L3. lesson 2. The exam will consider only what has been done in class. The extra elements can help to better capture the atmosphere of modernism.

Heart of Darkness by [Joseph Conrad](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Conrad)

***Heart of Darkness*** (1899) is a novella also considered an adventure work by [Polish-British](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Polish-British) novelist [Joseph Conrad](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Conrad), about a voyage up the [Congo River](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Congo_River) into the [Congo Free State](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Congo_Free_State), in the heart of [Africa](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Africa),.

How famous is this work? Literary critic [Harold Bloom](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harold_Bloom) wrote that *Heart of Darkness* had been analyzed more than any other work of literature that is studied in universities and colleges, which he attributed to Conrad's "unique propensity for ambiguity." However, it was not a big success during Conrad's life.

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL ELEMENTS and Real Elements:

In 1890, at the age of 32, Conrad was appointed by a Belgian trading company to serve on one of their [steamers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Steamboat). While sailing up the [Congo river](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Congo_river) from one station to another, the captain became ill and Conrad assumed command, guiding the ship to the trading company's innermost station. The story's main narrator, Charles Marlow, is based upon the author. When Conrad began to write the novella, eight years after returning from Africa, he drew inspiration from his travel journals.[[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heart_of_Darkness#cite_note-Bloom-5) (Bloom, Harold, ed. (2009). Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness., p. 15)

*“Now when I was a little chap I had a passion for maps. I would look for hours at South America, or Africa, or Australia, and lose myself in all the glories of exploration…., and when I saw one that looked particularly inviting on a map (but they all look that) I would put my finger on it and say, ‘When I grow up I will go there…… Well, I haven’t been there yet, and shall not try now. The glamour’s off…. well, we won’t talk about that.…..”*

*Marlow is probably one of the most famous persona examples in novels. In this novel, Marlow is used as Conrad’s mouthpiece. In this extract, Conrad is telling us through Marlow about his own visit to the Congo and his experiences of sailing to distant places and his boyhood ambition of sailing. Hence, Marlow is used as a persona in this novel.*

Opinions about the novella:

Conrad described *Heart of Darkness* as "a wild story of a journalist who becomes manager of a station in the (African) interior and makes himself worshipped by a tribe of savages. Thus described, the subject seems comic, but it isn't." Karl, Frederick R.; Davies, Laurence, eds. (1986). The Collected Letters of Joseph Conrad – Volume 2: 1898 – 1902. Cambridge University Press, p. 407

The volume consisted of [*Youth: a Narrative*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Youth_%28Conrad_story%29), *Heart of Darkness* and *The End of the Tether* in that order. For future editions of the book, in 1917 Conrad wrote an "[Author's Note](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Youth:_a_Narrative,_and_Two_Other_Stories/Author%27s_Note)" where he, after denying any "unity of artistic purpose" underlying the collection, discusses each of the three stories, and makes light commentary on the character [Marlow](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Marlow)—

Although *Heart of Darkness* was one of the first literary texts to provide a critical view of European imperial activities, it was initially read by critics as anything but controversial. While the book was generally admired, it was typically read either as a condemnation of a certain type of adventurer who could easily take advantage of imperialism’s opportunities, or else as a sentimental novel reinforcing domestic values: Kurtz’s Intended, who appears at the novella’s conclusion, was roundly praised by turn-of-the-century reviewers for her maturity and sentimental appeal. Conrad’s decision to set the book in a Belgian colony and to have Marlow work for a Belgian trading concern made it even easier for British readers to avoid seeing themselves reflected in *Heart of Darkness.* Although these early reactions seem ludicrous to a modern reader, they reinforce the novella’s central themes of hypocrisy and absurdity.

WHO IS THE CHARACTER OF THE ANTAGONIST KURTZ BASED ON?

