

Good day, dear friends and welcome to the
second module of Conrad's **Heart of Darkness**.

In this module, we're going to be
introduced to the plot and characters in
Joseph Conrad's novella **Heart of Darkness**.

We will get introduced to the plot.

of Conrad's **Heart of Darkness**,

as well as to the characters,

both major and minor,

At the end of this module,

learners will be acquainted with the
plot of Conrad's **Heart of Darkness**.

And they will be introduced

to the characters,

both major and minor, in the text.

Joseph Conrad's novella **Heart of Darkness** tells us the story.

of an introspective sailor whose journey

up the Congo River to meet Kurtz.

The novella begins with a group

of passengers aboard a boat,

a boat floating on the Thames.

One of them, Charlie Marlow,
relates to his fellow seafarers,
an experience of his that took
place on another river.altogether: the river Congo in Africa.

Marlowe's story begins in what he calls
the sepulchral city somewhere in Europe.

There the company appoints him captain of a river steamer.

He sets out for Africa,
optimistic of what he will find.

But his expectations are quickly
soured from the moment he arrives.

He is exposed to the evils of imperialism.

He witnesses the violence of this imperialism
inflicted upon the native African people.

As he proceeds,
he begins to hear stories of
a man named Kurtz, who is a colonial agent supposedly
unmatched in his ability to procure
ivory from the continent's interior.

According to rumor, Kurtz has fallen ill,
and perhaps is a victim of

some sort of madness. Thereby,
this has jeopardized the company's
entire venture in the Congo. Marlow is given command of his
steamer and a crew of European
and Africans to man it.

It becomes clear that Marlow's surroundings
have impacted Kurtz psychologically.

His journey is not only into the
geographical heart of darkness,
but into his own psychic interior and
perhaps into the dark and psychic
interior of Western civilization as well.

Conrad offers parallels between London,
the Great city on Earth,
and Africa as places of 'darkness'-- both literal and psychological.

Central to Conrad's work is
the idea that there is little
difference between civilized people
and those described as savages.

In fact, the savages display more self
restraint than the white civilized people.
Kurtz dies on the journey back up the River.

But not before revealing to Marlow,

the terrifying glimpse of human

evil he'd been exposed to.

His final words, "The horror, The horror!", have multiple shades of meaning.

They unravel the horrors he has experienced.

His psychological fears come true.

Malow now is disdainful of the petty

tribulations of Western civilization that

seemed to occupy everyone around him.

Gradually, he heals from these experiences.

He is visited by various characters

from Kurtz's former life.--- the life he led before finding the

dark interior of himself in Africa.

A year after his return to Europe,

Marlowe visits Kurtz's Intended,

that is, his fiance. She is represented as several

other white characters from **Heart of Darkness**..

Marlow presents his female characters as naively sheltered

from the awfulness of the world,

a state that Marlow hopes to preserve

when she asked about Kurtz's final words.

Marlow lies to her.: "Your name",

he tells her. Marlow's story ends there.

Heart of Darkness. itself ends as the narrator and,

one of Marlow's audience sees a mass of

brooding clouds gathering on the horizon. what seems to him to be

the heart of an immense darkness.

We shall now look at the characters

in Joseph Conrad's novella,

Heart of Darkness.

Marlow, is in the narrator of Conrad's novella.

He's an archetypal character.

Who appears in Conrad's other novels as well.

A complex man.

In some ways he is a traditional hero, tough,
honest, an independent thinker and a capable man.

He vacillates between being the intelligent

natural philosopher and the cynical,

and a very sceptical individual, all at once.

His experiences in the heart of darkness

leave a harrowing impression on his mind.

Kurtz is the chief of the Inner station.

He is the finality of Marlow's quest.

The General Manager- he is the chief agent of the company in its African territory.

The brickmaker-Marlow meets the brickmaker at the Central Station.

He's the kind of corporate spy and the manager's favorite.

Very petty, conniving and ironically never produces any bricks.

The Chief Accountant-

dressed in spotless white despite the

heat and filth of the Outer Station, the Chief Accountant is insensitive

and careless to all the natives

who are suffering around him.

He embodies the double

standards of the colonizers.

He has trained a native woman

to look after his wardrobe.

Pilgrims --the Pilgrims are

carrying wooden staves and are reminiscent of the biblical pilgrims.

They are the greedy agents

of the Central station.

They trade in ivory for a pricey commission.

Cannibals--

These are natives hired as team or crew.

They are well disciplined.

Marlow respects their restraint

and calm disposition.

Russian trader--- the Russian trader is boyish in appearance.

He is a sailor in the African

interior and is a representative

of a Dutch company.

The helmsman---

He is a youth from the coast

trained by Marlowe to pilot the

Steamer. He is killed when the

steamer is attacked by natives.

Freesleven--- He is a good, non-violent man killed in a petty scuffle. He is

Marlowe's predecessor and

captain of the steamer..

The men aboard the Nellie.---

These are Marlow's, friends

and an audience to his narrative.

They are moral,

ignorant about anything beyond England.

Let us now look at the women characters in

Joseph Conrad's novel **Heart of Darkness**.

The first one is Kurtz's African mistress---

a fiercely beautiful,

dusky woman loaded with ivory.

She is treated like a model, a mannequin,

to carry Kurt's ivory trophies.

She exudes fear and all ---just like Kurtz.

She is enigmatic.

Kurt's Intended---

She is the naive and long suffering

fiancee who Marlow visits after Kurtz is dead.

Her unshakable sureness about Kurtz's fidelity and love towards her, reinforces

Marlow's belief that women are dreamers,

insulated from the real hard world.

Marlow's aunt--

She is Marlow's doting relative who

secures him a position with the company.

Marlowe's aunt firmly believes in the

white man's greed of imperialism as being a charitable enterprise

to civilize the heathen races.

In conclusion, the plot amplifies

themes related to imperialism, racism and exploitation.

The novella exposes the colonial mindset

of the white man who has the potential to become like Kurtz.

The characters in **Heart of Darkness**

can be divided into two broad categories viz:

Whites and natives.

The novella exposes the true

meaning of 'civilization' as being a display of

restraint and self control. It is true that Conrad's portrayal of women

characters in this novella as dreamers.

and illusionary drifters has made

him a soft target for several

20th century feminists.

With this I end with the plot and characters of Joseph

Conrad's novella **Heart of Darkness**.

Thank you.