



 Prestwick House

# Activity Pack

## HEART OF DARKNESS

BY JOSEPH CONRAD



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Written by Kelley Stewart McConathy

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Chapters 1 – 3

### Writing Diary Entries

**Objectives:** Composing a series of diary entries for a character  
Inferring character traits through dialogue and narration  
Understanding a character's thoughts, actions, and motivations

#### Activity

Joseph Conrad kept a journal and wrote many letters during his years at sea. He later used these journal entries to remember specific events in his travels, which he used as events in his various writings.

Your assignment is to create a journal or diary for Marlow. You will compose at least 8 dated entries based on his journey to the Congo. Pretend you are Marlow and use first person point of view. You will comment on the major events of the plot and **MUST** comment on the following:

- Any meeting Marlow has with other characters
- Any changes in Marlow's character, especially psychological changes
- Any important event in the novella
- Marlow's relationship with other characters
- Marlow's thoughts about Kurtz
- Marlow's theories about colonialism and imperialism

Begin creating your dates in the late 1800s (such as 1875 – 1890). Be sure to mention other characters in each diary entry, if possible, and remember to pretend you are Marlow and are experiencing the trip to the Congo. Here is a sample journal entry for him based on the events in Chapter 1:

May 12, 1882

Today, I went to the Company's office to sign my employment contract. I had no trouble locating the office; it was the biggest building in town. I found two women knitting black wool at the entrance. The slim woman showed me to the waiting room where I examined a colorful map that showed various areas of the world. I became excited when I found the yellow area where I was going. The river was so fascinating; it looked like a deadly snake and beckoned me to it. A doctor then examined me, which was a puzzling encounter. He measured my pulse and skull size and remarked that he measures everyone who leaves for the Congo. I found it strange, however, that he said he never got a chance to measure each person's skull when they returned. Why would he go to the trouble to measure everyone's skulls when they left but not when they returned? What's the point? He also talked about psychological changes and madness, which really irritated me. Why did he think this was his business?

Try to write in the style in which Marlow speaks in the novella. Revise for grammatical errors. Be creative!

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Chapter 1

### An Illustrated Summary

**Objectives:** Summarizing and understanding the events in a novella  
Analyzing and illustrating scenes from a novella

#### Activity

Working in small groups, write a summary of the events in Chapter 1. Then choose a different scene for each group member to illustrate and assign parts of your summary to each drawing.

Here is an example for Chapter 1. Important illustrated scenes could include the five men relaxing on the deck of the boat as Marlow begins his tale, the two women knitting black wool, the doctor examining Marlow at the Company's office, Marlow's first meeting with the Company's chief accountant, his 200-mile land journey to the Central Station with 60 men, the sunken steamer, Marlow and the brickmaker discussing Kurtz's painting, or Marlow and the foreman dancing on the ship at the thought of obtaining rivets.

Each group member will turn in a drawing and a portion of the summary.

Be creative! Try to complete your illustrations in different ways, such as paintings, sketches, collages, or even multimedia presentations with computer graphics. Share your illustrated summaries with the class.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Chapter 1

### Analyzing the Text

**Objectives:** Critically analyzing and evaluating a text by formulating, expressing, and supporting opinions  
Demonstrating careful reading and understanding of a text in a written response

#### Activity

Chapter 1 of *Heart of Darkness* includes many peculiarities, or absurdities, that don't make sense to rational individuals. Other terms that can be used are: strange, bizarre, unreasonable, irrational, meaningless, ridiculous, ludicrous, or illogical. Consider the incident that occurs after Charlie Marlow signs his employment contract at the Company's office. He is then examined by a doctor who takes external measurements, such as Marlow's pulse and skull size. The doctor, however, emphatically tells Marlow that "the changes take place inside." If the changes take place inside, shouldn't each employee undergo a psychological examination instead of a physical examination? In addition, the doctor tells Marlow that he never sees the employees when they return. This means that he does not re-examine each employee to compare their pulses and skull sizes after their voyages. Therefore, why does he examine each employee in the first place? His occupation with the Company seems pointless to rational-minded individuals.

The above examples have been placed in the chart on the next page. Examine Chapter 1 to find 5 – 7 more examples of bizarre incidents and add them to the chart, along with explanations. If you choose to quote material directly from the text, remember to use quotation marks and provide the page number where the quotation is found.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Chapter 2

### Identifying Literary Devices

**Objective:** Identifying literary devices, such as similes, metaphors, and personification.

#### Activity

Literary devices can make an author's writing seem exciting and vivid. Determine the literary device used in each of the following examples. Here are your choices: simile, metaphor, personification, hyperbole, onomatopoeia, alliteration, parallelism, repetition, and synecdoche. Some will be used more than once. The first question has been answered for you.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Chapter 2****Identifying Literary Devices in *Heart of Darkness*****Objective:** Locating, analyzing, and explaining literary devices**Activity**

Use the following chart to find the specified literary device on the page number indicated. Then explain each literary device. For each simile or metaphor, for example, indicate the two items that are being compared. For each hyperbole, explain the exaggeration, and so forth. Use the blank spaces at the end of the chart to add your own examples of figurative language that you find in these or later chapters in the novella. An example has been provided for you.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Chapter 3

### Writing a Will

**Objectives:** Writing a will to express a character's wishes  
Analyzing characterization and plot by forming an opinion about actions of a character  
Demonstrating careful reading and understanding of a text in a written response

#### Activity

Your task is to write a living will for either Marlow or Kurtz. In Chapter 3 of *Heart of Darkness*, Kurtz's situation is desperate. He struggles for his life, but his last words are, "The Horror! The Horror!" He entrusts Marlow with his important papers and writings. What would he have left, if anything, in his will for his Intended, for example? Consider the following questions, as well.

