

SUMMER READING ASSIGNMENTS FOR IB ENGLISH IV

GREETINGS

The Work Begins

Conrad, Joseph. Heart of Darkness, 4th ed. Ed. Paul Armstrong. New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2006. *originally in English* [ISBN: 978-0-393-92636-1] *You are required to purchase this edition.*

Perhaps the most demanding work you will read this year is Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness (HD). The novel itself is short—75 pages. However, its style is extremely lyrical and deceptively easy to read. Many significant details are glossed over by the novel's lyricism. Thus a slow, careful reading is necessary, and I urge you to read this novel twice. On second reading, you should have pencil in hand to make marks or annotations in the margins of the text. Never forget that you are dealing with Marlow as narrator—storyteller—and with an unnamed narrator. Moreover, do not miss that the storytelling is so engrossing that the other passengers on “[t]he Nellie, a cruising yawl,” men who are typical of those who run the business of the British Empire, are so entranced by Marlow's story that they lose “the first of the ebb” and cannot sail. The brilliant literary critic, Edward W. Said, one of the founding fathers of postcolonial literary criticism and best known for his seminal work Orientalism (1978), argued that we cannot lose sight of where a literary work begins (and by implication where it ends) without losing critical mass in understanding what the work is about. So! Caution: HD, among other things, is a story of ineptitude by the agents of imperialism, and it is the story of storytelling.

The novel's two rivers are the Thames (pronounced *Tims*) and the Congo. If you Google the Thames River you will find out important information about its importance in the history of Great Britain and its empire. This history is alluded to in the first few pages of HD. If you Google the Congo River, you may not find out that the force of its reality is this: from the air, off the Congo coast, you can see the earth-filled black of the Congo River thrusting its way into the Atlantic Ocean. This is an arresting sight: a river so powerful that it cuts through so many miles of a great ocean.

The city referred to as the place where Charlie Marlow goes for his job interview is Brussels, in Belgium, which was the headquarters for King Leopold II of Belgium. When the Congo was stolen from its African peoples for the financial benefit of various European governments, the Congo was first in the private ownership of Leopold II, who invited other countries to participate in his private business ventures there. Tremendous and horrific abuses of Congolese Africans followed, and, eventually, thanks to Roger Casement, a British civil servant and Anglo-Irish patriot, a 1905 report was written and published that exposed the horrors of Leopold II's management of the Congo. Leopold II was relieved of direct control. The Congo, in its tortuous politics, still suffers from the abuses of this time in its history.

Please pay particular attention to the roles of the women in the novel. Do not think these women are unimportant. Look for what they tell you about Charlie Marlow and his point of view. Marlow has adopted a view of women promulgated by the 19th-century German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer (“Of Women,” 1851).

Assignment:

1. In addition to your careful reading of HD, you must read the works listed below that are in your required copy of HD:

From: "Backgrounds and Contexts"

- Encyclopaedia Britannica (1902)
- European Reaction to Leopold's Abuses
- King Leopold II, "The Sacred Mission of Civilization"
- Roger Casement, "The Congo Report"
- Adam Hochschild, "Meeting Mr. Kurtz"
- Alan Simmons, "Conrad, Casement, and the Congo Atrocities"
- G. W. F. Hegel, "The African Character"
- Charles Darwin, "On the Races of Man"
- Peter Edgerly Firchow, "Race, Ethnicity, Nationality, Empire"
- Joseph Conrad, "Imagining Africa"

These abridged sources constitute 99 pages of reading.

From: "Criticism"

- Chinua Achebe, "An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's Heart of Darkness" [This essay revolutionized literary criticism of this novel.]
- Hunt Hawkins, "Heart of Darkness and Racism"
- Patrick Brantlinger, "Imperialism, Impressionism, and the Politics of Style"
- Marianna Torgovnick, "Primitivism and the African Woman in Heart of Darkness"
- Jeremy Hawthorn, "The Women of Heart of Darkness"
- Edward W. Said, "Two Visions in Heart of Darkness"
- J. Hillis Miller, "Should We Read Heart of Darkness?"
- Louis K. Greiff, "Conrad's Ethics and the Margins of Apocalypse Now"
- Margot Norris, "Modernism and Vietnam"

These essays—some of them abridged—constitute 77 pages of reading.

2. Having read the novel and the above itemized list of readings, you are to prepare two short papers based on the readings. Make sure you follow Modern Language Association (MLA) guidelines and use MLA parenthetical documentation. [Google MLA Guidelines for presentation directions.]

Paper A: Write a summary of the background and contextual information and make use of direct and indirect quotations and document these. This summary should be about 5 pages, double spaced with 1-inch margins top, bottom, left, and right. Use a font no larger than 12-point, no smaller than 11-point. Provide Works Cited and use MLA guidelines.

Paper B: Select 2 of the critical essays and write no more than 5 pages comparing and contrasting the essays. Use the presentation requirements stated for Paper A above.

Remember: Your summer reading for this assignment is going to save you a great deal of time second semester.

And so you have your Summer Reading work cut out for you.

Look forward to a great school year.