

# Power corruption in heart of darkness

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



Heart of Darkness by Joseph Conrad tells the tale of numerous lives influenced by the desire of power, and the lust of wealth. Marlow is a sailor who ends up far away from home, away from the restrictions society places on an individual. Marlow's journey takes him through the jungle, in which the only thing controlling your every move is your own restraints.

Without control and governing rules Marlow finds that madness prevails at the core of society, in both the heart of the jungle and the civilized European cities. Through Marlow's discovery of madness in humanity he progressively becomes more deranged by the ominous being of Kurtz, Marlow's newfound understanding of social status, Kurtz's madness, and his new outlook on society.

Kurtz's haunting character is Marlow's motivation to reach the inner station, and his work is his distraction. Marlow's trip down the Congo river to the inner station is filled with numerous obscure encounters with nature and man. The closer Marlow gets to the inner station, or in other words the heart of darkness, the more frequent he hears paw-strokes and calls from the wild. The closer to the heart of darkness, the madder you become. Marlow overhears conversations and stories of Kurtz, and how this all powerful man is seen as a god among the natives. Kurtz's only desire is to obtain as much ivory as he can, and he does not care at what cost it takes for this to happen. Marlow progressively becomes more paranoid the farther from civilization he gets.

Marlow's journey down the river entails many oddities, one of which, is the groups of savages he encounters. Marlow discovers just how closely related

he and the savages are. During this time period very few European men had respect for savages, but Marlow comes to realize that he even has respect for these savages as humans. Kurtz's lust for wealth and power is portrayed as the darkness fully engrossing his sense of what is morally acceptable. Kurtz's desires take over his every being, and his need for ivory his internal drive. This can be judged reasonably because Kurtz discovered who he really was apart from everyone else, even though he turned into a raging lunatic. Kurtz could identify who he was compared to the rest of society, which is more than most people can say for themselves. Could this really be considered so mad?

Kurtz is his own judge of character, or in other words his own discerning eye. Kurtz's last words: the horror! the horror! can be seen as his last judgement of humankind, and how poorly as a society we have evolved. Kurtz's apparent madening behavior can be considered normal compared to the rest of humankind's behavior because Kurtz sees society for what it truly is. Maybe Kurtz is sane and the rest of society is insane. The European's are clueless as to how much more savage they are compared to the natives of Africa. The white men are far more lost and clueless of life than the savages who dance around a campfire and scavenge for food. Marlow and Kurtz have always lived in a mad and irrational world, they just lacked the discerning eye to see past the veil that covers it.

Upon Marlow's return to Europe he has a new outlook on society. Back in the society of frauds, Marlow does not upset the natural order of life. Marlow chooses not to waste his time and try to explain how Europe's society is

mad compared to the savages, and not the other way around. Conrad had a discerning eye, and that is why he was able to write this novel without being biased towards one civilization. Conrad chose Marlow as the narrator with the hope that by the end of the novel its readers would also see society with a discerning eye.

Heart of Darkness by Joseph Conrad tells the story of the white man's need for power. Through Marlow's discovery of madness in humanity he progressively becomes more deranged by the ominous being of Kurtz, Marlow's newfound understanding of social status, Kurtz's madness, and his new outlook on society. Throughout Conrad's novel Marlow learns that not everyone can see through a discerning eye, and it takes a special individual to see the world in this way. Before Marlow and Kurtz traveled to the Congo, they lived in a mad world, they just couldn't see it because they lacked a discerning eye. The question posed at the end of the novel is left to the reader to decide whether or not someone with a discerning should try and pass it to the rest of us. If you could see humankind through a discerning eye, would you try and teach others? z