

# The Heart of Darkness & The Secret Sharer

by Joseph Conrad

## Teacher's Guide

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## Synopsis

### The Secret Sharer

I

The story is narrated by a captain recalling his first experience of command. Anchored in the Gulf of Siam at the head of a voyage, the new captain finds himself a stranger to both himself and his command. To his mates' astonishment, he elects to take the first anchor watch that night. During the watch, he spots a rope ladder that his crew has neglected to hoist in. When he tries to pull it in himself, he is surprised to discover a naked man in the water holding the other end. The swimmer asks for the captain, then introduces himself as Leggatt.

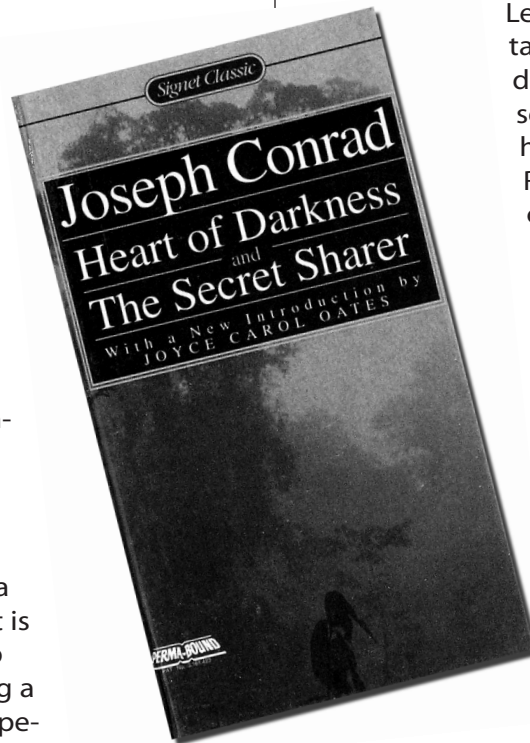
The captain dresses Leggatt in a set of his pajamas and listens to a brief version of his story. Leggatt is the first mate of the *Sephora*, a ship anchored two miles away. During a savage storm, he killed an incompetent and insolent crew member and was subsequently relieved of his duties and imprisoned on the ship. Seeking to escape land justice, he slipped over the side and swam to freedom, eventually coming to the rope ladder. The captain feels an identification with Leggatt, frequently calling him "my double." He takes the young man to his cabin, where he listens to whispered details of the tale.

II

The captain of the *Sephora* comes looking for his escaped mate. He relates the story within earshot of Leggatt's hiding place. Though he does not directly accuse the captain of harboring Leggatt, the *Sephora's* skipper clearly holds suspicions. The captain insists on showing the visitor around the ship, then escorts him to his boat.

The ship commences its voyage. Leggatt remains hidden in the captain's cabin, eating the small tinned delicacies stored there. There are several brushes with discovery that heighten the captain's paranoia. Realizing that the charade cannot continue the entire trip, Leggatt insists that he must be marooned, preferring freedom to comfort.

The captain resolves to sail as close as possible to the island of Koh-ring to maximize Leggatt's chance of swimming ashore. He gives him three gold sovereigns and a white hat. They sail dangerously close to the islands until he spots the white hat, reversing course at the last minute. He leaves Leggatt "a proud swimmer striking out for a new destiny."



### HEART OF DARKNESS

I

The novella is a nested story. An unnamed narrator listens to Marlow's narration of his experiences in the Congo. The story opens with five men on the *Nellie*, a ship anchored at the mouth of the Thames river. Marlow promises to recall his only freshwater experience, then briefly reflects on the Roman colonization of Britain, leading him to recount his own time as a colonist.

Having returned to London from about six years in the East, Marlow is captivated by a map of Africa in a London shop window and resolves to go there. Through the influence of an aunt, he secures a position with a Belgian company operating in the Congo. The company has recently lost a captain to a skirmish with natives and is in need of another.

He crosses the English Channel to a "sepulchral" city, presumably Brussels, to sign his contract at the company headquarters. At the offices, he is met by two sinister women, one of whom lets him into a waiting room, where he examines a color-coded colonial map of Africa. He signs his agreement, then is examined by a company doctor who measures his skull, commenting on the mental changes evident in those who return from Africa. Marlow visits his aunt, who naively encourages him to civilize the natives.

Marlow takes a French steamer down the African coast, stopping frequently at ports to deposit soldiers and custom-house officials. They pass a French warship inexplicably shelling an apparently deserted stretch of coast. Eventually Marlow disembarks at the company's station, which is littered with abandoned machinery and senseless waste. A group of workers pointlessly blasts a random cliff, while chained prisoners are lead past. He passes a group of dying native laborers, abandoned much like the rusting machinery.

He meets the company's chief accountant, a fussily dressed man who labors scrupulously over his books, indifferent to the death and suffering around him. Marlow waits at the station for ten days. The accountant remarks that Marlow will probably meet Mr. Kurtz, an ivory agent with a fantastic reputation, producing more ivory than all other agents combined.

Marlow departs for the interior in a caravan of sixty men, traveling 200 miles by foot in fifteen days. His sole European companion falls ill and must be carried by native bearers, who begin to desert. Upon arrival at the central station, he learns that the steamer he is to command has sunk to the bottom of the river.

The general manager strikes Marlow as unremarkable, aside from his notable good health. He praises Kurtz to Marlow, though expresses unease at

the lack of recent communication. One evening a storage hut burns, and a native is beaten severely for starting it, though his connection to the blaze is tenuous at best. A brickmaker who has never produced a single brick initiates a conversation with Marlow. He claims that Kurtz will become general manager, then hints that he'd like Marlow to use his Continental influence on his behalf.

Months pass as Marlow waits for rivets from the coast to fix his steamer. Instead of rivets, the Eldorado Exploration Expedition arrives, a group intent on plundering the interior of wealth. It is lead by the general manager's uncle. Marlow despairs of the rivets ever arriving.

### II

One evening Marlow, resting aboard his beached steamer, overhears the general manager and his uncle discussing Kurtz's odd behavior. Kurtz had begun to bring a large load of ivory to the central station, then turned back 300 miles into the trip, sending along his assistant with the ivory and an acerbic note. They speculate about Kurtz's prospects and rumored plans and discuss killing a mysterious unaffiliated trader until Marlow reveals himself, startling them. A few days later, the Eldorado Expedition departs. Long afterwards the station receives word that their donkeys have all died, the last news of the group.

Marlow finally finishes the steamer's repairs and starts upriver for the two month voyage to Kurtz's station, accompanied by white "pilgrims" and native "cannibals." The river route is treacherous and demands his complete attention, though he does find time to obsess about meeting Kurtz. Their passage is slowed by leaky steam pipes.

About fifty miles below the Inner Station, they discover an abandoned hut and a stack of firewood with a note reading, "Wood for you. Hurry up. Approach cautiously." In the hut, Marlow finds a discarded copy of *An Inquiry into some Points of Seamanship*, printed sixty years previous. The manager assumes the camp belonged to the unauthorized trader.

Two days later in the evening, they reach a point eight miles below the station. Marlow is impatient to finish the voyage, but the general manager insists they stop for the night, citing the need to

approach cautiously. In the morning, the ship is mired in a dense fog, which lifts briefly and descends again. Human noises emerge from the jungle. The pilgrims discuss the possibility of an attack. Marlow realizes that the natives aboard must be famished, their supply of rotten hippo meat having been discarded some time ago and not replaced. He wonders what prevents them from eating him and the pilgrims.

