

Kurtz in Heart of Darkness

What? To develop our understanding of the character of Kurtz.

How?

- 1) Read the information on slide 2 that gives you more information as to how black people were treated in the Victorian period. Look at the words in bold and answer the questions.
- 2) Read the information on slide 3 this is guidance for the next few slides, we are going to analyse how Kurtz goes from being a 'normal' and 'civilised' Victorian man to a savage.
- 3) Read the extract on slide 4 and answer the question in the pink box. Use the yellow boxes on slide 5 to help you focus your analysis.
- 4) Look at the extract on slide 6 which describes where Kurtz lives and answer the questions.
- 5) Read the extract on slide 7 but use the translation in the yellow box to help you understand what is being said and then answer the question.
- 6) Drawing the axis in your book like the one on slide 9, you need to plot the 'downfall' of Kurtz on the graph. Show how you have learned he has become more and more savage as the plot has developed. Use quotes from your extract as you go through his downfall.

Why? We are able to see how being in Africa has affected this character. We can see how Kurtz has become different to his European colleagues and can see how the environment he is in has affected him.

What? To develop our understanding of the character of Kurtz.

Read the section of an article about racism in the Victorian period.

Try to write a summary of what you think it means, refer back to your notes from last lesson to help you.

Racism against black people grew in popularity after 1860, when race-based discrimination was fed by then-popular theories of scientific racism. **Attempts to support these theories cited 'scientific evidence', such as brain size.** James Hunt, President of the London Anthropological Society, in 1863 in his paper "On the Negro's place in nature" wrote, "**the Negro is inferior intellectually to the European...[and] can only be humanised and civilised by Europeans.**"



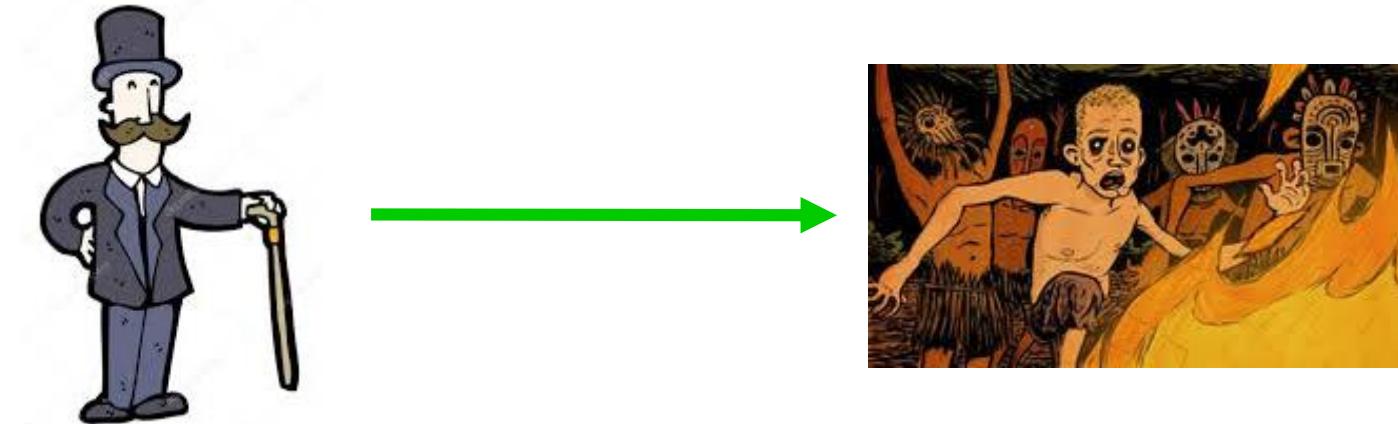
Despite this racist view, a lot of black people became incredibly successful during the Victorian period!

In this lesson, we are going to be looking at the character of Kurtz and how he goes from **being a civilised man of Victorian society to a savage.**

The next few slides show how the character of Kurtz develops.

We see how he transforms from a respected Victorian man, to a savage.

As we move through the different extracts, how is Kurtz presented as being more and more 'savage' and 'uncivilised?'



The task for the next few slides is to see how Kurtz changes from a civilised Victorian man who behaves normally, to someone who is behaving more like a savage man in Africa.

Consider these questions as we learn more about Kurtz this lesson.

Until we meet Kurtz at the end of the novel, everything we learn about the character is through other people.

Introducing Kurtz



This extract is taken from the start of the novel, Marlow is about to leave England and speaks to a man who works for the company. He describes his impression of Kurtz.

Task: What does the extract below reveal about this initial introduction to Kurtz?

Pick out key words and explode them to see what this suggests about Kurtz at the start of the novel.

