

Modern literature 1

[Linguistics](#), [English](#)



The Heart of Darkness and Things Fall Apart Most of the African novels that were written in the 19th century were Marjory based of colonization. It was a period in history when Africans encountered the whites and writers felt that the events of this period were best documented through writing. The Heart of Darkness by Joseph Conrad and Things Fall Apart by Chinua Achebe are some of the novels that were written during this time in history. They are both centered on the African struggles against European colonialism. Although the books contain almost similar subject-matters, they are seemingly different.

A careful analysis of both The Heart of Darkness and Things Fall Apart evidences that Conrad and Achebe differ in the manner in which they both write about the colonizing Europeans and the native Africans. It is important to note that Achebe was an African, while Conrad was Polish and did actually not learn English until in his twenties. The very initial difference in the two stories can be derived form a careful interpretation of their titles. In Chinua's Things fall apart, he elaborates on the manner in which Europeans came and destroyed the then peaceful systems of African traditions and resulted to everything literary falling apart. In The Heart of Darkness on the other hand, Conrad exposes how the African continent can be described as a dark continent as far as development and civilization are concerned.

Characters are fundamental vehicles that writers employ in conveying their meaning. Another significant difference in these two stories is evidenced through the characters. Marlow, the main character in The Heart of Darkness, travels to the central station from the outer station and encounters scenes of brutality and cruelty against the Africans. Marlow's

adventures portray the hypocrisy in the rhetoric employed to justify imperialism. The men working in the company describe their actions as trade and their ill treatment against Africans as part of civilization. Kurtz, another character in this story, agrees that he does not trade, but takes ivory by force. In his own words, his treatment to the Africans is extermination and suppression (56). In *Things Fall Apart*, on the other hand, the author describes the Native Africans with intense praise. Okonkwo, the main character, is described as a hard-working and a determined man. He achieves a lot of social and financial success through his hard work and is viewed as a pillar in his clan and society. He is however, resistance to change and this leads to his final downfall. He has a strong sense of self-worth, which rests upon the standards the society judges him.

Africans in *The Heart of Darkness* are presented as objects. For instance, Marlow refers and views his helmsman as a machinery. He also refers to Kurt's African mistress as a piece of statuary. Africans to Marlow are just backdrops or human screens on which he can play his existential and philosophical struggles. In *Things Fall Apart* on the other hand, Africans are viewed as people who are bold and with strong determination. For instance, Ezinma, the only child of Ekwefi and Okonkwo's favorite daughter, is presented as one with a masculine spirit. She has kindred spirits that boost her precociousness and confidence. Whites in this book have, on the contrary, being painted as evil and cruel. Reverent Smith, Mr. Brown's successor, is vengeful, zealous, manipulative and small-minded.

Madness in *The Heart of Darkness* is linked to imperialism. In this book, Africa is shown as a continent responsible for physical illness and mental

degradation. From the onset, Marlow is told that Kurtz is mad. However, with a complete picture of Kurtz, it appears that his madness is relative.

Generally, the picture that Conrad paints of Africans and Africa at large is entirely different from the manner in which Achebe illustrates them. It is therefore arguable that, though the two books were written during similar historic times, they differ in their presentation of Africans and Whites.

Achebe once accuses Conrad of making his point in the book by dehumanizing Africans.

Work Cited

Paul Davis, Gary Harrison, David Johnson, and John Crawford. *Western & World Literature*. New York: Bedford/St. Martins. 2003. 1-200. print.