After the fog lifts, about one and a half miles below the station, the steamer is attacked. Flights of small arrows pour over the ship, and the pilgrims return fire with rifles. The native helmsman throws open the pilot house shutter to fire a rifle and receives a spear in his side for his trouble. His blood soaks Marlow's shoes. Marlow assigns a pilgrim to steer while he flings his shoes overboard and begins to despair of ever meeting Kurtz.

He attempts to explain his obsession with Kurtz, imagining him as a voice of great power, then reverts to the story. He tips the helmsman's corpse over the side of the ship to prevent the natives from eating it. The expedition is surprised to find the station still standing. A man in patchwork clothes greets them and allays their concerns about another attack. While the general manager and pilgrims disembark to find Kurtz, Marlow remains on the ship and converses with the ragged man, a former Russian sailor and something akin to a disciple of Kurtz. The sailing book is his, as was the camp where it was found. He confides that the steamer was attacked because the natives don't want Kurtz to leave.

### III

The Russian describes his relationship with Kurtz to Marlow. The day they met, he listened to Kurtz speak all night on various and sundry topics. He claims that listening to Kurtz has expanded his understanding of the world. Their tenuous friendship has been frequently interrupted by Kurtz's raiding trips for ivory. A native tribe has taken him as a leader and accompanies him on raids. The Russian has nursed the agent through two illnesses. Despite Kurtz's having once threatened to shoot him over a small amount of ivory, he insists that he should not be judged as other men are. He anxiously reports that Kurtz is presently very ill.

Looking through binoculars, Marlow realizes that the trading house is surrounded by heads on poles. The Russian reports that they belonged to rebels, which Marlow finds entertaining in its irony. The pilgrims emerge, bearing Kurtz on an improvised stretcher. A group of natives moves to intercept them, but disperses after a few words with the agent.

A richly ornamented native woman approaches the steamer after Kurtz is brought aboard and stares mournfully. The Russian intimates that she is Kurtz's mistress and says that she has interfered incessantly with his care for the man. Kurtz moans behind them, begging to be saved and accusing them of only having come for the ivory.

The manager takes Marlow aside and deems Kurtz's methods deplorable, saying that they have ruined the region for the company. Marlow responds that he considers Kurtz to be a remarkable man, which earns him a place in the category of those of "unsound methods." Marlow informs the Russian that the manager thinks he should be hanged. He confides to Marlow that Kurtz has ordered the attack on the steamer, hoping they' turn back. The Russian begs a small amount of supplies, then disappears.

Shortly after midnight, Marlow wakes to the sound of Kurtz's followers beating drums and chanting in the jungle. He checks for the agent, but does not find him. On shore, he finds a trail through the grass and realizes that Kurtz is crawling on all fours. Marlow circles through the jungle to cut Kurtz off from the front. He intercepts him within earshot of the natives. Kurtz bemoans the loss of his great plans. Marlow assures him that his success, nevertheless, is secured in Europe. After threatening to strangle him, Marlow escorts him back to the steamer.

The current speeds their progress downriver, but Kurtz's health deteriorates rapidly. Marlow listens to Kurtz ramble, alternately childish and profound. The steamer finally breaks down. While it is laid up for repairs, Kurtz entrusts a packet of documents to Marlow. One evening, Marlow finds Kurtz in some semblance of a trance. He cries out, "The horror! The horror!" and Marlow leaves. Shortly after, the general manager's native servant reports, "Mistah Kurtz—he dead."

After they stop to bury Kurtz, Marlow becomes gravely ill. Upon recovery, he returns to Europe, where he is consumed by disdain for the people around him. A company representative demands Kurtz's papers. Marlow offers him only an article on the "Suppression of Savage Customs." The representative threatens legal action to secure the rest, but never reappears. A man claiming to be Kurtz's cousin retrieves the personal writings and family letters. A journalist colleague of the agent's also visits Marlow, taking a report for publication. Each visitor has a radically different idea of Kurtz, his life, and his talents.

Finally Marlow takes the remaining papers to Kurtz's Intended, who is still in deep mourning, despite a year having passed since his death. She praises Kurtz and his universal genius extravagantly, irritating Marlow. Eventually she begs to hear Kurtz's last words. Marlow lies to her, saying that he called her name at the end.

The novella ends on the *Nellie*. The Director notes that they have missed part of the tide. The narrator looks into the distant sky, which seems to him to lead "into the heart of an immense darkness."

### Conrad Timeline

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| <p><b>1857</b> Born Jozef Teodor Konrad Korzeniowski in Poland.</p> <p><b>1861</b> Conrad's father arrested in Warsaw.</p> <p><b>1862</b> Conrad family exiled to Vologda, Russia.</p> <p><b>1865</b> Conrad's mother dies.</p> <p><b>1869</b> Moves to Kraków with father, who dies.</p> <p><b>1874</b> Conrad leaves for Marseilles to become a seaman.</p> <p><b>1875</b> Apprentice seaman on <i>Mont Blanc</i> to Caribbean.</p> <p><b>1876</b> Steward on <i>Saint Antoine</i>.</p> <p><b>1877</b> Possibly smuggles arms.</p> <p><b>1878</b> Attempts suicide. Joins the British merchant navy. Seaman on <i>The Skimmer of the Seas</i>.</p> <p><b>1879</b> Seaman on <i>Duke of Sutherland</i> to Australia, <i>Europa</i> to Mediterranean.</p> <p><b>1880</b> Third Mate on <i>Loch Etive</i> to Australia.</p> <p><b>1881</b> Second mate on <i>Palestine</i> to Indian Ocean.</p> <p><b>1883</b> Mate on <i>Riversdale</i> to Indian Ocean.</p> <p><b>1884</b> Second Mate on <i>Narcissus</i> to Bombay.</p> <p><b>1885</b> Second mate on <i>Tilkhurst</i> to Singapore.</p> <p><b>1886</b> Becomes naturalized British citizen.</p> | <p><b>1887</b> First mate on <i>Highland Forest</i> to Java. Mate on <i>Vidar</i> to Singapore. Mate on <i>Melita</i> to Bangkok.</p> <p><b>1888</b> Captain of <i>Otago</i> to Australia.</p> <p><b>1889</b> Moves to London.</p> <p><b>1890</b> Travels to Belgian Congo. Second in command of the <i>SS Roi des Belges</i> up the Congo River.</p> <p><b>1891</b> First mate on <i>Torrens</i>.</p> <p><b>1895</b> Publishes <i>Almayer's Folly</i>. Meets Jessie George, his eventual wife.</p> <p><b>1897</b> Publishes <i>The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'</i>.</p> <p><b>1898</b> Publishes <i>Tales of Unrest</i>. Borys, his son, is born.</p> <p><b>1899</b> Publishes <i>Heart of Darkness</i> as a serial.</p> <p><b>1900</b> Publishes <i>Lord Jim</i>.</p> <p><b>1901</b> Publishes <i>The Inheritors</i>, a collaboration with Ford Madox Ford.</p> <p><b>1902</b> Publishes <i>Youth: A Narrative and Two Other Stories</i></p> <p><b>1903</b> Publishes <i>Typhoon and Other Stories</i> and <i>Romance</i>, a collaboration with Ford.</p> <p><b>1904</b> Publishes <i>Nostramo</i>.</p> <p><b>1905</b> Four months in France.</p> <p><b>1906</b> Publishes <i>The Mirror of the Sea</i>. John, his son, is born.</p> <p><b>1907</b> Publishes <i>The Secret Agent</i>. Moves to Somieres, Bedfordshire.</p> <p><b>1908</b> Publishes <i>A Set of Six</i>.</p> <p><b>1909</b> Moves to Adington, Kent.</p> <p><b>1910</b> Suffers a nervous breakdown and moves to Capel House, Kent.</p> <p><b>1911</b> Publishes <i>Under Western Eyes</i>.</p> <p><b>1912</b> Publishes <i>A Personal Record</i> and <i>Twixt Land and Sea</i>.</p> <p><b>1914</b> Publishes <i>Chance</i>. Caught in Poland, visiting family, at outbreak of WW I.</p> <p><b>1915</b> Publishes <i>Victory</i> and <i>Within the Tides</i>.</p> <p><b>1916</b> Borys fights on the French front.</p> <p><b>1917</b> Publishes <i>The Shadow-Line</i>.</p> <p><b>1918</b> Borys wounded in war.</p> <p><b>1919</b> Publishes <i>The Arrow of Gold</i>. Moves to Oswalds, near Canterbury.</p> <p><b>1920</b> Publishes <i>The Rescue</i>.</p> <p><b>1921</b> Visits Corsica with his wife, Jessie.</p> <p><b>1923</b> Publishes <i>Laughing Anne, a Play</i> and visits the U.S.</p> <p><b>1924</b> Declines knighthood, then dies August 3 of a heart attack.</p> |
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### Author Sketch