1. [Georges-Antoine Klein](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Georges-Antoine_Klein), an agent who became ill and later died aboard Conrad's steamer
2. The principal figures involved in the disastrous "rear column" of the [Emin Pasha Relief Expedition](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emin_Pasha_Relief_Expedition), including column leader [Edmund Musgrave Barttelot](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edmund_Musgrave_Barttelot), slave trader [Tippu Tip](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tippu_Tip) and the expedition's overall leader, Welsh explorer [Henry Morton Stanley](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry_Morton_Stanley).
3. [Adam Hochschild](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adam_Hochschild), in [*King Leopold's Ghost*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/King_Leopold%27s_Ghost), believes that the Belgian soldier [Léon Rom](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/L%C3%A9on_Rom) is the most important influence on the character.

TECHNICAL ASPECTS OF THE NOVELLA:

The plot, content, and style of the novella are inseparably fused to achieve a single, common effect, which is multilayered, ambiguous, with fascinating complexity of the work, and which opens new sides for reader while reading (Kolocotroni, 2010). Thus the participation of the reader is inevitable.

1.NARRATOR: Charles Marlow tells his story to friends aboard a boat anchored on the [River Thames](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/River_Thames), London, England.

2.SETTING: Aboard the *Nellie*, anchored in the [River Thames](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/River_Thames) near [Gravesend](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gravesend), England, and [Congo River](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Congo_River) into the [Congo Free State](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Congo_Free_State), in the heart of [Africa](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Africa)

3.EFFECT : Conrad to create a parallel between London and Africa as places of darkness. ( Chinua Achebe "An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*" in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, vol. 2 (7th edition) (2000), p. 2036.)

Central to Conrad's work is the idea that there is little difference between so-called civilised people and those described as savages; *Heart of Darkness* raises questions about [imperialism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Imperialism) and racism.

1. PLOT AND MOTIVE: Marlow's obsession with the ivory trader [Kurtz](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kurtz_%28Heart_of_Darkness%29)
2. In a flash forward, Marlow notes that the [International Society for the Suppression of Savage Customs](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Society_for_the_Suppression_of_Savage_Customs) had commissioned Kurtz to write a report, which he did eloquently. A handwritten postscript, apparently added later by Kurtz, reads "Exterminate all the brutes!" (Conrad 83).
3. SYMBOLS
4. Hanging on the wall is "a small sketch in oils, on a panel, representing a woman draped and blindfolded carrying a lighted torch" (Conrad 39).
5. a big river, "resembling an immense snake uncoiled, with its head in the sea, its body at rest curving afar over a vast country and its tail lost in the depths of the land" (Conrad 10) The image of this river on the map fascinated Marlow "as a snake would a bird" (Conrad 10). The river is winding, dangerous, sinister and is a symbol of darkness.
6. IMPERIALISM:

Conrad’s critique of imperialism is present in the novella especially through the depiction of the [Ivory trading](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ivory_trade) company

Marlow had been fascinated by "the blank spaces" on maps, particularly by the biggest, which by the time he had grown up was no longer blank but turned into "a place of darkness" (Conrad 10)

Feeling as though "instead of going to the centre of a continent I were about to set off for the centre of the earth", a little sea-going steamer captained by a Swede.

Work on the railway is going on, involving removal of rocks with explosives

At this station, which strikes Marlow as a scene of devastation, he meets the Company's impeccably dressed chief accountant who tells him of a [Mr. Kurtz](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kurtz_%28Heart_of_Darkness%29), who is in charge of a very important trading-post, and a widely respected, first-class agent, a "'very remarkable person'" who "'Sends in as much ivory as all the others put together'" (Conrad 28). The agent predicts that Kurtz will go very far: "'He will be a somebody in the Administration before long. They, above—the Council in Europe, you know—mean him to be'" (Conrad 29).

A Russian wanderer who had happened to stray into Kurtz's camp has disappeared.

