

# HEART OF DARKNESS

We have made a project of Conrad's novel "Heart of Darkness". We have picked up some information about the topic, the critics and the most important thing : we have taken out the true philosophical meaning of the novel.

To begin with, here there is a short summary of the novel:

In " HEART OF DARKNESS", Joseph Conrad tells the story of a man who goes through the African jungle, along the Congo river. It is Marlow, the own captain of the merchant ship who narrates the story of the trip to his crew. He goes in search of Mr. Kurtz, a person in charge of the ivory, but his meeting will mark him forever, since this character personifies the bloody inhuman development. This direct knowledge of the horrors of the settling will change the real meaning of that expedition.

In this novel there are a lot of characters but the most important are Marlow and Kurtz.

Marlow is the main character and the main narrator of the story, who goes to Africa looking to sail a steamboat and finds much more. He possesses a strong sense of the past and a good ethic work: working hard is a means of achieving sanity. In many respects, Marlow's view of the world is that of a typical European. Still, he is intended to be a versatile character, one of the few who does not belong to a different class, and can thus relate to different kinds of people more easily.

Kurtz is in charge of the most productive ivory station in the Congo. Universally praised for his genius and eloquence, Kurtz becomes the focus of Marlow's journey into Africa. He is the only victim of colonization; the wilderness captures him and he turns his back on all people and customs that were a part of him.

The style of the story is the typical style of Conrad. He uses in this novel a prose which is very descriptive and informative. He portrays terrifying images and conveys horrifying truths in a mystic voice that contrasts effectively with the true horrors of his message. For shadowing and suspense is used to heighten this exciting novel.

Like in other novels of Conrad he introduces philosophical means. He tells us in this story that a man is inherently evil and his evils are only masked by civilization.

Some critics believe that in *Heart of Darkness* Conrad illustrates how "the darkness of the landscape can lead to the darkness of social corruption." What does this statement mean? How can one's environment affect one's actions, feelings, and morals? Is this statement believable or not? Have you ever experienced a change in yourself that resulted from a change in your environment? What kind of change was it? *Heart of Darkness* seems to blur the line between the so-called "advanced" society of Europe and the "primitive" society of Africa. What makes one culture "civilized" and another "savage" in the eyes of the world? Are these distinctions valid? In *Heart of Darkness*, Kurtz is depicted as an upstanding European who has been transformed by his time in the jungle—away from his home, away from familiar people and food, and away from any community moral support that might have helped prevent him from becoming such a tyrant. There was nothing and no one, in essence, to keep him on the straight and narrow.

Some readers claim that *Heart of Darkness* is strictly a political novel. Others, however, say it's really a story about the human condition. Can a work of fiction be interpreted in different ways? Should readers consider the author's intent when analyzing a story? "*Heart of Darkness*" can sometimes seem to readers like an incredibly dark, depressing story that paints civilizations in a very negative light.

Here we have some critics about this famous novel:

The first one is the critic of Mario Vargas Llosa, who said: "Heart of Darkness comes out the historical and social circumstance to turn into an exploration of the roots of the human thing, these catacombs of the being where a vocation shelters of destructive irrationality that the progress and the civilization manage to attenuate but never to eradicate completely".

Another important novelist, Borges said that Conrad was an excellent novelist. In this novel appears the fragility of the man, the facility that has of being corrupt for the power, in the shape of Kurtz, but latently in everyone. The trip to the interior of the soul realizes parallel with the trip for the river The Congo, which enters the jungle, and for what Conrad uses all his knowledges as sailor.

The members of the project have tried to develop a critic of the novel. We have investigated about the importance about this wonderful novel. Probably we should consider this novel like the best Conrad`s novel. To show this argument we can say that the director Francis F. Coppola made a film based on the novel. The famous film called "Apocalypse Now".

Looking for information of the novel we have discovered that the book is based on real facts. It`s based in the massacre in the time of the colonialism started in Leopold II of Belgium. During 20 years this terrible man was exploding the Congolese.

In conclusion we have chosen a poetic and deep sentence of the novel that we liked a lot.

*"I saw him extend his short flipper of an arm for a gesture that took in the forest... to the lurking death, to the hidden evil, to the profound darkness of its heart."*

**Valeria Morales, Xisi Dai, Sonia Amorós, Celia Martínez y Fabiola Murcia.**

**1º Bachiller A**