Joseph Conrad was born Jozef Teodor Konrad Nalecz Korzeniowski on December 3, 1857 in Berdichev in the Polish Ukraine. His father, Apollo, was a writer and translator whose politics resulted in the family's

being exiled to Vologda, Russia in 1862. His mother, Eva, contracted tuberculosis and died April 18, 1865. After their release, Conrad accompanied his father to Kraków, where Apollo died on May 13, 1869. Conrad was raised by various family members, then joined the French merchant navy, leaving for Marseilles at age seventeen. His stay in France was marked by sailing and period of idleness, ending with Conrad falling into debt and shooting himself.

On April 24, 1878 Conrad left on a British freighter. He arrived in England at age twenty and spent the next fifteen years sailing on seventeen ships to ports in Europe, Asia, Africa, and Australia. Conrad advanced quickly and became a British citizen on August 17, 1886.

In 1889 he took a position in the Congo with a Belgian company. He was assigned to the *Roi des Belges* to go upriver on the Congo and help the captain rescue a Belgian agent who had become seriously ill. The captain fell sick on trip upriver, forcing Conrad to assume command, and the agent died on the trip back downriver. Conrad himself contracted an illness that would permanently affect his health. This trip formed the basis for *Heart of Darkness*.

As his interest in sea life waned, Conrad became increasingly interested in writing. He wrote his first short story, "The Black Mate," in 1886, then wrote nothing until he began *Almayer's Folly* in 1886, which was published in 1895. The following years would mark a period of sustained creativity during which he would produce about one book each year.

Conrad met Jessie George in November 1894. They were married on March 24, 1896 and had two sons: Borys, born January 15, 1898, and John Alexander, born August 2, 1906. He met Ford Madox Ford in 1898 and collaborated on several



writing projects with him. The post WW I period brought Conrad both financial success and fame. He died August 3, 1924 of a heart attack.

### Critic's Corner

*Heart of Darkness* makes an appealing object of critical study because Marlow's inconclusive narrative style, the novella's various ambiguities, and the complex network of themes, images, and motifs both invite and resist interpretation. The novella opens itself to a plethora of variant readings but resists any effort to impose a normative interpretation. Consequentially it has attracted the attention of every major critical perspective of the twentieth century.

Psychoanalytic readings often investigate the relationship between reality and dream in the novella, the system of shadows: Africa reflecting the subconscious desires of Europe, Kurtz as Marlow's insubstantial alter-ego. Feminist critics have analyzed Marlow's curious statements about women's disconnection from objective reality, the subjugation of women in comparison to the conquest of Africa, and the ownership implied in Conrad's language. Deconstructive critics have focused on the network of oppositions like speech/silence, light/darkness, male/female, Europe/Africa, and active/passive, often arguing that the apparent polarization is merely apparent, that the opposites originate from a single source and coexist without contradiction. New-Historical readers place the novella in the context of the history of ideas, situating Marlow's journey and consequent discoveries in relation to Europe's dawning disillusionment with colonization. Post-colonial critics have explored the substrata of ideas and attitudes about Europe and Africa that makes possible both the events Marlow witnesses and his reactions to them.

### Selected Other Works

#### Fiction

*Almayer's Folly*, 1895

*An Outcast on the Islands*, 1896

*The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'*, 1897

*Tales of Unrest*, 1898

*Lord Jim, a Tale*, 1900

*The Inheritors*, 1901, coauthored by Ford Madox Ford

*Youth: A Narrative*, 1899  
*Typhoon*, 1902  
*Typhoon and Other Stories*, 1903  
*Romance*, 1903, coauthored by Ford Madox Ford  
*Nostramo, a Tale of the Seaboard*, 1904  
*The Secret Agent, a Simple Tale*, 1907  
*A Set of Six*, 1908  
*Under Western Eyes, a Novel*, 1911  
*Twixt Land and Sea, Tales*, 1912  
*Chance, a Tale in Two Parts*, 1913  
*Within the Tides*, 1915  
*Victory, an Island Tale*, 1915  
*The Shadow-Line, a Confession*, 1917  
*The Arrow of Gold, a Story Between Two Notes*, 1919  
*The Rescue: A Romance of the Shallows*, 1920  
*The Rover*, 1923

### Nonfiction

*The Mirror of the Sea, Memories and Impressions*, 1906  
*A Personal Record*, 1912  
*Notes on Life and Letters*, 1921  
*Last Essays*, 1926

### Plays

*One Day More, a Play in One Act*, 1913  
*The Secret Agent, Drama in Four Acts*, 1921  
*Laughing Anne, a Play*, 1925

## Media Versions

### Audiobooks

*Heart of Darkness*, In Audio, 2003  
*Heart of Darkness*, Sound Room, 2004  
*Heart of Darkness*, Tantor Media, 2005

### Large Print

*Heart of Darkness*, Dover, 2001  
*Heart of Darkness*, Thomson Gale, 2002  
*Heart of Darkness*, Echo Library, 2005

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Yelton, Donald C. *Mimesis and Metaphor: An Inquiry into the Genesis and Scope of Conrad's Symbolic Imagery*. The Hague: Mouton, 1967.

