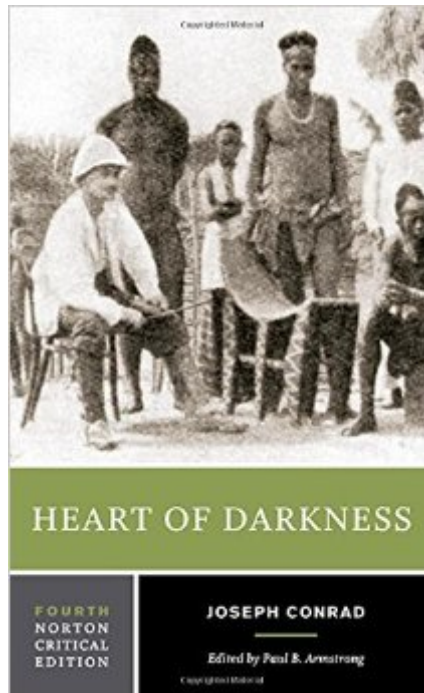


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Heart Of Darkness (Norton Critical Editions)



Synopsis

The Fourth Edition is again based on Robert Kimbrough's meticulously re-edited text. Missing words have been restored and the entire novel has been repunctuated in accordance with Conrad's style. The result is the first published version of Heart of Darkness that allows readers to hear Marlow's voice as Conrad heard it when he wrote the story. "Backgrounds and Contexts" provides readers with a generous collection of maps and photographs that bring the Belgian Congo to life. Textual materials, topically arranged, address nineteenth-century views of imperialism and racism and include autobiographical writings by Conrad on his life in the Congo. New to the Fourth Edition is an excerpt from Adam Hochschild's recent book, King Leopold's Ghost, as well as writings on race by Hegel, Darwin, and Galton. "Criticism" includes a wealth of new materials, including nine contemporary reviews and assessments of Conrad and Heart of Darkness and twelve recent essays by Chinua Achebe, Peter Brooks, Daphne Erdinast-Vulcan, Edward Said, and Paul B. Armstrong, among others. Also new to this edition is a section of writings on the connections between Heart of Darkness and the film Apocalypse Now by Louis K. Greiff, Margot Norris, and Lynda J. Dryden. A Chronology and Selected Bibliography are also included.

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Customer Reviews

I was once one of those students forced to read this book at school. I was dragged kicking and screaming to its pages and read it only because I did not want to flunk my English Literature class. I was riveted from the first page, right up to the last paragraph. It is quite simply Conrad's finest book,

(yes, I read his other books after this one.) However be aware, this is not everyone's cup of tea. There will be some people who will read this book and think, "Oh God, you have to be kidding!" However if you can get passed this mentality then you are in for a real literary treat. The story is simple enough, a young Englishman; Marlow (this character appears in Conrad's story "Youth") goes out to Africa to seek his fortune. He is at first idealistic, and full of himself. However he quickly realises that Africa is full of petty bureaucrats who have no idea how to make use of this dark jewel they have acquired. Like Colonists before them, they proceed to ravage and plunder the land of its natural resources. Enter Kurtz, an Ivory Trader who has gone Native. He has become a Renegade, living with his Black mistress in the heart of Africa's interior; systematically turning his back on his supposed civilised self. Marlow meets Kurtz after an eventful trip up the Congo and finds himself curiously attracted to this strange man who is [very ill], and obviously going insane. Kurtz in turn is an embarrassment to his employers who would rather see him dead than returned to "civilization." Of course this is unspoken, and the hypocrisy of human natures sticks out like a sore thumb in this novel, especially as Kurtz is one of the best Ivory Traders on the Congo route.

Several people I am acquainted with have questioned my reading of "Heart of Darkness," using as argument the fact that they read it "in high school." Apparently, for these very well-read souls, if the book was in their high school reading list, then it should never be approached again. Well, both the poem of "El Cid" and the novel "Don Quijote" first revealed their wonders to me when I was in high school, and now that I have read them again (and "Don Quijote" complete this time), they have just proved to be timeless classics with something to tell a person of any age. "Heart of Darkness," by Joseph Conrad, is a classic that, given its length, invites several readings, particularly if one goes beyond the "high school-depth" sadly evident in those acquaintances of mine. The different, dark, alien world of the Congo as barely seen through Marlow's eyes, juxtaposed with the author's subtle-but-powerful condemnation of a system that promotes exploitation of those seen as "inferior," is one of this novella's most important, and often missed, commentaries. Marlow is the English sailor who does not, and cannot, understand anything that is not English, from the nameless city across the Channel (Brussels, most probably), to the ghost-like figures that people his employer's offices, to the multi-coloured map that shows how Africa has been carved, to the multi-coloured Russian whose language Marlowe cannot recognize and believes is cypher, to the river itself, to the native inhabitants of the land he is invading. This trip up the Congo river that Marlow tells his shipmates about while on the Thames is a journey after a man's voice, his treasure of ivory, and his report on the natives.

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