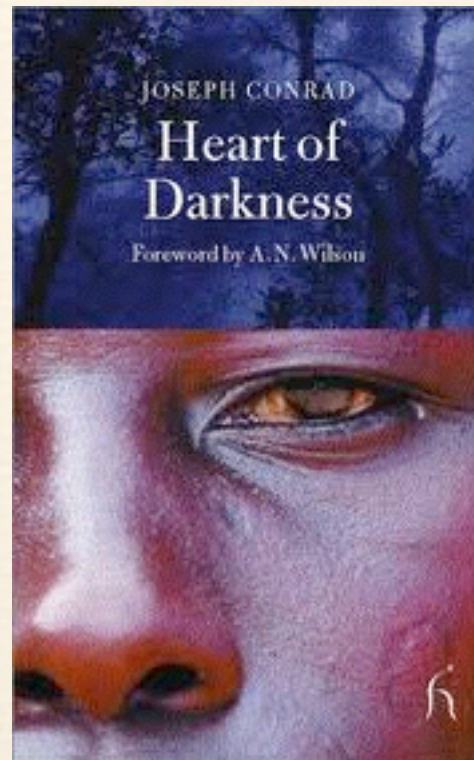


# Heart of Darkness

by Joseph Conrad

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- ❖ One of the most well known works among scholars of classical literature and post-colonial literature.
- ❖ To get a full grasp of the novella, one must first understand the history behind the Congo and its colonization by the Belgians.





# Africa in 1878



# Africa in 1880-1914





# Colonization of Africa

- ❖ Ruthless colonial exploitation, involuntary servitude, and direct violence--the native people live in an impoverished state.
- ❖ Six million Africans died during the brutal rubber trade overseen by the Belgians.
- ❖ Many are forced to be "carriers" for people on jungle expeditions that need to move cargo from one place to another.





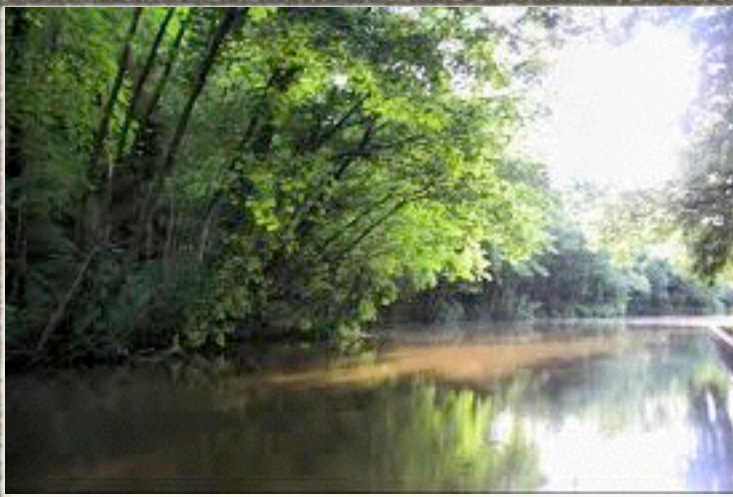
# Joseph Conrad

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- ❖ Was born in Russia controlled Poland in 1857.
- ❖ Real name- Josef Teodor Konrad Nalecz Korzeniowski
- ❖ Lost both of his parents by the age of 12; lived with relatives.
- ❖ At 16 moved to France and joined the merchant marine thus fulfilling his childhood dream of traveling the seas.
- ❖ In 1878, Conrad joined the British Navy-learned to speak English fluently.
- ❖ By his late twenties, he became a British citizen and had risen to the rank of captain.
- ❖ In 1889 he found himself as a captain of a steamboat on the Congo River.





# Joseph Conrad

## and Heart of Darkness

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- ❖ Based on a 4 months stint when Conrad accepted an assignment to command a steamboat for the Belgian Company for Upper-Congo Commerce.
- ❖ Steaming a thousand miles upriver, Conrad reached the company's inner station where he met an ailing agent named Georges Antoine Klein, who may have been a model for the character Kurtz.
- ❖ He never wrote about his voyage until he returned home to England where he wrote Heart of Darkness in 1899.
- ❖ He did keep a journal, and some of the excerpts from his journal can be found in the novella.
- ❖ The desolation of the land described in the book is an actual account of locations seen by Conrad. Over the years he spent there, he traveled the land and was shocked by the poverty of the Congo due to lack of funding.



# Joseph Conrad

## and Heart of Darkness

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- ❖ Conrad drew heavily on his experiences when he wrote the novella.
- ❖ Incorporated details about people he had known, places he had visited, and events he had witnessed.
- ❖ "Experience pushed a little (and very little) beyond the facts of the case."

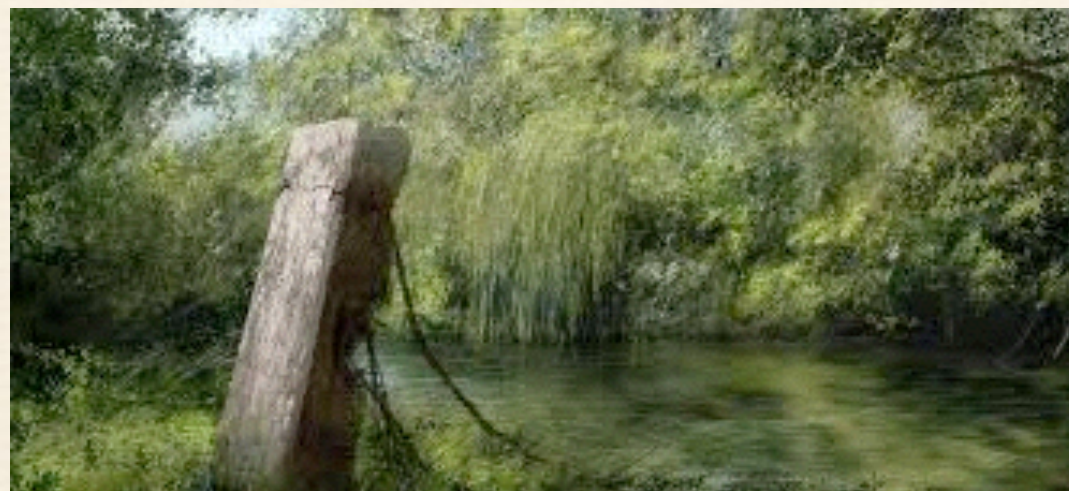




# Time and Place

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- ❖ The novella takes place in the Congo River basin in the summer of 1890, during a period when the colonization of Africa was at its peak and Belgium's King Leopold II was ruthlessly exploiting the land and its people.
- ❖ European countries rushed to claim territory in Africa and to establish strongholds that would secure their status as world powers. Before that period, few Europeans had explored the "Dark Continent."





# Literary Merit

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- ❖ Since its publication, *Heart of Darkness* has become one of the most read and debated works of fiction in the English language. It is Conrad's most famous, controversial, and influential work.
- ❖ It affected and inspired such English and American writers as TS Eliot, Graham Greene, George Orwell, and William Golding. It also inspired Francis Coppola's 1979 film *Apocalypse Now*.
- ❖ Chinua Achebe denounced *Heart of Darkness* in a famous 1975 lecture as the work of "a bloody racist."