## Cross-Curricular Sources

### Film

*Apocalypse Now*, Paramount, 1979

*Citizen Kane*, Turner Home Entertainment, 1941

### Internet

"An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*" by Chinua Achebe

<http://social.chass.ncsu.edu/wyrick/debclass/achcon.htm>

Imperialism in Africa to the Eve of WW I

<http://www.wwnorton.com/college/history/ralph/resource/impaftr.htm>

Project Gutenberg, complete texts of Conrad's works

[http://www.gutenberg.org/wiki/Main\\_Page](http://www.gutenberg.org/wiki/Main_Page)

Web English Teacher, lessons plans for Conrad and *Heart of Darkness*

<http://www.webenglishteacher.com/conrad.html>

### Fiction

Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*

Aphra Behn, *Oroonoko*

Charlotte Brönte, *Jane Eyre*

Albert Camus, *The Stranger*

Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*

E.M. Forster, *A Passage to India*

Amitav Ghosh, *The Shadow Lines*

André Gide, *The Immoralist*

James Joyce, *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*

Rudyard Kipling, *Kim*

Herman Melville, *Moby Dick*

Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

### Nonfiction

*Encyclopedia of Postcolonial Studies*, Greenwood Press

*The History Atlas of Africa*, MacMillan

*King Leopold's Ghost*, Adam Hochschild

*Orientalism*, Edward Said

*The Sailor's Illustrated Dictionary*, The Lyons Press

### Poetry

T.S. Eliot, *The Waste Land*

W.B. Yeats, "The Second Coming"

## Themes and Motifs

### THE SECRET SHARER

#### Themes

- self-discovery
- authority
- fidelity
- honor
- confidence

#### Motifs

- reflections of the self
- accurate use of maritime imagery and terminology
- coming to terms with responsibility
- insolent or incompetent subordinates

### HEART OF DARKNESS

#### Themes

- colonization
- self-knowledge
- journey
- evil
- exploitation
- cynicism
- isolation
- self-restraint
- greed

#### Motifs

- plays on the meanings of "heart" and "darkness"
- contrast between pairs of opposition like speech/silence, light/dark, male/female, European/African, known/unknown, civilized/savage.
- physical journeys as metaphors for journeys into the self
- cynicism towards European goals/intents in Africa
- the allure of known places

## General Objectives

1. To develop critical reading, writing, and thinking skills.
2. To expand vocabulary.
3. To read an example of colonial literature.
4. To place literature in relation to historical circumstances.
5. To follow difficult prose.
6. To track multiple interlocking thematic threads.
7. To identify significant images, formulations, and motifs.
8. To decode complex symbols and metaphors.
9. To evaluate both implicit and explicit qualitative judgments in a text.
10. To analyze the relationship between internal and external events.

## Specific Objectives

### THE SECRET SHARER

1. To note and interpret repetitive formulations.
2. To track changes in the narrator.
3. To analyze the white hat as a symbol.
4. To discuss Leggatt as the narrator's alter-ego.
5. To characterize the tensions that define the story.

### HEART OF DARKNESS

1. To gain an understanding of European colonial practices in Africa.
2. To decode the many possible meanings of the title.
3. To identify and analyze pairs of oppositions in the novella.
4. To chart the novel's structure in relation to geography, themes, characters, and plot.
5. To compare Marlow and Kurtz.
6. To contrast European and African settings.
7. To discuss Marlow's transformation in the novella.
8. To evaluate Marlow's attitude towards women.
9. To formulate and apply reading and interpretive strategies for the novella.
10. To gain an appreciation for Conrad's literary style.

## Literary Terms and Applications

**Narrator:** the person or character responsible for revealing a narrative to the reader. *Heart of Darkness* has two narrators. Marlow narrates the events of the novella, but his retelling is nested within a framed story, narrated by an anonymous narrator.

**Oppositions:** a term used in post-structuralism for dichotomies that contain qualitative judgments. *Heart of Darkness* revolves around several binary pairs of opposition like speech/silence, light/darkness, reason/emotion, Europe/Africa, and male/female. The first term in each pair is treated as inherently superior to its opposite.

**Symbol:** an object, image, or event that stands for or comments on something more complex, such as an idea or system of related ideas. The novella is rife with symbols. For example, the river suggests the progress of an entire life, the jungle stands in for the impenetrable center of human consciousness, and Kurtz symbolizes European involvement in Africa generally, including attitudes toward Africa and Africans, motivations for colonization, and methods of subjugation.

## Meaning Study

### THE SECRET SHARER

1. But what I felt most was my being a stranger to the ship; and if all the truth must be told, I was somewhat of a stranger to myself. (p. 19) (*The captain of "The Secret Sharer" begins the voyage new to command and the ship. He feels a stranger to the crew, their habits, and the ship itself. He also feels a stranger to himself, untested, unsure if he will live up to the ideal he has imagined. His brief relationship with Leggatt reduces both these distances. Through Leggatt he learns to exercise his newfound authority over ship and crew, and he comes to know himself through his double.*)
2. Can it be, I asked myself, that he is not visible to other eyes than mine? (p. 50) (*The narrator echoes the reader's question about Leggatt's actual existence. The visit from the Sephora's captain confirms that an escaped man does exist, but does not necessarily confirm Leggatt's existence as experienced by the narrator. The two close calls, the intrusion into the head and the Sephora's captain's inspection of the captain's quarters, hint that Leggatt may be a specter of the captain's imagination. This unreality is height-*



ened by the uncanny resemblance between the two and Leggatt's function in the plot as the catalyst of the captain's self-discovery.)

HEART OF DARKNESS

3. "And this also . . . has been one of the dark places of the earth." (p. 67)  
*(Marlow here is referring to Britain. By "dark" he means both "unknown" and "barbarous." He speculates on the experiences of Roman colonists to which he compares his own experience in the Congo. The particular phrasing ("has been" instead of "was") seems to indicate a circular understanding of time that contradicts notions of progress. Marlow seems to think that conquest is a facet of civilization, but that it has no moral purpose, aside from the looting of resources. History, for Marlow, is a continuing power struggle with neither end nor noble cause.)*
4. The conquest of the earth, which mostly means the taking it away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look into it too much. (p. 70)  
*(This statement is perhaps Marlow's only definite conclusion from his experiences in the Belgian Congo. The "different complexion or slightly flatter noses" implies that conquest is at its bottom arbitrary, motivated only by greed. That the conquest of the earth ceases to be pretty only upon close examination highlights the distance between Europe and Africa, both geographically and metaphorically. People safely away from the actualities of colonization, like Marlow's aunt, are able to imagine noble purpose.)*
5. It's queer how out of touch with truth women are. They live in a world of their own, and there has never been anything like it, and never can be. It is too beautiful altogether, and if they were to set it up it would go to pieces before the first sunset. (p. 77)  
*(Marlow expresses this sentiment twice in the novel. The two primary examples of this notion are his aunt and Kurtz's Intended, both of whom appear blithely ignorant of actual colonial practices. His reasoning is circular. He claims that women must be protected from reality, which establishes the disconnection that he uses as a justification for excluding them from the world. For example, he assumes Kurtz's Intended must be protected from the reality of Kurtz's life and death in Africa, so he lies to her, while internally scorning her ignorance of the world.)*
6. it is impossible to convey the life-sensation of any given epoch of one's existence—that which makes its truth, its meaning—its subtle

and penetrating essence. It is impossible. We live, as we dream—alone . . . (p. 97)

*(Several times Marlow makes comments about the limits of language. Here he claims that one cannot adequately describe the texture or depth of experience, that the essence of living evades speech. This belief partially explains his refusal to indicate explicit meanings of events, though the lack of a meaning to describe also plays into his silence. That one is perpetually "alone" is a recurring theme that finds its most extreme expression in Kurtz, whose solitude knows no bound. Marlow here seems to be expanding his experience of Africa to apply to life in general. He moves from the geographic and personal solitude in the Congo to a general statement about life.)*

