Apocalypse Now.*

This guide is designed to support the Edexcel English Literature A Level and AS Level specification **(Component 2: Prose – Colonisation and Its Aftermath)**. Presented in the resource is a detailed analysis of the novel, including a biography of the author, plot summary, historical and contextual information, themes, writing techniques, character notes, critical reception, genre and narrative structure discussion, use of language, key quotations and activities for students. Each chapter is also briefly summarised prior to analysis.

Note: As this novella is split into only three parts, I have analysed each part in sections of 5–10 pages.

A Note on the Text

This guide has been written using the 2007 Penguin Classics Edition as a source for all quotations and excerpts. The 2007 edition can be found in all good bookshops and websites using the following information:
Conrad, Joseph, *Heart of Darkness*: Penguin Books Ltd: London: ISBN: 978–0-141–44167–2

Other texts referenced:
J.M Dent and Sons, *Everyman's Encyclopaedia*: Jarrold and Sons Ltd: 1978: London: ISBN: 0–460–04098–7

This edition has been chosen not only due to a combination of quality, high availability and value for money, but for the fact it includes a detailed introduction, reading notes, chronology and glossary from commended literature critics Owen Knowles, Robert Hampson and critic and editor J H Stape. Though we have included a further reading list specific to this text, the Penguin edition also includes a further reading list of texts and journal entries covering the author's other works as well as his use of genre, style, symbolism and context.

November 2017

Specification and Learning Outcomes

This guide is designed to support the Edexcel English Literature A Level and AS Le
Prose – Colonisation and Its Aftermath)

Assessment Objectives

AO1	Articulate informed, personal and creative responses to literary texts, using associated concepts and terminology, and coherent, accurate written expression	(supported by *Sec* *Character Profiles*
AO2	Analyse ways in which meanings are shaped in literary texts	(supported by *Sec* *and Narrative Stru* discussion)
AO3	Demonstrate understanding of the significance and influence of the contexts in which literary texts are written and received	(supported by *Con* discussion and *Aut*
AO4	Explore connections across literary texts	(supported by *Con* *Texts for Further R*

Background on the Text: A Short Biograp

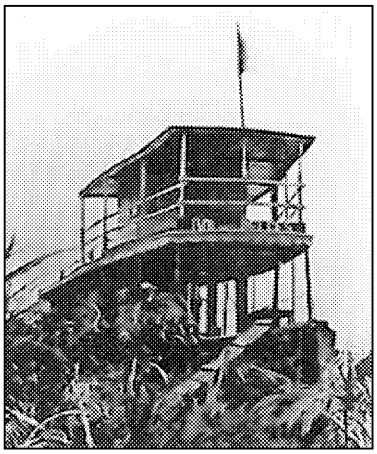
Childhood

Born in Podolia, Poland in 1857, Teodor Jozef Konrad Korzeniowski (later anglicised to Joseph Conrad) was the only child of Apollo and Evelina Nalecz Korzeniowski. Conrad's father, a writer and political activist, was descended from an impoverished line of Polish nobles and was an ardent patriot. In 1862, when the young Conrad was barely out of infancy, Apollo was arrested for his involvement in the Polish nationalist movement and banished with his family to Western Russia. The Korzeniowski family were to have a short and unpleasant life in exile, for both Conrad's mother and father would die within the next seven years, leaving him orphaned by the age of 12 and sent to live with his uncle, Tadeusz Bobrowski.

Early Career

In 1874, Conrad persuaded his uncle to allow him to go to Versailles, where he began his long, active and occasionally illicit career as a seaman. It was from his experiences upon several of his more adventurous voyages that Conrad drew much of his inspiration for his writing. His experiences of illegal gunrunning for the Spanish are immortalised in the ficti (1906) and *Arrow of Gold* (1919). It was in 1878 that Conrad first reached British s here that he began to learn English from the native sailors.

Conrad's seafaring career would take him all over the Indian and Pacific Oceans, first as a seaman, a mate, then as an officer and would see him ultimately pass his Master Mariner's examination in 1886, recounted in *A Personal Record* (1912). This was the year that Conrad also obtained his British citizenship and during the next four years he would see the Congo, as captain of a river steamer, on a four-month voyage docume Conrad supposedly based the character of Mar upon himself and the **novella** is doubtlessly bas Congo voyage. In 1893, during his final voyage a with Nobel Prize winner John Galsworthy, of *Th* fame and the two became close friends and lite



Rio des Belges – the ship Conrad sailed up the Congo river

Keywords

Novella: a 50,000 wo

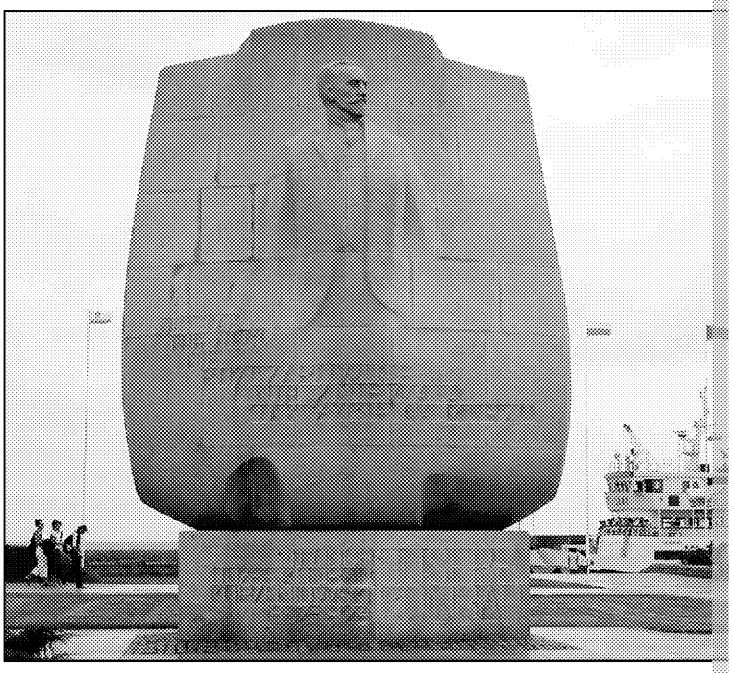
Modernis movemen twentieth emphasis innovatio

Later Life and Death

Conrad's seafaring career was at an end by 1894, when at the age of 37 he found mentor Jessie George, and by 1896 the married couple had settled in Essex, later Polish background, Conrad is well established as one of the greatest British autho synonymous with turn-of-the-century **modernism** and this is due to his infallible seemingly effortless ability to draw out the psychological fears and pains of man *Folly* was published in 1895 and with the encouragement of Galsworthy he proce produced two further works in the same number of years, namely *An Outcast of of the Narcissus* (1897).

As can be expected from an author with such a long and distinguished seafaring c
had its foundations in seaboard activity and throughout the early 1900s he longe
Conrad's novels published around this period are reminiscent of this fact, as he p
their physiological limits, in alien locations: *Tales of Unrest* (1898), *Lord Jim* (190
are some of the finer examples. Conrad's literary career would keep him from e
however, and in subsequent years he went on to produce a respectable bibliogra
political works *Nostromo* (1904) and *Under Western Eyes* (1911). Conrad was surr
famous literary figures, including H G Wells, Henry James and of course his good
whom became loyal friends and critics of the expatriated author.

His fame and fortune, though insignificant during the late nineteenth century, w
not only given a pension of £100 a year on the civil list in 1910, but was offered a
It has often been commented that Conrad's most famous novels only arrived in t
death. *A Personal Record* (1912) which was written in America, *Chance* (1913) and
amongst his most successful works. On 3rd August 1924, Conrad suffered a fatal
body is buried in the cemetery at Canterbury, under his Polish surname.



Anchor-shaped memorial to Conrad in Gdynia, Polan

Critical Reception

In recent decades, *Heart of Darkness* has attracted the attention of numerous critics who analyse the novella as both a colonial and post-colonial text. While most critics focus on Conrad's criticisms of Western imperialism and the way in which he undermines the dominance of the white settlers, more recent post-colonial criticism, such as that of Edward Said and Chinua Achebe, focuses on the idea that Conrad's text is itself a means of colonial oppression.

Keywords:

Colonialism: country or po… strength by ta… overseas terri…

Post-colonia… examines the … on the countri…

Jacques Berthoud

'Marlow's journey to the Inner Station – to the heart of the African darkn… ancestral past; and what Kurtz in the end discovers for himself is what M… the ideals of European life form no part of man's essential self – that the … all the endeavours of his education, remains an abode of darkness.'

Jacques Berthoud, *Joseph Conrad: The Major Phase*, (Cambridge: Cambridge Un…

Developing Said's idea, Berthoud contends that the European colonial pr… ultimately a hollow and soulless one.

Cedric Watts

'Through Marlow, this liminal and protean novella renders the process of … negotiating alternative viewpoints.'

Cedric Watts, 'Heart of Darkness', from *The Cambridge Companion to Joseph Conrad*, ed. … University Press, 1996), p. 31

Watts' interpretation highlights the difficulty of establishing a stable pow… although he is one of the dominant colonisers, Marlow's experiences on … profoundly humbling and instructive.

Edward Said

'Conrad wants us to see how Kurtz's great looting adventure, Marlow's jo… narrative itself all share a common theme: Europeans performing acts of … about) Africa.'

Edward Said, 'Two Visions in *Heart of Darkness*', from *The Cambridge Companion to Jose…* Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 34

This commentary focuses on the novella as a colonial text. Said suggests … instrument of colonial power as Marlow and Kurtz's conquests of the Afr…

Chinua Achebe

'The kind of liberalism espoused by Marlow/Conrad… took different form… but almost always managed to sidestep the ultimate question of equality … people.'

Chinua, Achebe, 'An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*', *Massachuset…*

Achebe is possibly the most renowned contemporary commentator on *H…* interpretation of the text is centred on the idea that Conrad's story does … Western depravity depicted within it in strong enough terms. The chara… inequality, Achebe says, but stops of short of doing anything to prevent i… formation of post-colonial studies and is well worth a read in its entirety … this link:

zzed.uk/8042-achebe

Plot Summary

Heart of Darkness is a story about a man telling a story. At the beginning of the t group of sailors moored aboard a ship called the *Nellie* at Gravesend, waiting for Thames so they can begin their seaward journey.

While they wait, the narrator – one of the members of the crew – listens to a sto Charles Marlow. Marlow reveals that he once took a position with the Belgian T down to the Congo to help the Company advance and protect its commercial int and the building of transportation networks. He relays how he gained an introdu connection of his aunt, and describes in particularly vivid detail an appointment a

Having completed a long and arduous journey down the east coast of Africa, Ma Company's satellite stations and discovers that the railway they are building is be African slaves, many of whom are dying due to a combination of overwork and s unimpressed by many of the white settlers that he comes into contact with, inclu associate who accompanies him on a 200- mile trek to the Company's Central St Congo, Marlow is met with evidence that the Company's projects in Africa are sl pointlessness: one of the sheds in the Central Station burns down, many of the C ill and decaying machinery that was once used to build railtracks now lies abando

Marlow begins to hear stories about one of the Company's agents, a man name Kurtz, who has travelled into the African interior to search for ivory and failed to return from the expedition. It is suspected that he has fallen ill but the stories ar rumours that Marlow hears about Kurtz depict him as a mythical, almost god-like character; he decides that his meaningless and dispiriting journey to Africa will b given purpose by a pursuit of Kurtz. After spending months repairing a ship-wrecked steamboat, Marlow, accompanied by other members of the Company and a hired group of native cannibals, follows Kurtz up the Congo River to discov what has become of him.

A mile from Kurtz's compound, the steamboat is attacked by a band of natives loyal to Kurtz and Marlow's helmsman is killed in the battle. Through the help of Russian who is acting as Kurtz's assistant, Marlow negotiates a truce with the natives. Through speaking with another Company agent stationed with Kurtz, Marlow learns that Kurtz has become mentally unhinged and that his methods a damaging the productivity of the Company; preparations are made to return Kur night, Marlow catches Kurtz, who suspects that he will be killed by the Company from the station.

During the return journey, it becomes apparent that Kurtz will not survive and h to Marlow, instructing him not to hand them over to the Company. He dies afte horror!' Marlow returns to Europe and, after giving Kurtz's official reports to a j order to pass on his personal letters. When she asks Marlow about Kurtz's final were her name. With this Marlow's story ends, and the novella concludes just a boat prepares to leave the mouth of the Thames.

Section-by-Section Analys
Section 1

Part 1, pp. 4–10

Introduction and Preparation

With the Nellie *anchored on the Thames, each of the men aboard is described. B begins to speak to his colleagues. He describes the circumstances that lead up to Company, and his preparation for his voyage to Africa. This section ends on p. 10, appointment to the Company due to the death of a Belgian steamboat captain n*

Gloom and Darkness: The Future

One of the most interesting and evocative themes that occurs throughout this n gloom and darkness that surrounds both London and the African colonies. Conra foreboding darkness that hangs over the various characters and settings; an opp to lift. A notable example can be found on the very first page, as the narrator de Thames at twilight:

> *'The air was dark above Gravesend, and farther back still seem mournful gloom, brooding motionless over the biggest, and the earth.' (p. 4)*

Keywords:

Imperialism: the action by the prac

As we have mentioned elsewhere (see *Themes: Darkness and Confusion*), the height of the British Empire and the success of her foreign trading activities at this stage were pervaded over by an intense sensation of fear and confusion. In the last decade of the nineteenth century, with the turn of the century and a new age of Modernist art and literature fast approaching, a definite sense of motion and change encroached ever closer upo sensation of inexorable progress and infinite profit and success. The imperialists success and must now begin to decline. In describing London's 'brooding gloom' unknown: the impenetrable future that dominates the success of the past and h is, of course, no accident that Conrad at this stage relates the current state of Eu former glory of the Ancient Roman Empire, once the largest and most powerful g more than a relic: the sensation of this fast impending backward motion broods nineteenth-century of *Heart of Darkness*, imperialism uses the practice of colonia over overseas territories.

The Unknown

This constant reference to darkness may also simultaneously allude to the foreb unknown culture and environment. Indeed, when travelling to unknown contine native customs and cultures and even languages, the most unassailable difficulty have been uncertainty and alienation. As Conrad postulates on the experiences arrived in Britain, he mentions the manner in which conquerors would tackle the

> *'It was just robbery and violence, aggravated murder on a grea at it blind—as is proper for those who tackle a darkness.' (p. 7*

Conrad's use of the term *'darkness'* at this stage appears to infer the recklessnes
activities: these men, who have no knowledge of the country which they invade,
cultural, simply tear a path through nameless continents with a view to mere pro
this passage to 'blindness' could therefore allude to the sheer folly and hypocrisy
simultaneously crash through an unknown country in blind search of profit, all th
activities as 'civilised' or 'progress'.

Light and Enlightenment

The contrasting theme of light is also referred to at several points in this section.
darkness as a metaphor for the unknown, he also appears to use it as a symbol fo
symbol for moral and spiritual ignorance, rather than intellectual stupidity. This
narrator makes his initial description of London in the half-light:

> *'And further west on the upper reaches the place of the monstr
> marked ominously on the sky, a brooding gloom in sunshine, a
> stars.' (p. 5)*

It is interesting that Conrad chooses to describe the city in both light and darkne
further division of the theme of light/darkness. We might infer from this passage
civilisation may appear dazzlingly enlightened when surrounded by nothing but d
greater light, appear only muddy and dull – the mere relic of a once enlightened past.

Keywords:

Enlightenment:
took place primar
the 1700s in whic
placed on rationa
mystical, superst

Simply put, this is a metaphor for imperialism: Europeans may appear civilised and enlightened in their own context, when all that is around them bears the results of years of civilised behaviour; however, when displaced from this context and placed in a strange environment, it is the natural regression and barbarism of humanity that exposes the seemingly civilised as uneducated, unenlightened: they are the dullness of London in broad daylight. Marlow's experiences in the African Congo
enlightenment:

> *'It was the furthest point of navigation and the culminating po
> It seemed somehow to throw a kind of light on everything abou
> thoughts... No, not very clear. And yet it seemed to throw a ki*

Should we choose to view London as representative of Europeans, we are clearly
intentions for this metaphor. Having experienced the state to which a white man
amongst his own people – might return to savagery, Marlow has seen civilisation
the same way as the sparkling city of London might seem dull and muddy when e
a great light has been thrown upon Marlow's preconceived notions of the morali
Europeans: he has become enlightened to the true darkness and evil that pervad
unenlightened methods.

Colonialism:
Characterisation and Contrasting Views

In the beginning of the novella, Marlow is immediately presented to the reader a
his fellow shipmates or class. The initial impression given of his character is one
adventurer, in whose heart there is still a yearning to set sail to unknown contine

> *'He was the only man of us who still 'followed the sea.' The wo*
> *of him was that he did not represent his class... Marlow was n*

In presenting the reader with such an atypically seaman-like character as the nov
Conrad intends to bring the subject of colonialism, the novella's most significant
from an equally atypical viewpoint. A notable point is that this novella is widely
semi-autobiographical. Conrad, therefore, appears to be characterising Marlow
describes Marlow as an atypical seaman, Conrad himself, a Pole by birth, was inc
and with an aspect unlike the typical English imperialist. It is for this reason that
from his fellow sailors.

