

Seminar on *Heart of Darkness* - Chapter 1

Hi everyone,

Today, I'm here to tell you about the first chapter of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*—a story full of rivers, shady colonialists, and some serious existential dread. Buckle up; we're setting sail!

1. The Scene Opens: Chill on the Thames

The novel starts on a ship called the *Nellie*, anchored on the River Thames. A group of men is just sitting there waiting for the tide to turn.

There are four men onboard:

- The Director of Companies (basically the boss-man of the ship).
 - A Lawyer (because why not?).
 - An Accountant (Probably balancing his books even in the middle of nowhere.).
 - And finally, Marlow, our storyteller. Think of him as the guy at a party who starts telling a story that takes hours but you can't stop listening to.
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2. Marlow's Childhood Dreams: Blank Spaces

Marlow shares that as a kid, he loved looking at maps and imagining himself exploring all those blank spaces. (Kids today just Google Earth everything. Boring.)

He was particularly fascinated by Africa—a giant question mark on the map that promised adventure. But spoiler alert: the reality is more horrible .

3. Marlow's Job: Welcome to Colonialism, Inc.

Marlow gets hired by a shady European company to manage riverboats in the Congo. It's like getting a job at a sketchy startup, except this one deals in ivory and exploitation.

On his way there, Marlow sees the true face of imperialism:

- The locals are treated horribly, basically enslaved to get ivory for the company.
- The so-called "civilized" Europeans are anything but—they're greedy, cruel, and totally losing it in the heat.

Marlow realizes that all this talk about "bringing civilization to the savages" is just a fancy way of saying "stealing stuff."

4. Enter the Mystery of Kurtz

While traveling, Marlow hears about this guy **Kurtz**

Is he a hero, a villain, or Or just the ultimate workaholic? We don't know yet, but Marlow is super curious. It seems we will get our answers in probably next chapter.

5. Themes: Darkness Everywhere

- **Colonialism:** The Europeans claim they're spreading light, but they're really spreading greed and chaos.
 - **Light vs. Dark:** This book isn't saying Europe = light and Africa = dark. It's more like "humans are messed up no matter where you go."
 - **Mystery:** Africa, Kurtz, and even Marlow himself are full of unknowns.
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6. The Mood

The whole first chapter feels like sitting in a dim room while someone tells a story you *know* is going to get weird. Conrad's writing is heavy, but it's also filled with sharp observations about people and power.

Conclusion

So, what's Chapter 1 really about? It's setting the stage: Marlow is on a journey, not just into the Congo but into the darker corners of human nature. It's like an adventure story, but instead of treasure, you find moral dilemmas and bad company policies.

Thanks for listening! Let's dive into the darkness together.
