

Ashley college essay



While in England between 1898 and 1899, Joseph Conrad wrote the novella *Heart of Darkness*. Taking place during the height of European imperialism in Africa, *Heart of Darkness* follows the journey up the Congo River of Marlow, a steamboat captain. Marlow comes to Africa to escape the strict confines of European society. Marlow is very idealistic, and during his travels up the Congo, he is eager to prove that there is some good to the European presence in Africa.

Although Marlow looks for signs of the good of imperialism, he finds none. Because of this, Marlow is eager to meet with Kurtz, another trader in the Congo. Marlow is so eager to meet with Kurtz because he believes Kurtz is the man who will prove to him that there is good in the European presence in Africa. However, as Marlow journeys up the Congo, viewing the effects of European imperialism on Africa, he realizes that there is no good in the presence of Europeans; furthermore, he is exposed to his own heart of darkness that he has seen in all the other Europeans in Africa.

Joseph Conrad was inspired to write *Heart of Darkness* because of a journey through the Congo early in the 1890's. *Heart of Darkness* deals with European imperialism in Africa during the 1890's. During this time, Africa was the property of King Leopold II of Belgium. Leopold believed that his mission statement was to reduce the barbarism of the African people by bring civilization to the African people.

For most Europeans, the continent of Africa was the Dark Continent because the people of Africa were considered to be uncivilized, uneducated, lacking a real government, and lacking any culture. Europeans considered it their duty

to bring all that the Africans lacked in culture and civilization to the continent; thus, imperialism in Africa began. Conrad explores the heart of darkness through the Protagonist of the novel: Marlow. As Marlow journeys up the Congo River, viewing the atrocities of European imperialism on the African people,.

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