Distance is an important element in Conrad's characterisation of Marlow. Note h
character – refers frequently to his fellow shipmates at this stage as 'us' or 'we', a
from himself and his colleagues by referring to him by name:

> *'...it was only after a long silence, when he said... 'I suppose yo*
> *did once turn freshwater sailor for a bit,' that we knew we wer*
> *one of Marlow's inconclusive experiences.' (p. 8)*

This is firstly to establish a relationship between the reader and these four specta
distancing the reader from Marlow's own position in the narrative. We may infe
more 'typical' sailors aboard the yacht are intended to represent the British Impe
thereby endowed with the typical imperialist attitude of the time. During the late
know (see notes on *Contextual Information*) the British Empire and indeed all of E
zenith and ready to fall, the typical British attitude then being one of vicious patr

At the height of their nation's colonial success, the British as a nation would have
majesty and glory of their imperial state and the worldwide enlightenment to wh
portend. This attitude is nowhere more obvious than in the narrator's initial des
magnificence of British colonialism and his overwhelming respect for the founde

> *'...the adventurers and the settlers; kings' ships and the ships o*
> *Hunters for gold or pursuers of fame... bearing the sword and*
> *messengers of the might within the land, bearers of a spark fro*
> *(p. 5)*

This passage is an excellent example of a heavily imperialist attitude that would h
at this time and as such helps to establish the significance of such contextual issu
novella. The narrator, one of these four insignificant characters whose narrative
from Marlow's, is clearly the embodiment of an attitude that would glorify and e
throughout the nineteenth century and thereby relates to the attitude of the no
observation is used ironically, however, as Conrad's actual intention is to bring cu
fore, before he proceeds to criticise the hypocrisy and murderousness of colonia

Where the other sailors represent the attitudes of Englishmen, Marlow presents
Following the evocative and lofty monologue from his colleague, Marlow immed
observation that not only distances his character further from the reader, but is
most oft-quoted epitaphs:

"And this also,' said Marlow suddenly, 'has been one of the dar
(p. 5)

This attitude presents us with a stark contrast to the lofty magnificence with whic
Marlow's colleague. For the imperialist, the allusion to a Britain filled with unedu
conditions while Britain is at the height of her decadence and greatness is seen to
would have instantly alienated the reader. With this one first utterance, Marlow
emerging Modernist view; the self-analytical and the socially critical approach tha
the early twentieth century. Conrad has established Marlow's character much as
not content to follow a prescribed course, but willing to explore his own psyche a

Questions

1. *And further west on the upper reaches the place of the monstrous town was still m brooding gloom in sunshine, a lurid glare under the stars.' (p. 5)*

Why does Conrad choose to make this contrast between London's appearanc
are the connotations of this description in relation to themes of ignorance and

2a. As a group, discuss how Marlow is characterised as isolated and alienated fr

2b. Why do you feel Conrad has chosen to alienate the protagonist from the othe

3. Discuss in pairs. What is the significance of Marlow's comparison between the and the arrival of Roman conquerors on the British Isles? Present your finding

Section 2

Part 1, pp. 11–19

Departure and Arrival

Marlow travels to Brussels to sign contracts and find his new ship. After a brief in his farewells to his aunt and is dispatched on a French steamer. The voyage is de ship comes upon a man-of-war aimlessly shelling the coast. Upon reaching the ri the Company station, finding the country a confusion of destruction and disarray. station, Marlow observes a chain-gang of natives that pass him on the road.

Conrad's Criticism of Colonialism: Destruction and Devastation

Another theme occurs during this section, as Conrad describes Marlow's initial ir Each time he comes upon a new scene, Marlow is impressed by the devastation trucks, rusty rails, blasting, destruction and chaos. Conrad describes each situati great war or skirmish:

> *'...we came upon a man-of-war... shelling the bush... There wa the proceeding... and it was not dissipated by somebody on boa earnestly there was a camp of natives—he called them enemie sight somewhere.' (p. 16)*

Once again we may note the criticism of the imperialists: Conrad here observes t as barbaric or savage, but each as an act of war. In opposition to the popular att in the success of colonial expansion and Imperialism, Conrad views these activiti Roman 'conquerors' mentioned earlier in the book. Ironically, the act of 'conque merged with the acts of trade and colonisation, whereby use of unnecessary forc necessary in gaining trade access to the Congo. The callous and blatant use of th sailors shelling the coast to describe the natives is given here with a sardonic bitt Europeans no longer keeping up pretensions of honest trade. A scene further al of the colonial situation into stark view:

> *'The cliff was not in the way of anything; but this objectless bla going on.' (p. 18)*

In much the same way as the featureless bush into which the man-of-war is ceas for the African nation under the devastating yoke of the European Imperialists. Europe at this time was that only hope and profit could be gained from these ve shows the act of colonisation as not only destructive and chaotic, but as both po atrocities committed at the time by the Belgian traders, the act of shelling an em random cliff is simply misdirected anger, a base, savage instinct, freed in the whi and disorder in the African colonies.

Light and Darkness: Characterisation of Marlow

We may once again observe Conrad's use of the opposing themes of light and da enlightenment and ignorance at this point. As Marlow discusses his future work begins to become pessimistic of her xenophobic views, in describing the work of the savages:

> *'...I was also one of the Workers, with a capital—you know. So emissary of light, something like a lower sort of apostle... the e right in the rush of all that humbug, got carried off her feet.' (p*

Marlow's attitude serves to alienate him from his fellow characters. In much the aboard the *Nellie*, Marlow's aunt is amongst the European masses, swept up by i propaganda. Marlow, however, is presented as a more cynical character, for as h dogmatic views and moral values of others, he begins to see the folly of his own draws Marlow's character away from the current attitudes of the British and Euro character from the values held by the novella's audience. The act of alienating th is one of the self-analytical elements of the Modernist author's technique, for, as notes on *Contextual Information*), the novella was published in an age when the Victorian novel had become outmoded and archaic.

The Threat of Darkness and the Unknown

As Marlow travels past miles of African coastline, he begins to notice the darkne In a continuation of the metaphor from the beginning of the book, Conrad seems brooding darkness of the scene surrounding the *Nellie* on the Thames with the co

> *'Watching a coast as it slips by the ship is like thinking about a was almost featureless... with an aspect of monotonous grimne*

Much as he described the way in which the Romans might have viewed Britain u turns this analysis upon the unexplored wastes of Africa. Conrad's use of this co the earlier metaphor, in which darkness is symbolic of all that is unknown or fear of Africa here relates to the propensity of an uncertain future in Britain during th motion, as well as the dangers that surround and encroach upon Europe's imper

Secondly, his comparison between the impressions of a British Imperialist trader that of the Roman Empire's first views of Britain is also significant. Once again, C great empires must soon go the way of all great empires when at their foremost either fall naturally or be reclaimed by force. This comparison adds the possibilit sense of suspense and dread that would have been felt by the European Imperia and insecurity that such dark symbolism must have evoked in Conrad's audience

The Civilised and Enlightenment

As in many places throughout this novella, where there is a metaphor invoking d metaphor that invokes light. As Marlow makes his way through the jungle to his observe the true nature of the white man's rule. As mentioned above, (See Part Enlightenment) the symbol of light is strong and frequent throughout *Heart of D* contrasts issues of savagery and barbarism with those of civilisation and enlighte

this symbolism lies in Marlow's sudden realisation of the white man's savage rule routes:

> *'I foresaw that in the blinding sunshine of that land I would be a flabby, pretending, weak-eyed devil of a rapacious and pitiles*

It is, of course, significant that Marlow's realisation comes upon him in a blinding example of the supposedly enlightened European attitude having been laid bare the same way as London's glittering haze might appear dull and lifeless in the bro man's supposedly gleaming morality and enlightenment is exposed as dark and s a foreign sun. This is because, as we have mentioned in Section 1, the white mar his own context: his civilisation is supported by the many conveniences and com her propriety and her shared moral attitudes. Here, comparatively alone in this v understanding of local culture, law, language or custom, Conrad observes how th are starkly exposed as barbaric and corrupt.

Questions

1. As Marlow approaches Africa, he witness several scenes of futility, including a bush. How is this scene symbolic of Conrad's view of imperialism? Refer to M there are 'enemies' out of sight in the jungle.

2. *'...I was also one of the Workers, with a capital—you know. Something like an em lower sort of apostle... the excellent woman, living right in the rush of all that hu (p. 14)*

   How does Conrad's sarcastic description of Marlow as an 'emissary of light' c of the Europeans in Africa?

3. Marlow describes the white man's influence in Africa as that of a 'flabby, wea Discuss as a class how this description is significant with regards to issues of civ hypocrisy.

Section 3

Part 1, pp. 19–25

The Company Station

In need of shade, Marlow stumbles upon a group of dying natives, huddled benea pushes on and finally reaches the Station. There he is met by the chief accountant a martyr to European order and discipline. Marlow waits at this station for ten w begins hearing rumours of Kurtz's fame. At the end of his stay, Marlow must ma station with a fellow white man and a caravan of 60 natives. Upon his arrival, he has been holed and sunk on the river.

The Face of Colonialism: Untrustworthiness

A notable occurrence in this part of the book is Marlow's encounter with the Sta in his ludicrous attire. Marlow observes the man with a mixture of amazement a to be a symbol of European order and civilisation in even the remotest and isolat

> *'That's backbone! His starched collars and got-up shirt fronts character…' (p. 21)*

We might observe, with reference to the themes of light and darkness, that this m presents us with a symbol for the white man's belief in his own enlightenment. H success: the way in which not only those at home may choose to perceive the Eur white man that is sent to greet Marlow upon his arrival and is therefore his first im However, the chief accountant in reality becomes the first white man in whom Ma

> *'I could not help asking him how he managed to sport such liner faintest blush, and said modestly, 'I've been teaching one of the the station…" (p. 21)*

These great 'achievements of character', when exposed to even the slightest of questionings, bring about in the accountant a vague sheepishness, for they are neither achievements of character nor evidence of the imperialist's success in the colonies: they are simply the results of oppression and violence against the local natives. It is interesting to note here that the man whom we are given to represent the success of **colonialism** ultimately is seen to be an untrustworthy figure. Conrad's criticism in this case is possibly that he believes the idea of imperialism to be immoral and untrustworthy, as well as deceitful in its outward behaviour. What is also significant is that this man represents the white man's self-assurance in his own **enlightenment** an that with just the faintest interrogation are seen to be only skin-deep.

Keywords:

Colonialism: the p country or political strength by taking overseas territories

Post-colonialism: examines the after- on the countries tha

Ignorance and Enlightenment

There is yet another side to this symbolism, in the disorder that surrounds such a s
imperialist's success and control. Despite the spotless appearance of the accounta
fallen beyond simple disrepair and into utter chaos. Upon his arrival, Marlow com

> *'Black shapes crouched, lay... half effaced within the dim light,*
> *pain, abandonment, and despair... this was the place where so*
> *withdrawn to die.' (p. 20)*

The grove of death is significant in several ways. If the pristine dress of the acco
European colonialism and imperialism, the grove of death that lies below is the u
note not only the position of the grove of death in this case, but Conrad's use of
the grove, the accountant remains aloof and omnipotent, bathed in the bright su
civilisation as he goes about his work. Far below, in the gloom of the grove, evil,
from sight. This may be Conrad's attempt to symbolise the supernatural status o
'savages': he resides in his cliff-top heaven; his self-made Olympus or Valhalla, m
and retribution, while below in the dark recesses of the jungle lay the hellish rea

The chaos that surrounds the camp suggests that the white man's self-assumed '
utter ignorance. Where the accountant's neatness and accuracy with his work su
imperialist as one of high authority and control, it is clear that one must only loo
this is not the case. This is once again a symbol for the just surface-deep behavio
Conrad attempts to place aside the violent atrocities which actually took place in
during the late nineteenth century:

> '...[the chief accountant] *bent over his books, was making co*
> *perfectly correct transactions; and fifty feet below the doorste*
> *tree-tops of the grove of death.' (p. 23)*

Figuratively, we might view the chief accountant above as the respectable and ci
imperialist, while the dark heart and ugly savagery of his true nature beats just in
outward show of decorum.

Corruption and Deceit

The true nature of colonialism is once again exemplified on Marlow's long journe
The protagonist's weakened travelling companion, a large white man with a prop
untrustworthy and corrupt white man that Marlow meets on his voyage upriver.
shelling and devastation caused by the invasion of the white man, Marlow still ha
with a true purpose for being there:

> *'I couldn't help asking him once what he meant by coming ther*
> *money, of course. What do you think?' he said, scornfully.' (p*

The interesting point we might make about this excerpt is that the man ends his
question: '*what do you think?*' as though inviting the narrator to overtly criticise
possibly Conrad's observation of the false pretences with which the Europeans s
we have mentioned above (see *Contextual Information*) the Belgian monarchy ha
centre of Africa for purposes of trade during the middle of the nineteenth centur
explicitly and legally appropriate the larger part of the continent. The presence o
apparent purpose in Africa is certainly indicative of this kind of political deceit an
'trader' could well be described as an agent for the European's governments' ult
Africa and the expansion of empires.

The corrupt nature of the imperialists is brought to mind once again, as Marlow d
in the bushes, having been dropped by his mischievous carriers:

> *'The heavy pole had skinned his poor nose. He was very anxiou*
> *somebody, but there wasn't the shadow of a carrier near. I rem*
> *doctor,—'It would be interesting for science to watch the ment*
> *individuals, on the spot." (p. 24)*

The act of this injured man, a typical, respectable imperialist, descending immed
torture is indicative of the true nature of European ventures in Africa: dishonest,
Once again, the man's quick descent into appalling savagery not only presents us
of the 'enlightenment' enjoyed by the civilised European white man, but once ag
barbaric act of conquering and domination to which Marlow gave mention earlie
Romans, these apparently civilised men take almost immediately to meting out v
of law, justice and civility. Even Marlow self-analytically observes his own wish t
scarcity of a target. Conrad's criticism is that no man is incorruptible: each man
when distended from the context of his own society, each man may be as easily
each shall descend into the savage behaviour that his own society has sought to

Questions

1. We might assume that the well-dressed accountant surrounded by the dust an
metaphor for the farcicality of imperialist activities. To what extent do you a
why?

2. What elements of symbolism in this section are heavily critical of hypocrisy? R
the 'grove of death' in your answer.

3. *'The heavy pole had skinned his poor nose. He was very anxious for me to kill son
shadow of a carrier near.' (p. 24)*

   Discuss in pairs: Marlow reflects that he has become a specimen for scientific i

Section 4

Part 1, pp. 25–30

The Central Station

Marlow has his first meeting with the station manager. He finds himself unsettled b suspiciously and inspires unease in his workers. He discovers from the manager tha though with his steamboat at the bottom of the river, he may not start the journey f grass shed is burned down and a Negro beaten as a scapegoat, though it is unclear some business in the accident. Marlow meets with the brickmaker, said to be the m to work as he is waiting for some 'ingredient' and continuously questions Marlow. A blindfolded woman carrying a torch that was painted by Kurtz, Marlow discovers fr sent as an emissary of virtue and that the same men who sent Kurtz had also sent i promoted to the position of general manager and is the main rival for the station m

The Oil Painting: Hypocrisy

A good example of Conrad's use of symbolism in this section is the presence of th hut. The painting is significant in two ways: it is the portrayal of the misguided a 'savages' and is also denotative of the dark inner nature that is held inside even th

> *'Then I noticed a small sketch in oils, on a panel, representing a blindfolded, carrying a lighted torch. The background was somb the effect of the torchlight on the face was sinister.' (p. 30)*

Firstly, we must concentrate on the most obvious meaning of this symbolism. Wh indicates the vast, unknown continent of Africa, the blindfolded woman represen his attempts to enlighten her natives. This is because as the stately, philanthropic civilisation to light the dark, uncivilised world of the African wilderness, he himself and subterfuge. Put simply, in his attempts to light the way of those he presume blinded to his own acts of savagery. The merciless beating of the Negro scapego well as the general air of plotting and mistrust amongst the station's population a savagery. Indeed, Marlow makes a direct reference to the hypocrisy of 'justice' in

> *'By heavens! There is something after all in the world allowing horse while another must not look at a halter.' (p. 29)*

Conrad's criticism is that there is an element of 'civilisation' that allows great crim trivialities to be met with the severest penalties: a good example would be the co Negro men, women and children under the pretences of justice and discipline fo fire. However, no attention is paid to the larger crimes of the imperialists that ha the native's homes and businesses, murdering their families and treating them as standards – those who are seen as savages are assumed to have no rights to justi values of civilisation are seen as untouchable.

The second element of symbolism in this painting is the effect of the light on the have discussed, the torch is a symbol for the attempted 'enlightenment' of Africa and civilised white man. However, note how the light's effect on the white man's Conrad's intention here may well be to symbolise the act of civilising another cul one's own civilisation. In the blackness of Africa, far from the 'enlightened' socie behaviour seemingly does little to penetrate the unassailable darkness of the co nature as violent and barbaric. The sinister reflection of the light upon the woma the ugly reality of the 'civiliser'.

