

Heart of darkness narrative essay

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Heart of DarknessHeart of Darkness projects the image of Africa as " the other world," the antithesis of Europe and therefore of civilization, a place where man's vaunted intelligence and refinement are finally mocked by triumphant beastiality. --Chinua Achebe In this quote Chinua Achebe is making his case against Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness. He is saying that the novel shows Africa and its people as animals and the complete opposite of the white man in Europe.

However this is truly not the case, the Europeans end up becoming the animals not the African people. From the very beginning of the novel one can see that the story of Marlow is going to be a dark and interesting one. While traveling the Thames River at the start of the novel, Marlow states, " And this also has been one of the dark places of the earth" (Conrad 48). This seems as if Conrad is trying to make the reader insinuate that the rest of the story is only going to get darker.

Obviously this assumption is correct due to the fact that Marlow ends up traveling deep into the heart of the Congo to find Kurtz and discover the " horror" that lies deep within the heart of darkness. Heart of Darkness portrays a lot of symbolism such as the idea that light is greater than dark. Throughout the entire story the reader sees the comparison that the white man is better than the native people, but in actuality the white people are worse than the native people. It is actually very different to what people think.

The Europeans that are trying to " civilize" the African people are really more uncivilized. The way that the natives are treated and forced to work is

inhumane. Civilization is the heart of darkness, meaning that white people going into Africa forcing the black people to work as slaves to find ivory is the actual evil and darkness that is symbolized in Conrad's story. In other words, the horror that Kurtz sees while with the natives is how the Europeans enslave and abuse the African people.

The reader can see many different examples of calling the native people savages or brutes, such as in the book that Marlow finds where it says, "Exterminate all the brutes" (111). This is an instance where we can see how the Africans are labeled as brutes, but it is actually the so-called civilized people that are actually the savages. It is pointed out to readers by the critic Chinua Achebe that, "Conrad is concerned not so much with Africa as with the deterioration of one European mind caused by solitude and sickness" (4).

What Achebe is saying is that Conrad uses the country of Africa as one of the reasons that Kurtz is no longer like all other Europeans. The critic Cedric Watts says, "However talented Conrad may be, his tale preaches racial intolerance; it is on the side of enslavement rather than deliverance; and it is therefore to be condemned" (197). What he is trying to say is that Joseph Conrad is showing the people as slaves and animals, but they really are not the animals at all.

In conclusion, the story of Marlow is one that contains a large amount of symbolism. The horror that is discussed is really the treatment of the native people. It is not the native people like most people would think. The white men are meant to portray light or goodness where as the natives are black and are supposed to be dark or evil. This stereotype is completely false in

this novel. The script is flipped and the Europeans trying to imperialize the Congo are the corrupted and evil ones.

One needs to think what really is horror and what truly is evil. It might not be what one usually thinks. Works Cited Achebe, Chinua. "An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's Heart of Darkness." *Massachusetts Review*. 18 (1977): 251-261. Print Conrad, Joseph. *Heart of Darkness*. New York: Barnes ; Noble Classics, 2003. Print. Watts, Cedric. "'A Bloody Racist': About Achebe's View of Conrad." *The Yearbook of English Studies*. 13 (1983): 196-209. JSTOR. Wed 7 April 2008.