8. COLONIALISM AND ITS DISASTER:

1. Marlow enters a narrow ravine to stroll in the shade under the trees, and finds himself in "the gloomy circle of some Inferno": the place is full of diseased Africans who worked on the railroad and now await their deaths, their sickened bodies already as thin as air (Conrad 24-25). Marlow witnesses the scene "horror-struck" (Conrad 26).

2. One of the natives is tortured for allegedly causing a fire that burnt all the materials used to trade with the natives.

3. Conrad's accurate recounting of the horror arising from the methods and effects of colonialism in the Congo Free State. "*Heart of Darkness* is experience ... pushed a little (and only very little) beyond the actual facts of the case.

4. French philosopher Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe called *Heart of Darkness* "one of the greatest texts of Western literature" and used Conrad's tale for a reflection on "The Horror of the West." Lacoue-Labarthe, Philippe. [*""The Horror of the West""*](http://www.bloomsbury.com/us/conrads-heart-of-darkness-and-contemporary-thought-9781441101006/). Bloomsbury.

5. Achebe described Conrad's novella as "an offensive and deplorable book" that [de-humanised](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dehumanization) Africans.( Watts, Cedric (1983). [*"'A Bloody Racist': About Achebe's View of Conrad"*](http://www.jstor.org/discover/10.2307/3508121?uid=3739560&uid=2&uid=4&uid=3739256&sid=21102956766521). The Yearbook of English Studies. **13**: 196)

Achebe argued that Conrad, "blinkered...with xenophobia", incorrectly depicted Africa as the antithesis of Europe and civilisation, ignoring the artistic accomplishments of the [Fang people](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beti-Pahuin_peoples) who lived in the Congo River basin at the time of the book’s publication. Since the book promoted and continues to promote a prejudiced image of Africa that "depersonalises a portion of the human race," he concluded that it should not be considered a great work of art.( Achebe, Chinua (1978). [*"An Image of Africa"*](http://www.jstor.org/discover/10.2307/3818468). Research in African Literatures.)

6. In 2003, professor Peter Mwikisa concluded the book was "the great lost opportunity to depict dialogue between Africa and Europe."( Mwikisa, Peter. "Conrad's Image of Africa: Recovering African Voices in *Heart of Darkness*. *Mots Pluriels* 13 (April 2000): 20-28.)

7. Fellow novelist [Caryl Phillips](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caryl_Phillips) stated after a 2003 interview that "Achebe is right; to the African reader the price of Conrad's eloquent denunciation of colonisation is the recycling of racist notions of the 'dark' continent and her people. Those of us who are not from Africa may be prepared to pay this price, but this price is far too high for Achebe."(Phillips, Caryl. [*"Out of Africa"*](https://www.theguardian.com/books/2003/feb/22/classics.chinuaachebe). The Guardian.)

Various Possible Meanings of The Title:

Heart of Darkness is seen to contain “suggestions that the evil which the title refers to is to be associated with Africans, their customs, and their rites” ([Singh 43](https://muse.jhu.edu/article/542238" \l "b22))

The meaning of the novel’s title is gradually revealed as a comprehension of the heart of black Africa, as a comprehension of evil in human nature. The author doesn’t give the unambiguous answer to the question of what the evil is and where its origins are.

Reading against the grain of the general formula of analyzing racism in Heart of Darkness, Paul B. Armstrong argues that Conrad’s representation of the Other is not an act of racism as Achebe alleges, but a daring and deliberate exploration of the difficulties in understanding “cultural otherness”: “Conrad is neither a racist nor an exemplary anthropologist but a skeptical dramatist of epistemological processes. Heart of Darkness is a calculated failure to depict achieved cross-cultural understanding” (23).

What is the place of art?