The Futility of Greed and Mistrust

It is interesting to note that the theme of futility makes several further appearanc
with the desire for economic success so foremost in the minds of the populous o
some confusion that Marlow observes the apparently useless nature of the man
against Kurtz:

> *'He had no genius for organising, for initiative, or for order eve
> learning, and no intelligence. His position had come to him—
> he was never ill...' (p. 26)*

Throughout Marlow's stay, the manager contrives ways to slow down the missio
fire in the station is doubtlessly his doing and it is even possible that he has contr
steamboat before his arrival. This is due to the fact that Kurtz is seen as the man
promotion and fame. However, though Kurtz is so universally plotted against, he
extolled for his abilities to acquire more ivory than any other station manager. T
futility of greed: should the station manager relinquish his plotting and subterfug
brought back to full health, though his natural abilities to produce ivory may lead
manager's position, he would bring economic success and financial wealth to the
for power and natural mistrust have led him to fear Kurtz's return, though his ow
responsible for the poor trade at this station.

More overtly symbolic of futility is the episode with the burning of a storage hut.
wreck to observe the incident, the man with whom he first met attempts to fight
holed bucket of water:

> *'I was smoking my pipe quietly by my dismantled steamer... wi
> moustaches came tearing down to the river... dipped about a q
> back again. I noticed there was a hole in the bottom of his buc*

This is symbolic once again of the European imperialists' futile efforts to civilise A
which they resort in their task of enlightening these foreign 'savages', they are th
the water with which the man fills his bucket is nowhere near enough to fight th
with which the white man applies himself to his philanthropic task is not nearly e

Further Symbolism of Futility: The Unreal and Reality

It is interesting to note that Conrad describes the station's pursuit of wealth and
reality. Note how he describes the air which even the very word 'ivory' has take
it is seen as something no longer solid, but as unreal:

> *'They wandered here and there... like a lot of faithless pilgrims
> rang in the air, was whispered, was sighed. You would think t
> it... and outside, the silent wilderness surrounding this cleared
> struck me as something great and invincible, like evil or truth.*

The religious imagery is significant here, as Conrad describes the men as 'faithless
tangible reason to believe in the existence of their idol, now disillusioned and pra
religious imagery is used to create a sense of futility surrounding these pilgrims' p
no longer stands for merely an object of trade: it has become their object of wors

and success. As Marlow observes, the traders *'intrigued and slandered and hated* warring religious denominations whose ultimate object is the same God – and the pursuit for success, each of these traders has become blinded to his surroundings, propriety: Conrad's use of such diminutive language when referring to the station of his intention to explore the utter insignificance of man's greed and self-destruct

> *'There was an air of plotting about that station, but nothing ca was as unreal as everything else—as the philanthropic pretenc concern…' (p. 29)*

The futility of worshipping the unreal is contrasted with the unassailability of rea – this unreal concept – is worshipped and bickered over, all around the enormous (represented by the wilderness surrounding the camp) silently waits for the natur humanity to lead to its own destruction, when it shall regain precedence.

Questions

1. Considering his distaste for Kurtz, how does the general manager's incompete camp reflect the utter futility of man's greed and mistrust?

2. As a class, find a volunteer (or work together) to make a rough sketch of how t Around the sketch, create a mind map describing in careful detail the symbolis darkness, the light from the lamp and the woman's appearance.

3. Conrad alludes to the word 'ivory' as having become merely an ideal; a word while all around the immensity of the jungle remains silent and threatening. Ho contrast between the real and the unreal?

Section 5

Part 1, pp. 30–37

Rivets

As Marlow at last comprehends the brickmaker's personal interest in Kurtz, he dec connections in Europe in an effort to procure materials for his repairs to the boat. however, and makes an indirect threat on Marlow's life before he disappears into boat, he meets with the foreman – a boiler-maker – and proclaims that they shall dance a joyous jig upon the deck, which creates a thundering echo about the camp Instead, bands of white men and Negroes, each bearing trade goods and provision the Eldorado Exploring Expedition, and the manager's uncle is their leader. He spe conversation with the manager and eventually Marlow gives up any former hopes

The Insignificance of the Unreal: References to the Real and the Supernatural

A great deal of the language in this part of the book is used to describe the unrea contrast to the vastness of reality in the Congo. Notably much of the language u intentions in Africa stems from the semantic field of the *supernatural:* the unrea

> *'I could see a little ivory coming out from there, and I had hear there... somehow it didn't bring any image with it—no more t an angel or a fiend was in there.' (p. 32)*

With Conrad's use of these terms, '*angel*' and '*fiend*', note how, much like the wo the camp, Kurtz's name too has become this mythical, hushed term for a concept Kurtz represents the way in which the white man's success in Africa is synonymou godlike status in this foreign, barbaric land exudes his addiction to power, exacerb greed and self-pride and ultimately bringing about his own failure. The white ma unexplored heart of Africa, sees himself placed high upon a pedestal by the native mercy and his wrath upon both the world around him and the people he enslaves figure. Note how Marlow goes on to describes the name 'Kurtz' as no longer havi

> *'I became in an instant as much of a pretence as the rest of the He was just a word for me. I did not see the man in the name (p. 32)*

Conrad's criticism here is of the insignificance of humanity against the backdrop describes these greedy, petty men as the 'bewitched pilgrims', the worshippers false idol. All around them, the vast, foreboding environment bears silently dow with the arguing, conniving and plotting, all in the name of these false gods *'Kurt*

> *'...the silence of the land went home to one's very heart,—its m the amazing reality of its concealed life.' (p. 31)*

Conrad's intention here seems to be to show mankind as an insignificant, pestile we discussed in Section 4, all the while these men worship and bicker over the u are prepared to ignore the far greater significance of reality. Unlike the more my and 'Kurtz', the mystery inherent in the great wilderness of the Congo is somethi and envelopes the camp and all of its proceedings – it watches silently yet brood of mankind. The sheer magnitude of the Congo is never covert; though it is silen mockingly upon the behaviour of the men below.

Conrad's Criticism of Colonialism: An Invasion, an Infliction and a Visitation

Continuing the theme of colonialism that runs through the novella, Conrad now a
Eldorado Exploration Expedition as an allegory for the imperialist activities in col
band here presents us with a parody of the various expeditions that were led by
seeking fortune and treasure in Africa. *(NB The editor's notes in the 2007 Pengui
band specifically represents the Katanga Expedition of 1890.*) What is interesting
describes the arrival of these bands of adventurers, in relation to his criticism of

> *"They'll come in three weeks,' I said, confidently.*
> *But they didn't. Instead of rivets there came an invasion, an in*
> *(p. 36)*

Note the use of these three terms: *invasion*, *infliction* and *visitation*. Conrad is h
barbarism and savagery with which the white man would usurp and exploit Africa
take the Eldorado Expedition as a metaphor for European imperialism, Conrad ap
of turn-of-the-century imperialist activities. Firstly, rather than view the acquisit
progress and the westernisation and civilisation of her savage natives, he deems
'invasion': the unapologetic and blatant hijacking of the country and its resource
Secondly, Conrad observes how their arrival is not, as the European politicians m
enlightenment for the continent's natives as much as it is a curse: it is the inflicti
upon a unique indigenous people – a blemish upon the perfect face of pre-coloni
further term used at the conclusion of Part 1, in which Marlow refers to the expe

> *'He carried his fat paunch with ostentation on his short legs, a*
> *gang infested the station spoke to no one but his nephew.' (p. 3*

We may observe from the disparaging way in which Marlow speaks of them that
the highly honourable race of civilised men, benevolently reaching far-flung cont
knowledge and their noble cause, as they were viewed by the European public.
teeming mass of unwanted pestilence – they are seen as a plague upon the cont
proportions that it needs only the constant supply resources and wealth to sprea
'infest' the Company station – later, they will move on, to spread their influence
with them all the goodness and wealth of the land and leaving behind them little

The third of these terms is the more interesting, Conrad refers to the arrival of th
continuation of the series of references to the *supernatural* in this section, this is
examples. With this term, the author refers to the influx of imperialists upon Afr
some poltergeist, ghost or ghoul. This term appears to directly relate to the man
seen by the natives as supernatural, ethereal beings. However, rather than desc
like qualities as the natives may have ascribed to them, Conrad uses this term 'vi
malevolent and demon-like characteristics, as they visit their wrath and hatred u
her people.

Darkness:
The Narrator's Monologue

Having described his own hypocrisy in lying to the brickmaker on p. 32, Marlow d
and contemplation. Whilst he collects his thoughts and prepares to go on, Conra
one of his rare internal monologues. Once again, this monologue uses the them
strong effect:

> *'It had become so pitch dark that we listeners could hardly see o
> long time already he, sitting apart, had been no more to us tha
> listened on the watch for the sentence, for the word, that woul
> the faint uneasiness inspired by this narrative…' (p. 33)*

Conrad here uses the gradual darkening of London's skies to reflect not only the t
effect which his story is to have on its largely European audience. It is significant
of the first part, the narrator is given an opportunity to observe the darkening sk
with a further element of symbolism. Firstly, it is significant that this darkness ha
simultaneously with Marlow's gradual realisation of the dark nature of humanity
corruptness and savagery inherent in the soul of the civilised man, Marlow's liste
white man, have been exposed to the darkness of their own hearts and are now s
impenetrable blackness. This symbolises the reader's own self-perception, havin
the listeners can no longer even see one another, denoting that this self-reflectio

The monologue's significance is twofold. In the first of three parts, the reader ha
experiences and given many reasons to mistrust or to doubt his misgivings with c
given few clues as to his intentions for telling the story. In much the same way a
Marlow's three listeners, are plunged into darkness at this stage, so must the rea
uneasiness…' awaited by the narrator. The oncoming darkness is thereby a meta
that portends later in the novella, but signals the inevitable enlightenment and t
conclusion, with the rising of the sun.

Questions

1. *'I became in an instant as much of a pretence as the rest of the bewitched pilgrim
not see the man in the name any more than you do.' (p. 32)*

   As a pair, discuss how the almost ethereal, unreal terms 'ivory' and 'Kurtz' der
   futility of mankind's presence in Africa. How are these terms symbolic?

2. The unnamed narrator interrupts Marlow's narrative during this section to desc
   How could this encroaching darkness be seen as metaphorical, considering the
   tale?

3. How does the arrival of the Eldorado Expedition represent the true intentions o
   your answer the terms used by Conrad to describe their descent upon the can

Section 6

Part 2, pp. 38–44

The Journey Upriver

Lying on the deck of his steamboat, Marlow overhears a conversation between th are both clearly distressed by Kurtz's productivity. There has been no evidence of for a constant flow of prime quality ivory from his station. Kurtz was supposed to delivery, though after 300 miles on the river, turned back to his headquarters. He for nine months and to have never quite recovered. The manager and his uncle t threaten to hang the man who competes for their ivory. Soon after the departure Marlow and the manager can at last set off. They depart with a crew of cannibals treacherous way up the river.

The Futility of Human Greed

During the opening part of this section, Conrad returns to the criticism that bega during Part 1. We may observe at this point the significance of the manager's dis Conrad's criticism of human greed:

> *"Anything since then?' asked the other, hoarsely. 'Ivory,' jerke of it—prime sort—lots—most annoying, from him." (p. 38)*

It is notable that the manager holds Kurtz's productivity in such scathing terms. A much of our analysis of Part 1, the harvesting of ivory is seen by every character t success, to the point where the word itself has become mythical and unreal. Ivo key reason for the European presence on the Congo and is crucial to the shared f employees. However, here the manager's greed once again overshadows the im term *'ivory'* is representative of the success and fortune that clearly belong to Ku threatened by Kurtz's clear aptitude for the business and rather than viewing hi bid for fortune and profit, views him as a threat to his success.

Conrad's criticism here is the utter futility of greed and jealousy: if Kurtz were to unhindered with his massively productive methods, or even sent the proper aid a he would certainly increase Company profit, percentages and prosperity for all c may seem, the manager and his uncle plot Kurtz's downfall in a greedy effort tov producing no ivory, no profit and no great fortune for his station, this one man is the ranks by contriving the downfall of the one man who actually brings a profit. shows the utter pointlessness of this act in the passage that follows the dialogue the camp:

> *'The sun was low; and leaning forward side by side, they seeme painfully uphill their two ridiculous shadows of unequal length, them slowly over the tall grass without bending a single blade.'*

We are able to observe through Conrad's evocative use of language that the sha of their true effect on reality. When their scheming conversation is over, for all o the two men are seen to be dragging their shadows behind them. This is symbol and the futility of mankind's propensity toward jealousy and greed. The consequ to be as ineffectual as a shadow drawn over tall grass – no matter how strongly a fight, argue or connive against one another, none of their plotting shall ever have real world, much as each man's shadow is unable to bend even a blade of grass.

Darkness and Ignorance

A theme which dominates Marlow's trip upriver is the constant sense of gloom a
forest surrounding the expedition. As we have already discussed in Part 1, the se
representative of an uncertain future:

> *'There was no joy in the brilliance of sunshine. The long stretc
> on, deserted, into the gloom of overshadowed distances.' (p. 4*

Conrad comments upon not only the foreboding future ahead of European impe
ignorance of European governments attempting to conquer lands that lay far be
Here, there is no 'brilliance of sunshine' – there is no civilisation, or even any pre
river lies ahead, as daunting and massive as the continent itself. Marlow sees hi
searching for some clue as to the correct passage through the immense river. He
as a combination of guesswork, and luck; a clear reference to the ham-handed m
Belgian traders (and other Europeans) in the Congo Free State during the late 18

> *'Imagine a blindfolded man set to drive a van over a bad road.'*

The vast, unconquerable river presents us with a symbol for the vast wastes of A
yet ultimately successful, navigation may represent man's ignorance, in the face
formidability of nature and reality. During this section, it appears to take all of M
strength to simply avoid grounding or scraping the thin hull of his tiny steamer. T
tenuous grasp of European imperialists on Africa's trade routes and resources – e
disaster and ruin. The heedless rush of traders and colonists toward these foreig
criticised as the boat makes its solemn progress upriver. As Conrad observed ea
shipped to Africa would ever return. This certainly displays the utter ignorance w
throw themselves into the unknown, a criticism made blatant by the use of the n
deeper into the heart of darkness' (p. 43). Marlow's blundering progress despite
surrounding him seems to be representative of the imperialist's progress throug
to enlightenment, but move steadily toward darkness and ignorance.

Questions

1. *'The sun was low; and leaning forward side by side, they seemed to be tugging pai
shadows of unequal length, that trailed behind them slowly over the tall grass wi
(pp. 40–41)*

   The silent departure of the two conspirators is clearly a criticism of the futility
   his fellow man. With this in mind, why do you feel Conrad describes the shad

2. How do Marlow's desperate attempts to navigate the Congolese river symbo
   imperialist? Choose at least two quotations from the text to support your ans

3. How is the lack of sunshine in the forest symbolic of mankind's blundering ign

Section 7

Part 2, pp. 45–53

The Fog Descends

*Marlow describes the fireman, a trained native, who has taken readily to his wor
across a deserted hut stacked with firewood, with a message warning them to ap
makes an odd find: a well-thumbed seaman's textbook, supposedly belonging to
for ivory in this district. Just eight miles from their destination, the crew stop to s
awake there is a thick fog over the jungle, which is suddenly penetrated by loud,
One of the cannibals displays a wish to eat their unseen enemy and it dawns upo
these men must be after months of starvation. Despite the manager's pleas, Ma
fear of losing his sense of direction and instead the crew silently await the lifting
possibility of an attack.*

The Unknown Future: The Blinding Fog

One of the key symbols in this section of the book is the blinding fog, which silen
obscuring virtually everything but the boat itself. The appearance of this fog is p
the context in which it occurs. As Marlow and his crew draw to within a few hou
suggests that they spend the night on the river, so as to avoid arriving in darknes
tension for the reader, but allows Conrad to continue his metaphor for the unkn

> *'When the sun rose there was a white fog, very warm and clam
> than the night. It did not shift or drive; it was just there, stan
> something solid.' (p. 48)*

Here, Conrad appears to be drawing a comparison between the contrasting princ
As they sit surrounded by the fog, the crew are blinded to reality and with their p
with only their thoughts to disclose the mysteries of the world:

> *'The rest of the world was nowhere, as far as our eyes and ears
> nowhere. Gone, disappeared; swept off without leaving a whis
> behind.' (p. 49)*

It is at this stage that both Marlow and his crew of white men begin to make ferv
the cries outside the fog. Where the pilgrims bicker over the location of the shri
nature of the sounds themselves as being rather more sorrowful than aggressive
display of guesswork while surrounded by the blinding fog could be seen as a me
crew's guesses as to the true nature of what lies beyond the fog are insignificant
have no effect on the real future that is to come and have no relevance to the re
reality can therefore only be seen in its true form when the fog is lifted; it is the s
and the mysteries that lay ahead.

This blind and hopeless guesswork seems to mirror the nature in which Marlow h
become intrigued with various elements of Kurtz's personality. Throughout the n
to forming his conclusions based only on Kurtz's reputation. Naturally, the assum
Kurtz's complex character are far from accurate, as they have been distorted by t
future. Conrad's intention in this metaphor is to present Marlow as being as blin
assumptions as he is utterly blinded to the real world by this surrounding fog. Ha
months to simply reflect on Kurtz's reputation, Marlow has created an unreal an
the name that bears little relation to the man behind it. In much the same way, t
crew's view of the reality that lies outside.

