

Heart of Darkness Reading for Meaning & Socratic Discussion

You should have **already completed a fast read of *Heart of Darkness***. Now you will have five days, beginning on Monday, 4 November, and ending on Friday, 8 November to **reread the novella and compose book notes**. These book notes should be neatly prepared and written, where applicable, in complete sentences. Notes may be handwritten or word processed. You will have separate sections of notes, one for each of the reading days/assignments:

Day 1: pp. 1-15 (end with “trickle of ivory”); **Day 2:** pp. 15-27; **Day 3:** pp. 27-43 (end with “‘tobacco’ . . .”); **Day 4:** pp. 43-58 (end with “phenomenon! . . .”); **Day 5:** p. 58-end.

Each day’s notes should include:

1—a one or two paragraph **summary** of the day’s reading; 2—a list, with details, of any **direct or indirect references to your assigned topic**; 3—three to five thoughtful, **probing questions about the reading**; and 4—3-5 **new/unfamiliar vocabulary words encountered in the day’s reading, with appropriate meanings derived from context** (make sure you note the page where you found each vocabulary word). Be prepared at any time for reading check quizzes and/or random note checks.

On Monday, 11 November, in class, you will **develop a one-page overview of your insights into the significance of your assigned topic**. I strongly recommend that you DO NOT refer to Cliffs Notes or any other study guide for this assignment. While this type of aid may be of some help in the short run for this assignment, in the long run reliance on this type of aid will be detrimental to your learning. Trust your ability to reason things out. The book notes that you completed should be helpful. **Be specific in regard to how and where any diction, imagery, and/or patterns related to your topic occur AND determine the consequent meaning or interpretation of the concept/symbol/motif/pattern**. Concentrate on what you know and what you can figure out rather than becoming frustrated about what puzzles you. This is not an easy assignment. Simplistic thinking or not using the time allotted for in-depth analysis will result in a poor product. While you may prepare ahead of time, you should complete this assignment in class so you can discuss your ideas with other students. You may use me as a resource for the really troublesome issues.

Beginning on Tuesday we will hold roundtable discussions of *Heart of Darkness*. **I will initiate the discussion with an open-ended question; but from that point on, you will be expected to take the lead and contribute thoughtfully and insightfully** to these discussions. I may ask additional questions periodically, as needed, to stimulate the flow of the discussion. While **you are expected to be the “expert” on your assigned topic**, you should **plan to contribute to the discussion in multiple ways—actively listening, asking probing and/or clarifying questions, using evidence to support your claims or the claims of others, as well as to refute certain claims of others and to bring others into the discussion**. Our discussion will last several days.

Topics

1. fate/the Fates
2. white man’s burden
3. madness/insanity
4. light/enlightenment
5. dark/darkness/ignorance
6. devils, devil figures, and “hollow” men
7. gods/idols/pilgrims
8. truth/lies
9. ivory/bones
10. dreams/nightmares
11. paintings/sketches
12. silence/voice(s)
13. machinery/equipment/materials (such as rivets and bricks)
14. restraint/lack of restraint
15. Dante’s *Inferno*/hell
16. rivers/maps
17. conquest/slavery/Imperialism
18. natives/Africans (including all ways they are referred to, such as cannibals)
19. Europeans (different characters and their significance—NOT Marlow and Kurtz)
20. women
21. illness/death/killing