The world in the literature of modernism is presented as eternally hostile to human chaos, knowing if which is difficult, not available, and only the art (the word) is a mean of organizing the world. Modernists believe that only the art offers a holistic model of reality, and this model should be as complex and internally contradictory as life is, as the secrets of the human soul are. This new concept of world and man require new ways of artistic expression, new ways for interaction with the reader. One of the founders of modernism – Conrad – combines a tendency for a spectacular adventure plot, which is typical for an ordinary adventure novel, with an astounding wealth of content and dramatic complexity of narrative structure

Figures of speech. literary techniques- literary devises:

Irony, sarcasm, foreshadowing and contrast:

Kurtz is described by the brick maker who never makes briks, "'a prodigy'" and "'an emissary of pity, and science, and progress'", and feels Kurtz represents the "'higher intelligence, wide sympathies, a singleness of purpose'" needed for the cause Europe entrusts the Company with (Conrad 39). The man predicts Kurtz will rise in the hierarchy within two years and then makes the connection to Marlow: "'The same people who sent him specially also recommended you'" (Conrad 39-40).

In the forest the brick maker will never make briks!!!

Finally Marlow is left with some personal letters and a photograph of Kurtz's fiancée, whom Kurtz referred to as "My Intended" (Conrad 79). When Marlow visits her, she is dressed in black and still deep in mourning, although it has been more than a year since Kurtz's death. She presses Marlow for information, asking him to repeat Kurtz's final words, which in fact are "The horror! The horror!"

Kurtz on his death bed sees in his own heart and personal horror and hell as he did not gain but what he accomplished.

Uncomfortable, Marlow lies and tells her that Kurtz's final word was her name.

= Women occupy traditional roles as arbiters of domesticity and morality, yet they are almost never present in the narrative; instead, the concepts of “home” and “civilization” exist merely as hypocritical ideals, meaningless to men for whom survival is in constant doubt.

A handwritten postscript, apparently added later by Kurtz, reads "Exterminate all the brutes!" (Conrad 83). What about the beautiful native woman, the ornately dressed woman, who walks in measured steps along the shore and stops next to the steamer?

MYSTERY AND LACK OF EXPLANATION: ( drive to the participation of the reader)

Through conversation Marlow discovers just how Kurtz can be; how the natives worship him; and how very ill he has been of late. The Russian admires Kurtz for his intellect and his insights into love, life, and justice, and suggests that he is a poet. He tells of how Kurtz opened his mind, and seems to admire him even for his power—and for his willingness to use it. Marlow, on the other hand, suggests that Kurtz has gone mad.

From the steamboat, Marlow observes the station in detail and is surprised to see near the station house a row of posts topped with the severed heads of natives.

Kurtz has harmed the Company's business in the region,; his methods are "unsound".

Kurtz gives Marlow a packet of papers, including his commissioned report and a photograph, telling him to keep them away from the manager. When Marlow next speaks with him, Kurtz is near death; as he dies, Marlow hears him weakly whisper: "The horror! The horror!" (Conrad 116). A short while later, the "manager's boy" announces to the rest of the crew, in a scathing tone, "Mistah Kurtz—he dead" (Conrad 117). The next day Marlow pays little attention to the pilgrims as they bury "something" in a muddy hole (Conrad 117).

DISILLUSIONMENT AND DISAPPROVAL :

Upon his return to Europe, Marlow is embittered (cynical disillusioned) and contemptuous of the "civilized" world. Many callers come to retrieve the papers Kurtz had entrusted to him, but Marlow withholds them or offers papers he knows they have no interest in. He then gives Kurtz's report to a journalist, for publication if he sees fit.

Modern Hero- Dramatic Hero- Anti Hero: The Place of HEROISM iN tHE NOVELLA:

Aristotle’s Poetics defines a "tragic hero" as a good man of high status who displays a tragic flaw (―hamartia) and experiences a dramatic reversal ―peripeteia, as well as an intense moment of recognition ―anagnorisis and ‘hubris’.

Who is the hero, Marlow or Kurtz?

Both Marlow and Kurtz are the protagonists of the story; however, protagonist and hero are not always synonymous. Marlow is the hero in the traditional sense of the word, while Kurtz is the more modern hero, often referred to as the anti-hero.

