

Quotes from heart of darkness

[Literature](#), [Novel](#)



Foreshadowing“ I did not see the real significance of that wreck at once... Certainly the affair was too stupid... to be altogether natural...” (p. 88)This quote portrays foreshadowing because it is evident that the wrecking of the steamer was not an accident. Since the reader now knows that this incident was intentional, it alludes to the fact Marlow is not welcome in the Congo. It foreshadows the future troubles Marlow will have with the Company members, since as soon as he arrives, he is already having issues. “ presently he said, very slow—“ I was thinking of very old times, when the Romans first came here, nineteen hundred years ago—the other day. . . . Light came out of this river since—you say Knights? Yes; but it is like a running blaze on a plain, like a flash of lightning in the clouds. We live in the flicker—may it last as long as the old earth keeps rolling! But darkness was here yesterday...” (p. 68)When Marlow speaks about the Romans coming to England, it foreshadows the story’s characters, the plot that will unfold, and the theme of the novella. This is because the situations that occur throughout his journey mirror the Romans journey to England. The characters and interactions with the natives included in Marlow’s short story of the Roman invasion of ancient England compares to the white men Marlow meets in Belgian-controlled Africa.

Also, in the last paragraph of the book, it is brought to light that the Roman conquerors treated the natives harshly, which also compares to the African atrocities Marlow witnesses.

When Marlow arrives at the outer coast, he sees the enslaved men who are working with chains on them, and others are deathly ill, and starving. He is in the middle of the jungle, so when he is greeted by the Company Accountant,

there is an utter contrast. He is dressed in British finery, wearing “ a high starched collar, white cuffs, a light alpaca jacket, snowy trousers, a clean necktie, and varnished boots” (p. 84). This is a definitive contrast between the dirty, starving, and malnourished natives, and the put-together, clean, and rich accountant. This contrast is supposed to emphasize how little respect the natives received, since it is evident that the Europeans should have treated them better.

Another example of juxtaposition when Marlow arrives at the outer coast is the contrast of the dirty materials in the jungle to the precious ivory. Conrad explains, “ Everything in the station was a muddle. . . a stream of manufactured goods, rubbishy cottons, beads, and brass-wire set into the depths of darkness, in return came a precious trickle of ivory” (p. 85). The contrast is evident, since the pure ivory is deep into the dark jungle, waiting to be corrupted.

The whole novela can be seen as a flashback, since Marlow is telling the story as a flashback. In the beginning of the story, when the reader gets the frame, Marlow is on a ship anchored at the mouth of Thames. The story begins when Marlow thinks about his journey and shares it with the other four men on the ship. While talking to the men, Marlow says, “ I don’t want to bother you much with what happened to me personally... yet to understand the effect of it on me you ought to know how I got out there, what I saw...” (p. 70). This is how the flashback of his journey on the Congo River is first introduced.

Another example of a flashback is during the concluding events of the story. This occurs when Marlow describes the photograph of the Intended, thus preparing us for the actual encounter shortly afterwards, with metaphorical imagery surrounding it. There is also, and more predominantly, analepsis. Marlow is constantly recalling Kurtz, for example, his appearance, actions, voice and especially his last words. (p. 164).

“ Yes; I respected his collars, his vast cuffs, his brushed hair. His appearance was certainly that of a hairdresser's dummy... His starched collars and got-up shirt-fronts were achievements of character” (p. 84). Conrad uses imagery to describe what Marlow was seeing and what he thought about it. By having Marlow's point of view, the reader gets to see what is directly in the character's mind, and possibly getting a biased portrayal of the story.

Paradox” He was the only man of us who still ‘ followed the sea’. . . He was a seaman, but a wanderer too, while most seamen lead, if one may so express it, a sedentary life” (p. 66). This quote defines Marlow as a paradox in the way that he is a wanderer as well as a seaman, and seamen tend to have ‘ a sedentary life’.

The reason why this is a paradox is because it is contradictory for someone who “ follows the sea” to also be a “ wanderer”. This paradox gives the reader insight on what Marlow will be like further into the story. “[Marlow's experience was] not very clear. And yet it seemed to throw a kind of light. ” (p. 70). The purpose of this paradox is to tell the reader to pay close attention to small details in the story that Marlow tells. This is because there will be some things that may seem subtle, but really have a deeper meaning.

Simile“ They were discolored, just awash, and the whole lot was seen just under the water, exactly as a man’s backbone is seen running down the middle of his back under the skin” (p. 118)This is where the author describes some patches of the river. The simile is used to show how hard the journey has been, and to give the reader a visual. The visual is something everyone is familiar with, and Marlow tends to use human examples as metaphors, to help portray to the men he is telling the story to how treacherous the journey was.

The primitive ‘ savages’ are described as dark, both literally in regards to skin tone, but also in attitude and inwardly. Marlow calls the natives at the first station “ black shadows of disease and starvation” (p. 80). A little further into the text, Marlow is horrified by what he is seeing, and by the darkness he and the reader are being presented with. The darkness of the natives is a metaphor for their supposed incivility, evilness and savagery.

“ The wilderness had patted him on the head”. . . “ it had caressed him”. . . “ it had taken him, loved him, embraced him, got into his veins, consumed his flesh and sealed his soul to its own. ” (p. 129). It is evident that Marlow continuously compares the wilderness to people. This situation is a direct example. He uses personification to portray the wilderness in a human form. He does this because the wilderness owns qualities that you will often find in humans, especially love, which is what Conrad is trying to convey in this quote. “ The immense wilderness, the colossal body of the fecund and mysterious life seemed to look at her, pensive. . .”(p. 142). The “ her” Conrad is referring to is Kurtz’s mistress. The author attempted to create a

comparison to the woman and the wilderness. Like the wilderness, the warrior woman is savage, wild, magnificent, and ominous, almost as though she's the soul of the wilderness.

Throughout the novel, the recurring opposition is darkness vs. light. In the beginning, the black people are said to be in the "darkness", and they are being put into this darkness from the civilized white man. The inhuman, deceptiveness and the selfish Kurtz and Marlow are the main source of darkness in the African land. They have disturbed the solitariness of natives, their culture has been made impure and their way of living have been degraded to darkness by the interruption of whites. The existence of darkness is at the core of shining civilization. The Europeans believed they were "shedding light" on the natives, and making them more civilized, when really they were just creating a more uncivilized society.

Marlow describes his experiences floating on the river in the mist on his steamboat, "To me it seemed as though the mist itself had screamed. . . from all sides at once, did this tumultuous and mournful uproar arise. It culminated in a hurried outbreak of almost intolerably excessive shrieking, which stopped short..." The reason why this is considered impressionism is because Marlow only describes what he sees (the mist) and what he hears (loud shrieking and then silence). He doesn't actually describe what is happening. Instead, he tells us how he is experiencing the event, which leaves the interpretation up to us. "The horror, the horror" (p. 155).

The reason why this is also considered impressionism is because it is leaving the reader to interpretation. Nowhere in the novel is there the answer as to

what horror Kurtz is talking about. There can be many different views and interpretations on what horror Kurtz is talking about in his last words, but there is no way to figure out the answer. Impressionism is always when the author does not give a definitive answer to what it can be, and leaves it up to the reader to interpret.