In addition, Marlow becomes very ill and must return home to recover. Since he is an explorer and has an exceptionally dangerous lifestyle, he should also have a living will. It will be read aloud to his family and friends in the event of his untimely demise.

The purpose of a will is to distribute personal belongings, like money or material possessions, and to express one's final wishes and thoughts. Here are some ideas that are appropriate for either Marlow's or Kurtz's will:

- What does he want to tell the town, the world, and his friends?
- Why did he choose to risk his life travelling through the Congo?
- Would he leave any advice for anyone?
- How would he divide his possessions? (You can assume certain possessions that are not mentioned in the novel as long as they are consistent with the time period.)

Write in first person, from either Kurtz's or Marlow's point of view. Wills should be about one page in length. Do not forget to revise and/or proofread to reduce grammatical errors. Use the following line as your beginning:

"I, \_\_\_\_\_, declare this to be my last will and testament...."

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Chapter 3****Characterization: Spidergrams**

**Objectives:** Inferring character traits from text  
Analyzing characters' thoughts, motivations, and values

**Activity**

To help you understand each character's thoughts, values, and motivations, fill in the Spidergram Worksheet for each character concerning: your first impressions of each character, the character's problems or concerns, what the character thinks of others, what others think of the character, the character's background, and the character's development throughout the play. Examine the first study on the Russian trader as an example. Then, complete your character studies by completing spidergrams for Marlow, Kurtz, and a character of your choice, such as the brickmaker, the accountant, or the general manager.



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Wrap-Up

### Independent Project

**Objectives:** Choosing, organizing, and crating visuals to enhance a presentation or extend meaning  
Writing original, creative poetry, journal prompts, or other creative writings using the text as a model

#### Activity

Now that you are familiar with *Heart of Darkness*, including its setting, characters, and plot, it's time for you to complete an independent project. Choose one of the following projects to complete.

1. Create a model or sculpture of a character. You may use fabric, clay, soap, wood, food, or other objects. Include a written explanation of how this character is important to the novella.
2. Construct a diorama that depicts one of the scenes in the novella. Your three-dimensional model should include everything important to your chosen scene, such as buildings, people, and objects. Include a written explanation of how the scene is important to the novella.
3. Write a letter to the main character of the book. In it, ask questions and make complaints or suggestions. Use correct letter format, including heading, salutation, body, closing, and signature.
4. Make at least 2 puppets to represent characters from the novella and act out a scene for the class. Your presentation should last at least 5 minutes.
5. Turn your favorite scene from the novella into a comic strip or comic book. Comic strips should consist of 7 – 10 frames. Comic books should contain at least 4 pages.
6. Prepare a travel brochure that describes the setting of the novella. Include pictures, places of interest, and tourist information for visitors.
7. Write a different beginning or ending to the novella. It should be at least 2 pages in length.
8. Pretend you are going to join the characters in the novella. Pack your bag for a weeklong stay. Make a list of at least ten items you will take. Then, explain why you plan to take each item.
9. Choose a character from the novella. Then, provide an update on the character's life twenty years after the conclusion of the novella. What have they accomplished? Your update should be at least 2 pages in length.
10. List the characters in the novella and choose birthday gifts for each character. Each character should receive at least 3 gifts. Write an explanation of why you chose each gift.
11. Write song lyrics and music for a song that could accompany the novella. Then, perform your song for the class or record it on a tape.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Wrap-Up

### Book Review

- Objectives:**
- Writing a book review
  - Analyzing characters, plot, setting, theme, and style
  - Summarizing a novella
  - Writing in formal Standard English using correct grammar, mechanics, and usage
  - Organizing paragraphs using topic sentences, supporting details, and transitions

### Activity

Write a book review for *Heart of Darkness*. Your review should be four paragraphs in length. Use the following outline as a guide, remembering to supply appropriate topic sentences, supporting details, and transitional words and phrases. After writing your review, check your writing for grammatical errors.

#### 1<sup>st</sup> Paragraph:

- Name of book
- Author
- Date of publication
- Summary of the plot that does not reveal the ending. Tell just enough for a reader to decide if it is the kind of play the reader might enjoy.

#### 2<sup>nd</sup> Paragraph:

- Give a brief description of the main characters.
- Choose three quotations from the book to capture the reader's attention. Record the quote, who said it, and its significance. Comment on how each quote relates to the plot, characters, or theme. Remember to cite quotations with page numbers.

#### 3<sup>rd</sup> Paragraph:

- Describe the setting.
- Comment on the author's style, such as the use of dialect, realistic details, humor, fast pace, imagery, or other elements of style.

#### 4<sup>th</sup> Paragraph:

- Describe the theme.
- Include your feelings about the book along with logical reasons.
- Suggest what type of reader would like the book and why.