How does Kurtz have the dimensions of a tragic hero?

Is it his flaw of arrogance,greediness, vehemence and insatiable ambition " the end of his life, his exceptional personal talents, or all of these?

Kurtz’ cousin told Marlow that he could have been a ―great musician.

A journalist said Kurtz had the potential to be an excellent politician. ―He could get himself to believe anything– anything. He would have been a splendid leader of an extreme party. (

Heart of Darkness, p.55). No one could deny that whatever he was, and whatever he did, as his cousin said, Kurtz was "a universal genius".

Kurtz can be seen as something of a tragic hero. His original intentions were relatively honorable. His eventual decline into darkness and subsequent demise can be seen as tragic. Usually, a tragic hero is a person of the nobility, such as a king, who makes a fatal error and/or who possesses a personal flaw that leads to a downfall. Often, a tragic hero possesses excessive pride that leads him to ignore warning signs or to make avoidable mistakes.

Let's take a look at how Kurtz fulfills these requirements. He definitely seems to be excessively proud, as he initially envisions himself as an idealistic savior, and then, once he begins to decline, as an actual god. This pride is certainly a personal flaw, and it certainly leads to his death (also known as his downfall). Also, while Kurtz is not a noble as such, he is a prominent and influential member of society, and so he can be seen as a kind of modern equivalent of nobility.

While Kurtz' personal talents probably helped him gain his influential role in society, they don't necessarily fit in with the classic characteristics of a tragic hero. All in all, it would appear that the intense, flawed personal pride and his subsequent death are some of the most important factors contributing to Kurtz' status as a tragic hero, as they most closely resemble the most commonly accepted tragic hero criteria.

When Kurtz enters in wilderness his personality changes completely, he becomes cruel, arrogant and greedy and these flaws that he has are the main reasons for his demise. Thus,

Kurtz’s fate was doomed the moment Marlow sees the remains of his predecessor Fresleven, who has been killed in a scuffle with the natives and buried by nobody but the grass growing through his ribs.

Consequently, Kurtz’s weakness is that he lacks the ability to overcome adversities presented by the jungle, that is to say insanity. Unlike Okonkwo, Kurtz’ key flaw is that he is greedy and self-righteous. And this is very clear when Marlow states why Kurtz went to the Congo in the first place (Karin Hansson, 1998: 5\_8):

Kurtz has succeeded with the Africans ―they adored him. And He himself has ordered the attack to be made on the steamer because he ―hated sometimes the idea of being taken away (Heart of Darkness, p. 41). Marlow believes that Kurtz's immersion in the wilderness has fundamentally changed him. Living deep in the Congo, among the ―savages- and far from the structured life of society, Kurtz has learned some deep, dark secret about the nature of life which is ravenousness and prideful (Enas Subhi, 2010).

Marlow starts out just as everyman, trying to earn a living. His original plans were setting out to make money, but his journey turns into so much more. His expedition turns into a quest to find and save Kurtz, and to understand the people so many were prejudice against.   
  
Despite the opinion of certain critics, Conrad did not create Marlow to be a prejudice character. One of Marlow’s first Reactions to the villagers is the exact opposite:

They were not enemies they were not criminals??(Conrad, 189) While his initial response may not seem altogether accepting, it is far beyond the understanding of his peers. As the story continues Marlow is slightly sarcastic in his understanding of the villagers. Fine fellows-Cannibals-in their place. They were men one could work with, and I am grateful to them. And, after all, they did not eat each other before my face? (189) Marlow shows his ability to be sarcastic in the face of popular criticism (189). They howled and leaped, and spun, and made horrid faces; but what thrilled you was just the thought of the humanity-like yours - the thought of your remote kinship with this wild.(189)   
  
  
Marlow’s blindness to Kurtz’s impurities are both his strength and weakness. His ignorance to the greatness of his own qualities can best be stated one way: The Horror.

