

Heart of darkness and one flew over the cuckoo's nest essay sample

[Politics](#), [Marxism](#)



The definition of classism is the belief that people from certain social or economic classes are superior to others. When viewed from a Marxist perspective, Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest* and Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* can be seen as a comment on negative treatment of lower class individuals. In the *Heart of Darkness* the way the Europeans treated the lower class Africans was quite inhumane. As for in *One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest* the patients there were truly mistreated because of their class of being mentally ill. A Marxist theory can give you a better idea of how bad the class fight truly was between the Europeans and Africans.

In the Congo the European pilgrims truly treated the native Africans like they were worthless because of their class. There were many problems between them and because of the European's power many of the Natives were being captured as slaves. An example of this is, " each had an iron collar on his neck, and all were connected together with a chain" (Conrad, 70). Marlow witnessed these events take place at the outer station. This just shows how disrespectful they treated the Natives, almost like they were animals. A few of the Africans started to change their ways and help the Europeans. They saw this as a way to stay safe. The Manager's boy did this, " an over fed youthful negro from the beach to delight the white men below" (Conrad, 79). This was wrong as the Europeans had total control over the helpless Natives and compelled them to their methods.

They were almost making them believe that the Native class was bad and should be more like them. Europeans had no respect for the Native's health

and lives as they were just poor slaves making them rich. Marlow observes the over worked and dying, “ they were dying slowly-it was very clear. They were not enemies, they were not criminals, they were nothing earthly now- nothing but black shadows of disease and starvation, lying confusedly in the greenish gloom” (Conrad, 83). The Europeans disregarded the health of the Natives, using them simply as a means to their end. This all shows how badly the Native`s class was treated by the Europeans. The weren`t even treated as humans more of a thing. The patients in One Flew Over the Cuckoo`s Nest weren`t quite mistreated like the Natives in The Heart of Darkness but they were belittled by a higher class by their disability.

At times throughout the novel the nurses and orderlies truly treated the patients unfair and took advantage of their disabilities. Each morning there was a shaving ritual and one of the patients named Chief who is a Native American Indian was held captive and his free will and self determination was violated. They did not care that he was terrified of it. He would hide in the mop closet, “ The least black boy and one of the bigger ones catch me before I get ten steps out of the mop closet and drag me back to the shaving room. ” (Kesey`s, 1. 123). These hospital orderlies would disregard the patient`s wishes to not shave for whatever reason the patient may have. This showed disrespect for these patients assuming they were above or better than them. The nurses would drug the patients to try an control them. The patients would sometimes become so drugged that they did not remember anything. “ This morning I plain don`t remember, they got enough of those

things they call pills down me so I don't know a thing till I hear the ward door open." (Kesey's, 1. 2. 2).

These nurses didn't care about the patient's well being, they drugged them to make their own jobs easier. Nurse Ratched and the doctors performed a surgery on patient McMurphy that turned him into a vegetable. They basically killed him. This devastated Chief and he couldn't leave his friend this way, " I mashed the pillow into the face. I lay there on top of the body for what seemed days." (Kesey's, 4. 4. 99). Nurse Ratched believed she cured McMurphy of his mental illness when he wasn't even mentally ill to begin with. She was only using her authority over him to punish and silence him.

Chief put McMurphy out of his misery and not allowing nurse Ratched to win. She also used her authority to basically kill Billy. She emotionally belittled him and threatened to talk to his mother. She refused to stop even after he begged her too. This ultimately made Billy take his own life. The patient's only had each other for support and comfort despite being in a hospital where one would assume they would be treated well in every possibly way and not belittled or abused. The staff believed they were better than the patients and used their authority to control them however they wanted. Both books showed a different kind of mistreatment to people by individuals who believed they were above or better than them but when looked at through a Marxist theory they are both mistreatment of a lower class.

When breaking down *The Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad and *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* by Ken Kesey from a Marxist perspective you really see how poorly the lower class was mistreated. The Europeans ruined the Native's lives as they were captured as slaves and forced to work to near death. The patients on the other hand were manipulated and belittled by the staff and two lives were ended as a result. This kind of class mistreatment does not just happen in novels. People around the world display prejudice and ignorance. This is an everyday occurrence and is unethical and unacceptable.

Work Cited

* *Heart Of Darkness*. New York, NY: New American Library, A division of Penguin Putnam Inc, 1950 * Kesey, Ken. *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. United States: Viking Press & Signet Books, 1962