Also notable at this point is the interest with which Marlow observes his savage t
referred to as the 'cannibals', these men begin to enthral Marlow with their gent
characteristics in a way that the white men aboard the steamboat do not. The o
in supposedly 'uncivilised' natives was obviously not a popular attitude in Europe
reflected in the manner in which Marlow first describes his fireman:

> *'He was an improved specimen… to look at him was as edifying
> parody of breeches and a feather hat, walking on his hind-legs.'*

The amusement with which he observes the fireman clearly stems from the basi
African natives and the Europeans, alongside the popular attitude that these me
barbarians. He views the fireman as inhuman – he sees him as more akin to an a
than to a native man performing a white man's job. However, where at this stag
the attitude of the nineteenth century imperialist, it is not long before he begins
human qualities about these savage men, thus further alienating him from his w

> *'The whites, of course greatly discomposed, had besides a curio
> painfully shocked… The others had an alert, naturally interest
> (p. 49)*

Despite the imperialists' assumptions that these men are unenlightened and inh
displayed as acting calmly and rationally in the face of imminent danger. These m
some wit, as their chief jokes that they might be able to catch and eat the unsee
natives act with dignity and intelligence, the noise in the fog sends the white me
panic and chaos. Throughout the book, Marlow has yet to meet a European mar
or suspicion. It is interesting to note, therefore, that all the while Marlow's resp
white men fall further into his contempt and disparagement. This is most notabl
restrained behaviour of the cannibals, who have not resorted to cannibalism dur

> *'And I saw that something restraining, one of those human sec
> probability, had come into play there. I looked at them with a s
> interest…' (p. 51)*

Despite the gnawing desperation of hunger and the availability of food, these cannibals have acted with the restrained and dignified approach that even Marlow himself confesses he does not possess and he is immediately captivated by their capacity for humanity. By contrast, it is interesting to observe the behaviour of the pilgrims when placed under similar duress and hardship. Upon the first sound from out of the fog, these reputably enlightened, respectable Europeans fly immediately into an intense panic that almost seems to echo a more savage, feral kind of behaviour:

> *'Two others remained open-mouthed a whole minute, then
> dashed into the little cabin, to rush out incontinently and stan
> darting scared glances, with Winchesters at 'ready' in their
> hands.' (p. 49)*

The fear and panic inspired in these men, coupled with their immediately resorti
seems to echo the animalistic manner in which Marlow had described his firema
behaviour as that of a cornered animal – first standing terrified, before resorting
Conrad's intention here does not seem to be the drawing of comparisons betwe
men, but to comment upon the hypocrisy with which the white imperialists wou
mysterious environment. The author is once again observing the barbaric nature
they supposedly attempted to bring Western culture and civilisation to their con
methods of enslavement, extortion and violence would be more akin to inhuma
the behaviour of the allegedly 'barbaric' natives.

Questions

1a. Find from this section at least three instances in which Marlow describes his su
and ancient. How does this relate to his description of British shores in Sectio

1b. Why do you suppose Conrad compares the civilised imperialists with these ar

2. With regards to the themes of darkness and ignorance in the novella, what is
description of the fog as being *'more blinding than the night'? (p. 48)*

3. The assumptions of the crew as to the nature of their attackers is based entire
columns 'Kurtz' and 'Attackers' and identify and list the ways in which this mirr
and his fervent desire to meet the man himself.

Section 8

Part 2, pp. 53–58

The Attack

As Marlow continues down a channel of the river, the boat is attacked from the b defend with their Winchesters and the helmsman leaves the wheel to fire at the t the wheel, barely scraping past a snag in the river as the boat careers off course, t helmsman is killed by a spear. Marlow pulls the boat's whistle, which frightens a before looking down to find his feet soaked with blood. Giving the wheel over to changes his shoes and socks and flings them overboard. He now believes Kurtz to disappointed that he will no longer be able to connect the name with the voice of

Comments on Colonialism: Modern and Ancient Weaponry

It is interesting to note at this point the contrast between the sophisticated weap the seemingly pathetic arrows and spears used by the natives. Conrad here appe purpose of the white man's presence in Africa as being one of utter folly, as he c perceptions of the glory and success of the imperialist in a foreign land. In this ir weaponry as the natives' arrows and spears are able to actually kill one of the ste sophisticated rifles not only do no damage to the natives, but hinder the boat's p her crew:

> *'The pilgrims had opened fire with their Winchesters… A deuce came up… I swore at it. Now I couldn't see the ripple or the sn*

This is clearly Conrad's criticism of the Europeans' folly, for they have come ill eq with the harsh nature of this ancient, untouched environment. However, where t civilised man are shown up to be ineffective and unsophisticated when placed in primitive of weapons is able to cause the most significant damage in killing their h

> *'It was the shaft of a spear that, either thrown or lounged thro caught him in the side just below the ribs…' (p. 56)*

As Marlow observes the ineffectiveness of his crew's attempts to defend themse such ancient weaponry, he decides not to defend using the sophisticated moder resorts to a far more ancient and primal concept: his ability to frighten the attack much the same way as in some ancient display of strength and ferocity, such as i display, Marlow is able to drown the battle cries of his attackers and terrify them boat's whistle, Marlow invokes a great fear amongst the natives, perhaps that th god, or that it is possessed of some kind of unknown witchcraft:

> *'…I felt above my head for the line of the steam-whistle, and je screech hurriedly. The tumult of angry and warlike yells was c then from the depths of the woods went out such a tremulous c mournful fear and utter despair…' (p. 57)*

The wonderful effectiveness of this play between ancient weaponry and ancient t reader how ineffective the white man's ways and customs are seen to be in such while simultaneously echoing Marlow's thoughts of the jungle as almost prehisto *monster'* (p. 44). Marlow views his progress upriver as a gradual descent toward when technology, culture and belief systems were more fluid and uncertain than

reflects Marlow's initial comments in Section 1, in which he dwells upon the reac
harsh, sunless shores of Britain as being similar to his own reaction upon arriving
appears to be criticising not only the assumed decadence and self-assurance of V
widespread public opinion of imperialist activities. As we mentioned in Section 1,
themselves the pinnacle of civilisation – the proud, decadent conquerors, arrivin
ambitions for the glory and expansion of their empire. However, as Marlow men
narrative, these men were simply barbaric conquerors, defeating their enemies n
intelligence and abilities to create and to philosophise, but through years of viole
much the same way as these Romans, Europeans would deem their efforts in the
beacons toward progress and expansion and the enlightenment of the world. Co
popular notion, in drawing his comparisons between the imperialists of the nine
violent conquerors.

Questions

1a. How does the vast difference between the weaponry of the European pilgrim
again expose the similarities between the nineteenth-century colonists and the

1b. Write a piece of prose describing how the ignorance of mankind to the vast u
section. Choose only one example for your answer and comment upon oppos
darkness, or savagery and civilisation.

2. Discuss as a class how Marlow's use of the boat's whistle in fending off the att
a man's pretences toward civilisation and respectability might be when displa

Section 9

Part 2, pp. 58–62

Reflecting on Kurtz

As he changes his shoes, Marlow reflects sorrowfully on the fact that Kurtz may n a grunt from his colleague, to which he retorts by criticising their Western decade to describe Kurtz's humanitarian reputation, as well as his ultimate descent into v amongst the natives. Originally employed to write a report on the possibilities of eventually lost his mind and named himself a God amongst the savages. Marlow character and his charismatic ability to captivate human minds, though he discov comment wishing to exterminate the natives disturbing and disillusioning.

The Real and the Unreal: Marlow's Sorrow at Kurtz's Death

Conrad makes several very penetrating observations in this section. The first of t notion that the Real so often contrasts with the Unreal in this absurd and confus mourns the potential loss of his opportunity to at last hear Kurtz's voice, how he character, but as a voice attached to a name:

> *'The point was in his being a gifted creature, and that of all his stood out pre-eminently, that carried with it a sense of real pre to talk, his words—the gift of expression…' (p. 58)*

After witnessing a world filled with the absurd and the unreal, Marlow has for m one important and all-encompassing characteristic with the reputation of the ma real and the tangible, in a world so relentlessly filled with the unreal. Thus far, M Africa with a purpose, or with a voice of his own, shown to us in his description o *mâché Mephistopheles'* (p. 31) – so far he has met only men with no inner purpo futility about them. The white man's position in Africa is one of absurdity: the pi ivory yet never lift a finger to find it in much the same way as the general manag maintaining his status due to his ability to survive.

Kurtz, however, produces results – his name is synonymous with the almost myth symbol for success and glory – he is the one man with a true purpose and is Mar unreal with the real. Marlow has lived for months with only his own perception desperately to connect this image with something even remotely like reality:

> *'…the most exalted and the most contemptible, the pulsating s deceitful flow from the heart of an impenetrable darkness.' (p*

Note how Marlow reflects that Kurtz may or may not be dark-hearted or evil, or enlightened. This is because he does not simply wish to see the man live up to h his own perception of the man may be distorted. He merely wishes to find the v connects the reputation with the man; thus connecting the unreal with the reality absurdity. This is the reason for his sorrow at the thought that Kurtz may now b connect the reputation with the man and end his search for reality in this ludicro

The constant use of references to the strength of Kurtz's ability to talk are contra
companions aboard the *Nellie,* at his passionate emotion while talking about Kur

> *'This is the worst of trying to tell... Here you all are, each moor
> addresses... a butcher round one corner, a policeman round an*

Marlow's response is that these naïve and decadent men cannot possibly compr
things that they take for granted in their own lifestyles. Marlow believes the gre
society and the various decadent ways of the Western man to be a mere veil ove
– their decadence and comfort represents the unreal and the absurd. Conrad he
about a man is held deep within his personality; that without the comforts and t
life, a man must recourse to his greatest and most powerful personality trait in o
makes the man – in Kurtz's case, this is the ability to talk:

> *'These little things make all the great difference. When they a
> back on your own innate strength, upon your own capacity for*

This is why Marlow does not see the man as anything more than a voice – all tho
his physical body, are unreal in comparison to his strongest trait in this world wh
reign and the trivialities of Western civilisation cannot penetrate. The policemer
intended wife and the good addresses that represent home – have all been strip
lifted on reality and all that is left behind is the truth, the reality, the voice.

Comments on European Colonialism: Kurtz's Pamphlet

There are several subtle references to Conrad's overall criticism of nineteenth-ce
section. As well as his representing the protagonist's one connection with reality
environment, Kurtz's character also presents us with a criticism of the European
intentions in colonising Africa. The description of Kurtz's parents as half English a
reference to the symbolism portrayed in his character:

> *'All Europe contributed to the making of Kurtz, and by and by I
> appropriately, the International Society for the Suppression of S
> entrusted him with the making of a report...' (p. 61)*

The entrusting of this report to Kurtz by such a seemingly philanthropic body presents us with Conrad's symbol for the supposed benevolence and philanthropic virtues of the European imperialist. This is because, in reputation alone, Kurtz embodies all of the elements of European civilisation that are most humanist and **altruistic**: he is given to be kind, strong-willed, an excellent public speaker and a motivator of human spirit; he is reputed by all at home and abroad to be the pinnacle of humanitarianism and all that is great about the Empire's attempts to civilise the world. However, as we have mentioned, Conrad's belief is that no man can be incorrupt
even Kurtz, this great altruistic imperialist, has fallen to his baser instincts and ha
and mercenary in his values and his methods:

Keywords:

Altruistic: helpi
expecting anythi

Rationalisation
making explanati
that one has take

> *'But this must have been before his—let us say—nerves, went him to preside at certain midnight dances ending with unspeak were offered up to him…' (p. 61)*

Kurtz's corruptibility and his ultimate descent into this violent, unspeakable beha atrocities of the Belgian trading companies in Africa during the late nineteenth c Kurtz's initially altruistic pretences upon writing the report: he wishes to civilise a white man to be able to *'exert a power for good practically unbounded'* (p. 61). K descent into 'madness' is clearly a symbol for the popular attitude toward the Eu time; his report is the benevolent, humanistic reputation of the colonialists that home, whereas his behaviour upon reaching Africa is indicative of the reality:

> *'…this was the unbounded power of eloquence—of words—of (p. 61)*

Conrad may be suggesting that in much the same way as Kurtz has become like a with the power of words and speeches – through clever politics and altruistic pre gained precedence in Africa and were able to exploit her people and resources. and deceitfulness of the European intentions to civilise and improve these foreig **rationalisations** for the torture and violence that went on in reality:

> *'It was very simple, and at the end of that moving appeal to ev sentiment it blazed at you… like a flash of lightning in a seren the brutes!" (p. 62)*

Kurtz's final postscript sums up the great futility and the insincerity of his passion great European, supposedly made up of all the various elements of European su greatest values of benevolence and humanism at last expresses his inner desire t inclusion of such a massively contrasting postscript after such an enthusiastic an maintains Conrad's criticism of the white man's purpose in Africa. He is criticisin Europe's public image, for all the noble words, the speeches and the great repor justice merely veiled public perception from the truth that was their cruelty, gre entire continent.

Questions

1. Considering his experiences of Africa thus far in the book, why do you feel M Kurtz's voice with his name and is now so upset at the possibility that he may b

2. *'All Europe contributed to the making of Kurtz…' (p. 61)*

   What is Conrad implying with this statement? What elements of Kurtz's perso referring to and why is this significant when we consider his ultimate descent i

3. By comparing Kurtz's hugely elegant and philanthropic writing style with his c *the brutes!' (p. 62)*, how might we perceive Kurtz's great capacity for eloquen criticism of the public face of imperialist altruism?

Section 10

Part 2, pp. 62–67

The Harlequin

Marlow regretfully heaves the dead helmsman overboard, to a murmur of discon
He guesses that the pilgrims may have wanted to give him a Christian burial, whi
eaten him. As the boat continues at half speed, the Company Station at last appe
man, to whom Marlow refers as the harlequin because of his patchwork attire, be
directing the manager toward Kurtz's hut, the man professes to be a Russian trad
company to send him out for ivory. Marlow gives him the textbook found in the c
to be his. He then explains that the natives attacked Marlow because they do no

The Harlequin: Farcicality and Innocence

One of the more significant elements we might observe during these few pages i
harlequin. As we are introduced to the character of this Russian trader, we are q
innocence and naivety in the way he is described:

> *'A beardless, boyish face, very fair, no features to speak of, nos*
> *eyes, smiles and frowns chasing each other over that open cour*
> *and shadow on a wind-swept plain.' (p. 65)*

In contrast to the other white men whom Marlow has encountered during his ex
looking and fairly featureless: his face does not inspire any sign of unease or mis
of particular brilliance or virtue. It also becomes apparent that, upon running aw
had been allowed to travel to Africa of his own free will and virtually had to beg
admittance:

> *'It appears he had persuaded a Dutch trading-house on the coa*
> *stores and goods, and had started for the interior with a light h*
> *idea of what would happen to him than a baby.' (p. 66)*

This appears to be Conrad's attempt to display once again the true absurdity and
when a man is placed outside of his own context and into the vast unknown that
Europeans, such as Kurtz, Marlow, the general manager and the accountant, Con
man whose personality and values may have been little more than a blank canva
his round, blue eyes bespeak both his innocence and his inexperience. This may
contrast the effect of these absurd surroundings upon all types of mankind; from
respectable humanitarian that is Kurtz, to the youthful, enthusiastic young harle
harlequin had appeared in Africa brimming with thoughts of success and persona
years has experienced prodigious changes in his attitude and behaviour:

> *'He nodded a nod full of mystery and wisdom. 'I tell you,' he cr*
> *enlarged my mind." (p. 67)*

This is a reflection on Conrad's belief that even the innocent and the seemingly i
manipulated in the confusion that is the dark heart of Africa. With only the grea
his influence, the man has become wizened and humbled by Kurtz's oratory geni
once again as the charismatic, mythical and sage-like concept that he has becom
truly corruptible nature of the human mind: that even the most innocent and na
madness of the jungle.

It is also interesting to note how this man's attire differs so massively from anyth
before. Originally a suit or uniform of brown fabric, the man's clothing is covere
series of patches:

> *'He looked like a harlequin... covered with patches all over, wit*
> *red, and yellow... and the sunshine made him look extremely g*
> *neat withal, because you could see how beautifully all this patc*
> *(p. 65)*

This once again presents a dramatic contrast to the other white men whom Marl
Particularly notable is the way in which this man's bizarrely grotesque fashion is
sewn together. Marlow's description of this outfit appears to echo his descriptio
worn by the chief accountant, seen upon arrival at the Company Station in Part 1
characters is symbolic of a different concept. Where the accountant's clothing is
'achievement of character', (p. 21) in this bleak wilderness, the accountant sheep
a native woman to clean his linen. This presents the accountant as hollow and u
personal achievement and success is a false one – his character as empty and bla
he wears.

