

Themes of heart of darkness

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



" There is... a machine. It evolved itself... and behold!--it knits.... It knits us in and it knits us out. It has knitted time, space, pain, death, corruption, despair and all the illusions--and nothing matters. three evident themes include death, corruption, and despair. During Marlow's journey into the " heart of darkness," death, corruption, and despair became the manifest themes of the novel. First of all, Marlow came face to face with death several times throughout his voyage. Marlow finds out about the death of Kurtz, the climax of the novel, when the manager's boy said to Marlow, " Mistah Kurtz—he dead" (Conrad 64). Another death occurs when the attack on the steamer leaves the helmsmen dead with " the shaft of a spear in the side just below the ribs" (Conrad 64). Marlow decides to "[tip] him overboard" because " if [his] late helmsmen was to be eaten, the fishes alone should have him. He had been a very second-rate helmsmen" (Conrad 47). Second, corruption overshadowed all other themes as the major theme of the novel. As Marlow's journey progresses, the corruption of the trading business becomes increasingly obvious. Kurtz " had collected, bartered, swindled, or stolen more ivory than all the other agents together" (Conrad 43). Despite his reputation as a thief and a swindler, people in the ivory trading business regarded Kurtz as a " first-class agent" and " a very remarkable person" (Conrad 16). In addition, when Marlow came to Kurtz's station to trade with him, " Kurtz ... ordered [an] attack to be made on the steamer" (Conrad 58), even though Marlow came in peace. Finally, Marlow sees the despair of the existence of humans while in the " heart of darkness." When Kurtz lay on his deathbed, Marlow " saw on that ivory face the expression of somber pride, of ruthless power, of craven terror—of an intense and hopeless despair"

(Conrad 64). Also, the manager told Marlow that Kurtz "suffered too much. He hated all this, and somehow he couldn't get away. When I had a chance I begged him to try and leave while there was time; I offered to go back with him. And he would say yes, and then he would remain; go off on another ivory hunt" (Conrad 51-52). Clearly, Marlow saw death, corruption, and despair in the "heart of darkness." In all, Conrad used his own experiences and his views on life as the basis for this novel. He used his experiences from his journey down the Congo River on a steamer for the basic plot of the novel. In addition, the themes of death, corruption, and despair describe the fatalistic attitude of Conrad. He saw these themes at the heart of human existence, and Marlow confronts them in the "heart of darkness." The "heart of darkness" can be a symbolic journey into the dark center of the heart and soul of a human, revealing the concealed evil of one's own nature and his capacity for evil. It is a psychological exploration of the inner self; it reflects the unconscious self of a human. Marlow does not get the opportunity to see Kurtz until he is so disease-stricken he looks more like death than a person. There are no good looks or health. In the story Marlow remarks that Kurtz resembles "an animated image of death carved out of old ivory." The manager, in charge of three stations in the jungle, feels Kurtz poses a threat to his own position. Marlow sees how the manager is deliberately trying to delay any help or supplies to Kurtz. He hopes he will die of neglect. This is where the inciting moment of the story lies. Should the company in Belgium find out the truth about Kurtz's success in an ivory procurer, they would undoubtedly elevate him to the position of manager. The manager's insidious and pretending nature opposes all truth (Roberts,

42). When Marlow expresses doubts about the nature of the work, she replies, ³You forget, dear Charlie, that the labourer is worthy of his hire²