7. A quarrelsome band of footsore sulky niggers trod on the heels of the donkey . . . (p. 101)  
*(Like Shakespeare's The Merchant of Venice, Heart of Darkness is a problematic classic. Despite Marlow's evident sympathy for some of the native Africans and his condemnation of European colonization, the novella is full of racist language and attitudes, of which the above line is a prime example. The language of the line and similar lines is problematic, as is the content, which follows Conrad's contemporary culture's habit of thinking of non-Europeans as fractious, lazy children.*

*These elements of the text can be used productively, however. They allow for a discussion of writers as products of cultures, rather than wholly independent creators. One way of approaching these features of the text is to open a discussion about the degree to which Conrad was able to balk his cultural context by examining the tension between his racist formulations and attitudes with his sound condemnation of European savagery.)*

8. Fine fellows . . . They were men one could work with, and I am grateful to them. (p. 107)  
*(Marlow is speaking of the "cannibals" on the steamer. This admiration for their work displays his lingering Victorian belief in the value of labor. This passage is preceded by his reflections on his own work, how it saved him from brooding and confronting the sinister realities around him. This attachment to work and its value partially explains his admiration for Kurtz (whose labor is exponentially more productive than other agents') and his dismay upon arrival in Africa (the wasted machinery and pointless labor)).*
9. of all his gifts the one that stood out preëminently . . . was his ability to talk, his words—the gift of expression, the bewildering, the illuminating, the most exalted and the most contemptible, the pulsating stream of light, or the deceitful flow from the heart of an impenetrable darkness. (p. 124)

*(As they travel upstream, Marlow begins to obsess about meeting Kurtz, who for him is primarily a voice. This identification between Kurtz's power and his speech is echoed in the Russian's description of him and in Kurtz's interactions. He sends away his native tribe simply by speaking to them. His body is wasted away from illness, so he is almost literally reduced to a mere voice. It is interesting to note that the jungle is most often described by Marlow as a source of unbearable alien silence. Kurtz's power of speech in such a context explains his source of mastery over the jungle and its inhabitants.)*

10. There was nothing either above or below him, and I knew it. He had kicked himself loose of the earth. (p. 149)  
*(This line describes a different kind of solitude, a moral one. In the vacuum of the interior, Kurtz establishes his own order, completely separate from all others and inscrutable in its own right. This moral solitude is alluded to by the Russian, who insists that Kurtz cannot be judged as other men are. It is also related to Kurtz's essay, which claims that Europeans necessarily appear as deities to natives. Lines like the one above indicate that, among other things, Kurtz had set himself up as a god-king of the tribe that followed him.)*

## Comprehension Study

### THE SECRET SHARER

1. Compare the narrator/captain with Leggatt.  
*(The captain closely identifies with Leggatt, frequently referring to him as "my double." They resemble one another physically, but they resemble one another also in experience. Both are graduates of Conway, indicating a similarity in education and instilled values. Both are naval officers asserting their authority over cowardly or insolent crew members. There is also a silent communication, an implicit understanding of one another.)*
2. Discuss the white hat as symbol.  
*(The captain's white hat primarily symbolizes fidelity. First, it represents the captain's fidelity to Leggatt, his fulfilling ethical obligations to a friend and peer. More profoundly, it refers to the captain's fidelity to himself and his personal ideal of conduct. The ship is saved by the white hat, veering off at the last second. The hat points to the captain's remaining true to his own commitments and judgment. It also symbolizes his exercising his authority over the crew. It is significant that Leggatt is not shown swimming in the hat. Rather the hat is shown floating on its own, Leggatt having disappeared. A single captain has finally emerged and exerted mastery over the ship.)*

### HEART OF DARKNESS

3. List ambiguities in the novella.  
*(The novella's title is the first ambiguity to confront the reader. Unlike other nineteenth century titles, it does not allude to the story's main action or themes. This uncertainty extends throughout the tale. The frame-narrative is a sketch at best. It remains unclear why the five men have gathered on the Nellie or where it is going. The narrator remains nameless, as do most characters. Marlow is known for relating "inconclusive experiences," which aptly describes his narration of the Congo. He consistently refuses to assign definite meanings to his experiences. For example, of the sunken steamer he says, "I did not see the real significance of that wreck at once. I fancy I see it now, but I am not sure—not at all." Similarly, the exact meaning of Kurtz's "The horror! The horror!" is left ambiguous.)*
4. Analyze the significance of the title.  
*(The title combines two stock metaphors: heart and darkness. "Heart" is literally the organ central to animal life. By extension, it refers to life generally. It also means "center," geographic or symbolic. In a plethora of mythologies, darkness refers to chaos and disorder. Literally a lack of light, it uses all the metaphoric meanings of "light." Darkness is the time/place that harbors those things antithetical to "civilized" life: the unknown, unknowable, sinister, secret, or evil. In the novella's context, it also refers to the darker skin tones of Africans.*

*These two metaphors combine in a number of patterns, all of which are appropriate for the novella. It can be read as "Heart made of evil," referring to Kurtz or European colonial practices in general. "Center of evil" describes the steamer's progress towards the Inner Station, as does "Center of the Unknown" and "Center of the continent inhabited by dark peoples." "Center of the unknown" refers to Marlow's psychological journey, and "Unknowable heart" may describe his conclusions.)*

6. Describe Marlow's transformation across the narrative arc.  
*(Marlow arrives in Africa with his Victorian ideals intact, especially regarding the value of work. He is immediately confronted with purposeless work and wanton waste. While at the Central Station, his shock turns to contempt for European colonial practices, specifically the combination of idleness, savagery, and greed he witnesses. On the journey upriver, he comes to sympathize with the native crew and identify with Kurtz. Upon discovering the nature of Kurtz's methods, he turns cynical but retains respect for Kurtz as a remarkable man. By the time he returns to Europe, he has become embittered and disdainful. However, his lying to Kurtz's Intended is significant as a return to "civilized" behavior, an exercise of self-control for the good of another.)*

7. What deeper truth does Marlow discover in the “heart of darkness?”

*(Marlow discovers no inner truth at the heart of the jungle. The French warship’s pointless shelling of the coastline foreshadows this negative discovery. His experience of the Belgian Congo is marked by wanton waste and purposeless cruelty, discarded machinery and savage beatings to innocent natives. The reality of Africa negates all European notions of social progress, reduces the entire operation to greed and power struggles. Even Kurtz becomes disillusioned, scrawling “Exterminate all the brutes!” at the bottom of an essay on the ameliorative effects of European influence. His “The horror! The horror!” remains inconclusive because there is no profound conclusion to be drawn. If Marlow discovers anything, it is a terrible void at the center of every human waiting to be exposed beneath the veneer of “civilization.”)*

8. Analyze the novella’s themes of isolation and self-restraint.

*(In Heart of Darkness, isolation and self-restraint are inversely related. One finds self-restraint only in the presence of a community. Kurtz, isolated from his culture and the attendant values, is unable to practice any self-restraint and indulges his various lusts. Similarly, Marlow’s helmsman is culturally isolated (he is of a very different background and tribe from the “cannibals”) and lacks any modicum of self-control, as Marlow notes, which eventually leads to his death. Conversely, the “cannibals” on the steamer are part of an intact social network. Marlow marvels at their self-restraint in not killing an eating him and the pilgrims. Self-control in the novella is neither a European nor African characteristic. Rather, it stems from being part of a social structure.)*

