

# *HEART OF DARKNESS*

- ▶ 5<sup>TH</sup> SEMESTER ENGLISH HONOURS
- ▶ CC-1 (EARLY 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY BRITISH LITERATURE)

# *Heart of Darkness*

- ▶ The tale was first published as a three-part serial, February, March and April 1899.
- ▶ Blackwood's Magazine (February 1899 was the magazine's 1000th issue: special edition).
- ▶ Then later, in 1902, **Heart of Darkness** was included in the book *Youth: a Narrative, and Two Other Stories* (published on 13 November 1902, by William Blackwood).

# Heart of Darkness

## Major Theme

The novella is remarkable for an overwhelming sense of evil and corruption and for its excellent tropical backgrounds.

(Edward Albert)

This book is an ironic precision of the realities of colonialism in Africa.

It is of the greed and selfishness of the idealistic professions of the trading companies.

( David Daiches)

# Conrad's World View

- For Conrad, the world as we experience it is not a place that can be reduced to a set of clear, explicit truths
- Instead, its truths (of the psyche, of the human mind and soul) are messy, vague, irrational, suggestive, and dark.
- Conrad's intention is to lead his readers to an experience of the "heart of darkness."
- His goal is not to shed the light of reason on it, but to **recreate his experience of darkness** in our feelings, our sensibilities, our own dark and mysterious hearts.





# Narrative Style in HOD

- The book has a distinct **circular structure**: the first narrator begins and ends the novel in the same evening while on the boat moored on the Thames.
- "Darkness" (excess, madness, destruction) is **not only in the jungle but everywhere**, even in London, which was the heart of the British empire and its colonialism.
- There is a clear progression downward to hell that recalls Dante's *Inferno*, and perhaps also Hamlet's descent into madness.

## Significance of the Title

Tony Myers in his book, 'Literature' mentions that the Darkness is a pervasive symbol in the novel. It refers to malevolence (causing harm or evil).

As there is no definite article before 'heart', the title is cosmic, not confined to a particular area but it is stretched to everywhere.

## Title of HoD

- The phrase heart of darkness has two meanings—
- one is the **literal** meaning and the other is the **symbolic** meaning.
- The novel is literally about Marlow's voyage to Congo which was regarded in the nineteenth century as the heart of places in darkness with impenetrable jungles.

## Title of HoD

- The title Heart of Darkness has a symbolic meaning.
- The narrator Marlow's journey can be regarded as a symbol of a person delving into the depths of his own mind and coming out with shocking discoveries.
- The human mind has different manager of the central station.



## Title of HoD

- Chinua Achebe, the great Nigerian author has charged Conrad with treating Africans in the novel as though they were primitive beings lacking their own culture.
- When Marlow travels deeper and deeper into the heart of the mystery of Africa, he finds not enlightenment, or the just results of a cause, but increasing darkness.

# Characters

- The novel moves around two important characters:
  - **Charlie Marlow and Mr. Kurtz.**
  - They are extraordinary and full of intensity.
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- There are several minor characters; they appear to justify the meaning of physical and moral suffering which is the substance of the book.

## Characters

- **Marlow** is an important narrator of the story; he seems to be the mouthpiece of the author.
- He is thirty two years old and selected sailing as his career.
- He discovered **the Congo River** during his navigation and met Mr. Kurtz, an ivory agent.

# Characters

- **Marlow** during his navigation explores white people as an emblem of cruelty and ruthless behaviour.
- He moves to the dark jungle and finds solace there as a symbol of reality and truth.
- Marlow's hatred towards White people and love for the Black race is an attack on imperialism (a system in which a country rules other countries using force to get power over them).

## Characters

- **Mr. Kurtz** is the child of a half English mother and half-French father. He is an orator, writer, poet, musician, artist, politician, ivory procurer, and the chief agent of the Ivory business.
- He visited the Congo with his noble cause to bring changes in the lives of the Congo inhabitants.



## Characters

- Kurtz wished to develop the Ivory business as a beacon of modern lives. But he suffers because of his character of 'a hollow man' lacking in basic integrity or any sense of social responsibility.
- Tony Myers regards Kurtz more of a myth than a man to Marlow but he finds himself inexplicably drawn to him.
- He is obsessed with his plans and often delirious.

## Style & Structure of the novel

- Conrad possesses an effectively **descriptive style**.
- He chooses the right details to make the story come alive rather than use excessive detail that bog down the narrative.
- Conrad also has a dark sense of humor, which lends readability to this otherwise grave tale.

## Style & Structure of the novel

- Heart of Darkness is quite short, yet intriguing, due to the content of the novel.
- Much like Shakespeare's Hamlet, Heart of Darkness overwhelms the reader by the power of the story.
- Conrad's use of **sensory effects** are excellent. From the Beginning, readers seem to be on the Nellie with Marlow and his comrades.

## Style & Structure of the novel

- The writing style, techniques, structure and themes in Heart of Darkness all combine to create one of the most renowned, respected and mysterious novels of all time.
- Conrad wrote **an ultimate enigma for readers** to interpret and critically analyze for years to come.
- This deep novel by Joseph Conrad is not easy to read but is valuable knowledge once it is read.

## Style & Structure of the novel

- Heart of Darkness uses a variety of narrative techniques that add complexity to the story.
- First, the story of Marlow's voyage into the heart of Africa and his discovery of Kurtz is told as a frame narrative.
- It is a story within a story: one is the main story and the other is the sub-text.



## Important Questions

**Q.no.1** Discuss the aptness of the title, Heart of Darkness.

**Q.no.2** Discuss the narrative technique of the novel HoD.

**Q.no.3** 'The inhuman treatment of the indigenous population' is the major concern of the novel. Elucidate.

# THE END