

THE GLENCOE LITERATURE LIBRARY

Study Guide

for

**Heart of
Darkness**

and

**“The Secret
Sharer”**

by Joseph Conrad



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To the Teacher

The *Glencoe Literature Library* presents full-length novels, novellas, short stories, and plays bound together with shorter selections of various genres that relate by theme or topic to the main reading. Each work in the *Library* has a two-part Study Guide that contains a variety of resources for both you and your students. Use the guide to plan your instruction of the work and enrich your classroom presentations.

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- *About the Work*: pertinent background information on the work, including a character list, a plot synopsis, key themes, and an annotated bibliography
- *Media Links*: annotated listings of audio, visual, electronic, and print resources related to the work
- *Teaching Options*: high-interest activities for introducing the work and individualizing instruction
- *Assessment Options*: alternative assessment activities for greater flexibility in evaluating students' understanding of the work
- *Options for Using Related Readings*: suggested approaches to the Related Readings included with the work
- *Answer Key* and *Assessment Rubrics*: detailed answers to all questions and reading activities and evaluations for alternative assessment activities

For the Student consists of these reproducible blackline masters:

- *Meet the Author*: a lively overview of the author's life
- *Introducing the Work*: background information that provides a meaningful context in which to read the work
- *Before You Read* and *Responding* pages: pre- and postreading questions and activities
- *Active Reading*: graphic organizers for students to complete as they read
- *Test*: a comprehensive two-part test of the work

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About the Works

HEART OF DARKNESS AND “THE SECRET SHARER” BY JOSEPH CONRAD

Heart of Darkness was first published in 1899 in the landmark thousandth number of *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine*, the literary review in which it was serialized. When the editors had first approached Conrad about writing something for the special number, he replied that he had almost finished writing a novella that he thought was well crafted but whose subject might be unsuitable for the occasion. As it turned out, his portrayal of a European driven to madness while working in the African ivory trade resonated with readers and reviewers alike. Since then, *Heart of Darkness* has been acclaimed as one of the finest works of psychological fiction in the English language. More than a century after it was written, the novella’s parallel journeys into the heart of the Congo and the dark side of the human heart continue to captivate readers.

“The Secret Sharer” (1910), Conrad’s famous story about “doubles,” or alter egos, is also rich with psychological insights. Conrad based the tale on the true story of a first mate who killed a rebellious seaman and whose skipper gave him an opportunity to escape.

Note that *Heart of Darkness* contains the racial epithet nigger and describes women and people of color in derogatory terms. Before assigning your students to read the novella, you may wish to explain that the views expressed in it were unlikely to be recognized as such by readers from colonialist countries during the age of imperialism, when *Heart of Darkness* was written.

HEART OF DARKNESS CHARACTER LIST

Anonymous narrator aboard the *Nellie*, a former seaman who has a wry sense of humor
Marlow, a seaman who piloted a steamboat for a large Belgian trading company

General manager, the chief of the company’s Central Station, who seeks to replace Kurtz
Russian, a boyish seaman who idolizes Kurtz
Kurtz, the charismatic chief of the company’s Inner Station

HEART OF DARKNESS SYNOPSIS

The novella opens with a frame story in which an unnamed narrator and four companions aboard the *Nellie* are sailing on the Thames River. To pass the time, one of the men, Charlie Marlow, describes his experiences as a steamboat captain for a European trading company with outposts in Africa. The anonymous narrator occasionally intrudes on Marlow’s narrative and comments on it.

In the story within the frame story, Marlow and the general manager of the trading company travel up the Congo River to see the head of the Inner Station, Kurtz, who is reportedly ill. Kurtz is the company’s most successful ivory trader and is thought to be “an emissary of pity and science and progress”—in short, an embodiment of the “noble cause” that the company ostensibly supports.

When Marlow and the manager approach the Inner Station, they encounter a naïve young Russian who idolizes Kurtz. As the Russian speaks with them, he unwittingly reveals a chilling truth: Kurtz has gone mad. Kurtz has fostered the local Africans’ belief that he has supernatural powers, established himself as a demigod, and ruled the native inhabitants not with pity, but with extreme cruelty. Moreover, he has not been trading goods for ivory but rather looting villages for it. On his deathbed, Kurtz laments his moral decay.

About a year after Marlow returns to Europe, he visits Kurtz’s adoring “intended,” who begs for an account of her fiancé’s final hours. Marlow, unable to shatter her lofty illusions, lies and says that Kurtz uttered her name as he died.

“THE SECRET SHARER” CHARACTER LIST

The captain, a young seaman who has been given his first command and is alienated from his crew

Leggatt, the ship *Sephora*'s chief mate, who has killed a shipmate and is a fugitive

First Mate, an experienced sailor who questions the captain's decisions

Captain Archbold, the *Sephora*'s experienced captain, who seeks to imprison Leggatt

“THE SECRET SHARER” SYNOPSIS

A fledgling unnamed captain is given his first command and feels estranged from his crew. He surreptitiously harbors a fugitive from another ship who, during a storm at sea, has killed a quarrelsome mate who he thought was endangering his ship. The captain risks his command by hiding the fugitive in his cabin until he can safely arrange for the man's escape. In a risky maneuver that causes his crew to question his fitness to lead, the captain sails his ship dangerously close to land to enable the fugitive to slip overboard and swim to shore. After he has helped the fugitive escape, the captain finally feels at one with his ship and is able to secure his command.

APPROACHES TO TEACHING THE WORKS

Heart of Darkness is often approached in one or more of the following ways:

- an indictment of colonialism
- a symbolic journey into the unconscious
- an ironic quest story
- a modernist work that is built around a sophisticated narrative technique, motifs, and symbolism

Both *Heart of Darkness* and “The Secret Sharer” are often approached as:

- doppelgänger, or “doubles,” stories in which honorable men are attracted to men who closely resemble them but who reveal a dark aspect of the self that is hidden or suppressed by them

FURTHER READING FOR THE TEACHER

- *A Conrad Companion*, by Norman Page, 1986, contains a concise overview of criticism about “The Secret Sharer.”
- *Heart of Darkness: An Authoritative Text, Backgrounds and Sources, Criticism, Norton Critical Edition*, edited by Robert Kimbrough, 1988, contains helpful notes, background information, and critical essays, including Nigerian author Chinua Achebe's ground-breaking essay about the racism that permeates the novella.
- “Heart of Darkness: A Lawrence University Freshman Studies Lecture,” by Mark Dintenfass, available on the Internet at <http://www.acsu.buffalo.edu/~csicseri/dintenfass.htm>, is an entertaining and illuminating lecture of interest to both teachers and students.
- *Joseph Conrad: Heart of Darkness, Columbia Critical Guide* series, edited by Nicholas Tredell, 1998, is a collection of nineteenth- and twentieth-century criticism about *Heart of Darkness*.
- *Marlow, Major Literary Characters*, edited by Harold Bloom, 1992, a collection of criticism about Conrad's famous character, includes an introduction concerning how the concept of character has developed in literature from Shakespeare to the present.

Media Links



Videos

The following videos may be used to help students understand the characters, themes, and historical setting of *Heart of Darkness*.

- *Heart of Darkness* (a 1994 television dramatization of the novella, starring Tim Roth and John Malkovich, 100 minutes)
- *Heart of Darkness*, Discovery Channel School (a video about Conrad's classic novella, 60 minutes)



Audiocassettes

Have students listen to the following recording to increase their comprehension and appreciation of the novella as they read.

- *Heart of Darkness* on two cassettes from Blackstone Audio Books (also available on CD-ROM)



Art

Students might enjoy viewing the African masks, headrests, staffs, ancestral statues, and ceremonial figures in this article.

- "Masterpieces from Central Africa," *Smithsonian Magazine*, August 1997



Internet Connection

The Internet can be a valuable research tool. Suggest that students visit the following sites.

- *Encyclopaedia Britannica* <http://search.britannica.com/search?query=congo>
- English-language learners and less-proficient readers can visit the following site to hear an extract of a radio adaptation of *Heart of Darkness* by Tim Crook.
<http://www.irdp.co.uk/darksound.htm>

At the time this study guide went to press, these Web sites were in operation. Before assigning students to visit the sites, check to ensure that the sites still exist.



Further Reading for the Student

- *A Concordance to Conrad's Heart of Darkness*, edited by Todd K. Bender, 1979
- "Congo Diary," by Joseph Conrad, in *Last Essays*, 1926

Be sure to preview all media links to determine whether the material is appropriate for your class.

Teaching Options

Options for Motivating Students

Framed

Introduce students to the frame as a narrative technique.

- Generate a discussion of picture frames by asking students why it is important to choose the right frame for a picture. (Students should see that a well-chosen frame holds a picture in place and enhances it.)
- Point out to students that *Heart of Darkness* contains a frame story, an outer story that frames and enhances an inner story.
- Read aloud the opening frame, or show the opening of a film version of the novella (see **Media Links**, page 4).
- Ask students to predict what the inner story will be about and why.

