

Bridging the Gap!

This lesson is part of 4 which help to bridge the gap between GCSE and A-Level studies.

Focussing on the Victorian Period, these lessons will look at two novels – Heart of Darkness by Joseph Conrad and The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll & Mr Hyde by Robert Louis Stevenson.

Developing you knowledge of Jekyll & Hyde, these lessons aim to turn your initial analysis skills of this novel into a critical essay comparing the two novels.

We will look at:

- Historical Context
- Heart of Darkness – looking at the plot and key characters.
- Comparing characters from both novels
- Applying literary theory
- How to write a critical essay.

The British Empire & The Heart of Darkness

What? To understand how the British Empire has influenced Victorian Literature

How?

- 1) Read the information on slide 3 and look at the pictures. Using both, write some inferences about what they might suggest the British Empire is like.
- 2) Look at the map on slide 4 this shows you what sort of materials we got from other countries in the British Empire. Guess what they are, then check your answers on slide 5.
- 3) Read the information on slide 6 about how people were treated by the British who invaded their countries. Write about how you would feel if you were someone who lived there.
- 4) Read the information on slide 7 about the story Heart of Darkness and watch the video summarising the plot if you can.
- 5) Read the extract from the novel on slide 8 and answer the questions on slide 9 to analyse it. We are focussing on how this extract shows us how the British thought differently about people from Africa.
- 6) Read the extract on slide 10 and analyse it using the questions on slide 11 in this extract it is clear how Marlow feels there are some similarities between himself and the African people, write down what you notice.
- 7) We now know how people seem to act if they live in Africa, Kurtz has been there for 2 years, write down some ideas as to what you think he might be like.

Why? We are able to establish a basic understanding of the British Empire and how it can influence writing of the time. This will prepare us for the next lesson when we consider a key character, Kurtz, in more detail.

What? To understand how the British Empire has influenced Victorian Literature.

The British Empire began in the 16th Century as Great Britain began to invade other countries and take control of countries across the globe.

These countries were known as 'colonies' and controlled by the King or Queen of England.

Task:

What do these images reveal about the British Empire?

Answer the questions in the yellow boxes.



This image shows Britannia (the mascot for Britain) sitting on top of the world,

What might that suggest about her power?



Key



The British Empire in 1922

Look at how much of the world is coloured in yellow.

What might this tell us about how big the Empire was?

The British Empire

How many did you get?

A world map with yellow-shaded territories representing the British Empire. Labels on the map include Canada, Ireland, Egypt, India, Australia, South Africa, and New Zealand. Callouts include:

- Ivory:** A box with an image of ivory tusks, with an arrow pointing to the African continent.
- Rubber:** A box with an image of woven rubber mats, with an arrow pointing to South America.
- Tobacco:** A box with an image of cigarettes, with an arrow pointing to the Americas.
- Tea:** A box with an image of tea bags, with an arrow pointing to India.
- We sent criminals to Australia:** A box with a historical image of convicts, with an arrow pointing to Australia.

Civilised vs Uncivilised

When the British arrived in places like India and Africa, the native people in these countries were seen as being **'uncivilised'** and **lower in status** to the British. This was because countries in the East did things differently to those in the west. As a result, these people who were native to these countries were considered to be 'uncivilised' and **sometimes referred to as 'savages'** which created the impression they were **primitive**, not as evolved or civilised as people from the West.



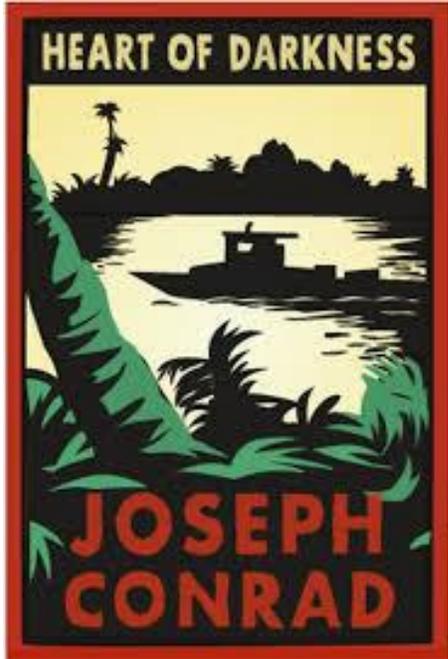
Task:

Write down your initial thoughts based on this information – how would you feel if we treated people like this today?