"One day he remarked, without lifting his head, 'In the interior you will no doubt meet Mr. Kurtz.' On my asking who Mr. Kurtz was, he said he was a **first-class agent**; and seeing my disappointment at this information, he added slowly, laying down his pen, 'He is a very remarkable person.' Further questions elicited from him that Mr. Kurtz was **at present in charge of a trading-post, a very important one**, in the true ivory-country, at 'the very bottom of there. Sends in as much ivory **as all the others put together...**'



Marlow

Introducing Kurtz

Here's an example of how to pick out the key information from the extract.

Make sure you take the same approach with the other extracts in this lesson.

Only known referred to by his formal title,
how does this suggest respect?

What does 'first-class' suggest about how
people perceive him?

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If he sends more ivory than everyone else combined, what does this suggest about how others feel about him?
What questions might it make you ask?

If Kurtz has been put in charge of a 'very important' post – what does that suggest about how much people trust him?

Kurtz the Savage

When Marlow arrives at the Inner Station where Kurtz has been living for the last two years, he doesn't instantly see him. Instead, he sees the hut where Kurtz has been living. Outside of the hut are severed heads on poles. Apparently, these are the heads of men who disobeyed Kurtz.

. They would have been even more impressive, **those heads on the stakes**, if their faces had not been turned to the house. Only one, the first I had made out, was facing my way. **I was not so shocked as you may think.** The start back I had given was really nothing but a movement of surprise. I had expected to see a knob of wood there, you know. I returned deliberately to the first I had seen—and there it was, **black, dried, sunken, with closed eyelids**—a head that seemed to sleep at the top of that pole, and, with the shrunken dry lips showing a **narrow white line of the teeth**, was **smiling**, too, smiling continuously.

Task:

Why would this action be considered savage by Marlow?

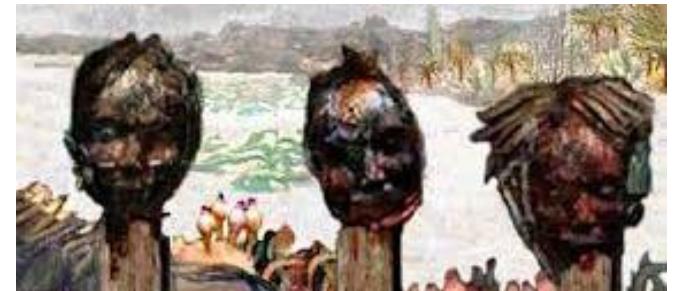
How does he react to seeing these heads on poles?

Make some notes in your book.

Why does Kurtz have heads on poles outside his house?

What might he be trying to show people who visit?

How does this make him seem savage?



Kurtz the Savage

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. This alone, I was convinced, had **driven him out to the edge of the forest**, to the bush, towards the gleam of fires, the **throb** of drums, the drone of **weird incantations**; this alone had beguiled his **unlawful soul** beyond the bounds of permitted aspirations I've been telling you what we said—repeating the phrases we pronounced—but **what's the good?** They were common everyday words—the familiar, vague sounds exchanged on every waking day of life. But what of that? They had behind them, to my mind, the terrific suggestiveness of words heard in dreams, of phrases spoken in nightmares.

What does this extract mean? I've translated it below into more modern English.

I tried to wake up Kurtz, he seemed to be confused as he had been in the wild for so long. Being in the wilderness had turned him wild, making him go back to being like a caveman. The wilderness made him enjoy being like this. I could hear the grass, the trees, the fire and a throb of drums in the jungle. These weird sounds in the air had made Kurtz want to go out and join the natives. Kurtz was speaking English, I could understand that, but what was the point? He was too far gone and had become a true native of the jungle. I couldn't help him.

This is the final part of the novel, where Kurtz's is shown to have been influenced by his surroundings and where Marlow believes him to be mad and uncivilised.

Task: What do you think this extract shows us about Kurtz?

Kurtz's descent into savagery

LEVEL OF SAVAGERY

"first-class agent"

Suggests he is respected by people in England.

Shows he is not savage at all because he is respected by people of civilised society.

PART OF THE NOVEL

Taking a full page in your book, draw this chart.

Using all of the evidence from this lesson (including key quotes you have noted), you are going to plot Kurtz's journey into savagery.

Each point on your graph should include:

A Quote

An inference

An explanation as to how savage he is at this point and why.

The first one has been done for you.

Review



Tomorrow we will be comparing the character of Kurtz in Heart of Darkness to the character of Mr Hyde in The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde.

How could these men be similar?

Write down your initial ideas.

Think about how they act, how they treat other people and how they behave in society.