Night and Day

Prepare students for a motif developed in *Heart of Darkness*.

- Point out that *Heart of Darkness* is filled with images of darkness and light. Explain that the connotations of these images are often traditional but that Conrad sometimes departs from tradition to make a point.
- Call for volunteers to identify traditional connotations of darkness and light.
- Challenge students to look for images of darkness and light as they read and to interpret the meaning of each image.

Exploiters and the Exploited

Introduce the issue of economic exploitation to students.

- Have students brainstorm for instances of exploitation in today's world. List their responses on the board.
- Ask them why they think such exploitation occurs.
- Point out that *Heart of Darkness* is a criticism of exploitative practices and that, during an age of imperialism, it contributed to a reform movement against them. Have them look for evidence of exploitation in the novel as they read.

A Questionable Quest

Help students draw on their knowledge of quest literature to prepare them for the quest in *Heart of Darkness*.

- Ask students to recall quest stories that they have read or seen in movies. (Examples include Jason's quest for the golden fleece, the Arthurian quest for the Holy Grail, and the quest for the ark of the covenant in *Raiders of the Lost Ark*.) Have students identify elements that these stories have in common.
- Explain that *Heart of Darkness* is sometimes described as an ironic quest story. As students read, challenge them to identify the subject of each quest.
- After students have finished reading the novella, discuss ways in which the quest in *Heart of Darkness* differs from traditional quests.

Water, Water Everywhere

Help students grasp the importance of the setting of each work.

- Ask for a show of hands of students who have traveled a long distance by water. How is water travel different from other popular modes of travel? Ask for students' impressions of the experience.
- Challenge the class to generate a list of words that describe rivers and the sea.
- Prepare students to read *Heart of Darkness* and "The Secret Sharer" by pointing out that the former story takes place on a famous river and the latter at sea. Encourage students to refer to the list as they read to see how many of their impressions are evoked in the works.

Meeting Individual Needs

Conrad's style and sophisticated narrative techniques make Heart of Darkness and "The Secret Sharer" appropriate for students who enjoy challenging reading material. The following activities will help you present the works in ways that meet the needs and interests of all students.

Less-Proficient Readers

Explain nautical terms.

- Both *Heart of Darkness* and "The Secret Sharer" contain nautical terms that may be new to students. Before assigning the stories, you may wish to explain the following terms or assign a volunteer to create an annotated ship poster to display in the classroom (see **Assessment Options**, page 7).
- Nautical terms referred to in the novella include yawl, aft, fore, fore-and-aft, offing, spar, sprit, mizzenmast, and stern.
- "The Secret Sharer" contains the terms poop deck, cuddy, mastheads, quarterdeck, forerigging, forecastle, binnacle, foresail, sou'wester, starboard, and taffrail.

Encourage students to read for overall meaning.

- Remind students that they need not understand the meaning of every word in a story to understand the story as whole. Point out that frequently looking up definitions in the dictionary will break their train of thought. Encourage students to use contextual clues, when possible, to determine word meanings instead. Demonstrate how to do so.
- Discuss the following reading strategies:
 - Read with a definite purpose in mind.
 - Skip unfamiliar words that are not key to comprehension.
 - Take brief notes about major events.
 - Ask yourself questions while reading.

Encourage students to keep track of plot events.

- Suggest that students create a time line of events as they read. The time lines might include locations, major events and approximate dates, and physical and personal traits of major characters.

English-Language Learners

Provide glosses for unfamiliar references.

- The opening frame story of *Heart of Darkness* contains references to historical figures and items that may be unfamiliar to English-language learners. You may wish to provide the following explanations:
 - Sir Francis Drake (c. 1540–1596), English navigator and popular hero who was the first captain to sail his own ship around the world and was instrumental in defeating the Armada, a great naval fleet sent by Spain to help invade England.
 - Sir John Franklin (1786–1847), English explorer of the Arctic, whose ships the *Erebus* (named after a personification of darkness in Greek mythology) and *Terror* were lost during an expedition to find the Northwest Passage, an Arctic waterway connecting the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans.
 - Falernian: legendary wine of ancient Rome
 - *Morituri te salutant*: "Those who are about to die salute you."

Have students listen to audio versions of *Heart of Darkness*.

- Have students follow along in their texts as they listen to readings of the novella. Note that the radio adaptation listed in **Media Links**, page 4, includes a printed script to which students can refer as they listen to the sound extract.

Gifted and Talented

Encourage students to evaluate literature.

- State that some modern critics have characterized *Heart of Darkness* as racist and sexist. Point out that other modern critics maintain that readers need not share the social perspectives expressed in the novella to appreciate it as a work of art.
- Have students address the question of whether *Heart of Darkness* necessarily reflects racist attitudes in the author or merely represents the beliefs of his characters. Remind students to support their thesis with details from the novella.

Assessment Options

Writing

Double Takes

- Have students use details from *Heart of Darkness* and “The Secret Sharer” to write an essay that compares and contrasts Marlow’s feelings toward Kurtz with the young captain’s feelings toward Leggatt. How are the narrators’ feelings toward their alter egos alike and different? What point is Conrad making in each case?

Truth in Fiction

- Have students write an alternative ending to *Heart of Darkness* in which Marlow tells Kurtz’s fiancée the truth about Kurtz. Students should describe what her reaction might be, remaining true to Marlow’s views about women and approximating Conrad’s writing style as closely as they can.

Listening and Speaking

Exposé

- Have students write and produce a news program or talk show about Europeans’ exploitation of central Africa. The report or talk show should be directed to a Victorian audience and incorporate details from the novella to contrast the public perception of the “noble cause” with the reality that Marlow describes to his companions aboard the *Nellie*. Students may videotape the production or perform it for the class.

Point, Counterpoint

- Have students debate whether the captain’s actions toward Leggatt in “The Secret Sharer” are best characterized as humane or criminal. Students should cite details from the story for support.

Viewing and Representing

Ship Shape

- Have volunteers bring in pictures (or, if possible, scale models) of a yawl or another ship that has masts and sails. Ask students to identify the sails and other major parts mentioned in the stories and to explain how the parts function.

Rank and File

- Have students research and chart the hierarchy and roles of officers and crew aboard a typical merchant ship, from captain to ordinary seaman.

Interdisciplinary Connections

Was It a Free State?

- Assign students to use the Internet or library resources to learn more about the history of the Congo Free State. Have students present brief oral reports in which they answer the following questions: How and when was the state formed? What part did King Leopold II play in its formation? Journalist Henry Morton Stanley? When was the state abolished, and why?

Thai-ing in Geography

- Help students to understand Siam’s (Thailand’s) geography and history at the time “The Secret Sharer” was written. Work with students to create a map of modern-day Thailand, featuring the route traveled in the story. Encourage students to bring in artifacts or images of traditional Thai culture, or, if they wish, samples of Thai foods.

Options for Using Related Readings

Related Readings	Making Connections to <i>Heart of Darkness</i> /“The Secret Sharer”
<p>The Hollow Men by T. S. Eliot (BLM page 32)</p>	<p>Like Joseph Conrad, T. S. Eliot examines the moral behavior of people. The first epigraph above the poem refers to the death of the ivory trader Kurtz, who is described as “hollow” in <i>Heart of Darkness</i>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You may wish to use the poem as a prereading activity to introduce students to modernist thought or as a postreading activity in which students compare the tones, symbols, and themes of “The Hollow Men” and <i>Heart of Darkness</i>. • Before students read the poem, discuss the meaning of the epigraphs. • Ask students what words come to mind when they think of the word hollow. List the words on the board. • Ask students to keep the words in mind as they read the poem.
<p>The Negro Speaks of Rivers by Langston Hughes (BLM page 33)</p>	<p>This poem mentions four great rivers—the Euphrates in Asia, the Congo and the Nile in Africa, and the Mississippi in the United States—that are associated with Africans and African Americans.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use this poem to introduce students to the Congo River before they read <i>Heart of Darkness</i> or as a postreading comparison/contrast activity. • Before students read the poem, ask them to explain why rivers are important to civilization. • On a world map, point out the locations of the four rivers. • Ask students what qualities of the Congo are suggested by the speaker’s brief description of it. • Have students write a short poem describing a river that they know well, giving it human qualities.
<p>Vessel of Last Resort by Jeffrey Tayler (BLM page 34)</p>	<p>This magazine article describes a modern-day voyage up the Congo River, during which the author thinks of Marlow’s journey in <i>Heart of Darkness</i>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use this travelogue as a prereading activity to introduce students to the Congo River or as a postreading comparison/contrast activity. • Before students read, ask them whether they have ever returned to a familiar place only to find that it has changed since their last visit. Encourage them to give possible reasons for the change. • As students read, have them note ways in which the modern-day Congo River has changed since the time that Conrad described it and ways in which it remains the same. • Have students speculate why little change occurred in the region in one hundred years.