9. Discuss representations of women in *Heart of Darkness*.

*(Women in the novella are on the lesser side of the speech/silence, reality/fiction, and conquerer/conquered oppositions. Marlow’s aunt and Kurtz’s Intended live in fictional worlds, disconnected from the “real” masculine world. Kurtz’s mistress’ speech is indecipherable. She is portrayed as simply a sexualized symbol of the unknowable depths of the continent, implicitly painting her as an object of conquest. Although most of the novella’s characters lack proper names, the women are generally identified in relation to men: Marlow’s Aunt, Kurtz’s Intended, Kurtz’s mistress. Men, on the other hand, are identified by their work: General Manager, Chief Accountant, Brickmaker.)*

10. Outline the structure of the novella.

*(The novella is divided into three sections, each corresponding to a portion of Marlow’s journey. The first section spans from Europe to the Central Station. The second section follows Marlow from the Central Station to the Inner Station, and the*

*third progresses from Inner Station back to Europe. They also correspond to changes in Marlow’s relation to Kurtz. In the first section, he learns of Marlow indirectly. In the second, he constructs an idealized image of Kurtz, which is destroyed in the third. The frame narrative begins and ends on the Nellie in the mouth of the Thames river, the progress of the tide marking the time it takes Marlow to narrate the story.)*

## How Language Works

### THE SECRET SHARER

1. The narrator of “The Secret Sharer” uses a variety of formulations to describe Leggatt, almost all of which emphasize 1) his feelings of identification and 2) the secrecy surrounding Leggatt’s presence aboard: “my double,” “a double captain,” “dual working of my mind,” “my secret self,” “secret sharer of my life,” “unsuspected sharer,” “secret sharer of my cabin,” “my second self,” “secret stranger,” “my other self.”
2. The narrator describes his first mate as curious and methodic: “His dominant trait was to take all things into earnest consideration. He was of a painstaking turn of mind.” The description is interesting because as the mysteries surrounding Leggatt mount, it comes increasingly to describe the reader.

### HEART OF DARKNESS

3. The narrator, while describing Marlow’s relationship to stories, gives the reader a clue as to how to approach the novella: “to him the meaning of an episode was not inside like a kernel but outside, enveloping the tale which brought it out only as a glow brings out a haze . . .” This passage reveals another meaning of the title. “Heart of Darkness,” in this context, refers to the story itself, which has no “meaning” at its center.
4. Marlow’s aunt is typical of nineteenth century attitudes towards colonization: “She talked about ‘weaning those ignorant millions from their horrid ways.’”

5. In several passages Marlow betrays the tension between his ideas about Africans and his inherited prejudices. While describing the “cannibals,” he says, “I looked at them as you would on any human being . . . .” Then later in the same paragraph, he comments, “I would have just as soon expected restraint from a hyena . . . .”
6. In many ways, Kurtz is the colonist extraordinaire. His reported mantra of “My Intended, my ivory, my station, my river, my—” echoes European acquisitiveness by the repetition of the possessive pronoun.

## Across the Curriculum

### Drama

#### THE SECRET SHARER

1. Gather details from the story and then act out the scene of the captain’s discovery of Leggatt and their first conversation.
2. Script and read aloud a conversation between the narrator and his mates. Provide a specific set of circumstances and base character reactions on elements of the story.

#### HEART OF DARKNESS

3. Gathering details from the novella, script and act out the scene of Marlow’s confrontation with Kurtz in the jungle.
4. Underling all of Kurtz’s spoken lines and read them aloud. How does what he says compare/contrast with what is said about him? If you were to characterize him solely based on his speech, would your conclusions differ from your existing ideas?

### Geography

1. Conrad’s sea voyages took him to these ports:

Adelaide	Hull	Port Elizabeth
Amsterdam	Istanbul	Port Said
Bangkok	La Guaira	Port-au-Prince
Bombay	Le Havre	Puerto Cabello
Bordeaux	Livorno	Rouen
Bulungan	London	Samarinda
Calcutta	Lowestoft	Semarang
Cape Haitien	Madras	Singapore
Cape Town	Marseilles	Southampton
Cardiff	Mauritius	St. Pierre
Cartagena	Melbourne	St. Thomas
Dundee	Muntok	Sydney
Dunkirk	Naples	Yeysk
Falmouth	Newcastle	
Genoa	Palermo	

On a world map, mark each port with an arrow and a label.

#### HEART OF DARKNESS

2. Examining a colonial map of Africa, explain the map Marlow examines on page 74. Try to match colors to colonial powers.

### Gender Studies

#### HEART OF DARKNESS

1. Make lists defining gender roles in the novella. Which gender performs which social, sexual, emotional, economic, and physical roles? Are the gender roles of the novella indicative of its contemporary society or idiosyncratic?
2. Note every reference to women or a woman in the novella as you read. Go back and read them together. What portrait of women emerges from Marlow’s comments and descriptions?

### History

1. Make a timeline of Joseph Conrad’s life, including major personal experiences, publications, world events, contemporary publishing, and other significant dates.

**HEART OF DARKNESS**

2. In a chalk talk, give a concise history of British colonization, including a timeline, colonial interests and colonies, relationships between the Empire and its colonies, justification of colonization, and writings about colonies.
3. Research and give an oral report about the Belgian colonization of the Congo. What were the Belgians looking for? What did they find? how did they treat native Africans? At what point did their behavior become known to the world? Upon whose authority were they acting?

**Art**

1. Draw portraits of the main characters. Explain your artistic decisions with references to the story or novella.
2. Sketch drawings of what you consider to be the most significant moments of the story or novella. Indicate the significance of each drawing in its title. Present and discuss the drawings in class.

**THE SECRET SHARER**

3. Research common British ships of the late nineteenth century and draw a diagram of the narrator's ship from "The Secret Sharer." Base your design upon a specific type of vessel, and label areas of the ship that correspond to significant moments of the story.

**HEART OF DARKNESS**

4. Using media of your choice, make collages that depict the systems of oppositions central to the novella like light/dark, male/female, Europe/Africa, speech/silence, etc.

**Journalism**

**HEART OF DARKNESS**

1. Write an obituary for Kurtz. Make reference to his reputation, exploits, and talents.
2. Write a "Help Wanted" advertisement for the position Marlow is offered by the Belgian company. Include a job description, profile of ideal candidate, and starting salary.

**Film**

**HEART OF DARKNESS**

1. Watch *Apocalypse Now*, which is based on *Heart of Darkness*. Identify elements taken from the novella and elements original to the film. Evaluate the film's use of the novella. Does the change of setting and time change its dominant themes?

**Language**

1. Keep a reading journal as you read. List every phrase that seems important or particularly aesthetically appealing. Discuss your selections with your classmates.
2. Keep a vocabulary journal as you read. Note every word you do not know. At the end of every section, look up the words and write their definitions as used in context.
3. Choose a significant paragraph and rewrite it in your own words. Discuss how your writing style differs from Conrad's. What is lost in the conversion? What is gained?

**THE SECRET SHARER**

4. Selecting terms from the story, make an illustrated glossary of nautical terminology.
5. Mark every use of the words "double" and "secret" and their synonyms. List the usages and discuss how they are used in the story and how their repetition affects the dominant themes.

**HEART OF DARKNESS**

6. Mark every use of the word "darkness" in the novella. How many times does it occur. How is it used and to what does it refer? Discuss your findings in class.

**Composition**

1. Choose what you consider to be the most significant moment or quote from the story or novella and write an essay explaining it. Use MLA citations to document quotes and references.