As we have mentioned, (see Section 3, *the Face of Imperialism*) the accountant is a
image of European colonialism during this period. The blank whiteness of his cloth
assumption that these men were enlightened and incorruptible, absolute beacons
humanitarian intentions. However, at this stage in the novella we meet with a ma
different tale. Covered with brightly coloured patchwork and representing a comi
the Russian presents us with Conrad's criticism of the contrast between the image
clothing is observed by Marlow to have originally been *brown holland* (a coarse fab
nature of colonialism in Africa. Unlike the accountant, he wears this damaged and
coarse material, symbolising how the reputation of colonialism may not be built up
of benevolence and philanthropy, but upon a far darker foundation of deceit and a

The multi-coloured patchwork itself appears to represent the confusion and absu
The harlequin's random and irregular appearance strongly contrasts with the ord
accountant and seems to present another of Conrad's observations, in that the pe
such a naïvely virtuous distortion of the reality. The idealistic perception of appl
is instead shown to be a false one. The patchwork is also observed to be immacu
Conrad's observation of the detail and intricateness of reality, that contrasts with
perceptions of the public. Finally, it is significant that this man's appearance evo
Originally a term for a comical, clown-like character, the application of this name
comments upon the realities of imperialist activities in Africa during this period, a
and ludicrous.

Questions

1. Compare and contrast the harlequin's eccentric dress with the pristine attire o
Station. In what ways could the contrastive clothing be metaphorical for the s
reputation of European imperialism/colonialism and the reality?

2a. How does the absurdity of the harlequin's clothing also symbolise the farcicali

2b. Define the term 'harlequin'. Why do you suppose Conrad decides to use this
in his criticism of imperialist behaviour?

Section 11

Part 3, pp. 68–74

Kurtz's Reputation

The harlequin describes Kurtz and his general methods. He has been literally raid disappearing for long stretches at a time with the tribes of surrounding villages. Kurtz threatened to shoot him for a small amount of ivory. Sweeping the hill with that there are disembodied heads on top of spikes outside Kurtz's headquarters. told that these men were rebels. As the sun fades on the camp, a great mass of c approach Marlow's group.

Darkness: Savagery and Ignorance

One of the more poignant elements we might observe during this section is the g over the surrounding jungle during Marlow's conversation with the Russian. This initial pages of this section, as the harlequin proclaims the visionary, prophetic n

> *"...He made me see things—things.'*
> *He threw his arms up... I looked around, and I don't know why never, never before, did this land, this river, this jungle, this ve sky, appear to me so hopeless and so dark, so impenetrable to h (p. 69)*

Darkness in this instance appears to be a metaphor for the savagery and confusio surrounds him. Until now, the jungle has never before appeared so chaotic and u that Marlow's observation of the increasing darkness is inspired by the Russian's is the first time Marlow has witnessed a civilised, enlightened human being beha inexplicably. Upon witnessing this bizarre behaviour, Marlow is led to an ultimat futility; he has realised that no amount of human knowledge and endeavour can this savage, prehistoric land that can be so corrupting to mankind, as it is merely wilderness that inspires mankind's inner darkness:

> *'I think the knowledge came to him at last—only at the very la had found him out early, and had taken on him a terrible veng invasion.' (p. 72)*

As Marlow sombrely relates, it is only when it is too late that a man is able to disc darkness and corruptibility in this confusing, mysterious environment. Towards t to observe another reference to the darkness that threatens to envelope these 'c interesting to note at this stage that as Marlow's perception of Kurtz develops wit corrupt behaviour, Marlow simultaneously becomes aware of the gradual approa

> *'The long shadows of the forest had slipped down hill while we beyond the ruined hovel, beyond the symbolic row of stakes. A while we down there were yet in sunshine...' (p. 73)*

The darkness seen here is once again symbolic of the savagery and corrupt beha station. At this stage, the approach of this shadow is a metaphor for our percept grisly staves are each a symbol for Kurtz's descent into savagery and violence an deplorable anecdotes, the darkness envelopes these symbols until only Marlow's are the only men in the inner station that are as yet free from the darkness that surrounded and threatened by its inevitable approach.

Comments on Imperialism: Justification for Invasion

Also prevalent during this section is Conrad's criticism of the absurdity of Europe
most notable in Marlow's surprising reaction, as he gazes uphill towards the seve
Russian implores him to understand the nature of Kurtz's situation:

> *'I had no idea of the conditions, he said: these heads were the h
> shocked him excessively by laughing. Rebels! What would be t
> was to hear? There had been enemies, criminals, workers—ar
> (p. 73)*

Marlow's sudden burst of contemptuous laughter at the use of the term 'rebels' p
criticism of the imperialist justification for a European presence in Africa during t
plaintively describing these suffering natives on their own land as rebellious, the t
the justification seems to Marlow to be as futile as the that of the man-of-war se
impenetrable bush because there are believed to be 'enemies' within. This appe
derision toward the European imperialists' behaviour in these African trading co
humanitarian rationalisation for the unashamed enslavement of African natives t
gesture, made to keep the gullible and the naïve blissfully unaware of reality. To
were supposed to be civilising the natives and creating trading opportunities for
arguably in reality these benevolent humanitarian intentions were often simply i
blatant exploitation of resources and the imperial expansion.

Questions

1. As the evening draws in over the Central Station, there is an impression of a f
threatens to engulf the steamboat crew. Identify two examples from this secti
approaching darkness may signify in relation to humanity and notions of civili

2. *"...He made me see things—things.'*
*He threw his arms up... I looked around, and I don't know why, but I assure you t
land, this river, this jungle, this very arch of this blazing sky, appear to me so hop
to human thought...' (p. 69)*

   What is it about the harlequin's behaviour that compels Marlow's perception o
impenetrable?

3. Why does Marlow suddenly laugh at the Russian's description of the disembo
this criminalise the supposed altruism of imperial activities?

Section 12

Part 3, pp. 74–79

Kurtz

Kurtz orders the natives to disperse and is carried into a small cabin. As he reads t speaks briefly to Marlow, who is instantly impressed by the power of his voice. The Marlow retreats to see a richly decorated native woman approaching the steame surround the boat and disappears into the forest. It seems that the Russian has h of patches from the storehouse and fears her influence on Kurtz. After the manag Kurtz, Marlow shocks him with a reference to his spy, the brickmaker, though afte condemned to Kurtz's fate. Marlow warns the Russian of the manager's intention notice the man takes some of Marlow's shoes and ammunition and disappears ab

Kurtz's Love-interest: Parallels Drawn

During this section, Marlow is met with the enigmatic appearance of Kurtz's mist Conrad here draws several parallels between Kurtz's life in Africa and his life at h presumably his lover, reflects Kurtz's 'intended' because she seems to be just as d ignorant of Kurtz's behaviour. Much like the fiancé, this woman relies heavily on forming her perceptions of his personality. Kurtz's virtues and successes are out form of her fine clothing and jewellery. This presents us with a similar concept t personality is perceived by his betrothed. Despite his behaviour, both women re their original perceptions of his personality and reputation. Their lifestyles are s experience that even the deepest psychological experiences that befall Kurtz lea their perceptions unsullied. This continues the way in which Conrad views the fe believing the female to be utterly out of touch with reality:

> *'It's queer how out of touch with truth women are! They live i and there had never been anything like it, and never can be.' (p*

As Kurtz lays dying in his cabin with the barbarically severed heads of his dissent mistress remains ignorant to reality, floating elegantly and plaintively through th her people's plight. This is shown to the reader through her reaction to the harle mere rags found decaying in a storeroom, but clearly of some materialistic value

> *'She got in one day and kicked up a row about those miserable storeroom to mend my clothes with... she talked like a fury to K pointing at me now and then.' (p. 76)*

Though Kurtz's use of torture and violence is outwardly despicable, it is only this that inspires her anger. We might observe that in Conrad's view, the women in t trials and tribulations of man by a veil of materialism and virtue, protecting them man's heart. The parallels drawn between Kurtz's women both at home and abr comparison of the wickedness and darkness of heart that pervade in both Londo discussed throughout the guide, the confusion that is prevalent in the dark heart symbolic darkness that envelopes London during the telling of Marlow's tale.

Hypocrisy and Morality: Marlow's Dilemma

One of the most interesting features we might observe throughout these pages i
the Europeans' hypocritical acquisition of the African colonies. This becomes cle
Kurtz's cabin, remarking on the ill timing of Kurtz's barbaric behaviour:

> *'The manager came out... 'He is very low, very low,' he said. H
> necessary to sigh, but neglected to be consistently sorrowful. '
> could for him... He did not see the time was not ripe for vigoro*

The manager once again presents us with a symbol for European hypocrisy. As he
condition, Marlow is clearly able to observe the insincerity and emptiness of his s
the forthcoming loss of Kurtz, he inwardly rejoices at the prospect of his death. F
hypocrisy, the manager outwardly decries Kurtz's behaviour as morally deplorable,
to his 'methods' as merely ill-timed, not as morally barbaric, but as inconvenient t
fortunes. This once again betrays Conrad's view that the European ivory trade's p
simply transparent justification for the pursuit of wealth and the exploitation of A

What is interesting at this point, however, is Marlow's reaction to the hypocritica
manager and his spy. As he betrays his utter disgust for the manager, Marlow's t
more barbaric methods:

> *'It seemed to me I had never breathed an atmosphere so vile, a
> to Kurtz for relief... I found myself lumped along with Kurtz a
> for which the time was not ripe. I was unsound! Ah! But it w
> at least a choice of nightmares.' (p. 77)*

The reason for Marlow's approval of Kurtz's ideals is simple. Rather than pursue t
justification for their invasion of Africa, Kurtz has acted upon the true ideals and
He has resorted to violence, torture and war, as means to procuring as much ivo
attempt to justify his actions with anything other than his pursuit of success and
gesture toward philanthropy which the station manager appears to advocate. W
Conrad presents the concept that in this confused, chaotic environment of decei
nightmarish behaviour of Kurtz may at last represent something real:

> *'I felt an intolerable weight oppressing my breast, the smell of
> unseen presence of victorious corruption, the darkness of an in
> (p. 78)*

It appears from Marlow's description of this dark, foreboding environment in wh
reign supreme, he finds Kurtz to be the one man who has acted truthfully and ou
without resorting to deceit and false justification. As we have previously discuss
tenuous link with the real world and despite the utter despicability of his actions
something that is justifiably real and solid, when surrounded by the sense of utte
thus far plagued his journey.

Questions

1. Identify any parallels or contrasts that exist between the lavishly decorated n
intended. Why do you feel Conrad draws such comparisons between Kurtz's
2. *'He did not see the time was not ripe for vigorous action.' (p. 77)* How does the
behaviour present a criticism of the hypocrisy of traders in Africa during the n
information to support your answer.
3. Why does Marlow frequently describe his siding with Kurtz and his rebuttal o
nightmares'? (p. 77)

Section 13

Part 3, pp. 79–84

The Pursuit

Marlow wakes up aboard the steamer late at night and surveys the camp. Hearin chanting and drums he goes ashore to investigate and discovers that Kurtz has di following his trail through the wet grass, Marlow discovers him, though Kurtz om With a native sorcerer nearby, Marlow senses the vulnerability of their situation a be throttled if he makes a sound. As Kurtz laments on his shattered ambitions, M At noon the next day, the boat leaves in front of a great crowd of natives, who sh perform strange dances. As the pilgrims raise their rifles, Marlow takes initiative disperse the crowd. Only Kurtz's mistress remains defiantly and unflinching as th from the rifles obscures Marlow's view and he does not see whether the mistress

The Corruptibility of Humanity: A Choice between Two Nightmares

Throughout these few pages, we are able to observe that despite his initial feelin intimate connection of understanding with Kurtz. This is because Kurtz's descen reflected in Marlow's own moral dilemma. The two men have thus far shared m in Africa charged with some seemingly philanthropic task and has thus been dist his own context. Each man has been thrust amongst the savage conditions and t and has been taken to the furthest reaches of human experience at the end of w examine the nature of his own soul. It is the horrific realisation of his connectio Marlow as he comes upon Kurtz's empty hut, prior to the pursuit:

> *'What made this emotion so overpowering was… the moral sh something altogether monstrous… had been thrust upon me u*

What terrifies Marlow so deeply is the realisation of the notion that it is impossi without committing some act of moral evil – that there can be no light without d suggesting the notion that runs subliminally through the book: that no man is inc and hypocrisy are inherent in human nature. Marlow's predicament as he pursu which path toward corruption he will take – be it favouring the hypocrisy he so d whom he has promised his loyalty:

> *'I did not betray Mr. Kurtz—it was ordered I should never bet written I should be loyal to the nightmare of my choice.' (p. 80)*

Rather than allowing Marlow a morally acceptable alternative, he must now be l the madness of Kurtz or the hypocrisy symbolised by his companions. As he self- how his self-reflective behaviour has begun to mimic Kurtz's own descent into m chasing the crawling madman through the forest, Marlow's mind wanders towar events that have occurred throughout his mysterious, enigmatic journey:

> *'I had some imbecile thoughts. The knitting old woman with t upon my memory as a most improper person to be sitting at th affair. I saw a row of pilgrims squirting lead in the air out of W hip…' (p. 81)*

Marlow's hastening approach toward the horrors of self-realisation seems to ech the madness and savagery symbolised by the native camp. As he considers the u

continue to surround and envelop him in this harsh and confusing environment, N
contemplate the nature of his own soul – he has begun to feel a sense of freedor
from society's structured moral code. In this solitary, maddening environment, fe
rules and regulations of European civilisation, a man is able to become a free age
true will of his own soul and it is this freedom that has forced Kurtz's descent int
amount of freedom, Kurtz's plunge into barbarism and cruelty is clearly an indica
inherent in his soul.

As he contemplates the nightmarish impossibility of his dilemma, Marlow realise
allow him to meet his end amongst the natives:

> *'I did not want to have the throttling of him, you understand—*
> *have been very little use for any practical purpose.' (p. 82)*

Marlow is presented with two alternatives: in murdering Kurtz as a means to pro
on the same sense of ultimate freedom and independence that has driven Kurtz
Kurtz to his fate as he creeps toward the depravity and insanity symbolised by th
betrayal. Should Kurtz be allowed to descend into complete madness, his reputa
destroyed and Marlow will have acted in favour of the corrupt, conniving station
horrific reality of Marlow's task is that he must keep the man alive and return hi
resigning himself to the fact that no matter how civilised, benevolent or philanth
context, when acting independently from the structure of society every man's so
propensity toward darkness and evil.

Questions

1a. Upon discovering Kurtz just yards away from the native camp, Marlow experi
pair, identify the two alternatives available to him and list the positive and ne

1b. What is the outcome of Marlow's dilemma and how is this critical of humanity?

2. How does Marlow's furtive and chaotic chase through the forest symbolise the
respectable of men? In your answer, refer to the amount of distance betwee
of the native camp.

Section 14

Part 3, pp. 84–88

Kurtz's Death

As the steamboat returns downriver, Marlow reflects that he is now viewed by his ... 'unsound methods'. With the occasional egomaniacal outburst from the dying m... eloquence and self-pride are merely a farcical compensation for the darkness of h... steamer breaks down and during the delay Kurtz hands to Marlow a bundle of pa... fiancé in England. One night, Marlow finds him lying in the dark, waiting for dea... words: 'The horror! The horror!'. Later at dinner it is announced that he has died... significance of Kurtz's judgement of the universe as a moral victory, achieved thro... but nonetheless a success for the human soul.

The Theme of Darkness: Kurtz's Soul

As the boat is carried downriver bearing the rapidly weakening Kurtz, it is useful t... symbolism and figurative language. In the opening part of this section, we are ab... a subtle comparison between Kurtz's death and the rapid ebbing of the river:

> *'The brown current ran swiftly out of the heart of darkness, be... the sea with twice the speed of our upward progress; and Kurtz ... swiftly too, ebbing, ebbing out of his heart...' (p. 84)*

Just as the murky river waters flow rapidly out of Africa, the boat and her crew a... confusion and chaos for which the continent is a symbol. It is significant that Kur... away and it is his own dark nature and savagery that rapidly flow from his dark, d... the hollow, empty shell of humanity:

> *'The voice was gone. What else had been there? But I am of co... day the pilgrims buried something in a muddy hole.' (p. 87)*

It is interesting that upon Kurtz's death, Marlow does not recognise that the body... man himself: he views it as merely the shadow of reality, bereft of Kurtz's true se... simply a disused husk; his voice, his knowledge of the horrors of human experien... leaving nothing behind but his hollow, false reputation in Europe: an ineffectual, ... as the dark waters of Kurtz's soul flow swiftly away, Marlow is able to observe the... outward character, when faced with the reality:

> *'The shade of the original Kurtz frequented the bedside of the l... both the diabolic love and the unearthly hate of the mysteries it ... fought for the possession of that soul satiated with primitive e... fame, of sham distinction...' (p. 85)*

With the man dying before his eyes and betraying his egomaniacal plans for fame... see the utter preposterousness of Kurtz's grand repute in Europe. His character is ... false perception and idealism. As Kurtz's soul battles for self-justification in its fi... to perceive the utter pretence of the 'civilised' man, when his veils are torn asun... such a confused, unstructured context.

Kurtz's Judgment upon Humanity:
'The horror! The horror!'

