

Week 3 Day 2: *Heart of
Darkness*

Modernism and Colonialism

ENGL201: Introduction to Modernism



Joseph Conrad (1857-1924)

- Born Józef Teodor Konrad Korzeniowski in the Ukraine.
- Parents were political activists who died when Conrad was a child.
- 1874: Joins the Merchant Marines.
- 1878: Joins the British Merchant Marines. Speaks no English.
- 1890: In the Congo Free State for the Société pour le Commerce du Haut-Congo as second in command and, temporarily, captain of the river steamer *Roi des Belges*.
- *Heart of Darkness* (serialized 1899)
- *Lord Jim* (serialized 1899-1900)
- *Nostromo* (serialized and published in book form 1903)

Artist: Sir William Rothenstein, 1903

“Both at sea and on land my point of view is English, from which the conclusion should not be drawn that I have become an Englishman. That is not the case. Homo duplex has in my case more than one meaning.” (Conrad qtd. in Owen Knowles, “Conrad’s Life,” *The Cambridge Companion to Joseph Conrad*, pp. 4)

Artist: Ellen Heath





The Congo-Free State

- 1885: The Berlin Conference recognized the “Congo Free State” as the personal possession of King Leopold II of Belgium
- Leopold ran the Congo Free State as a private enterprise
- The atrocities of the Free State became an international scandal
 - Between one million and fifteen million people died (consensus is approximately ten million)
 - Widespread forced labour, beatings, mutilation of local populations
 - Disease and epidemics from inhumane conditions

“It was just robbery with violence, aggravated murder on a great scale, and men going at it blind—as is very proper for those who tackle a darkness. The conquest of earth, which mostly means the taking it away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look into it too much. What redeems it is the idea only. An idea at the back of it; not a sentimental pretence but an idea; and an unselfish belief in the idea—something you can set up, and bow down before, and offer a sacrifice to...” (1956)



IN THE RUBBER COILS.

XXXX—The Congo "Free" State.



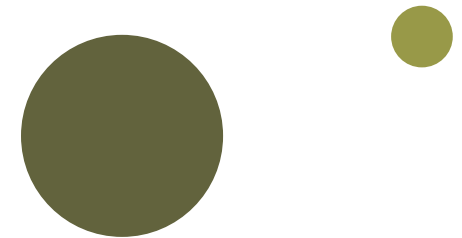
“My yearly income from the Congo is millions of guineas”
Unknown artist,
illustration from *King Leopold's Soliloquy: A Defense of His Congo Rule* By Mark Twain

What world does the text set up in the opening?

- Who are the characters?
- What are their loyalties?
- What are there ideas?
- What is the setting like?

Framing in *Heart of Darkness*

Nightfall on the Thames, 1880 - John Atkinson Grimshaw



Passages to Close Read

- pp. 1955
- pp. 1958





The Gothic and *Heart of Darkness*

What vain weathercocks we are! I, who had determined to hold myself independent of all social intercourse, and thanked my stars that, at length, I had lighted on a spot where it was next to impracticable—I, weak wretch, after maintaining till dusk a struggle with low spirits and solitude, was finally compelled to strike my colours; and under pretence of gaining information concerning the necessities of my establishment, I desired Mrs. Dean, when she brought in supper, to sit down while I ate it; hoping sincerely she would prove a regular gossip, and either rouse me to animation or lull me to sleep by her talk.....The worthy woman bustled off, and I crouched nearer the fire; my head felt hot, and the rest of me chill: moreover, I was excited, almost to a pitch of foolishness, through my nerves and brain. This caused me to feel, not uncomfortable, but rather fearful (as I am still) of serious effects from the incidents of today and yesterday. She returned presently, bringing a smoking basin and a basket of work; and, having placed the former on the hob, drew in her seat, evidently pleased to find me so companionable.