Options for Using Related Readings

Related Readings	Making Connections to <i>Heart of Darkness</i> /“The Secret Sharer”
<p>Miriam by Truman Capote (BLM page 35)</p>	<p>Like Joseph Conrad’s “The Secret Sharer,” Truman Capote’s short story explores the idea of a “double”—a person who represents another side of an individual’s personality.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use this story as a prereading activity for “The Secret Sharer.” • Before students read the story, ask for a show of hands of those who think that people have both a good side and a bad side. • Ask them to tell which of the two is more often in control and to give reasons why. • After students read, ask them to discuss what they believe Mrs. Miller’s inner conflict is.
<p>The Street by Octavio Paz (BLM page 36)</p>	<p>The speaker of this poem senses the presence of a shadowy figure stalking him. The poem appears in the original Spanish and in English.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use this poem as a prereading or postreading activity for “The Secret Sharer.” • Ask students if they have ever felt that someone was following them when no one was. Have them speculate why they might have felt this way. • In a journal activity, ask students to describe in vivid detail an instance in which they felt as though they were being followed.

Answer Key

ACTIVE READING

Heart of Darkness Part 1

Thames River/London: "one of the dark places of the earth"; "the very end of the world, a sea the color of lead, a sky the color of smoke"

Brussels ("sepulchre city")/company offices: "dead silence"; "arid as a desert"; "two women . . . knitting black wool"; "something ominous in the atmosphere"

Outer Station: "decaying machinery"; "a wanton smash-up"; "the gloomy circle of some Inferno"

Central Station: "a taint of imbecile rapacity blew through it all, like a whiff from some corpse"; "fantastic invasion"

Atmosphere: forbidding, sinister, tense

Heart of Darkness Part 2

The manager and his uncle: "Can you imagine such impudence?"; "makes rain and fine weather—one man"; "Ivory—lots of it—prime sort—lots—most annoying, from him"; "the pestiferous absurdity of his talk"; "that ass!"

Marlow: "Perhaps he was simply a fine fellow who stuck to his work for its own sake"; "He presided at certain midnight dances ending with unspeakable rites"; "exercises no restraint"; "of all his gifts the one that stood out preëminently . . . was his ability to talk, his words. . . ."

Kurtz's notes and papers: "I had rather be alone than have the kind of men you can dispose of with me"; "Each station should be like a beacon on the road toward better things, a centre for trade, of course, but also for humanizing, improving, instructing"; "Exterminate all the brutes!"

The Russian: "One doesn't talk to Kurtz, one listens"; "this man enlarged my mind."

Heart of Darkness Part 3

African woman: "apparition of a woman"; "walked with measured step"; "draped in striped and fringed clothes"; "treading the earth proudly with a slight jingle and flash of barbarous ornaments"; "hair done in the shape of a helmet"; "brass leggings to the knee, brass wire gauntlets to the elbow"; "tragic face"; "fierce aspect of wild sorrow and dumb pain"; "savage and superb"; "Intended"; "fair hair"; "pale visage"; "clasped pale hands"; "glittering eyes"; "pure brow"; "dark eyes"; "smooth white forehead illumined by the unextinguishable light of belief and love"; "guileless"; "profound"; "confident"; "trustful"

The Secret Sharer

The captain: high rank; has not committed a crime

Leggatt: chief mate; fugitive; son of a parson

The captain and Leggatt: young; have shadowy dark heads; wear the same size clothing; are strangers aboard the ship; attended the same school

RESPONDING Heart of Darkness Part 1

Recall and Interpret

1. Marlow seeks adventure. The former captain became enraged with a chief during a dispute over two black hens. The chief killed him. Some may say that it foreshadows other conflicts between Europeans and Africans or in which Europeans become aggressive after being in the jungle for a long time.
2. She believes their mission should be to civilize the Africans. She views Europeans as enlightened and altruistic and the inhabitants of the Congo as uncivilized and savage.
3. He thinks that Kurtz is a remarkable man because of the amount of ivory he produces. The manager dislikes Kurtz and wants to replace him. The accountant does not feel threatened by Kurtz; the manager, who is jockeying for a higher position, does.
4. The brickmaker thinks that Kurtz and Marlow are members of "the new gang—the gang of virtue." Marlow does not set

the record straight because he is curious to find out what the brickmaker means and does not trust him.

5. The Eldorado Exploring Expedition is a group of men who exploit Africa's natural resources. Marlow compares them to "burglars breaking into a safe." The men symbolize Europeans' exploitation of Africa.

Evaluate and Connect

6. Most will probably agree that the portrayal is sexist because it implies that women are out of touch with reality and cannot face facts. Others may believe that it applies only to sheltered, upper-class Victorian women.
7. Answers will vary but should reflect an understanding of Marlow's feelings of exhilaration and then fear.

RESPONDING Heart of Darkness Part 2

Recall and Interpret

1. Marlow feels a strange thrill. He attributes it to a "remote kinship" with the tribesmen because his mind, like all minds, contains memories of the "night of first ages." He does not join the men because he must repair the steamboat.
2. Marlow finds *An Inquiry into Some Points of Seamanship*. When he puts it away, he feels loneliness. He misses the companionship of men who share his interests.
3. It is a "white fog, very warm and clammy, and more blinding than the night." It symbolizes the white Europeans who invade the African landscape and their blinding ignorance, believing that they are beacons of hope.
4. The International Society for the Suppression of Savage Customs. In the report, he displays a benevolent, yet arrogant, attitude. The handwritten note shows that he has changed his attitude and now has murderous thoughts.
5. Some of Kurtz's followers attack the boat. They do not want him to be taken from them.

Evaluate and Connect

6. Conrad withholds Kurtz's appearance until Part 3 to heighten suspense.
7. Answers may vary but should be based on students' responses to the **Focus Activity**.

RESPONDING Heart of Darkness Part 3

Recall and Interpret

1. Marlow admires and envies his youthful innocence. Some may feel that the admiration is unjustified, as the youth's worship has made him blind to Kurtz's dark side.
2. Marlow is referring to Kurtz's belief in exerting a civilizing influence on the inhabitants.
3. Students may say that the "things" the wilderness whispered to Kurtz are that the human instinct toward evil lives side by side with the instinct for good.
4. Marlow thinks that Kurtz is a remarkable man because Kurtz confronted the dark side of his personality and gained the highest wisdom—self-knowledge. Other answers are possible.
5. Marlow is referring to the moment of Kurtz's death. The complete knowledge is self-knowledge, knowledge of the purpose of human existence, or knowledge of good and evil.

Evaluate and Connect

6. Marlow's views are that life is mysterious, futile, and illogical. He believes that the most one can hope for is knowledge of oneself, which comes too late. Answers should reflect an understanding of Marlow's philosophy.
7. Marlow lies to her because he does not want to destroy her image of Kurtz. Some may say that he performed a greater good by lying, because the truth would have hurt her. Others may say that he betrayed his principles, indicating that he would rather preserve illusions than live with the truth.

Answer Key (continued from previous page)

RESPONDING “The Secret Sharer”

Recall and Interpret

1. The captain took the five-hour watch because he couldn't sleep and because he felt estranged from his crew.
2. Leggatt killed him because he interfered when Leggatt was trying to save the ship during a storm at sea. Students might feel that Leggatt's action was justified.
3. The gesture implies that the captain is mentally unstable.
4. The captain pretends to be hard of hearing when talking with the skipper to enable Leggatt to overhear the conversation.
5. The hat marks the ship's progress when the captain maneuvers it close to shore to allow Leggatt to escape.

Evaluate and Connect

6. The fugitive's safe escape enables the captain to overcome his estrangement from his crew and to command his ship.
7. Some might argue that the captain endangered his ship because if Leggatt killed once, he might kill again. Others might argue that Leggatt's action was justified and that the captain's rescue of him was humane.

RELATED READINGS

The Hollow Men

1. The men are described as unmoving, quiet, and hollow. Their heads are filled with straw, but they have no shape or form. They communicate only with their dark, menacing eyes. These descriptions suggest that the men are morally hollow and lack a system of beliefs.
2. Students might focus on the men's physical descriptions, disguises, or dark eyes, or on the landscape, which details a spiritual decay similar to that of the men.
3. Eliot implies that, although the physical bodies of these men may be filled, they are spiritually empty.
4. The poet implies that man's moral emptiness prevents him from following through on an act or a desire.
5. Students should make the connection that Kurtz's words and deeds are closely connected to his moral state.

The Negro Speaks of Rivers

1. The speaker celebrates the story of each river, revealing how it has shaped African Americans' history and how African Americans have reached spiritual maturity.
2. Students should respond that the river has a voice and sings and that, like a mother, it has a nurturing bosom.
3. The “I” repeated throughout refers to African Americans collectively—effective because African Americans speak as one.
4. Students should respond that the speaker means that African Americans, like the rivers, have a deep, rich history.
5. The speaker describes the Congo as comforting as a lullaby, whereas Marlow describes it as one of the most mysterious and dark places on earth.