## THE SECRET SHARER

2. Write the events of the story from Leggatt's perspective. How does he view the captain? Does he share the same sense of similarity? Has he been truthful in his narrative?
3. Write a story detailing Leggatt's life after he is marooned. Are there natives on the island? How does he survive? Is he ever rescued? If so, does he eventually face criminal prosecution?

## HEART OF DARKNESS

4. Make a list of five significant themes, motifs, or images from the novella. Write a poem in relation to each selection in a form of your choice.
5. Write a short play about Kurtz's life at the Inner Station before Marlow's arrival. What exactly is his relationship to the tribe? How does he communicate to them? Are the Russian's descriptions accurate?
6. Choose a character and write a series of journal entries from his or her perspective about the events and characters of the novella.

## Literature

1. Make a character list, noting distinguishing characteristics of each character and changes in personality and behavior over the course of the story or novella.
2. Compose an essay in which you compare the narrator of "The Secret Sharer" to Marlow of *Heart of Darkness*. Specifically compare their individual journeys of self-realization.

## THE SECRET SHARER

3. Analyze and discuss Conrad's literary style in the story. Examine his diction, sentence length and construction, and treatment of dialogue.

## HEART OF DARKNESS

4. Read a scholarly analysis of the novella and write a reaction paper in which you agree or disagree with the critic's ideas. Your paper should include a summary of the article's main ideas, a presentation of your agreement or disagreement, support by references to the novella, a paragraph of counterargument, MLA in-text citations, and a works cited page.

## Alternate Assessment

1. Read another story or novel by Conrad. Are there similarities in characterization, literary style, themes, motifs, or imagery?
2. Read "An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*" by Chinua Achebe. Discuss his understanding of the novella and its historical/conceptual context. How does the essay change your view of the novella?

## Standardized Assessment Preparation

### Vocabulary

1. Choose ten words from the text that you did not know. Write down their definitions, synonyms, and antonyms, and use each one in a sample sentence
2. Make a glossary, choosing twenty of these words:

#### THE SECRET SHARER

abhor	haggard	rapture
abominable	impart	reproof
arbitrarily	impeccable	serge
arduous	impudence	similitude
compunction	incredulous	tenacity
deference	ingenious	tentatively
desist	insolence	urbane
devious	interlude	vexed
discomfiture	livid	wiles
doleful	maroon (v)	
eccentric	monotonous	
edification	oblique	
equivocal	ominous	
felicitous	peremptorily	
fortnight	preposterous	
gait	pretense	
gale	prudent	
grave (adj)	punctilious	

#### HEART OF DARKNESS

abscond	factitious	languid	recondite
alacrity	fecund	languor	recrudescence
ascetic	gallant	lugubrious	reposed
avid	immutable	lurid	revile
conflagration	impalpable	moribund	satiated
craven	imperturbable	odious	secular
crestfallen	indefatigable	ostentation	sedentary
culminate	indissolubly	pacific	sententiously
declivity	inducement	pensive	somnambulist
destitution	inestimable	perdition	sordid
detestable	inextricable	peroration	supercilious
diaphanous	inscrutable	pestiferous	tenebrous
digression	insidious	placid	trenchant
efface	insipid	ponderous	venerable
eloquence	interloper	prevaricator	vivacious
erroneous	interminable	propensity	volubility
estuary	intrepid	propitiatory	
evanescent	jocose	rapacious	

## Standardized Assessment Preparation (Page 2)

### Grammar

1. Find and copy an example of each type of sentence: simple, compound, complex, compound-complex, declarative, interrogative, imperative, and exclamatory.
2. Find and copy an example of each of these types of phrases: noun, verb (including participial, gerund, and infinitive), prepositional, absolute, and appositive.

### Critical Thinking

Using the following list of common analogy patterns, create a test of twenty analogies from the story or novella. Trade tests with a partner, take them, and then switch back to grade.

Action and Meaning (shiver : cold), Age (puppy : dog), Antonyms (large : small), Cause and Effect (explosive decompression : pulmonary embolism), Class and Member (rodent : rat), Defining Characteristic (genius : intelligence), Definition (visage : expression), Degree (angry : livid), Function (keyboard : typing), Group and Member (pod : whale), Location (sunset : west), Manner (laugh : snicker), Part and Whole (lens : glasses), Relation (father : son), Sex (bull : sow), Symbol and Symbolized (heart : love), Synonyms (happy : merry), Time Sequence (incubate : hatch), Tool and Purpose (knife : cut), Worker and Work (engineer : build), Worker and Place (sailor : ship), Worker and Product (photographer : photograph), Worker and Tool (photographer : camera)

ex: illness : Kurtz

- A) steamship : Marlow
- B) the Russian : Kurtz's Mistress
- C) spear : the helmsman
- D) Kurtz : ivory

The correct answer is c. Kurtz is killed by an illness, just as the helmsman is killed by a spear. The analogy pattern is cause and effect.

### Writing

1. Compose an essay comparing the narrator of "The Secret Sharer" with Marlow from *Heart of Darkness*. Your essay should include an introduction which briefly introduces the two characters, at least three paragraphs each focusing on one main point of comparison, an a conclusion.
2. Compose an essay in which you explore the various meanings of "darkness" in *Heart of Darkness*. Your essay should include an introduction, at least three main points, and a conclusion. Include quotations to support your argument and document them with MLA citations. Provide an outline and a list of works cited in MLA format.



## Vocabulary

Circle the definition that best fits the word.

\_\_\_\_\_ 1. ascetic

- A) sterile, safe
- B) religious
- C) self-denying, austere
- D) uneducated or unintelligent

\_\_\_\_\_ 2. interloper

- A) someone who meddles in others' affairs
- B) courier
- C) dominant economic or military force
- D) porter

\_\_\_\_\_ 3. somnambulist

- A) sleepwalker
- B) person with negligible ambition
- C) voyager
- D) steam-engine technician

\_\_\_\_\_ 4. lugubrious

- A) heavy, awkward to move
- B) mournful, gloomy
- C) underwater
- D) heavily furred

\_\_\_\_\_ 5. alacrity

- A) indecisiveness
- B) violence
- C) quickness
- D) sleepiness

\_\_\_\_\_ 6. rapacious

- A) lusty
- B) sea-worthy
- C) unidentifiable, mysterious
- D) greedy, plundering

\_\_\_\_\_ 7. trenchant

- A) deep and narrow
- B) forceful, vigorous
- C) recalcitrant
- D) possessing an inferior level of technology

\_\_\_\_\_ 8. prevaricator

- A) aggressor
- B) someone prone to sudden changes of mind
- C) coward
- D) liar

\_\_\_\_\_ 9. conflagration

- A) meeting of polar opposites
- B) collision, intersection
- C) sudden appearance of danger
- D) particularly large or destructive fire

\_\_\_\_\_ 10. intrepid

- A) inclined to roam
- B) fearless
- C) pointless, arbitrary
- D) healthy

\_\_\_\_\_ 11. recondite

- A) excitable
- B) impenetrable
- C) difficult to understand
- D) chagrined

\_\_\_\_\_ 12. destitution

- A) destruction of natural resources
- B) melancholy
- C) spiritual corruption
- D) poverty

\_\_\_\_\_ 13. languor

- A) silence
- B) lack of physical or mental energy
- C) nervous chatter
- D) comfort

