

Short Answer Responses
Heart of Darkness, by Joseph Conrad

Write a one paragraph response to each of the questions below. Use evidence from the novel where appropriate.

1. Describe the details of the setting. When? Where? Who are the characters and what are they doing?
2. Marlowe's soliloquy on the Romans illustrates one of Conrad's favorite artistic devices - foreshadowing of events. Summarize Marlowe's soliloquy.
3. Find other examples of Conrad's use of foreshadowing.
4. Observe Conrad's use of color, particularly if black and white. Find examples. Does Conrad associate black with evil, white with good? Find examples where Conrad reverses this association. What is he telling us with this reversal?
5. Notice Conrad's frequent use of the demonstrative adjective: that river, that steamboat, these pilgrims and so on. What is the effect of this usage?
6. Much of the irony in the story is verbal irony - ways of expressing things, as contrasted to, say, ironic situations or characters or conflicts. Find examples of verbal irony
7. Why did Kurtz, do you think, go back up-river, after once having started back down with the ivory?
8. Why are we told that Kurtz is a "universal genius"? Or that "all Europe contributed to the making of Kurtz"?
9. Why didn't Marlowe turn savage as Kurtz had done? Specifically, why doesn't he go ashore for a "howl and a dance"?
10. Notice that the atmosphere of the story had a dreamlike, nightmarish quality to it. Find examples.
11. Explain why much of the meaning of the story is contained in the phrase "the fascination of the abomination."
12. Explain the meaning of Kurtz's final cry, "The horror!" Is it a victory? an affirmation? What is defeated? What is being affirmed?
13. Characterize the manager. Where does he fit in Marlowe's recognition of the nature of evil?
14. What is Marlowe's final choice? What are the consequences of his final choice?
15. The subject of work is closely linked to the theme of self-restraint. How many characters lack restraint?