Vessel of Last Resort

1. Tayler was inspired by Henry Morton Stanley's account of his trip down the Congo and was not prepared for what he found.
2. Some of the perils Tayler encountered were disease, overcrowding, intense heat, and unsanitary conditions. The threat of disease was the most dangerous of the perils.
3. Some might respond that they felt anxious, or horrified, by the environment, or that Tayler's descriptions made them feel as if they had taken the journey themselves.
4. Tayler may not have thought that the trip was worth it because it ended with his being dazed and exhausted.
5. Both concern details of a journey as witnessed by one narrator. Marlow's version provides a psychological analysis with Kurtz as the focal point, while Tayler roots his article in his personal experience.

Miriam

1. Students may respond that the author named the little girl after Mrs. Miller to highlight Mrs. Miller's internal conflict.
2. Some students may reply that Miriam is a figment of Mrs. Miller's imagination, because the events that occur are fantastic and unbelievable. These students may also point out that a doppelgänger is usually an apparition.
3. The snowstorms in the story reflect Mrs. Miller's anxiety and conflicting emotions regarding Miriam.
4. Students might respond that Mrs. Miller fears Miriam because the girl represents a dark side of Mrs. Miller.
5. Mrs. Miller refuses to identify with Miriam and wants her to go away. The captain embraces Leggatt to such an extent that he views him as a second self.

The Street

1. The setting is a dark, silent, and unfamiliar street.
2. Whether the “he” is a stranger, the speaker's double, or emotions personified, the relationship between the two seems familiar, as though they have met before.
3. The words silent, blackness, blind, and dark suggest fear. Stumbling and falling suggest an attempt to escape the fear.
4. The speaker's experiences are imagined because the person that he thinks is following him does not materialize.
5. The speaker feels fear toward his double, whereas the captain feels an affinity for his double.

TEST

Recall and Interpret

1. c 2. d 3. b 4. b 5. a
6. Kurtz ordered the attack to drive the traders away, because he didn't want to leave the Inner Station.
7. Marlow is appalled by the African skulls impaled on stakes at Kurtz's Inner Station.
8. Marlow omits the postscript before giving it to the company to preserve Kurtz's reputation.
9. The captain feels estranged from his crew because he is newly assigned and does not know the crew members.
10. The captain maneuvers the ship dangerously close to shore to help the fugitive escape.

Evaluate and Connect (any 2)

1. Marlow quests after Kurtz. The outcome is unlike that of traditional quest stories in that Marlow's journey leads to a dying, self-appointed demigod rather than to a sacred object or a precious artifact. The contrast suggests that there is no possibility of spiritual redemption in the modern-day quest.
2. One side of Kurtz is civilized; the other, savage. The story prepares readers by showing the fine line between civilization and savagery and the relative recency of humankind's “enlightenment.” Each woman in Kurtz's life appeals to a different side of him—his “intended,” to the civilized, repressed man; the African woman, to the primitive, unrepressed man.
3. It suggests that the captain, because of the knowledge that he is harboring a fugitive, cannot command his ship. He must banish the fugitive, who represents his baser instincts, so that he can command effectively.
4. The Congo River and the River Thames reveal the theme of *Heart of Darkness* because the Thames, like the Congo, was once a savage, dangerous place that “civilized” men exploited. In “The Secret Sharer,” Leggatt reveals the theme by representing the captain's baser instincts, which must be set aside if he is to command effectively.
5. Achebe is criticizing Conrad's failure to use concrete imagery in portraying the Congo and instead relying on vague words that do not describe its reality. Students may agree that Conrad thus resorts to “trickery” or may respond that his use of such adjectives helps contribute to the theme of the mystery that lies in the human heart.

Assessment Rubrics

Use these criteria as guidelines for evaluating students' performance on Assessment Options activities presented in this study guide.

Writing

Double Takes *The essay should*

- contain a clear thesis statement
- note the main similarities and differences between Marlow's feelings toward Kurtz and the captain's feelings toward Leggatt
- present ideas in a logical, consistent order
- conclude with a paragraph or two that restates the thesis and sums up the essay's major points

Truth in Fiction *The alternate ending to Heart of Darkness should*

- attempt to engage the reader's interest
- be written in a style that approximates Conrad's
- accurately represent Marlow's views about women

Listening and Speaking

Exposé *The newscast or talk show should*

- provide information about the exploitation of the Congo
- include details from the novella
- include quotations from or interviews with eyewitnesses, as appropriate
- be directed to a Victorian audience that believes in the "noble cause"

Point, Counterpoint *Students should*

- debate whether the captain's actions in "The Secret Sharer" are humane or criminal
- present their position on the issue clearly and unequivocally
- support their opinions with evidence from the story
- present fair-minded and persuasive rebuttals

Viewing and Representing

Ship Shape *Students should*

- bring a picture or a model of a yawl or similar ship and identify the major parts
- accurately describe the functions of the parts

Rank and File *Students should*

- draw or use a computer to create a chart that shows maritime hierarchy from captain to ordinary seaman and that describes the roles of the personnel
- provide a source for the information

Interdisciplinary Connections

Was It a Free State?

The oral reports should

- describe the location of the Congo Free State
- explain when and how it was formed
- describe the roles that King Leopold II and Henry Morton Stanley played in its formation
- explain when and why the state was abolished

Thai-ing in Geography *Students should*

- create an accurate map of modern-day Thailand
- connect the geography of Thailand with "The Secret Sharer"
- bring to class and describe artifacts or foods representative of Thai culture

Meet Joseph Conrad



The artist appeals to that part of our being which is not dependent on Wisdom. . . . He speaks to our capacity for delight and wonder, to that sense of mystery surrounding our lives; to our sense of pity, and beauty, and pain.

—Joseph Conrad

As a child, Joseph Conrad dreamed of sailing the high seas. His fascination with the unknown reportedly led him to put his finger on a blank spot in the middle of a map of Africa and declare, “When I grow up, I will go there.” When he grew up, he did go “there.” He lived his childhood dream and became a mariner, visiting such distant places as the Congo, Constantinople, Bangkok, Java, Singapore, and Madras.

A Difficult Childhood Conrad, whose birth name was Jozef Teodor Konrad Nalecz Korzeniowski, was born in 1857 in Russian-controlled Poland. When he was three, the family moved to Warsaw but did not live there long. Conrad’s father, a Polish patriot and political activist, took part in a movement to free Poland from Russian control and was arrested and imprisoned soon after the family arrived.

When Conrad was four, the family was deported to Vologda, in northern Russia, far from the center of political activity. Soon after, Conrad’s mother died from tuberculosis. Later,

Conrad and his father were allowed to move back to Poland, where, before Conrad was twelve years old, his father also died of the disease. Thereafter, Conrad lived with relatives. He had never given up his dream of going to sea, though his uncle tried to dissuade him from pursuing it. At the age of sixteen, Conrad left for Marseilles, France, where he had distant relatives, and joined the French merchant marine. Over the next few years, he sailed several times to the West Indies.

From Sailor to Author As a young adult, Conrad became a seaman in the British merchant marine. Though he knew only a few words of English when he entered the service, he began picking up the language by listening and talking to his British shipmates. Gifted with a natural facility for languages, he quickly learned English. By his late twenties, he had become a British citizen and had risen to the rank of captain. A few years later, he began writing his first novel, *Almayer’s Folly*, but he worked on it only sporadically because of the demands of his career. When he was in his late thirties, he finally finished the novel and began to devote himself primarily to writing.

Heart of Darkness, which was first published in 1898, established Conrad as a master of psychological fiction and a brilliant prose stylist. It was soon followed by several other tales of the sea, including “The Secret Sharer,” published in 1910.

Conrad’s Art Conrad’s fiction is characterized by a narrative technique that involves time shifts, stories within stories, and the use of symbol and myth. To a reader who had asked about the meaning of one of his stories, he replied:

A work of art is very seldom limited to one exclusive meaning and not necessarily tending to a definite conclusion. And this for the reason that the nearer it approaches art, the more it acquires a symbolic character.

During his lifetime, Conrad’s close friends were authors Stephen Crane, John Galsworthy, Ford Madox Ford, and Henry James. He continued to write until his death, in 1924, at age sixty-six.

Introducing the Novella

[*Heart of Darkness* is a] dreadful and fascinating tale, full as any of [Edgar Allan] Poe's mystery and haunting terrors, yet with a substantial basis of reality that no man who had not lived as well as dreamed could conjure into existence.

—from a review in *The Nation*, 1906

BACKGROUND

Like many authors, Joseph Conrad drew on his experiences when he wrote. He often incorporated details about people he had known, places he had visited, and events he had witnessed. This technique gives *Heart of Darkness* a sense of authenticity and immediacy that moved critic F. R. Leavis to write,

The details and circumstances of the voyage to and up the Congo are present to us as if we were making the journey ourselves.

Conrad himself referred to the work as “experience pushed a little (and very little) beyond the facts of the case.”