Possibly one of Conrad's most famous quotations is Kurtz's final declaration of th
Unable to see the light of Marlow's candle beyond the darkness of his soul, the d
of clarity in the black world that has enveloped him:

> *'I saw on that ivory face the expression of sombre pride, of ruth
> terror—of an intense and hopeless despair… He cried in a whi
> cry that was no more than a breath— 'The horror! The horror!*

In becoming able to reflect so deeply upon the true nature of his own heart, Kurt
impenetrable blackness within himself. His conflicting emotional experiences su
perceived the human experience: he simultaneously rebukes and reveres his ow
proud and terrified. As has been quoted once already in the words of the harleq
judged by the rules of European society, because he has so utterly kicked loose o
ruled by the wickedness of his own heart, Kurtz alone is able to proclaim judgem
the depths of depravity to which even the most civilised and enlightened heart c
status of a God while meting out wrathful vengeance, profiting immensely in bot
moment of self-realisation, Kurtz is simultaneously overwhelmed and terrified b
man's will and by the innate capabilities of even the most benevolent soul.

It is also interesting to note during the final passage of this section that Marlow v
a success in itself. At this point he reflects that if he himself should die, his exper
significant enough to warrant his own self-realisation:

> *'I like to think that my summing-up would not have been a wo
> contempt.' (p. 88)*

Marlow believes that Kurtz, though the immense realisation of the wickedness o
on the point of death, has achieved something that very few men can ever hope

> *'Better his cry – much better. It was an affirmation, a moral v
> innumerable defeats, by abominable terrors, by abominable sa
> a victory!' (p. 88)*

We are able to observe here how Marlow views Kurtz's final words as a victory n
humanity in its entirety: for the good of the human soul. After his death, this pla
Kurtz's only surviving legacy. He has cast aside the trappings of success and fam
barbarism of reality – and in his final hour has decried the darkness that is in us a
Russian harlequin, Marlow has now become a disciple of Kurtz's great mind. We
through such torturous conditions and such a fatally chaotic environment, Kurtz
stretches of the human experience. In uttering his judgement of the world, he h
Had he not proclaimed this final judgement on humanity, Kurtz's experiences ma
worthless, a defeat. However, with disciples such as Marlow to spread the tale o
resounding success. Indeed, as Marlow now sits aboard the *Nellie,* narrating the
colleagues, he is opening the minds of decadent, materialistic westerners to the

Questions

1. *'The brown current ran swiftly out of the heart of darkness, bearing us down tow
our upward progress; and Kurtz's life was running swiftly too, ebbing, ebbing out*

   As a class discuss the connotations of the excerpt above. What symbolism might be i
   speed and direction of Marlow's journey significant?

2. Kurtz's final judgement on humanity, *'The horror! The horror!' (p. 92),* is viewed by
   this victory be ascribed? Marlow? Kurtz? Europe? Humanity? Explain your answer
   section of the novel.

3. Why does Marlow fail to recognise the pilgrim's burial service the following morning
   is left behind after Kurtz's corpse has been buried?

Section 15

Part 3, pp. 89–96

Conclusion

Having suffered a near fatal illness, Marlow returns to Europe where he finds he is for European life. Company representatives later question him about Kurtz's pers his report on the Suppression of Savage Customs, he yields nothing. After relinqu Kurtz's cousin and then to a man claiming to be his colleague, Marlow is left with delivers in person to Kurtz's intended. When she appears in her mourning clothes acuteness of her grief; though a year has passed it is as though Kurtz had died on with praise and reverence for him and wishes that his memory should never die. S his last words and despite the compulsion to tell her the truth, he tells her that Ku name. The book ends as the unnamed narrator looks out to the sea, which seems of an immense darkness'.

The Theme of Darkness and Light: Kurtz's Intended and Colonialism

In this final section of the novella, Conrad returns once again to the theme of dar in colonial Africa at the time, as well as the ignorance and naivety of Europeans a book is laced intricately with symbolism. As Marlow learns of Kurtz's revered an relatives and colleagues, his self-critical views are evoked once again. This becom Kurtz's intended, whose opinion of the man differs enormously from the reality e

> *'But with every word spoken the room was growing darker, and smooth and white, remained illumined by the inextinguishable love.' (p. 93)*

The room grows ever darker as the woman speaks, as though the farcicality of th impressing upon him – an existence described in Section 9 as one of policemen a woman speaks, Marlow becomes aware how far her lifestyle is from the true nat carefully ordered and prescribed façade, that protects its people from the chaoti innate depravity of the human heart. Only outside of this context has Marlow be the truth is an ugly one. However, as the darkness of ignorance, wickedness and upon the room, the only glimmer of brightness in the room is projected from the Kurtz's intended symbolises the innocent and the naïve: she is the masses of Euro in a room filled with darkness represents the common European's blind faith in h benevolent nature of imperialist activities in foreign lands.

We may also note that as the naïve woman extols her late fiancée's glorious dee represent a form of justification for imperialist behaviour in Africa during this pe away from home and his activities unknown to her, she has unwittingly invented benevolence and nobility:

> *"And you admired him,' she said. 'It was impossible to know h him. Was it?" (p. 93)*

Similarly, each of the three men who visit Marlow to retrieve Kurtz's documents h of the man, not one of which portrays him adequately. One believes him a talen orator with prospects in the political sphere. The great reverence in which Kurtz and his intended could therefore be viewed as a kind of moral justification for hi the light of his many achievements and he is venerated as some kind of universa the commonly perceived idealistic attitude of the European during this period w men and women who bustle and barter on the streets of Brussels are able to ma with their own veil of untruths and with their proud reverence for its many succe

'Their bearing, which was simply the bearing of commonplace i their business... was offensive to me like the outrageous flaunt of a danger it is unable to comprehend.' (p. 89)

Marlow is offended by these people, because they shall never be able, nor willin colonialism. Instead, they hoist the concept of the empire high upon a pedestal; upon ideas of progress and glory in the name of the empire. Marlow has observe rather than tear away the veil protecting the woman from reality, he chooses no

'I was on the point of crying at her, 'Don't you hear them?' The them in a persistent whisper... 'The horror! The horror!'" (p. 9

This is because the woman clearly does not wish to know the truth: she wishes t to remain reverent of Kurtz's reputation, in order to justify her devotion to him a loss. In much the same way as the larger part of the European masses, Kurtz's in significantly from imperialist success and so to enlighten her to its realities may b

Final Comments on Imperialism

However, a question we might ask ourselves is this: why if Marlow cannot repea colonialism to Kurtz's intended does he proceed to tell the entirety of his story t may note at this point that this may be because these men are not in fact repres masses, but symbolise only the more conservative advocates of imperialism. Ob is described in detail at the very outset of the novel; they are the accountants, di profit from the ivory trade and from colonialism. The rest of Europe, symbolised torn from their perceptions simply because they would not comprehend the rea

'You know what vast plans he had. I knew of them too—I coul understand—but others knew of them. Something must rema least, have not died.' (p. 95)

These men, however, as staunch advocates of imperialism, directly stand to prof overseas. These men are the men who are aware of the great plans of colonialis 'vigorous action' (as Kurtz's behaviour is contemptuously described: see Section resources. Marlow has targeted the keystone in the imperialist structure and ha men whose lives revolve around the success of the empire.

Finally, we are able to note that with the closing speech from the anonymous na narrative, the men aboard the *Nellie* become aware of the deep, pervading dark

'The offing was barred by a black bank of clouds, and the tranq to the uttermost ends of the earth flowed sombre under an ove lead into the heart of an immense darkness.' (p. 96)

This may be because at the close of Marlow's tale each of these men has been m inherent in all of mankind, as well as the realities of absurdity and confusion whi and respectability. The all-enveloping darkness surrounding the boat may now r self-criticism in the listeners, for they are now able to look out upon the world w and insight into the darker nature of reality. Also interesting at this final stage is how he describes the darkly symbolic waters of the estuary as both *'sombre'* and to describe such a dark metaphor, the author may be commenting on the proper over his inherent wickedness. Literally, should we contrast the structured, order against the realities of human depravity and of imperialism in Africa, there is an

and respectability acting as the transparent rationalisation for an immeasurable d
water may appear outwardly sombre and calm, to the newly enlightened narrato
toward a concept that is far darker and more formidable than its appearance mig

Questions

1. Having read the book, why do you feel that Marlow is relating his tale to the
did not choose to be truthful to his fiancé? Refer to the profession of each cha
interests in imperialism.

2. As Kurtz's great reputation is described by his intended, the room around Ma
again. Suggest how Marlow's realisation of the gradually darkening room re
ignorance of European life. Why does Marlow return from Africa with such a
Europeans?

3. Discuss as a class the significance of the 'darkness' in the unnamed character's
waterway… seemed to lead into the heart of an immense darkness' (p. 96). Wha
other passengers by Marlow's story? Do you feel that Conrad intended this to
reader?

Whole Text Analysis
Character Profiles

Marlow

The seafaring adventurer and protagonist of the tale is constructed from Conrad's journey to Africa. Described by the narrator as a 'wanderer' (p. 5), Marlow capta through the African Congo to find Kurtz, the enigmatic and deranged Company a enraptured. Marlow's perspective is very flexible: he appears impartial and obje change and adapt his moral values. As the story's narrator, Marlow allows us ins observations of the many white men he encounters and discovers to be untrustw observations also include the general abuse of the natives at the hands of these s 'civilised' westerners. Though he is indifferent toward Kurtz at the beginning of t experience of the man himself is enough to change definitively his views towards civilisation and colonialism.

Kurtz

Kurtz is a Company agent stationed deep in the heart of the Congo, who ultimately of a bloodthirsty primitivism. He enters the Congo with the intention to civilise the that his convictions have become more tyrannical over time. The enigmatic myste is due to his ability to procure more ivory than any other station manager, though h 'unsound' (p. 77). A talented musician and painter, Kurtz is also regarded highly fo regarded by all who know him as a 'universal genius' (p. 33). He is the object of M a prominent member of the ivory company, his apparent descent into madness an towards the moral sickness that Conrad believed to be at the heart of Western soc

General Manager

The general manager is described by Marlow as a curious character, whose main to inspire or to lead, but to invoke 'uneasiness' in his fellow man. He is a rapacio presents us with an exact mirror image of Kurtz: where Kurtz is described as a ge and organisation and is universally respected, the general manager however pos yet is respected simply due to his unintelligent resilience to the world. He feels t presents a more suitable candidate for his position.

The Chief Accountant

The first white man Marlow meets officially upon his arrival at the station. He is a civilisation, dressed in pristine linen and polished boots so that he contrasts stark his jungle station. He is a callous and unsympathetic man, emphasised by the an groans of a dying man in his hut.

The Director of Companies, Narrator, Lawyer and Ac

Marlow's fellow passengers, who wait aboard the *Nellie* on the Thames estuary a Between them, as the narrator says, is 'the bond of the sea' (p. 4). These men ar device, particularly the unnamed narrator who provides a detailed description o the story that makes up most of the narrative.

The 'Pilgrims'

The white populace of the Central Station. Marlow refers ironically to these mer appear to him as Christian adventurers, intent on their colonial ambitions of secu their inhabitants. The pilgrims fear what they perceive as barbarism in the native treatment of them betrays the hypocrisy of these European imperialists, whose g be more far more barbaric than that of the natives they have colonised.

Cannibals

As with many of Conrad's characters, the 'pilgrims' are mirrored by the native 'ca
native men drafted into Marlow's expedition to crew the steamboat. A direct co
of their white counterparts, the natives are surprisingly calm and collected and a
and thoughtful in attitude, but are the more restrained and placid members of th

The Fiancée and the Native Woman

Once again, these two characters present us with direct counterparts in Africa ar
remains devoted to his memory a year after she is informed of his death, though
differs from the elements of his character that had been allowed freedom in the
native woman is a silent and enigmatic figure and presents us with a direct contr
and his life on the Congo.

The Russian

A youthful figure whose reasons for being in the Congo are unclear, though oste
He is a devoted friend and companion of Kurtz and admires him zealously. He ac
and an emissary for Kurtz and the Inner Station.

Questions

1. Discuss in pairs how the 'lesser' characters in the text, such as the Russian or
our understanding of Marlow and Kurtz. What, for example, do we learn
towards the Russian?

2. Find three quotations which support the interpretation that Kurtz descends i
the text.

Essay Practice:
'*Joseph Conrad has echoed many aspects of his own character and personality in*
Charlie Marlow.'

Write an extended piece of prose, discussing to what extent you agree/disagr
Use contextual information and relevant quotations in your answer.

Relationships

Marlow and Kurtz

This is arguably the central relationship in the novella. When Marlow recalls first
he says that 'I wasn't very interested in him' (p. 37), believing him to be the same
has met so far. He finds himself drawn to Kurtz over time because he suspects th
about the white man's position in Africa that go beyond the Company's thirst for
high-minded opinions of Kurtz are formed before he has the chance to meet him,
fascinated and horrified by the madness and savagery that characterises the obje
develops a sense of responsibility and 'loyalty' (p. 87) for Kurtz and is determined
his reputation. It is also important to recognise that Marlow ultimately fails to u
happened to him. At the moment of Kurtz's death Marlow realises that he lies a
darkness. I looked at him as you peer down at a man who is lying at the bottom o
never shines' (p. 86). In this sense, the relationship between the two reflects one
the struggle for meaning in a situation that is too horrifying and painful to contai

Marlow and 'The Pilgrims'

Marlow does not share the respect he has for Kurtz with the other white settlers
describes those who accompany him on the steamboat to the Inner Station as ar
dislikes the manager of the Central Station because he fails to treat Marlow with
him to have 'no learning, and no intelligence' (p. 26). Similarly, he resents the 'w
with him to the Central Station because he is only there to 'make money, of cours
with the white settlers is a very negative one, but is complicated by the fact that
company as them. Marlow realises that he is more similar to the 'pilgrims' than t
when faced with death, 'I found with humiliation that probably I would have not

Marlow and 'The Natives'

The key passage that explores this relationship can be found in the first section of
arrives in Africa to find the Company building a railroad with the help of thousand
struck' (p. 20) by what he sees but also guiltily admits to himself that he is 'part o
and just proceedings' (p. 19). His tone here is one of bitter irony and sarcasm; ne
nothing in the remainder of the text to improve the situation of the African native
the murder of the African helmsman that steers his boat up the Congo River, Ma
patronisingly tone. 'I missed my helmsman awfully,' he says, in spite of the fact t
overboard almost immediately after he is fatally speared in the river battle with K
Throughout the narrative, Marlow's attitude towards the natives is typified by a d
continually turns away from the suffering of those that his people have enslaved
somewhat responsible. There is sympathy for the natives in Marlow's narration b
position of colonial power to act on that sympathy.

Questions

1. Are there any other key relationships not mentioned here? Could you make a
relationship between the white settlers and the natives as the main relationsh
2. Write a short piece of creative prose from the viewpoint of one of the native
watches Marlow's steamboat coming up the river. What are their thoughts a
invaders?

Essay Practice:
'Heart of Darkness *is Conrad's reflection on man's inner duality*.'

What are the two opposing elements of the human condition that Conrad intends
criticise in the book? Support your answer with evidence from the text.

Themes in Heart of Darkn

Colonial Hypocrisy

As with many of the authors who comprise the literary move into Modernism, Co with farce, political allegory and social criticism. *Heart of Darkness* is most predo and hypocrisy of the civilised man. During the very first part of the novella, Marl implicitly the shores of Britain in the days before Roman conquest and the shores of the Congolese river on which the story takes place. The ancient Romans, far more technologically advanced than the Celts whom they superseded, must indeed have thought Britain a strange and barbaric country: the well-documented persecution of the Celts and the ultimate fall of the Roman Empire is considered by Marlow to be a prophetic tale for future imperialists. However, rather than learning from the mistakes of the past, this new 'Roman Empire' made up o fortune in the colonies of Africa and commits acts of barbarism comparable to th The hypocrisy that Conrad identifies in the text is this: colonialism is founded on t and development, but the morally reprehensible methods it uses to achieve thos of any such advancement. Marlow's apparently needless digression on the expa fact a pointed attack on the idea that colonialism represents the progress of dev

Keywords:

Farce: ridiculous disorganisation

Allegory: a retell story with a hidde

Conrad's fury is primarily directed at the Belgian government, who – as we have *Contextual Information*) – took control of the Congo during the mid 1800s and ex and mistreating the African natives under the veil of civilisation. Indeed, the ivor in the Congo is nothing more than a front for thievery, slave labour and sacrifice plundering their natural resources. In 1892, King Leopold II took political power o traders to take any of her natural resources without having to trade with the nat symbolism that the colonists are seen to enforce drastic and violent retribution i justice while the very act of committing their murderous atrocities is morally dep blatant dishonesty and covert profiteering being equally hypocritical.

