

Heart of Darkness by Joseph Conrad

Conrad's, *Heart of Darkness*, is a tale of one man's search for another. Published in 1899, it sprang from his experience in the Congo nine years before.

The story is a suspenseful journey into the disturbed psyches of a rogue European ivory trader in the Congo and the British ship captain who pursues him, recounting the horrors he saw on his quest. Conrad exposes the racist, greedy nature of imperialism, and his story has led to many adaptations *Apocalypse Now* being the most famous, which substitutes Vietnam for the Congo.

Although short, this book is loaded with mysterious signs and symbols that increase the impact of the story's message and emotion. The length adds to the appeal, allowing the reader to contemplate metaphors and hidden messages embedded in the text. For example the entire physical journey down the Congo River represents the larger mind bending exploration of one man's psyche.

I enjoyed the complex and striking language used throughout the book, "For with a change came over the waters, and the serenity became less brilliant but more profound" but found the narrative to be less than disjointed at times. It would be a great book club read in which the symbolism and themes written well over a century ago could be dissected and constructed to apply to messages of current times.