The novella is based on a four-month stint Conrad spent in the Congo. Out of work, broke, and eager for a chance to realize his boyhood dream of exploring central Africa, he had accepted an assignment to command a steamboat up the Congo River for the Belgian Company for Upper-Congo Commerce. This company ranked as one of late-nineteenth-century Europe's most

successful—and greedy—traders in ivory. Steaming a thousand miles upriver from Kinshasa, Conrad reached the company's inner station. There he met an ailing agent named Georges Antoine Klein, who may have been a model for the character Kurtz.

Since its publication, *Heart of Darkness* has become one of the most read and debated works of fiction in the English language. Why? Perhaps it is because Conrad plumbs the depths of human consciousness to explore the dark side of the personality. Perhaps it is because his sophisticated narrative technique helped paved the way for modern fiction. Or perhaps it is because of his elegant prose style. Whatever the reasons, it is likely that *Heart of Darkness* will continue to be read, discussed, and analyzed for many years to come.

THE TIME AND PLACE

The novella takes place in the Congo River basin in the summer of 1890, during a period when the colonization of Africa was at its peak and Belgium's King Leopold II was ruthlessly exploiting the land and its people. European countries rushed to claim territory in Africa and to establish strongholds that would secure their status as world powers. Before that period, few Europeans had explored the “Dark Continent.”

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Did You Know?

The unnamed ivory trading company referred to throughout *Heart of Darkness* may have been based on companies such as the Anglo-Belgian India Rubber Company. During the twenty years that King Leopold controlled the company, in which he owned half the stock, an estimated five million people in the Congo died at the

hands of company agents, who terrorized and killed Africans who failed to meet their rubber quotas. King Leopold cleared a substantial profit before he lost his monopolistic control of the rubber trade. A reform movement sparked by *Heart of Darkness* and eyewitness reports helped break his power in the region.

Introducing the Short Story

“The Secret Sharer” remains one of Conrad’s most characteristic stories, and it contains passages of language as beautifully evocative as the most celebrated passages in Heart of Darkness.

—Joyce Carol Oates

BACKGROUND

Like the central characters in *Heart of Darkness*, the characters at the center of “The Secret Sharer” are based on people that Joseph Conrad met during his seafaring career. In particular, the fugitive Leggatt is based on a first mate named Sidney Smith, who, in an incident widely known in East Asia, had killed a combative seaman and

was given a chance to escape by his captain. Conrad chose to make Leggatt a more sympathetic character than Smith, who was known as a tyrant and whose crime was more savage than that portrayed in the short story. Conrad is said to have considered “The Secret Sharer” a favorite among his own stories. He wrote it based on the experience of commanding the ship *Otago* in Bangkok, Thailand, after the death of its captain. It was Conrad’s first and only sea command.

THE TIME AND PLACE

“The Secret Sharer” takes place on a ship in the Gulf of Siam (now Gulf of Thailand) sometime during the 1890s.

Did You Know?

According to German folklore, every living being has a doppelgänger—an exact, but usually invisible, spirit double. Legend has it that seeing one’s doppelgänger is a sign of approaching death. In literature, the

doppelgänger is often a device for revealing a character’s unconscious desires or conflicts. In “The Secret Sharer,” the murderer Leggatt is the captain’s very real doppelgänger.

CRITIC’S CORNER

[Conrad shows] *that a hidden part of man committed to order and the rules of society might suddenly embrace and identify itself with a being, a presence, an apparition which seems most antithetic to his own conscious self, a walking reminder of all that inner darkness and weakness which civilized man has suppressed in order to make group life possible.*

—Tony Tanner

Before You Read

Heart of Darkness Part 1

FOCUS ACTIVITY

Imagine that you are about to leave on a long journey to a distant country where everyone is a stranger to you. How do you feel?

Quickwrite

Jot down your feelings, explaining why you feel as you do.

Setting a Purpose

Read to discover how Charlie Marlow feels about embarking on a trip to Africa.

BACKGROUND

Did You Know?

In A.D. 43, Roman armies invaded and conquered most of the area that was later known as England. The area remained under Roman control until about 400. The Romans, who had already built a vast empire, considered themselves superior to the “uncivilized” Celts who inhabited the region. Among the remnants of the Roman occupation is Hadrian’s Wall, a long stone barricade in northern England that Emperor Hadrian ordered built to discourage invaders from entering Roman-occupied territory.

Story Within a Story

Heart of Darkness comprises two stories. In the frame, or “outer” story, an unnamed narrator and four companions aboard the yawl *Nellie* are sailing on the Thames River. The narrator introduces Charlie Marlow, one of his companions on the vessel, who proceeds to tell the story of his experiences in the Congo. The unnamed narrator and the other men on board occasionally comment on Marlow’s narrative. Marlow’s speech is set off by quotation marks; the unnamed narrator’s speech is not.

VOCABULARY PREVIEW

ascetic [ə se’ tik] *adj.* practicing strict self-denial (p. 1)

emissary [e’ mə ser ē] *n.* agent as of a government, in an official or secret mission (p. 21)

rapacious [rə pā’ shəs] *adj.* grasping; greedy (p. 13)

sententiously [sen tent’ shəs lē] *adv.* tersely or moralistically expressed (p. 8)

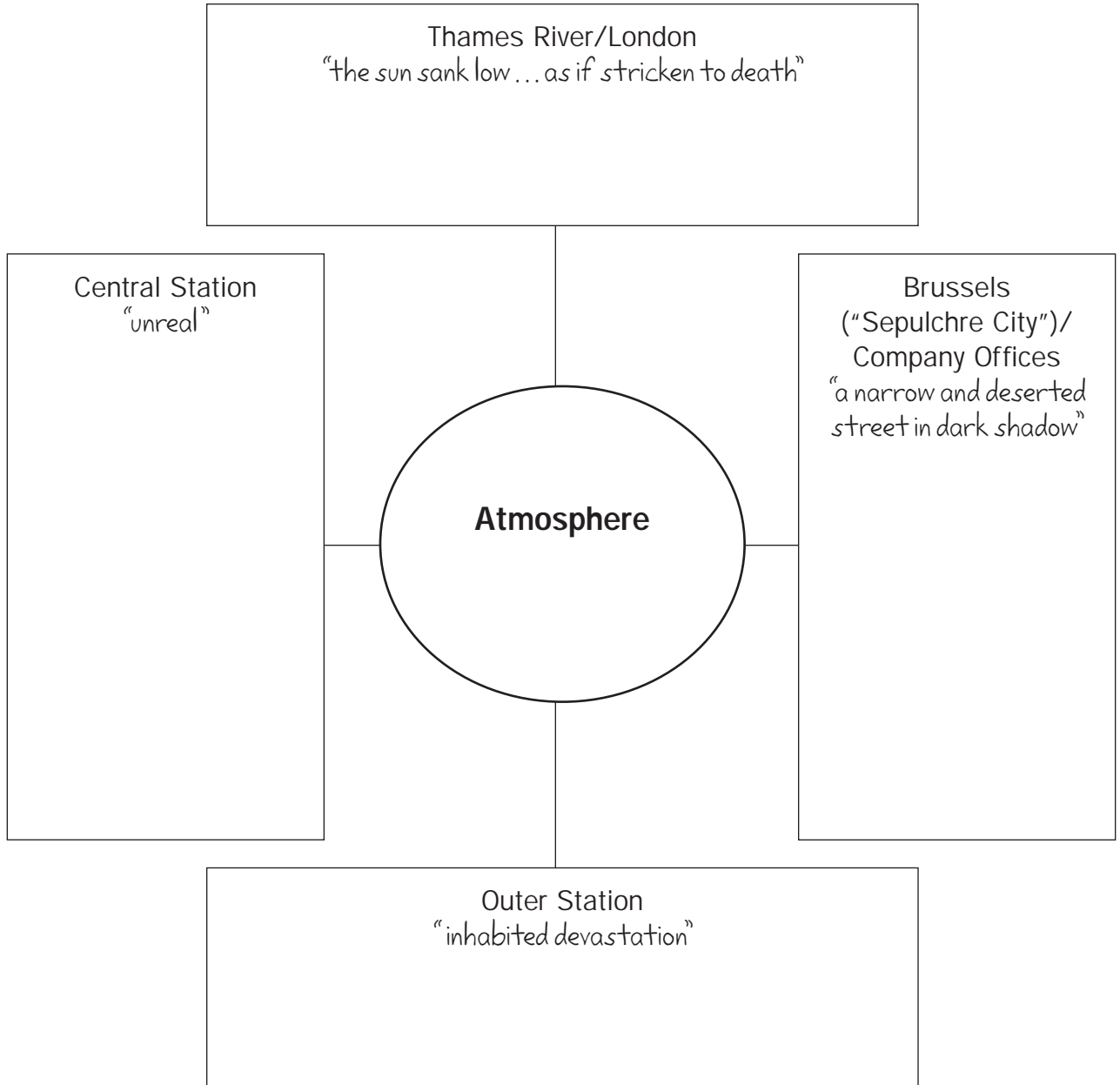
sepulchre [sep’ əl kər] *n.* burial place, esp. a vault or tomb (p. 7)

volubility [vəl’ yə bi’ lə tē] *n.* fluency (p. 17)

Active Reading

Heart of Darkness Part 1

The descriptions of the various settings in part 1 create a certain atmosphere, or mood. As you read, use the cluster diagram below to take notes on words and images that create atmosphere. Then sum up the atmosphere as a whole in the center circle.