The Death of Colonialism

With this hypocrisy in mind, it is important to consider how Conrad uses imagery Belgian Trading Company is doomed to failure. For example, there are numerou machinery being used to modernise the Congo is described as being discarded o one of the Company's stations, Marlow observes 'a boiler wallowing in the grass lying there on its back with its wheels in the air', like 'the carcass of some dead a Western technology have been abandoned in the African jungle because they sim detail of the truck being 'undersized' indicates this), and as the jungle envelops t reclaimed or naturalised by the wildness of the environment. Paying close atten jungle environment frequently reasserts its dominance over man's machines in t Conrad imagined colonialism's future as a return to the natural environment whi

In *Heart of Darkness*, the future is bleak not only for the technology of colonialism Imagery of death accompanies Marlow wherever he goes. Ominously, the man w Congo has been murdered by the natives and, on travelling there, Marlow finds h body fell, 'the grass growing through his ribs… tall enough to hide his bones' (p. 10 uses the metaphor of a 'whited sepulchre' (a tomb or burial chamber) with 'grass outside (p. 11). Through these repetitions of imagery, Conrad is again suggesting t attitudes that it represents are fated to die and disappear under the re-growth of

Darkness and Confusion

As mentioned above (see Context: *The Modernist Movement*) there is a great de attached to Conrad's use of a foreboding darkness in this novella. The frame sto narrative begins in darkness: as the sun sets over the Thames and the sailors awa darkness of London is echoed many times during Marlow's experiences in the Co gloomy, misty atmosphere of such an unknown place, but the darkness of its inh Darkness, as we have mentioned, is used as a metaphor for a number of concept unknown, the ominous, looming darkness of confusion and trepidation that is su with the passing of each moment. The terror evoked by an eerie screech as Mar symbolic of a very human fear, the fear of the unknown, the foreign or the unfam from home and unable to see their pursuers, the crew are driven to madness – n by their inability to see them.

The significance of this symbol is that it relates strongly to Conrad's own experie period: the uncertainty of sustaining the European colonies and the massive soci would take place at the turn of the century would each dwell heavily upon the th is only with hindsight that Conrad is able to reflect upon the darkness and trepid this time: Marlow's historical comparison of the Congolese rivers with the river T world's 'dark places' is certainly indicative of the uncertainty and mutability of th

Darkness and Evil

Throughout the novella, darkness also represents the evil that is hidden within th for, as each of the novella's white settler characters is separated from his civilise comforts and enforced laws of Britain and Europe, they begin to succumb to the concept amongst modernist authors, the contrast between black and white, or b virtually always synonymous with the relationship between good and evil. In *He* their pristine uniforms and great moral values are seen beating and scrabbling lik others, such as the general manager endeavour, to usurp and **monopolise** the co all in the pursuit of personal gain. Conrad's criticism lies in his belief that no ma Kurtz is universally respected by all who know him, he is responsible for committing some of the most barbaric and ghoulish acts in the novella. This is because in this 'dark place', the hidden evil inside every man, no matter how pristine of uniform or of morals, is allowed to be set free. Conrad does not believe that the Congo itself is necessarily evil, but that man's propensity toward evil deeds is psychologically inevitable in an isolated environment.

Keywords:

Monopolise: tak particular market ivory trade, with t money from it

Question

1. Create a mind map with each of the themes above in its central boxes. Mak using relevant quotations from the text.

Essay Practice 1: Colonialism is one of the most prominent themes in this novella. elements of the subject does Conrad criticise, and how? Find at least two or more your statements with quotations from the novella.

Essay Practice 2: Kurtz arrives in Africa filled with optimism and philanthropic (h intentions but is found to have descended into violent and unethical methods. Is K issue? Write an extended piece of prose discussing how Kurtz's descent into mad colonialism.

Style and Genre

Before the publication of the novella in its entirety in 1903, the three parts of *He* published separately between February and April of 1899, in a popular literary ar *Blackwood's Magazine.* The disjointed nature of this method of publication not o novella rather than a novel, but also explains the pace of the action. Despite Co is rarely a page on which he dwells for more than a few paragraphs on any given

Keywords:

Periodical: a now-outdated term used to describe newspapers or magazines that are published at regular intervals

With the turn of the twentie penned each piece, it is no s in the West during this perio novella differs from much o literature in both its structu fact that despite being struc omnipresent narrator often and Victorian genres is nota Modernist author – a follow rejected the objective, idealistic approach of the previous century and focused u self-criticism and existentialism. *Heart of Darkness* (1899) is written exclusively i ending with the unnamed passenger's observations of his surroundings and his f narrative belonging primarily to Marlow, the action is notably broken at intervals his fellow passengers:

> *'This is the worst of trying to tell... Here you all are, each moor addresses...' (p. 58)*

The use of this structure seems fundamental in separating the reader from the n Conrad appears to reject the writer/reader relationship common to Classical anc relationship be established between narrator and reader. It is as though the rea conversation between a group of friends, without partaking in the telling of the t reader to be on an equal footing with the protagonist, he is very much pushed to observe rather than to participate. Conrad's wish appears to be to compel his au deprecatingly. The reader/writer relationship is unnecessary considering the **par** the reader must simply join the group aboard the *Nellie* to receive Marlow's narr protagonist's criticisms upon himself.

Key Elements of Narrative Structure

The most important structural aspect of *Heart of Darkness* is that it is a **Chinese-box narrative**, that is, a story that uses a framing narrative (or 'box') to encompass the main plot. The frame narrative of the novella takes place on board the *Nellie*, where Marlow tells his story to his shipmates. It is a particularly slight frame narrative, so much so that we often find ourselves engrossed in the plot for pages at a time before Conrad reminds us through a narrative shift that the principal action of the story is taking place at the mouth of the Thames and not in the heart of the Congo. The effect of this on the reader is that we feel disorientated and lost as we read Marlow's story, accompanied by an uneasy sense that we are unsure of where we are. Conrad includes occasional **recursions**

Keywords:

Parabolic: descri that is propelled i a curve shape bef

Chinese-box nar the main story is story

Recursion: a retu mentioned eleme setting, character

to the frame narrative, such as the one on p. 33, as a means of comparing the mo
Marlow's tale with the literal darkness that comes with the onset of night aboard

As has been discussed, the novella's division into three long sections rather than
result of it originally being written for publication by a periodical. However, this s
as well as practical intentions. With the lack of chapters, Marlow is able to move
the middle of paragraphs and sometimes even in the middle of sentences – anoth
genre. This gives the narrative a dream-like quality in which the events and setti
together. On p. 88, Marlow moves without warning from his return down the Co
return to the 'sepulchral city' of Belgium, which encourages the reader to think of
indistinguishable.

The very last passage of the novella sees the narrator remark that the mouth of t
story, resembles a route 'into the heart of an immense darkness' (p. 96). This de
divided his story between two narrative voices: by drifting in between the frame
while abandoning any notion of conventional narrative structure, Conrad creates
West more generally, resembles the apparently strange and savage world of the C
might first imagine. Colonialism is based on the principle of a dominant power g
of increasing its power, but the fact that Conrad deliberately blurs the distinction
the colonisers and the African lands of the colonised suggests that he considers t
to be a false one.

Questions

1a. Research other novellas from the Modernist period that explore the change
such as Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* and Hemingway's *The Old Man and the S*
between these texts and *Heart of Darkness*, looking particularly at how the c
struggle against both their internal demons and the forces of nature.

1b. How do these struggles that man faces in novellas of the Modernist period re
colonialism in *Heart of Darkness*?

Essay Practice:
Conrad sets the frame narrative on a gradually darkening evening on the Thame
What is the significance of the approaching darkness on British shores? Discuss in
of ignorance, morality and hypocrisy.

Symbolism

Conrad's propensity for figurative language and symbolism is certainly key to his g genre. He frequently descends into characteristic floods of overtly symbolic lang run-on sentences with multiple clauses:

> *'Suddenly she opened her bared arms... in an uncontrollable de the swift shadows darted out on the earth, swept around on th steamer into a shadowy embrace.' (p. 76)*

The use of this overt symbolism and abstract **figuration** markedly differs from the more objective style of pre- and post-modernist literature and is a fundamental part of the Modernist literary style. Conrad does not explain the connotations of these symbols in any great depth. Consequently, the reader must therefore draw their own conclusions from each of the similes and metaphors presented to them, jus define the many intertwining themes of the novella using their own perspective. since its publication more than a century ago, there has been such widespread d true intentions for the novella; from some quarters (such as the essay by Chinua A Reception page) comes the argument that maintains Conrad as an overt racist, w while glorifying imperial activities. Others deem that his writing presents a more European politics.

Keywords:

Figuration: mak particular shape

Metaphors

The burning hut and the sunken steamboat are both metaphors for the gradual d attempted conquest of this area of the Congo. They indicate that the Company's commercial gain are unsustainable and doomed to failure.

Another metaphor that explores this idea is that of Brussels, the city in which the based, as a 'sepulchre' or tomb. There are two possible interpretations available Company is fated to fall apart in time, and, secondly, there is an implication that death and that those who are contained within its power structure, whether the are fated to die.

Literary Style

Conrad's writing is a wonderfully poetic expression of sentiments that seem at ti His self-analytical style often invokes the use of repetition and self-reflection, as searches for some kind of rationalisation for the confusion he witnesses:

> *'He had tied a bit of white worsted round his neck—Why? Wh it a badge—an ornament—a charm—a propitiatory act? Wa connected with it?' (p. 20)*

The disjointed, chaotic nature of this style and indeed that of the novella's theme seems to be an articulation of Conrad's own personal dilemma; a dilemma which may stem from his tumultuous Polish background. Despite his obvious talent with the English language and his natural **lyrical** rhythm, the author appears to be forever searching for the right words in a language that is not his own, mirroring Marlow's own search for meaning on a continent that is

Keywords:

Lyrical: a way of s that has the soun song

Motifs

As we have seen in the section-by-section analysis, darkness is one of the most im
text. It is worth focusing on the different ways in which Conrad uses darkness to
The darkness of the African jungle reflects the uncertainty that Marlow feels in its
difficult it is for the colonisers to find their way through this foreign land. The **ant**
Conrad provides of the jungle are numerous, presenting it as a living and breathing entity that will not give up its shadowy secrets. However, the darkness surrounding the Congo is also one that has been created, in part, by the colonisers. We see this demonstrated by the colonial map of Africa, blackened by markings and place-names made by white settlers, which Marlow looks at during the beginning of the text (p. 9).

Keywords:

Anthropomorpl
characteristics to
is not human

Next to its darkness, what Marlow finds most oppressive about the jungle is its s
throughout the text is that the silence of the Congo serves to amplify the innerm
inhabit it, as exemplified by the forest echoing back Marlow's cries of delight wh
repair the steamboat (p. 36). Too much of this silence, however, and one can be
Kurtz. Silence is also a motif that connects the narrator's frame narrative and M
Marlow falls silent that we return to the frame narrative. As has been mentione
tropes of darkness and silence also act as metaphors for the essential meaningle
in Africa.

Questions

1. As a class, debate whether Conrad's use of symbolism could be said to glori
activities of the colonists. Is his depiction of colonialism entirely negative?

2. Another language device that Conrad uses is the Belgian ship 'firing into a c
metaphor for the futility of the settlers' mission in Africa. Can you find anoth
similar metaphor is used?

Essay Practice:

'I think the knowledge came to him at last—only at the very last. But the wilderness
and had taken on him a terrible vengeance for the fantastic invasion.' (p. 72)

Conrad often uses anthropomorphosis to describe the forest that surrounds Marlo
What are the connotations of this symbolism and how is it developed during the
above in your answer and include at least two further examples.

Form

Point of View

Although the reader is in fact seeing the events of the novella through the eyes o
equally reasonable to argue that the main narrative point of view is that of Marl
takes up most of *Heart of Darkness*. The position of the narrator and the reader a
since both are, in a sense, sitting and listening to Marlow's account. Both narrat
often serves to complete the use of 'I' in the text; sometimes, when Marlow's sto
narrator's, it is unclear who the 'I' that is telling the story is, disrupting the idea o
However, this is not to say that the narrator does not need to be in the text at all;
point of view by inserting the narrator between Marlow and the reader is to rem
inside Marlow's head and cannot know what he is really thinking. In this way, M
enigmatic to the narrator and the reader as Kurtz is to Marlow.

Narrative Tense

Both the narrator and Marlow's narratives are written, for the most part, in the p
subtly manipulates and contrasts these two narrative layers to disrupt the reade
making the past seem like the future and the future seem like the past. Since Ma
back in time than the narrator's does, this gives the narrator's story the impressio
even though it isn't. Likewise, Marlow's narration sometimes lapses into the pre
thread of his story and begins to address his companions on the boat directly, su
impossible; it is impossible to convey the life-sensation of any given epoch of one
transitions between the past and present tense in Marlow's narrative voice tend
he realises the 'impossibility' of telling his story in a faithful and truthful manner

Genre Conventions

Much of the above discussion about point of view and narrative tense can be rel
Darkness belongs to the Modernist tradition, which is concerned largely with rep
individual characters (that is, what is going on in their minds) and the unstable n
meandering point of view of Marlow's narration is an example of the **stream-of-c**
Modernist writers such as James Joyce would go on to make popular in the decades following the publication of *Heart of Darkness*. Additionally, the constant use of the first person represents an attempt to explore the inner lives of Marlow and Kurtz, while the splitting of the first-person narrative voice between Marlow and the narrator points towards the difficulty and confusion that is often associated with this kind of exploration in literature.

Keywords:

Interiority: refe
thoughts and feel

Stream-of-cons
resembles a chara

Questions

1. It might be worth comparing the similarities between this use of point of vie
Coleridge's poem *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, which also consists of a l
told to an unnamed narrator.

2. Find two more examples in which Marlow interrupts his own narration and c
present tense. At what point in the story has he reached? Can you find any p
might suggest how Marlow feels about either Kurtz or the difficulty of tellin

Contextual Information

European Colonialism and Belgian Atrocities

Conrad's use of the African Congo at the heart of an ivory trading company is rem
trade of the same period. The country, known at this time as the Congo Free Sta
King Leopold II of Belgium, who set out on false pretences to westernise what he
savages of the region, though when his rule had become established he claimed
began to exploit her natural resources, including vast amounts of rubber, copper

Conrad's great criticism in *Heart of Darkness* stems from the Western reaction to the Belgian atrocities that occurred during this period. In the 1890s, Belgian traders, personified in Kurtz, would take it upon themselves to relay enormous and unreasonable quotas for rubber from African villages. Should a village fail to meet its quota, the ghoulish penalty would be to make up the rest of the order in human hands. Though the aim of this scheme was to force villages to take their own lives in lieu of payment, the increasingly unreasonable quotas simply led to warring tribes snatching children and women from neighbouring villages, disfiguring and maiming their enemies, many of whom survived. This nightmarish activity would continue until the disbandment of the Free State in 1908.

Conrad, along with various other literary figures such as Mark Twain, was part of the Congo Reform Movement, whose aim was to put an end to the ill treatment of the Congolese natives. The novella itself, particularly Kurtz's character, was clearly Conrad's depiction of British reactions to the news that would periodically be received during this period and is supposedly an indictment of Leopold's monopolisation of Africa (exploiting it for his sole profit) and his failure to rule his own subjects. It is also a gruellingly derisory vision of the hypocrisy of Western 'civilisation' and of conformity to moral ideals when outside of the ordinary rules and boundaries that constrain the Western man.

'Civilising the Savage'

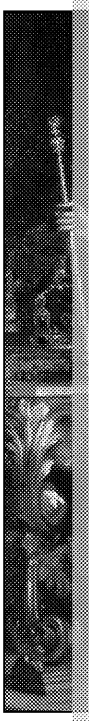
Though some frequent attempts had been made to colonise the continent and w
time much of Africa and Asia remained unexplored and were seen by the Weste
threatening to the civilised. The unofficial name for these areas during this perio
(hence the novella's title). The inhabitants of these vast continents were viewed
the West, so during the late nineteenth century there would be a great spate of
orders of King Leopold II, that were sent to remote African villages to bring West
teachings to the savages. Indeed, up to 75 per cent of African inhabitants now vi
many have integrated Christian teachings with their own native religions and belief systems. Conrad's novella is critical of these attempts to civilise these natives, attempts which he presents as hypocritical; for, in their attempts to bring Western culture to the furthest reaches of their empire, the white men are all too often seen to act as barbarically and corruptly – if not more so – as their 'uncivilised' African counterparts.

Keywords:

Missionary: a rel
travels to another
purpose of conver
to their faith

The Modernist Movement

At the time of the novel's publishing in 1903, the world's empires had establishe
and were at the beginning of a long and inevitable downfall. In Conrad's lifetime
the British throne and was in the process of witnessing a great change in British a
culture. The ending of the Victorian era with the death of the queen is certainly s
brought to the people of Britain and her empires a demure and dignified moral p
based its morals around respectability and decorum, often at the cost of other, n
However, with the coronation of the more decadent and grandiose King Edward V
to move into what we now know as the modernist movement.



The movement would have a marked effect upon virtually all aspects of British life, including culture, literature, art and music as well as science and technology. The modernist author's aim was to dispel cultural and social misconceptions and myths built up during the Romantic and Victorian eras and to present the reader with a more self-analytical and philosophical approach to humanity. Subjects such as femininity and propriety would often be challenged, as was the hypocrisy of the class system and the ethical controversy of imperial activities and slave trading. Conrad sets his story around 1890, the year that he himself manned a river boat in the African Congo. The period of great change and upheaval that was to emerge during the turn of the century is seen throughout the novella to loom steadily ahead and is the reason for the great amount of social confusion and physiological mayhem witnessed by Marlow. In Conrad's case, the sense of darkness and claustrophobia, evoked by not only Marlow's fateful voyage up river, but by the approaching darkness in London, is redolent of such scenes of philosophical exploration and social turmoil that were to occur over the following years, both at home and abroad.

