

Review on the novel "heart of darkness" written by joseph conrad

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



Heart of darkness is a novel written in by Polish-English writer Joseph Conrad. It follows the story of Charles Marlow and his narration of his trip to Congo, the center of Africa (that's the reason for the name of the book " Heart of Darkness", Congo is seen as the heart of Africa). In this novel we can clearly see a manifestation of Imperialism of Africa by European people (referred as white people in the book). Conrad bases this story on his own life as Araceli Garcia Ríos mentions in the prologue and how Conrad describes many events he has lived, he writes the character of Marlow based on his own personality, a moral person surrounded by the chaos that was occurring in Africa seen by his own eyes. Joseph Conrad changes many situations to fit the story and changes a lot of names, but his life is still easily recognizable and it can be compared with notes at the end of the book.

Real names of Joseph Conrad's life are mentioned and some of the changes that he did to the story of the sailor Marlow. The novel starts with Marlow sitting on a boat, then he proceeds to narrate to his partners his experience traveling on a ship as a sailor to Congo. As he tells his story you can understand how Imperialism affected Africa in those years. Marlow is white and as he travels he describes various experiences that for many people around him are seen as normal, but when you read them you understand the horrible torture and actions that the Europeans made the people from Africa go through. Black people were treated as slaves, as Marlow narrates, he describes them in numerous occasions with chains, working, lifting things, and even beaten up if they made something wrong or even if they were suspected to do something wrong. " They were hitting a black man near there. They said he had caused the fire somehow. Anyhow, he was shouting

horribly" (Conrad, 2013 p. 69) Black people suffered a lot " six black people walked on a line, going up tired through the path. They walked straight and slow, with equilibrium on their heads with nests full of dirt and the sound followed the rhythm of their steps. You could see their ribcages, the joints of their members seemed like knots on a string, they all had an iron collar around their neck and they were joined together by a chain that made noises." (Conrad, 2013 p. 51) And they weren't treated as humans, in some occasions black people went next to Marlow and they didn't even look him in the eye because he was white and they were used to treating white people with respect or being obligated to.

In the story we hear about a character that in the beginning is not mentioned a lot, but as the story continues it gains more and more importance. This character may be even considered the second most important character of the story. Marlow mentions him and Joseph Conrad based this character on a real person that he met. This character is named Kurtz and we can see a big contrast between Marlow and him, Marlow is more moral (he even compares the situation black people were living to his own " The population had disappeared long time ago. Well, if a bunch of black people came in armed with all sorts of scary weapons and started going from Deal road to Gravesend, capturing people from town from left to right and making them lift their heavy stuff , I imagine that all farms and houses from around the place would be empty soon." (Conrad, 2013 p. 60), and he thinks deeply the situations he is faced with, while Kurtz even though at the beginning people talk to him as a very great person and of high authority, we discover that he

is affected by his instance in Congo and he is not as moral and cautious as Marlow, we also know that Kurtz is very sick and the people that talk greatly about him are worried and concerned for him. Kurtz is a very explosive and violent character and he is seen as a contrast of Marlow. At the end of the book he dies because of his illness.

Imperialism can be seen very greatly in the book, because the story happens and takes place after the Scramble for Africa, the countries are divided and African people have to get used to being mistreated by white people. You can read the changes that European countries changed to the nation, but in some parts you can also read about their natural environment and understand how much their lives were forced to change. " In the distance you could see dark human shadows, moving confusingly against the scary border of the jungle, and near the river two bronze figures, laying against large spears, they were on their feet under the sunlight with their mottled skins, with a look of warriors and on sculptural repose..."(Conrad, 2013 p. 154) Reading the book various thoughts came to my mind, at first it was hard to think about the situation and how African people had to live it. When you read it you don't really think about it but when you put yourself in the situation of them you get to understand their horrible experience and pain. This was the only thing I didn't enjoy the book. For me it was very hard to read the bad treatments towards black people at the time. Reading the book made me feel sad at times and thinking about the pain of the people is something that really affected me.

What I liked about the novel is the way that is written, I like Marlow as a main character and I like his personality, I enjoyed his view of the situations he was facing and the thought of living life as a sailor. I enjoyed the narration and the way that Marlow/Conrad narrates his story as adventurous, but at the same time I really don't like reading about the mistreatments toward black people. Horrible tortures are mentioned, chained people, suffering, hunger etc. As a whole I would say I didn't like the book because of that, but I enjoyed reading it because it was really interesting and it gave me a new perspective of a situation I didn't know much about. I think it is a great novel to learn more about Imperialism through the eyes of both white and black people in Africa, and it is also really great to know more about history because it gives you the context in a story, not just the facts as you would find them in a history book. This is a great way to learn historical facts and it is more fun, because you also get to know different characters with different perspectives of the situation (As an example, Marlow saw the situation and the mistreatments of black people as it was, hurting people, and he mentions it as not a nice thing to experience. He even mentions the ambient in Africa felt very dense and even sad because of this "...with a telluric atmosphere, without moving as a hot catacomb along the seashore with dangerous waves, as if the same nature was trying to keep away the intruders..."(Conrad, 2013 p. 48). And some other white people that were mentioned in the novel don't really think of black people as humans and they don't care that they suffer as a consequence of their actions).

I would say Heart of Darkness is a book that can be great to understand the historical events after the Scramble for Africa but can be hard to read for some others that don't know about the situation of Africa or that are affected a lot by the mistreatment of black people as a consequence of Imperialism.