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Responding

Heart of Darkness Part 1

Personal Response

What are your first impressions of the trading company? Of the people who work for it?

Analyzing Literature

Recall and Interpret

1. Why does Marlow seek to pilot a steamboat up the Congo River? Describe the conflict that created an opening in the company for a captain. What future conflicts might this incident hint at, or foreshadow?

2. What does Marlow's aunt believe should be the mission of Europeans going to the Congo? What does that mission suggest about her view of Europeans? Of the inhabitants of the Congo?

3. What is the company accountant's opinion of Kurtz? How does it differ from the manager's opinion? Why do their opinions differ?

4. What assumption does the brickmaker make about Kurtz and Marlow? Why doesn't Marlow set the record straight?

5. What is the Eldorado Exploring Expedition? To what does Marlow compare the men in the expedition? What do you think the men symbolize, or represent?

Responding

Heart of Darkness Part 1

Analyzing Literature (*continued*)

Evaluate and Connect

6. Conrad's portrayal of women has been criticized as sexist. Do you agree with this criticism? Explain.

7. Review your response to the **Focus Activity** on page 16. Are Marlow's feelings similar to the ones you expressed? Why might this be so?

Literature and Writing

Character Sketch

What is Marlow like? Review part 1, taking notes on Marlow's opinions, actions, and motives. Then, in a few paragraphs, describe his most important traits and beliefs. Support your description with specific details from the novella.

Extending Your Response

Literature Groups

With a group of classmates, review the frame story at the beginning of *Heart of Darkness*. Then discuss the following questions: How does the unnamed narrator's view of the "conquest of the earth" differ from Marlow's? How do their contrasting views help prepare readers for the story that follows? Share your conclusions with the class.

Learning for Life

Using details from part 1, create an itinerary for Marlow. Trace his whereabouts from the point at which he seeks to command a boat scheduled to travel on the Congo River to the point at which part 1 ends.



Save your work for your portfolio.

Before You Read

Heart of Darkness Part 2

FOCUS ACTIVITY

Recall a time when other people's opinions of someone you did not know influenced your impression of the person. When you got to know the person, was your impression accurate?

Journal

In your journal, describe the opinions on which your impression was based and explain whether it proved to be accurate.

Setting a Purpose

Read to discover how other people's opinions of Kurtz influence Marlow's impression of him.

BACKGROUND

Did You Know?

When *Heart of Darkness* was written, ivory was much in demand. That demand continued well into the twentieth century. In fact, during the 1980s the demand for elephant tusks reached its highest level ever. More recently, the demand for ivory caused the elephant population to fall to dangerously low levels. In response, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) banned the international sale of ivory in 1990. In 1997, when the number of elephants rebounded, the ban was partially lifted.

Simile and Metaphor

A simile is a comparison of two unlike things signaled by the word like, than, or as. A metaphor is a comparison in which a likeness is suggested. In the following description, Conrad uses both a simile and a metaphor: "Going up that river was like traveling back to the beginnings of the world, when . . . trees were kings." As you read part 2 of *Heart of Darkness*, be alert to similes and metaphors, and think about what each one means.

VOCABULARY PREVIEW

cipher [sɪˈfər] *n.* code (p. 33)

evanescent [e vəˈne sənt] *adj.* tending to fade away or pass away (p. 40)

implacable [im pləˈkə bəl] *adj.* that cannot be placated or appeased (p. 29)

recondite [rəˈkən dīt] *adj.* difficult to understand (p. 36)

sagacious [sə gāˈshəs] *adj.* having or showing wisdom, sound judgment, and keen perception or discernment (p. 28)

Active Reading

Heart of Darkness Part 2

The mysterious Kurtz is described further in part 2. As you read, fill in the boxes below with quotations from the various characters who describe him, as well as from Kurtz's own written messages.

The Manager and His Uncle	Marlow
<p>"Look at the influence that man must have."</p>	<p>"a gifted creature"</p>
Kurtz's Letters and Papers	The Russian

Responding

Heart of Darkness Part 2

Personal Response

What images from part 2 linger in your mind?

Analyzing Literature

Recall and Interpret

1. How does Marlow feel when he hears the tribesmen howl and watches them dance? How does he explain that feeling? What keeps him from joining the tribesmen?

2. What book does Marlow find in the reed hut in the jungle? How does he feel when he puts the book away? Why?

3. Describe the fog that descends as Marlow and his passengers near Kurtz's station. What might the color of the fog symbolize, or represent? What mental state might the fog symbolize?

4. For what society does Kurtz write a report? What attitude toward the inhabitants of the Congo does he display in the report? What change in attitude is indicated by the handwritten note at the end of the report?

5. Who attacks the steamboat as it approaches the Inner Station? Why?

Responding

Heart of Darkness Part 2

Analyzing Literature (*continued*)

Evaluate and Connect

6. In part 2 Marlow reaches the Inner Station, but he does not meet Kurtz. What effect does Conrad create by withholding the meeting until part 3?

7. Review your response to the **Focus Activity** on page 20. When Marlow and Kurtz finally meet, do you think Marlow's impression of him will prove to be accurate? Explain.

Literature and Writing

Supporting a Position

Author Joyce Carol Oates has asserted that “Marlow, for all his condescension [toward people of color], represents a degree of humanity not found in the other Caucasian Europeans.” Do you agree? In a paragraph or two, explain why or why not, supporting your position with specific evidence from the novella.

Extending Your Response

Literature Groups

Heart of Darkness has been variously described as an adventure tale, a political story, and a psychological mystery. With a group of classmates, discuss which of the descriptions best fits the novella. Try to come to a consensus of opinion based on evidence from the novella; then share your opinion with the class.

Learning for Life

Imagine that you are a journalist who has been assigned to interview Kurtz in preparation for a story about him. Formulate a list of questions that you would ask him. (You may find it helpful to review the quotations you recorded for the **Active Reading** activity on page 21.)



Save your work for your portfolio.

Before You Read

Heart of Darkness Part 3

FOCUS ACTIVITY

Recall a time when you hesitated to tell someone the truth for fear of hurting the person's feelings. What did you decide to do? Why?

Journal

In your journal, describe the situation and explain whether you decided to tell the truth and why. Were you satisfied with your decision?

Setting a Purpose

Read to find out why Marlow hesitates to tell Kurtz's fiancée the truth.

BACKGROUND

Did You Know?

For many of the first readers of *Heart of Darkness*, the theories of the English naturalist Charles Darwin (1809–1882) were relatively new—and disturbing. Darwin hypothesized that human beings and the great apes evolved from a common ancestor and that moral and spiritual traits widely considered to be divinely created were actually the products of biological evolution. Thus, in Darwin's view, human beings are part of a continuum with the rest of the animal world. As you read part 3 of *Heart of Darkness*, consider the impact that Darwin's theory of evolution may have had on Victorian readers' notions of civilization.

Symbolism and Theme

Heart of Darkness is rich with symbolism—people, places, and things that have significance beyond their surface, or literal, meanings. Symbols are often a clue to the theme, or central message, of a work. As you finish reading *Heart of Darkness*, ask yourself what Marlow's journey up the Congo River symbolizes and what Marlow learns as a result of the journey.

VOCABULARY PREVIEW

abscond [ab skänd] *v.* to flee secretly and conceal oneself (p. 49)

inexorable [i neks' rə bəl] *adj.* that does not change or relent, no matter what anyone does or says (p. 61)

fatalism [fā' təl izm] *n.* doctrine that all events and conditions are predetermined by fate and cannot be altered by human beings (p. 61)

litany [lit' ə nē] *n.* form of prayer consisting of a series of petitions spoken by the minister to which the choir or congregation makes fixed responses (p. 60)

odious [ō' de əs] *adj.* causing hate, disgust, or repugnance (p. 58)

primeval [prī mē' vəl] *adj.* of, relating to, or belonging to the first or earliest ages, esp. of the world (p. 62)

Active Reading

Heart of Darkness Part 3

In part 3, Marlow describes the two women in Kurtz's life: an African and Kurtz's European "intended," or fiancée. On the chart below, record the words that Marlow uses to describe each of the women. What image of each emerges? What does the contrast between them reveal about Kurtz's personality?

African Woman	Kurtz's Intended
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>"wild-eyed and magnificent"</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>"surrounded by ashy halo"</i></p>

Responding

Heart of Darkness Part 3

Personal Response

Did the ending of Marlow's story surprise you? Why or why not?

Analyzing Literature

Recall and Interpret

1. Why does Marlow admire and envy the Russian? Do you think his admiration and envy are justified? Explain.

2. What does Marlow mean when he says that "[Kurtz's] appetite for more ivory had got the better of—what shall I say?—less material aspirations?" To what aspirations is he referring?