\_\_\_\_\_ 14. fecund

- A) fertile or productive
- B) possessing a foul odor
- C) materially wealthy
- D) decomposing

\_\_\_\_\_ 15. tenebrous

- A) uncertain
- B) comprised of numerous tendrils or growths
- C) dark and gloomy
- D) vibrating

## Comprehension Test A

### Part I: Character Identification (30 points)

Name the character(s) who fits these descriptions.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. measures the size of Marlow's cranium
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. narrates the story
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. narrates the narration of the story
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. helps Marlow secure his position with the Company
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. dies going upriver
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. owner of *An Inquiry into some Points of Seamanship*
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. dies going downriver
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. nearly died going downriver
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. well known for producing large quantities of ivory
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. first Company employee Marlow meets in Africa
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. "papier-maché Mephistopheles"
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. wears ornamentation equivalent in value to several elephant tusks
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. has filed teeth and scarred teeth
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. asks to know Kurtz's last words
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. leads the Eldorado Exploration Expedition

### Part II: Fact or Opinion (20 points)

Mark the following statements either T for true, F for false or O for opinion.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. The Company's stated objective is the Christianization of Africa.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Kurtz entrusts a packet of documents to Marlow.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Marlow expresses admiration for women.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Kurtz marries an African woman.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Kurtz writes that Europeans appear as supernatural beings to natives.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Kurtz's Intended misunderstands his plans.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. The chief accountant plots against the general manager.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. The Russian acts as interpreter and guide for Marlow.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Marlow threatens to strangle Kurtz.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. The Eldorado Exploration Expedition returns with mass quantities of ivory and gold.

## Comprehension Test A (Page 2)

### Part III: Chronology (20 points)

In the blanks provided, number the events in chronological order..

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. A French warship shells the African coast.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. An abandoned camp is discovered.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Marlow returns from Asia.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Kurtz's Intended gushes about his ideas.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Marlow is grouped with those of "unsound methods."
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Marlow notices heads mounted on poles.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. The Russian flees.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Marlow meets two ladies, one thin, one corpulent.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. The Brickmaker shows Marlow a painting by Kurtz.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Marlow hikes 200 miles.

### Part IV: Essay Questions (30 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

- 1. Characterize Marlow's opinion of women.
- 2. Analyze the significance of the title.
- 3. Discuss the novella's structure.
- 4. List examples of European savagery.
- 5. Contrast place descriptions of Europe and Africa.

## Comprehension Test B

### Part I: Identification (30 points)

Identify speakers of the following quotations.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. When you see Mr. Kurtz tell him from me that everything here is very satisfactory.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Save me!
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. And this also has been one of the dark places of the earth.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. I—I have mourned so long in silence—in silence!
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. We shall have rivets!
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. the changes take place inside, you know
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. You don't talk with that man—you listen to him
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. The horror! The Horror!
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. We have lost the first of the ebb.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Mistah Kurtz—he dead.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. You are of the new gang—the gang of virtue
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. I was on the threshold of great things.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. I say, haven't you a pair of shoes you could spare?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. The district is closed to us for a time. Deplorable!
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. My Intended, my ivory, my station, my river

### Part II: Short Answer (20 points)

Provide an answer to each of these questions:

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. How does Marlow travel to Africa?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. To what historical conquest does Marlow compare the European colonization of Africa?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Where is the *Nellie* anchored?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Where is Marlow's steamer when he arrives in Africa?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. How does Marlow dispose of the helmsman's corpse?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. What derogatory term is used for dug up ivory?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. How is the attack on the steamer dispersed?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. What inspires Marlow to go to Africa?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Who orders the attack on the steamer?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. What food stock do the natives bring aboard the steamer?

## Comprehension Test B (Page 2)

### Part III: Fill-in (20 points)

Fill in the words that complete each statement.

1. After traveling \_\_\_\_\_ miles towards the Central Station, Kurtz returns to his own station, sending on his assistant with \_\_\_\_\_ and a note.
2. Kurtz's cousin calls him a talented \_\_\_\_\_, while the journalist claims his true talents were in \_\_\_\_\_.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ claims that the heads on poles belonged to \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Kurtz reportedly threatened to \_\_\_\_\_ the Russian over a small amount of \_\_\_\_\_.
5. At the bottom of an essay, \_\_\_\_\_ scrawls, "\_\_\_\_\_ all the brutes!"

### Part IV: Essay Questions (30 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. Speculate on the meaning of Kurtz's last words.
2. Characterize Marlow's attitudes toward European intentions in Africa.
3. List the various thematic meanings of "darkness."
4. For what is the African jungle a symbol?
5. How does Marlow portray native Africans?

## Answer Key

### VOCABULARY

- |      |       |       |
|------|-------|-------|
| 1. C | 6. D  | 11. C |
| 2. A | 7. B  | 12. D |
| 3. A | 8. D  | 13. B |
| 4. B | 9. D  | 14. A |
| 5. C | 10. B | 15. C |

### COMPREHENSION TEST A

#### Part I: Character Identification (30 points)

- |                      |                             |
|----------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Company doctor    | 9. Kurtz                    |
| 2. Marlow            | 10. the chief accountant    |
| 3. unnamed narrator  | 11. the Brickmaker          |
| 4. Marlow's aunt     | 12. Kurtz's mistress        |
| 5. Marlow's helmsman | 13. native fireman          |
| 6. the Russian       | 14. Kurtz's Intended        |
| 7. Kurtz             | 15. general manager's uncle |
| 8. Marlow            |                             |

#### Part II: Fact or Opinion (20 points)

- |      |       |
|------|-------|
| 1. F | 6. O  |
| 2. T | 7. F  |
| 3. F | 8. F  |
| 4. O | 9. T  |
| 5. T | 10. F |

#### Part III: Chronology (20 points)

- 3
- 6
- 1
- 10
- 9
- 7
- 8
- 2
- 5
- 4

#### Part IV: Essay Questions (30 points)

Answers will vary.

### COMPREHENSION TEST B

#### Part I: Identification (30 points)

- |                         |                         |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. the chief accountant | 9. the Director         |
| 2. Kurtz                | 10. manager's servant   |
| 3. Marlow               | 11. the Brickmaker      |
| 4. Kurtz's Intended     | 12. Kurtz               |
| 5. Marlow               | 13. the Russian         |
| 6. Company doctor       | 14. the general manager |
| 7. the Russian          | 15. Kurtz               |
| 8. Kurtz                |                         |

#### Part II: Short Answer (20 points)

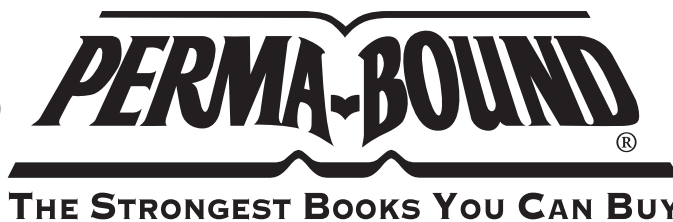
- a French steamer
- the Roman conquest of Britain
- at the mouth of the Thames river
- at the bottom of the Congo river
- he dumps it overboard
- fossil
- blowing the steam whistle
- a map of Africa in a shop window
- Kurtz
- rotting hippo meat

#### Part III: Fill-in (20 points)

- 300, ivory
- musician, radical politics
- The Russian, rebels
- shoot, ivory
- Kurtz, Exterminate

#### Part IV: Essay Questions (30 points)

Answers will vary.



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