MOST NOTABLE FEATURES OF MODERNISM:

*Heart of Darkness* is as much about alienation, confusion, and profound doubt as it is about imperialism.

*Psychological Aspects Of Heart Of Darkness appear at different levels and with various characters.*

[F. R. Leavis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/F._R._Leavis) referred to *Heart of Darkness* as a "minor work" and criticized its "adjectival insistence upon inexpressible and incomprehensible mystery"

FRAME NARRATIVE: a literary technique that sometimes serves as a companion piece to a story within a story structure, within sometimes yet another story.

Joseph Conrad's **Heart of Darkness** (1899) is an early and important example of **modernist** experimentation in English fiction. ... **Heart of Darkness** does not reveal its meaning openly. Rather, its meanings evade the interpreter; they are larger than the story itself. The Congo river is similar to a snake in its appearance. What does this mean openly and in an allusion?

In the voice of his frame narrator, Conrad provides a crucial image for understanding the symbolism of modern literature when he explains that the stories of Marlow, the narrator of most of the novella, differ from those of other sailors

Conrad, a Pole who had worked as a sailor and then captain on French and British ships before becoming a naturalized British subject, admired Flaubert and knew French literature well. While not aligning himself specifically with French symbolism, he wrote that “a work of art is very seldom limited to one exclusive meaning and not necessarily tending to a definite conclusion.

Conrad’s world is really tragic – it is full of terrible secrets, for which there are no words in human language, and which remain nameless. Here comes silence (skipping the most important) – an important method for the Conrad and the poetics of modernism.

There is a story and social motives, exposure of predatory exploitation of colonies, there are anti-racist theme; evil is also spread in nature – African nature is hostile and destructive for Europeans, but the main evil, perhaps, is in the human soul. Evil in Conrad’s novella looks like good in the eyes of some of the characters representative of some people.

Marlow realizes that his loyalty to humanity goes against all his experience, suggests that the world has no truth, no justice; there is only stupidity idealism, cunning selfishness, greed and fanaticism. Such concept of the world and human impacts shows pessimism that is characteristic for modernism.

Conrad’s works, *Heart of Darkness* in particular, provide a bridge between Victorian values and the ideals of modernism. Like their Victorian predecessors, these novels rely on traditional ideas of heroism, which are nevertheless under constant attack in a changing world and in places far from England.

Conrad deals with a complex character and changing narrator, using some aspects of the modernist ideology. So his novella is technically a modernist text, but it was only a starting point for more testing modernist literature.

In Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness, a chaotic form of writing takes place which is characteristic of the Modernist's experiments in their style of literature of stream-of-consciousness.  Written before WWI took place, he spoke of a different type of chaos and uncertainty present in the world at this time; the issue of slavery.

INABILITY TO UNDERSTAND AND CONTROL PROPERLY:

Imperialism is nevertheless at the center of *Heart of Darkness.* By the 1890s, most of the world’s “dark places” had been placed at least nominally under European control, and the major European powers were stretched thin, trying to administer and protect massive, far-flung empires. Cracks were beginning to appear in the system: riots, wars, and the wholesale abandonment of commercial enterprises all threatened the white men living in the distant corners of empires. Things were clearly falling apart. *Heart of Darkness* suggests that this is the natural result when men are allowed to operate outside a social system of checks and balances: power, especially power over other human beings, inevitably corrupts. At the same time, this begs the question of whether it is possible to call an individual insane or wrong when he is part of a system that is so thoroughly corrupted and corrupting. *Heart of Darkness,* thus, at its most abstract level, is a narrative about the difficulty of understanding the world beyond the self, about the ability of one man to judge another.

Reader’s participation:

One reason for the centrality of *Heart of Darkness* to the history of modernism is its openness to interpretation:

Some racial prejudice is also present in the text, but any purely ideological approaches to the text do not answer the question: what is the power of the novel?