3. What "things" about Kurtz had the wilderness whispered to him that he did not know?

4. Why does Marlow judge Kurtz to have been a "remarkable man" in spite of the terrible acts Kurtz committed?

5. Marlow asks the question "Did he [Kurtz] live his life again in every detail of desire, temptation, and surrender during that supreme moment of complete knowledge?" To what moment is Marlow referring? To what complete knowledge?

Responding

Heart of Darkness Part 3

Analyzing Literature (*continued*)

Evaluate and Connect

6. Sum up Marlow's views about the meaning of life. Do you agree with them? Why or why not?

7. Review your response to the **Focus Activity** on page 24. Why does Marlow lie to Kurtz's fiancée? Do you think he did the right thing? Why or why not?

Literature and Writing

Analyze a Title

Critics have pointed out several possible meanings for the title *Heart of Darkness*. In a paragraph or two, explain what you think the title refers to and why. Support your ideas with specific evidence from the work.

Extending Your Response

Literature Groups

With a group of classmates, debate the following questions: Was Marlow's journey into the heart of darkness really an "inconclusive experience"? What lessons did he learn? Why might he have judged the experience to be inconclusive? Try to come to a consensus of opinions. Then share your opinions with the class.

Interdisciplinary Activity: History

With a partner, use library resources or the Internet to research the African ivory trade from the 1800s to the present. Take notes on your findings; then use your notes to present a brief oral report to your class.



Save your work for your portfolio.

Before You Read

“The Secret Sharer”

FOCUS ACTIVITY

Recall a time when you reached out to a stranger. What were the circumstances, and how did the person respond?

Think-Pair-Share

With a partner, discuss the situation. What made you extend yourself?

Setting a Purpose

Read to find out how and why a sea captain reaches out to a stranger.

BACKGROUND

Did You Know?

The Gulf of Siam, where “The Secret Sharer” is set, is now known as the Gulf of Thailand, after the Southeast Asian country that it borders. Thailand is one of the world’s twenty most populous countries, with about 60 million inhabitants (in 1997). The country was known as Siam until its name was officially changed to Thailand in 1939.

Conflict

In literature, conflict is the struggle between two opposing forces. Conflict can be external, as when a character clashes with another character or a force of nature, or internal, as when a character struggles with a difficult decision or moral dilemma. As you read “The Secret Sharer,” look for instances of both types of conflict.

VOCABULARY PREVIEW

compunction [kəm pənkʻshən] *n.* uneasiness of mind due to feelings of remorse or guilt (p. 76)

edification [e də fə kāʻshən] *n.* act of edifying; being edified; intellectual or moral enlightenment or improvement (p. 87)

insolence [in sə lənts] *n.* insulting contemptuousness in speech or conduct (p. 80)

peremptorily [pə ɛmpʻtə rə lē] *adv.* performed with self-assurance or arrogance (p. 76)

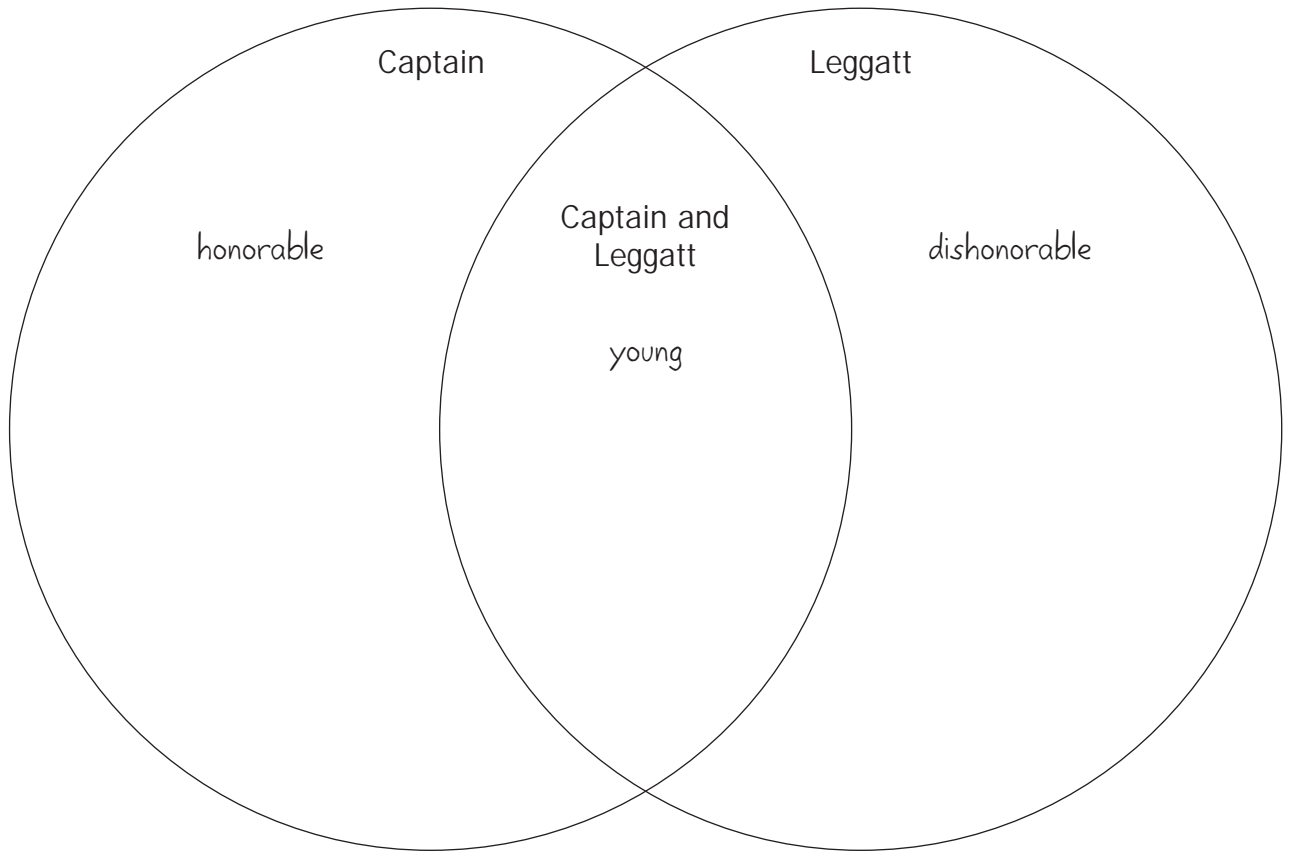
punctilious [pənk tiʻlē əs] *adj.* strictly attentive to the fine points of proper or polite behavior (p. 91)

tenacious [tə nāʻshəs] *adj.* holding or inclined to hold firmly (p. 92)

Active Reading

“The Secret Sharer”

The captain and his double, Leggatt, are similar in many ways and different in others. As you read “The Secret Sharer,” fill in the Venn diagram below with descriptive words and phrases that show how the two characters are alike and how they are different.



Responding

“The Secret Sharer”

Personal Response

What did you think of the “doubles” theme? Why?

Analyzing Literature

Recall and Interpret

1. Why did the captain uncharacteristically take the five-hour anchor watch rather than having his subordinates do so?

2. Why did Leggatt kill the sailor? Was he justified in doing so?

3. What does the chief mate’s gesture of tapping his forefinger against his forehead in conversation with another mate suggest about the captain?

4. Why does the captain pretend to be hard of hearing when talking with the skipper from the *Sephora*?

5. What purpose does the captain’s floating hat serve?

Responding

“The Secret Sharer”

Analyzing Literature (*continued*)

Evaluate and Connect

6. What effect does the fugitive’s safe escape from the captain’s ship have on the captain? How does his relationship with his crew change?

7. Review your response to the **Focus Activity** on page 28. Do you think that the captain was wrong to extend himself to a fugitive? Would you have done the same? Why or why not?

Literature and Writing

Analyzing Conflict

In a paragraph or two, describe the nature of the captain’s conflict—internal, external, or both—and how he finally resolves it. What role does the fugitive Leggatt play in this conflict?

Extending Your Response

Literature Groups

With a group of classmates, dramatize a trial scene in which the captain is charged with aiding and abetting a crime by harboring a fugitive. One student should act as prosecutor and another should act as defense attorney. Each should use evidence from the story to support his position and may call on other students to serve as jurors to render a verdict.

Learning for Life

Write an incident report describing Leggatt’s murder of a shipmate. Based on the facts provided in the story, describe the incident and the means by which he is suspected of having escaped from the ship. Include a description of the fugitive and any other pertinent information that might lead to his capture.



Save your work for your portfolio.

T. S. Eliot

The Hollow Men

Before You Read

Focus Question

What makes a person “hollow”?

Background

T. S. Eliot (1888–1965), winner of a Nobel Prize for Literature, wrote some of the most influential poetry of the twentieth century. Many of his poems examine the trivialization of spirituality in the modern world. The quotation that introduces the poem, “Mistah Kurtz—he dead,” is from Conrad’s novella *Heart of Darkness*, as is the phrase “hollow man,” which is used to describe Kurtz, a character in the novella.