Use the pictures to help understand how people from other countries were treated by the British.



Empire in Literature



During this time, many authors sought to write their own interpretation of what the British Empire meant to them. One of these novels is Heart of Darkness written by Joseph Conrad in 1899.

The novella centres on the efforts of Marlow, to travel up an unnamed African river on behalf of his employer in order to bring back a rogue ivory trader, Mr Kurtz. Kurtz's reputation precedes him: "He is a prodigy... an emissary of pity and science and progress." Yet as Marlow gets closer to Kurtz, there is the growing suggestion that he has in some way become corrupted and descended into savagery.

The further upstream Marlow gets, the more intense the sense of impending danger, with cryptic warnings and a bloody ambush raising the tension. When Marlow finally reaches Kurtz's camp, he discovers a scene of unimaginable savagery. The dying Kurtz is taken aboard the boat (along with a prodigious quantity of ivory), but he does not survive the journey back downstream. With Marlow present, his chilling last words are "The horror! The horror!".

For a summary of the plot – watch this video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XIFUHIM-w7M>

Character's ideas of Civilisation.



Marlow

After arriving in Africa, Marlow meets a native African man who will help him sail his boat to find Kurtz. Read his observations of this African man below:

“And between whiles I had to look after **the savage** who was fireman. He was an improved **specimen**; he could fire up a vertical boiler. He was there below me, and, upon my word, to look at him was as edifying as **seeing a dog in a parody of breeches and a feather hat**, walking on his hind legs. A **few months of training** had done for that really **fine chap**.”

Task:

- 1) What effect is the writer trying to create here?
- 2) What does it reveal about Marlow's impressions of the African man?
- 3) What language has the writer used here to support this?

On the next slide are some questions to help you complete this task.

Character's ideas of Civilisation.



Marlow

What does the word 'specimen' mean?
If Marlow refers to the man as a 'specimen' rather than a man, what could that suggest?

Based on what we've already covered, why does Marlow refer to the man as a savage? Notice how he doesn't ever call him a man in this extract...

After arriving in Africa, Marlow meets a native African who will help him sail his boat to find Kurtz. Read his observations of this African man below:

"And between whites I had to look after **the savage** who was fireman. He was an improved **specimen**; he could fire up a vertical boiler. He was there below me, and, upon my word, to look at him was as edifying as **seeing a dog in a parody of breeches and a feather hat**, walking on his hind legs. A **few months of training** had done for that really **fine chap**."

If you saw a dog walking on its back legs wearing a hat and some trousers, what would you think?
This is how Marlow feels about this man being so helpful and good with the boat.

What sort of training do you think Marlow is referring to?
Why has this turned him into a 'fine chap'?
What has he made him more like?

Character's ideas of Civilisation.



Marlow

As Marlow travels down river towards the Inner Station and Mr Kurtz, he describes what he sees as he goes deeper into the jungle.

“It was **unearthly**, and the men were—No, they were **not inhuman**. Well, you know, that was the worst of it—the suspicion of their not being inhuman. It would come slowly to one. They **howled and leaped**, and spun, and made **horrid** faces; but what thrilled you was just the thought of their humanity—**like yours**—the thought of your remote kinship with this wild and passionate uproar.”

Task: Write down the quotes that are highlighted bold and explode them.

What do the key words tell you about Marlow's experience of the jungle? Make notes.

Consider the ideas of Empire and how Marlow perceives native African people.

Character's ideas of Civilisation.



Marlow

Suggesting that it wasn't like the world he was used to. Why might this be?

The men appeared human which seems to surprise Marlow, why might this be surprising to him?

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He seems to feel familiar with them, what does this suggest? Is he seeing the good in them? Why?

What does this behaviour suggest? Is this what you would imagine men in civilised society doing?

Review



Marlow



Kurtz

Today you have looked at the character of Marlow.

Tomorrow we will focus on Mr Kurtz, the man who has been living in the wilderness of the African jungle for some time away from civilised society.

Based on what you have discovered so far, how might Conrad present the character of Kurtz?

Write down some initial ideas in your book.