The chaotic, stream-of-consciousness style [Conrad](http://www.123helpme.com/search.asp?text=conrad) took on helped to display the confusion, and made the reader have to interpret for themselves what they thought the writer meant.  Conrad experiments with this style, leaving some sentences without ending: "not a sentimental pretense but an idea;…something you can set up…and offer a sacrifice to…." (Conrad, Longman p. 2195), a very choppy form of literature and causes the reader to fill in the holes and interpret themselves, alone.

Conrad skips about from talking of the "two women knitted black wool feverishly" at the gate of the city (of hell), to his aunt which he feels women are "out of touch with truth," to how the British are as "weak-eyed devil(s) of a rapacious and pitiless folly" (Conrad, Longman pp. 2198, 2199, & 2202).

Conrad's mind moves about as ours do along a large duration of literary monologue to convey to the reader the author's ideas, as interpreted by the reader.

Marlow’s journey to central Africa to confront the power-mad Kurtz can be interpreted as a political statement about imperialism and race, a critique of bureaucracy, a journey to the center of the self, a descent into Hell, or a voyage up the birth canal. No single interpretation exhausts its meaning.

Most of the story is told from the perspective of Marlow, and much of the time he seems unsure what is happening to him. Through the narrative device that Watt has defined as “delayed decoding,” Conrad records first the impressions that an event makes on Marlow and only later Marlow’s arrival at an explanation of the event. Thus, when his boat is suddenly attacked by natives loyal to Kurtz, Marlow is unable to explain why his helmsman suddenly falls down:

“…the end of what appeared a long cane clattered round and knocked over a little camp-stool…. my feet felt so warm and wet that I had to look down. The man had rolled on his back and stared straight up at me; both his hands clutched that cane. It was the shaft of a spear… my shoes were full; a pool of blood lay very still gleaming dark-red under the wheel.”

The reader realizes only gradually what has happened and thus shares in the experience of Marlow’s perplexity. A similar structure dominates the narrative on a larger scale, as Marlow continually jumps around in the telling of his story, layering impressions from various times in his attempt to make sense of his experience. This resulted in breaking up the temporal continuity associated with the nineteenth-century novel. His use of multiple narrators undermines the nineteenth-century convention of narrative omniscience. The literary critic F. R. Leavis complained that Conrad frequently seemed “intent on making a virtue out of not knowing what he means.” Yet, this technique for forcing the reader to share the impressions of the characters became central to modernist fiction.  
  
\* Controversial writing about Africa  
  
\* The absence of resolution for a complex character  
  
\* The denial of breath taking for readers (Conrad's lack of the use of the all too important comma) in addition to the ongoing stories and lack of resolution.

The literature of that time showed the interest to the problem of evil, its nature and origins. If in the literature of the 19th century, the evil is treated as an integral part of life, which should be recognized and expressed in the work, and thereby expose, then Conrad’s evil, darkness and gloom are leitmotifs of the novel, the evil is incomprehensible and unavoidable. Conrad’s evil is concentrated in the “heart of darkness” –

In the “Heart of Darkness” Conrad is presented as a vindicator (a person who argues to defend or justify some policy or institution) of imperialism and it can be proved by text of the novel. The author depicts Africa the same as the “heart of darkness”, the negative sense, the metaphor cannot be ignored.

Conrad comes from the recognition of an insoluble contradiction of the world, so his artistic world has everything. The action takes place on the backdrop of nature, in comparison with which a person is ridiculously small, and the human story is ridiculously arrogant presumption.

Regret and rejoice: Aestheticism with its mannered affectations, reminding the late romanticism, together with modernism, with its grim, unflinching look at the world and man, fully absorbed the lessons of realism and naturalism, are equally obliged to the literature of the 19th century – both trends at the turn of the century are equally seen as new, rebellious. However, the allocation of different set of problems and their solutions set up different proportion of these areas in the history of literature from a historical perspective – aestheticism became a monument of past age, while modernism in the next stage of literary development became a leading trend in world literature.