Psychology

Also significant to the movement would be the great shift in scientific thought, away from the **anatomical** and toward the psychological and behaviourist. The work of Sigmund Freud, amongst others, was of categorical importance during the late nineteenth century and throughout the twentieth, as scientists began to utilise methods of psychoanalysis to interpret how our inert nature and subconscious self affects our behaviour. Additionally, the philosophical writings of Modernist thinkers such as Friedrich Nietzsche in the latter half of the nineteent
only on man's hidden thoughts but also on his domineering 'will to power', a pos
tyrannical manner in which Western powers attempted to colonise areas of Afric
begin to challenge not simply the day to day follies and foibles of man that we m
literature, but would focus on his inner nature. Writers such as T S Eliot, E M For
each part of this modern movement, often placing their characters far from com
their more **animalistic** instincts, with poignant and often ironic gestures toward t
home life.

Keywords:

Anatomical: rela
study of the body

Animalistic: acti
like way

Questions

1. Research the Congo Reform Movement. What does Conrad's membership o attitudes towards the colonisation of Africa by Western powers?

2. Make a table containing the key areas of context that influenced the writing Forster's *A Passage to India* (1924). What do the similarities and differences attitudes towards colonialism in Conrad's time and Forster's? Think in particu as the First World War and the wider knowledge, by 1924, of settlers' bar

Essay Practice:
Discuss how the Modernist focus on representing the inner psychology of a chara presentation of either Marlow or Kurtz. Make use of relevant contextual informa

Literary Approaches

Several branches of literary theory can be applied to *Heart of Darkness*. Exploring ea
ways in which the text has been interpreted over the course of the twentieth centur
considering more than one viewpoint when interpreting key passages from Conrad's

Marxism

Because of its strong critique of Western colonialism's obsession with money and pr
to label *Heart of Darkness* as a Marxist text. Marxism is based on the principle that m
chooses. Instead, he is governed by the social and economic forces in which he finds
evidence to support such an interpretation, perhaps the most of obvious of which is
being used to build the railroad. The group who trudge past him, 'all connected toge
clinking' (p. 18) are presented as though they are a machine and not a group of distin
Marxist principles, a colonialist enterprise like the Belgian Trading Company only val
provide labour for that enterprise. You might apply this information to the passage i
and weak Company slaves retreat into a dark, shadowy grove to die (p. 20), as thoug
exist in the society that the Company seeks to establish in the Congo. Another point
the text as Marxist is Conrad's use of similar language when describing Kurtz and ivo
colonial world of *Heart of Darkness*, it is possible even for the colonisers themselves
by the commodities they acquire. Throughout Conrad's novella there is a particularl
approach to human life that exemplifies the fundamental principles of Marxist theor

Feminism

Heart of Darkness is a heavily androcentric (male-focused) text, and as such cann
literature. However, there are several ways in which the novel might be interpre
As mentioned in the analysis of Part Three, the way in which Kurtz's 'Intended' c
fiancée's life reflects the colonial tendency towards fabrication and self-deceptio
mention Marlow's description of the native woman at Kurtz's station, and how M
items of clothing in a manner which suggests that he sees her as an object rathe
While the character of Marlow criticises the domineering attitude of the white se
a feminist critic might argue that his misogynistic opinions of women in the text a
him guilty of the very hypocrisy he claims to despise.

Post-Colonialism

The post-colonial approach takes particular interest in literature that examines the a
than the period of colonisation itself. *Heart of Darkness* is, to some extent, post-colo
the forest 'patiently waiting' for the colonists to leave, as well as foreshadowing an a
London at the end of the narrative. However, post-colonial criticism would also argu
provide a voice for the African natives. They are frequently characterised by languag
were nothing earthly now' (p. 20) and 'they were a great comfort to look at' (p. 16).
a post-colonial standpoint, you could argue, as with the feminist critics, that Conrad'
colonial crimes of objectification and callousness that he criticises in others. Renown
on the text in this way include Chinua Achebe and Edward Said, both of whom are qu
section.

Questions

1a. Find the conversation between Marlow and his aunt in Part One. Does Marlo
'out of touch with the truth' suggest that the society he represents is feminist o

1b. Can you find a Biblical allusion in this paragraph? What does it refer to?

2. Using the example of the 'chain gang' passage analysis above, read the pa
Company's office and identify any features that you could interpret from a

Key Terms Glossary

Allegory	a retelling of a well-known story; a story with a hid
Altruistic	helping others without expecting anything in retur
Anatomical	relating to the scientific study of the body
Animalistic	acting in a primitive or animal-like way; often used particularly violent or sexual in nature
Anthropomorphism	applying human characteristics to an object or bei
Chinese-box narrative	a narrative in which the main story is contained wi known as a **frame narrative**)
Colonialism	the process by which a country or political power s over and inhabiting overseas territories with settle or power richer; **imperialism**, by contrast, is the id practice of colonialism
Enlightenment	A movement that took place primarily in Europe du emphasis was placed on rationality and reason ove religious belief
Farce	ridiculousness or chaotic disorganisation
Figuration	making something into a particular shape; in litera of an allegory, a story that is used to illustrate a pa political idea
Imperialism	the idea that is put into action by the practice of co
Interiority	can be used to describe the inner thoughts or feeli
Lyrical	a way of speaking or writing that has the sound or
Missionary	a religious believer who travels to another country its native population to their faith
Modernism	a cultural and artistic movement originating at the that placed more emphasis on artistic experimenta representing reality in the realistic manner that the
Monopolise	take sole ownership of a particular market or reso with the purpose of making money from it
Novella	a literary work of around 50,000 words or 100 pag longer than a short story
Parabolic	descriptive of something that is propelled into the before returning to the ground
Periodical	a now-outdated term used to describe newspaper published at regular intervals
Post-colonialism	a type of theory that examines the after-effects of countries that they have colonised
Rationalisation	a reasonable or sense-making explanation for a cour
Recursion	a return to a previously mentioned element in the character or narrative point of view
Stream-of-consciousness	writing that resembles a character's thought proce

List of Texts for Further Reading

Bloom, Harold, *Joseph Conrad's 'Heart of Darkness' (Modern Critical Interpretati* 1987: New York: ISBN: 978–1555460150

Bloom, Harold, *Joseph Conrad (Bloom's Modern Critical Views), 2nd ed.:* Chelsea H York: ISBN: 978–1604138085

Firchow, Peter, *Envisioning Africa: Racism and Imperialism in Joseph Conrad's 'He* Press of Kentucky: 1999: Lexington, Kentucky: ISBN: 978–0813191980

Goonetilleke, D.C.R.A, *Joseph Conrad's 'Heart of Darkness' (Routledge Guides to L* 978–0415357753

Kimbrough, Robert (ed.), *Joseph Conrad's 'Heart of Darkness' (Norton Critical Ed* London: ISBN: 978–0393955521

Knowles, Owen, *The Oxford Reader's Companion to Conrad:* Oxford University P 0198662143

Maes-Jelinek, Hena, *York Notes on Heart of Darkness:* Longman Publishing Grou 0582022690

Middleton, Timothy, *Joseph Conrad (Routledge Guide to Literature):* Routledge: 2 0415268516

Moore, Gene, *Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness: A Casebook:* Oxford University ISBN: 978–0195159967

Seymour-Smith, Martin, *A Student Guide to Joseph Conrad (Greenwich Exchange* ISBN: 978–1871551181

Stape, John, *The Cambridge Companion to Joseph Conrad:* Cambridge University 978–0521484848

Answers and Indicative Conte
Section-by-Section Analysis

Section	Question	Answers/Indicative C
Section 1 – Part 1	1.	• London as a place that looks enlightened on the s of ignorance underneath • Understanding of the relationship between enlig and darkness as metaphorical
	2a.	• Quotations such as 'He was the only man of us w ascetic aspect…resembled an idol' / 'no one took relevant
	2b.	• More engaging as a storyteller-character • Gestures towards the difficult past his story will
	3.	• Conrad's demonstration that history repeats itse • Comparison of geographic distance (Congo) with
Section 2 – Part 1	1.	• Colonialism as nothing more than a show of pow • Marlow's quotation: '…there was a camp of native
	2.	• Linkage to enlightenment discussion from previ • Europeans as unable to improve or 'making brigh
	3.	• 'Flabby, weak-eyed' as linked to over-eating, phy • Hypocrisy of presenting oneself as pinnacle of ci that civilisation are in poor condition
Section 3 – Part 1	1.	• Taking care of small details such as dress while bi • Contrast between cleanliness of the accountant • 'I shook hands with this miracle' (p. 21)
	2.	• The white thread around the wrist of the child • Company seeing itself as a well-oiled machine w to death
	3.	• Enlightenment/Western interest in empirical ob • Reduced to status of an animal/thing/piece of a
Section 4 – Part 1	1.	• Kurtz as a seemingly educated, mysterious man • The genius of Kurtz sent to the fringes of the Co incompetent manager runs it • Manager's fear of Kurtz as someone who may re
	2.	• This is a creative task, so answer material will no
	3.	• Colour white is something that is pure/'ideal' bu • Fragility/unreality of the Company's chief intere enormity of the jungle • Sense of nature waiting for humanity to destroy
Section 5 – Part 1	1.	• Kurtz (as a person) swallowed up / 'disappeared' • Pointlessness of seeking something that seems s
	2.	• New-found sense of a moral darkness creeping o profited from the slave trade) • Metaphor for the increasing ambiguity and mea narrative / colonial enterprise as a whole • Metaphor for Marlow disappearing as Kurtz doe
	3.	• 'invasion', 'infliction' as useful quotations (p. 37 • Clear at this point that their project is not a civil towards profit
Section 6 – Part 2	1.	• Sense that men are never free of the dark / mora commit • Man's shadow acts as visual metaphor for his du
	2.	• 'I had to…get the tin-pot along by hook or by cro • '…a hut of reeds, an inclined and melancholy pol of what had been a flag of some sort flying from
	3.	• Suggestion that man refuses to see what has bee choosing instead to voyage into darkness • Comments on steamboat journey as reversal of progress narrative

Section	Question	Answers/Indicative
Section 7 – Part 2	1a.	• 'It was not sleep – it seemed unnatural, like a sta have been changed into stone' / 'the earth seeme • What we see as unearthly or strange is world wit (connection to London discussion earlier in text
	1b.	• Repetitions of history over time • Civilisation is not a story of progress, as the prin
	2.	• Metaphor for man's lack of understanding in the meaning • Civilised man's reversion to savage/primitive sta • 'It did not shift or drive; it was just there…' (p. 4
	3.	• Marlow's misreading the Russian's annotations • Both elusive/impenetrable • Attackers blend into forest in same way that Ku • Marlow's intuition that Kurtz is a kind of genius
Section 8 – Part 2	1a.	• Sophistication of Roman technology vs primitiv • Descriptions in both of 'military camps lost in th • 'They were men enough to face the darkness' (p.
	1b.	• This is a creative task, so answer material will no
	2.	• Reliance not on language but on sound as means • Seeking to drive away the very people the coloni • Controlling the natives by playing on their belief
Section 9 – Part 2	1.	• Wanting to find human connection / a kindred spiri find one • Marlow's loneliness and lack of purpose
	2.	• Europe, as much as the African wilderness, has d • Kurtz's eloquence / Kurtz's tendency to dominat
	3.	• Eloquence as deceptive veil for more barbaric an
Section 10 – Part 2	1.	• Colonialism's desire for a simple story of civilise narratives • Metaphor of 'multi-coloured': not one dominant toward the making of human society
	2a.	• Having resources/wealth at one's disposal but b environment one is attempting to colonise • Making clothing out of the scraps of one's own c the environment in which one finds oneself
	2b.	• Harlequin: a courtly servant that dresses in a clo be mute and wear a mask as well as a multicolou • Mask-wearing as suggestion of duplicity; 'clown- view races whom they attempt to civilise • Detail of stitching and corresponding complexit
Section 11 – Part 3	1.	• Civilisation on the point of decline • Humanity in a state of perpetual ignorance • Western civilisation facing a moment of immine questionable activities on which it is founded
	2.	• Marlow realises what appears so real to the harl • The Harlequin's being reduced to simple and wil reflective communication
	3.	• Rebels cannot be rebellious when the land is the • The 'Rebels' are not likely to have been killed for sport of the tyrannical Kurtz • Imperialism and colonialism proceed in the nam evidenced here, do away with them when they i

Section	Question	Answers/Indicative
Section 12 – Part 3	1.	• Colonialism treating women as property in the s property • Both women seeming detached from reality / una tendencies
	2.	• Traders Caring not about Kurtz's many grievous has cost the Company by doing so • Reference to Belgian government exploiting the its native population
	3.	• Realisation of the fundamental flaws of the colo what he believes to be the lesser of two evils • Seeing Kurtz as a man with whom he can sympa members only there to make money
Section 13 – Part 3	1a.	• Choosing A Path towards inevitable corruption • Aware That morally good actions often necessita
	1b.	• Defends Kurtz in spite of his moral failings • Criticism Of humanity that one is predisposed t
	2.	• Madness And savagery symbolised by native can • Freedom expressed by Marlow's run through the madness that has destroyed Kurtz
Section 14 – Part 3	1.	• Reference to parallel image of ebbing Thames at • Kurtz's life ebbing away in the same manner as t
	2.	• Can no longer be judged by rules of civilised soci • Experienced the most a human possibly can, in I • Responses focused on Kurtz's pronouncement a aforementioned characters/societies
	3.	• References to Kurtz's going beyond the mortal w on it • Kurtz's transcendence of earthly/bodily matters
Section 15 – Part 3	1.	• Finds He cannot contradict the 'truth' she has in • Naivety of the individual vs wider journalistic ne experience revealed to the world
	2.	• Believes them to have safely divorced themselve about human existence • Reflects staunch willingness to remain ignorant originates
	3.	• Increased awareness of the wickedness of manki • Comments on difficulties of understanding hum of the colonial characters throughout the text

Whole Themes Analysis

Section	Activity/Essay Question	Answers/Indicative C
Characterisation	1.	• Mentions of key terminology ('flat character • Marlow's bewilderment at the sight of the Ru understands his fellow colonisers
	2.	• 'Exterminate all the brutes!' (p. 62) / 'You ca ordinary man' (p. 70) / 'But his soul was mad
	Essay Question	• Reference to information in author biograph Africa / dislike of colonialism • Of Particular importance is Marlow and Con belonging – both 'wandering' figures
Relationships	1.	• Relationships between: settlers/natives, Kur • Importance Of relationship determined by w philosophy is changed by it (e.g. the Russian my mind' (p. 67))
	2.	• This is a creative task and as such has no ind
	Essay Question	• Responses should focus on civilisation/savag text such as the contrasting dress of the two • Encourage students to question whether Co distinction between civilisation and savagery practices of the 'civilised' settlers
Themes	1.	• Examples include: darkness and evil connect immense darkness'/colonial hypocrisy and d quotations linking colonialism with bodily o
	Essay Question 1.	• Focus Of Colonialism's hypocrisy and how it • Colonialists' pursuit of wealth and status ov • Contextual reference to Belgian government
	Essay Question 2.	• Language of darkness surrounding Kurtz mi colonialists' lack of understanding about Afr • References to 'hidden evil' inside the heart o civilised colonial progress
Genre and Narrative Structure	1a.	• Gregor Samsa changing into an insect / Kurt Man' battling against the fish / Marlow's bat • Novella At this time largely concerned with t man, as well as man's wider place in the natu • Man In Conflict with himself and the world
	1b.	• Difficulty Of carrying out colonial ambitions unstable
	Essay Question	• Impending destruction of all civilisation • Understanding that a 'civilised' city may not • Reference to fact that Western cities such as of colonial enslavement, and the hypocrisy in
Writer's Use of Language	1.	• Reference To Achebe's argument that Conrad condemnatory of the settlers • Admiration for Kurtz and use of words like 'f colonists such as the Russian and the accoun • Possibility that Conrad has sympathy for col searching for meaning (through writing) whi
	2.	• '…a puff of smoke came out from the cliff, a appeared on the face of the rock' (p. 18) • 'I avoided a hole…the purpose of which I fou
	Essay Question	• 'mournful stillness of the grove' (p. 19) / 'the patiently for the passing away of this fantast could look at a thing monstrous and free' (p. • Connotations of the forest as older and stron destruction / dangerous

Section	Activity/Essay Question	Answers/Indicativ
Form	1.	• Similarity between horrors seen by both Mar • Narrative point of view used to present Marl outsiders
	2.	• p. 42: 'You do your tricks very well' – worryin and the loss of reality • p. 58: 'This is the worst of trying to tell…' – r the truth of his tale to wealthy Westerners; l countries
Context	1.	• Research that highlights the Movement's eff exploited workforce • Condemnatory attitude towards colonial pra • Acknowledgement of a need to change or 'ref they are represented in the text
	2.	• WW1 leading to increased weakness of Britis • Wider Journalistic attention highlighting mo 'civilising' native populations
	Essay Question	• Marlow: recognition of an absurd element of unknown to him / fear that he cannot make board the Nellie • Kurtz: descent into madness / metaphor for impulses underneath man's rational exterior useful) / Kurtz's 'will to power' and its relatio Friedrich Nietzsche
Literary Approaches	1a.	• 'It's queer how out of touch women are! The they were to set it up it would go to pieces be
	1b.	• Reference to Eden ('before the first sunset')
	2.	• 'I ventured to hint that the Company was ru biggest thing in the town, and everybody I m grip on the handle-end of ever so many milli