Heart of Darkness
by Joseph Conrad
Heart of Darkness

The Journey

Part I. Marlow’s Journey Begins

1. London
2. The “whited sepulchre” city: Brussels
3. Boat down the African Coast to the “big river”.
4. Passage up river to the Company Station
5. At the Company Station (The Grove of Death)
6. Passage 200 miles up river to the Central Station
7. At the Central Station three months to repair his steamboat

Part II: The Trip Up River

1. 50 miles below: the Hut
2. 8 miles below: the Fog
3. One mile and a half below: the Attack
4. Arrival. Marlow meets the Russian Harlequin
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The Journey (cont’d)

Part III Marlow and Kurtz

1. Kurtz is brought aboard the steamboat.
2. Kurtz tries to return to the natives. Marlow brings him back.
3. The return trip begins
4. Kurtz discourses; then dies.
6. Marlow arrives back in the “sepulchral city.” Marlow concludes Kurtz’s affairs and meets with Kurtz’s Intended
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The Frame

Site:
The yawl, *Nellie*, on the River Thames Estuary alongside London’

Those Present:
1. Director of Companies
2. The Lawyer
3. The Accountant
4. Marlow
5. The unnamed, unidentified narrator, who informs us.

Beginning and Ending:
The Frame begins the story (pp. 3 – 8) and provides the last paragraph.
The Time:

Flood tide until after the ebb: from sunset until into the next day.

Interruptions:

Three interruptions, intrusions of the Frame during Marlow’s story

1. Marlow addresses the others present: pp. 32 – 33. Narrator says, “I was awake.”
2. “Try to be civil, Marlow” Narrator says, “I knew there was at least one listener awake besides myself.” pp. 42
3. “give me some tobacco.”
   “a match flared.” pp. 58 - 59
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Quotations

• this also . . . has been one of the dark places of the earth.  P. 5

• It had become a place of darkness.  p. 9

• These two, guarding the door of Darkness. p. 72

• a treacherous appeal to the lurking death to the hidden evil, to the profound darkness of its heart.  p. 40

• we penetrated deeper and deeper into the heart of darkness.  p. 43

• deceitful flow from the heart of an impenetrable darkness.  p. 58
• how many powers of darkness claimed him for their own. p. 60

• assaulted by the powers of darkness. p. 60

• the barren darkness of his heart. p. 85

• His was an impenetrable darkness. p. 86

• the heart of a conquering darkness. p. 91

• the tranquil waterway . . . seemed to lead into the heart of an immense darkness. p. 96
  (the last line)
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The Wilderness

1. The silence of the land went home to one’s very heart – its mystery, its greatness, the amazing reality of its concealed life. p. 31

2. The great wall of vegetation, an exuberant and entangled mass of trunks, branches, leaves, boughs, festoons, motionless in the moonlight, was like a rioting invasion of soundless life, a rolling wave of plants, piled up, crested, ready to topple over the creek, to sweep every little man of us out of his little existence. p. 69

3. This stillness of life did not in the least resemble a peace. It was the stillness of an implacable force brooding over an inscrutable intention. p. 41

4. The earth seemed unearthly. We are accustomed to look upon the shackled form of a conquered monster, but there – there you could look at a thing monstrous and free. p. 44

5. Never, ever before, did this land, this river, this jungle, . . . appear to me so hopeless, so dark, so impenetrable to human thought, so pitiless to human weakness. p. 69
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Those who make the Journey to the Inner Station

1. Marlow (Charlie Marlow)
2. The Kurtz/Mr. Kurtz (no first name is given)
3. The Russian Harlequin (no name given)
4. The Manager of the Central Station and five “pilgrims” (Central Station employees)
5. 20 or 30 cannibals/savages (both numbers are given)

The Eldorado Exploring Expedition, led by the manager’s uncle, a large group of at least five more white men and many “natives”, leaves the Central Station on land for the interior, but is never seen again.

Only Kurtz and the Russian Harlequin go further into the interior, the Wilderness, the Heart of Darkness.
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Marlow and Kurtz (cont’d)

Marlow
1. His Changing Motivation
2. The Importance of His Job
3. Why Marlow Decides to Side with Kurtz

Kurtz
1. Origins
2. Kurtz’s Varied Talents
3. Changing Motivations
4. Criticisms of Kurtz

Marlow and Kurtz
1. Their Inner Journeys
2. Their Relationship
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Marlow and Kurtz (cont’d)

Levels of the Journey
• Literature
• Adventure/Exploration
• Cultural/Historical
  o Europe/Africa
  o Civilized/Uncivilized
• Economic/Marxist
• Moral/ethical
• Inner/Psychological
• Metaphysical/Supernatural
  o Dreams/Reality
  o Feminist/Gender
  o The Problem of Evil
  o Fairy Tales/Myth/Epic
'Do you know what you are doing?' I whispered. 'Perfectly,' he answered, raising his voice for that single word: it sounded to me far off and yet loud, like a hail through a speaking-trumpet. 'If he makes a row we are lost,' I thought to myself. This clearly was not a case for fisticuffs, even apart from the very natural aversion I had to beat that Shadow—this wandering and tormented thing. 'You will be lost,' I said—'utterly lost.' One gets sometimes such a flash of inspiration, you know. I did say the right thing, though indeed he could not have been more irretrievably lost than he was at this very moment, when the foundations of our intimacy were being laid—to endure—to endure—even to the end—even beyond. pp. 81 – 82
But Marlow was not typical (if his propensity to spin yarns be excepted), and to him the meaning of an episode was not inside like a kernel but outside, enveloping the tale which brought it out only as a glow brings out a haze, in the likeness of one of these misty halos that sometimes are made visible by the spectral illumination of moonshine.  p. 6.
Mr. Kurtz lacked restraint in the gratification of his various lusts, that there was something wanting in him—some small matter which, when the pressing need arose, could not be found under his magnificent eloquence. Whether he knew of this deficiency himself I can't say. I think the knowledge came to him at last—only at the very last. But the wilderness had found him out early, and had taken on him a terrible vengeance for the fantastic invasion. I think it had whispered to him things about himself which he did not know, things of which he had no conception till he took counsel with this great solitude—and the whisper had proved irresistibly fascinating. It echoed loudly within him because he was hollow at the core. . . . p 72
I tried to break the spell—the heavy, mute spell of the wilderness—that seemed to draw him to its pitiless breast by the awakening of forgotten and brutal instincts, by the memory of gratified and monstrous passions. . . . I had to deal with a being to whom I could not appeal in the name of anything high or low. I had, even like the niggers, to invoke him—himself his own exalted and incredible degradation. There was nothing either above or below him, and I knew it. He had kicked himself loose of the earth. Confound the man! he had kicked the very earth to pieces. . . . But his soul was mad. Being alone in the wilderness, it had looked within itself, and, by heavens! I tell you, it had gone mad. . . . He struggled with himself, too. I saw it,—I heard it. I saw the inconceivable mystery of a soul that knew no restraint, no faith, and no fear, yet struggling blindly with itself. pp 82 - 83