



Colorado Book Club Resource

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR HEART OF DARKNESS BY JOSEPH CONRAD

1. Why does Conrad have one of Marlow's listeners relate the story, rather than make Marlow the narrator of the novel who speaks directly to the reader?
2. Why does the narrator note Marlow's resemblance to a Buddha, at the beginning as well as the end of Marlow's story?
3. Why does Marlow want to travel up the Congo River?
4. What is Marlow's attitude toward the African people he encounters on his trip up the Congo? In describing them, why does Marlow say that "what thrilled you was just the thought of their humanity—like yours—the thought of your remote kinship with this wild and passionate uproar" (p. 63)?
5. What does Marlow mean when he says that "there is a taint of death, a flavour of mortality in lies" (p. 49)?
6. Why does Marlow consider it lucky that "the inner truth is hidden" (p. 60)?
7. What does Kurtz mean when, as he's dying, he cries out, "The horror! The horror!" (p. 112)?
8. What is the significance of the report Kurtz has written for the International Society for the Suppression of Savage Customs? Why does Marlow tear off the postscriptum, which reads "Exterminate all the brutes!" (p. 84), before giving the report to the man from the Company?
9. Why does Marlow think that Kurtz was remarkable?
10. Why does Marlow tell the Intended that Kurtz's last words were her name?
11. What does Marlow mean when he says that Kurtz "was very little more than a voice" (p. 80)?
12. What does the narrator mean when he says of Marlow's narrative that it "seemed to shape itself without human lips in the heavy night-air of the river" (p. 50)?
13. Is it possible to distinguish between civilized and uncivilized societies?
14. Is complete self-knowledge desirable? Is it possible?

Questions issued by Penguin Group publishers.



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