Responding to the Reading

1. Briefly sum up the descriptions of the men. Based on the descriptions, what conclusions can you draw about the lives of hollow men?

2. Which images did you find the most striking in the poem, and why?

3. What might Eliot mean when he describes the men as being both “hollow” and “stuffed”? What is the effect of this contrast?

4. What does the poet imply about the human will when he says that the “shadow” falls between the idea and the reality, the motion and the act, the conception and the creation? How do these pairings help to reinforce the hollowness of men?

5. **Making Connections** What lines in the poem would you use to characterize Kurtz? In what ways is Kurtz a hollow man?

Art Connection

Make a drawing to accompany the poem or find images from the Internet or magazines and create a collage that illustrates this poem. Share your work with your class.

Langston
Hughes

The Negro Speaks of Rivers

Before You Read

Focus Question

Does your natural environment ever inspire you to reflect on the past? What thoughts come to mind?

Background

Langston Hughes (1902–1967) is one of America’s best-known African American writers. Much of his work focuses on people’s struggle to pursue their dreams despite hardships and oppression.

Responding to the Reading

1. What is the relationship between the poem’s ancient rivers and the lives of African Americans?

2. What human traits does the poet give the Mississippi River?

3. Who is the “I” that is repeated throughout the poem, and why is its use effective?

4. What do you think the speaker means when he says “my soul has grown deep like the rivers?”

5. **Making Connections** How is the speaker’s brief description of the Congo different from Marlow’s depiction of the Congo in the novella?

Listening and Speaking

Interview someone from an older generation. Ask the person whether the environment in which he or she grew up shaped his or her outlook on life. Have the person explain why or why not. Use the response to determine how important a physical environment is to the development of a person’s character and outlook on life.

Jeffrey Tayler

Vessel of Last Resort

Before You Read

Focus Question

Recall a time when a place that you longed to visit didn't live up to your expectations when you got there. What was the place, and why were you disappointed?

Background

In this travelogue, Jeffrey Tayler uses vivid descriptions, usually based on sight and sound, to make the reader experience the immediacy of the events described. He begins his trip by remembering Conrad's journey up the Congo River.

Responding to the Reading

1. What does Tayler cite as his motive for traveling the Congo? Do you think he was prepared for what he encountered?

2. What were some of the perils of Tayler's voyage up the Congo River? Which do you think were the most dangerous?

3. Which description of the writer's observations affected you the most? Why?

4. Do you think that Tayler felt his trip down the Congo River was worth the risk? Explain why or why not.

5. **Making Connections** How does Marlow's description of his journey compare with Tayler's account? What are some similarities and differences between the two?

Creative Writing

Think of an interesting place you have visited recently. Using vivid imagery, describe the most striking images of the place, capturing the sights and sounds as you experienced them.

Truman
Capote

Miriam

Before You Read

Focus Question

Recall a time when you had an unwelcome visitor. How did you respond to the person?

Background

Truman Capote (1924–1984) is probably best remembered for his novella *Breakfast at Tiffany's* and his pioneering “nonfiction novel” *In Cold Blood*. Capote also wrote a number of distinguished short stories and collaborated on screenplays.

Responding to the Reading

1. Why, do you think, did the author name the little girl after Mrs. Miller?

2. Do you think Miriam is real, or is she a figment of Mrs. Miller’s imagination? Explain your answer.

3. How do the weather conditions described in the story reflect Mrs. Miller’s state of mind?

4. Why is Mrs. Miller afraid of Miriam?

5. **Making Connections** In both “Miriam” and “The Secret Sharer,” the presence of a double influences certain characters’ behavior. Contrast Mrs. Miller’s reaction toward Miriam with the young captain’s reaction toward Leggatt. In what way are their reactions different?

Creative Writing

The end of the story leaves the reader hanging. Write a different ending describing what happens to Mrs. Miller when she sees Miriam reappear. Try to remain faithful to the author’s style.

Octavio Paz

The Street

Before You Read

Focus Question

Recall a time when you experienced the sensation of being followed. What was the situation, and how did it make you feel?

Background

Octavio Paz (1914–1998) was considered by many to be Mexico’s greatest poet. He won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1990 “for impassioned writing with wide horizons, characterized by sensuous intelligence and humanistic integrity.” In this poem, Paz describes the sensation of being followed.

Responding to the Reading

1. Where does the poem take place? Support your answer with details from the poem.

2. Whom do you think the “he” in the poem represents? What is the relationship between the speaker and the unnamed person in the poem?

3. What do the words silent, blackness, blind, and dark suggest about the poem’s theme? What do you think the speaker’s stumbling and falling symbolize?

4. Are the speaker’s experiences real or imagined? Explain.

5. **Making Connections** Compare the speaker’s feelings toward his double with the captain’s feelings toward Leggatt. What emotions characterize each man’s attitude toward his double?

Performing

Perform a dramatic reading of “The Street,” using pantomime to capture the feeling of being followed. Ask your classmates to evaluate the effectiveness of your interpretation.

TEST: *Heart of Darkness* and "The Secret Sharer"

Recall and Interpret (40 points total; 4 points each)

A. Write the letter of the best answer.

- _____ 1. Where is Marlow when he narrates the story of his experiences in the Congo?
a. on a steamboat on the Congo River c. aboard a yawl on the River Thames
b. on a ship in the China Sea d. in the city of London
- _____ 2. Why did Marlow so quickly receive the appointment he wanted?
a. Kurtz put in a good word for him. c. He is an experienced steamboat captain.
b. His aunt is a co-owner of the trading company. d. One of the company's captains was killed.
- _____ 3. Why does the manager travel to see Kurtz?
a. He misses talking with him. c. He plans to steal Kurtz's ivory.
b. He has heard Kurtz is ill. d. He believes Kurtz is insane.
- _____ 4. The Russian is loyal to Kurtz because
a. Kurtz saved his life c. Kurtz promised him a job
b. he believes Kurtz is a genius d. he fears Kurtz
- _____ 5. Marlow tells Kurtz's fiancée that Kurtz's last words were
a. her name c. "Exterminate all the brutes!"
b. "The horror! The horror!" d. "Forgive me!"

B. Write a short answer for each question below.

6. Why did Kurtz order the attack on the steamboat?

7. What appalls Marlow when he first sees Kurtz's station?

8. What does Marlow do with the postscript to Kurtz's pamphlet before giving it to the company? Why?

9. Why does the captain feel estranged from his crew in "The Secret Sharer"?

10. What does the captain do that causes his crew to question his fitness to lead?

TEST: *Heart of Darkness* and “The Secret Sharer”**Evaluate and Connect (60 points total; 30 points each)****Answer any two of the following essay questions on a separate sheet of paper.**

1. Analyze Conrad’s use of the quest as a literary device in *Heart of Darkness*. For what does Marlow quest? How does the outcome of his quest differ from that of traditional quest stories? What point does that contrast make?
2. Briefly describe the two sides of Kurtz’s “Jekyll-and-Hyde” personality. How does the frame story help prepare readers for the two sides? The two women in his life?
3. Explain the following quotation from “The Secret Sharer.” What does it suggest about the captain’s experience of his first sea command? What must he do to become one with his ship?

This is not the place to enlarge upon the sensations of a man who feels for the first time a ship move under his feet to his own independent word. In my case they were not unalloyed [pure, unmixed]. I was not wholly alone with my command; for there was that stranger in my cabin. Or rather, I was not completely and wholly with her. Part of me was absent. That mental feeling of being in two places at once affected me physically as if the mood of secrecy had penetrated my very soul.

4. In both *Heart of Darkness* and “The Secret Sharer,” Conrad uses symbolism to develop theme. As symbols, how do the Congo River and the River Thames help reveal the theme of *Heart of Darkness*? In “The Secret Sharer,” what does the fugitive Leggatt represent, and how does the character reveal the theme of the story?
5. The following quotation is from the African novelist and literary critic Chinua Achebe who, in his essay “An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*,” criticizes the author for what he considers to be a breach of artistic good faith. What is Achebe criticizing about Conrad’s writing style in *Heart of Darkness*? Do you think he has a valid point? Why or why not? Use evidence from the novella to support your opinion.

The eagle-eyed English critic F. R. Leavis drew attention long ago to Conrad’s “adjectival insistence upon inexpressible and incomprehensible mystery.” That insistence must not be dismissed lightly, as many Conrad critics have tended to do, as a mere stylistic flaw; for it raises serious questions of artistic good faith. When a writer while pretending to record scenes, incidents, and their impact is in reality engaged in inducing hypnotic stupor in his readers through a bombardment of emotive words and other forms of trickery, much more has to be at stake than stylistic felicity. Generally normal readers are well armed to detect and resist such underhand activity. But Conrad chose his subject well—one which was guaranteed not to put him in conflict with the psychological predisposition of his readers or raise the need for him to contend with their resistance. He chose the role of purveyor of comforting myths.