



Heart of Darkness (Annotated with a Biography about the Life and Times of Joseph Conrad)

Joseph Conrad

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The story centres on Charles Marlow, who narrates most of the book. He is an Englishman who takes a foreign assignment from a Belgian trading company as a ferry-boat captain in Africa. Heart of Darkness exposes the dark side of European colonization while exploring the three levels of darkness that the protagonist, Marlow, encounters: the darkness of the Congo wilderness, the darkness of the Europeans' cruel treatment of the natives, and the unfathomable darkness within every human being for committing heinous acts of evil. Although Conrad does not give the name of the river, at the time of writing the Congo Free State, the location of the large and important Congo River, was a private colony of Belgium's King Leopold II. In the story, Marlow is employed to transport ivory downriver. However, his more pressing assignment is to return Kurtz, another ivory trader, to civilization, in a cover-up. Kurtz has a reputation throughout the region.

This symbolic story is a story within a story or frame narrative. It follows Marlow as he recounts from dusk through to late night, to a group of men aboard a ship anchored in the Thames Estuary, his Congolese adventure. The passage of time and the darkening sky during the fictitious narrative-within-the-narrative parallel the atmosphere of the story.

Heart of Darkness was completed by Conrad in 1899 and first appeared in serialized form London's Blackwood's Magazine later that year. In 1902 it was published in one volume as a novella and is still in print. It is considered one of English literature's classics in depicting the savagery of man.

This book is annotated with a biography about the life and times of Joseph Conrad.

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