An analysis of kurtz in the heart of darkness

Heart of Darknesstells the tale of a man named Marlow and his quest to find the almost mythical figure of Kurtz. Kurtz is a station chief working for a Dutch trading company at the very end of the Congo river. Kurtz, along with the other station chiefs who are working at various stations along the Congo river, are charged to harvest the plentiful natural resources of the large African continent, primarily ivory. Marlow, who is an experienced sailor and river boat pilot, is charged by the company that employs Kurtz to lead an expedition into the heart of the African Congo to find Kurtz and figure out why he has stopped shipping ivory.

Marlow eventually finds his man, only to discover that Kurtz has slipped into madness. Kurtz dies on the trip back out of Africa, only to utter his last words, " The horror! The horror! ". Kurtz has also scribbled all over his report which he was to turn in to his superiors on the situation and people of the African continent. The scribbling read " EXTERMINATE ALL THE BRUTES". These two phrases hold important meaning in Heart of Darkness, as it describes how Kurtz really felt at the end of his journey. Kurtz was described several times to Marlow before and during the trip as a different type of man.

This colonial period was famous for the hypocrisy of the European Empires, who in their double edged mission of spreading thecultureof the white man while harvesting resources of the foreign lands of the world, horribly failed on the former and were astonishingly successful at the latter. Kurtz was supposed to be a different kind of man. He was described to Marlow as being a true humanitarian, a man who would not only turn a profit for the company but at the same time uplift and civilize the natives of Africa.

Marlow was immensely impressed with Kurtz and was eager to finally see the man for himself. What Marlow found couldn't have been further from the truth. When Marlow finally see's Kurtz and his compound for the first time, he's shocked to find that the man is almost held in reverence by the villagers. He has also taken an apparent mate from the villagers. Marlow soon discovers that Kurtz used his arrival on the boat and his possession of firearms as a means to awe the villagers into accepting him as their demi god.

Marlow eventually finds Kurtz, who is by now extremely sick both physically and mentally, crawling along a jungle path at night towards a village celebration. Marlow cuts him off and decides that if Kurtz won't go with him of his own free will, he will kill him right then and there. Kurtz relents and allows Marlow to take him back to civilization. The next morning Marlow loads Kurtz onto the boat and they begin their journey back to Europe. It is during this trip on the river out of Africa that Kurtz, who is slowly dying, has a moment of clarity.

His last words are " The horror! The horror! ". These words are symbolic of what Kurtz felt at realizing that he had become even more " savage" than the so called savages. Kurtz entrusts his papers that he was writing to Marlow. The papers were intended originally to be a humanitarian paper on the good Kurtz had done for the villagers. Scribbled across the papers now, were the words " EXTERMINATE ALL BRUTES! ". These words are an irony for the mission that Kurtz intended to fulfill. His humanitarian mission had degenerated into a mission ofviolenceand exploitation.

He no longer intended to help the people of Africa, he intended to kill them and take as much from them as they could. Kurtz in the end revealed in his final words what becomes of a man who willingly walked into a new land thinking he could be a savior to a people he thought beneath him. In reality, he ended up turning into the true definition of a " savage". He became a person who killed with no mercy in order to take what he wanted. In his moment of clarity, he realized the horror of the what he had become. His mission of exterminating the brutes had been successful until his sad, lonely death.