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1 | Prompt

Heart of Darkness Analytical Essay

English 10: Landscapes of the Self and Other

For your first literary analysis paper, you will be coming up with your own interpretive argument about

OPTION 1: Choose a recurring word, motif, pattern, or character

Choose a word, motif, pattern, or character that you've noticed throughout the book, and construct an a

OPTION 2: Choose a moment in the text

Pick an excerpt of no more than 1/3-1/2 a page from the book, and construct an analytical, argumentative

You will likely make connections to other parts of the text, particularly as you engage broader implica

OPTION 3: Propose your own analytical adventure

If neither option 1 or 2 appeals to you, please schedule time to meet with me during tutorial to discuss

Basic requirements:

Your essay will need to be 2-3 pages in length.

Your essay should include, at least, 2 thoughtfully selected and analyzed direct citations per body par

You should double-space your paper, use 1" margins, use 12-point font (preferably Times New Roman), and

Include a works cited entry for Heart of Darkness at the end of your essay.

Template Items Assessed for this Paper

Understanding Literature: Form and Function

Close Reading and Argumentation

Structure and Mechanics

The Writer's Voice

Due Dates:

Topic selection and thesis approval 10/2

A rough draft 10/5

at least, one page double-spaced will be due at the end of class. If you want feedback on a rough draft

Peer edit 10/7

The final draft 10/12 will be due at the beginning of class

2 | Evidence

- I want to analyze the language on the second half of page 92 > “I thought his memory was like the other memories of the dead that accumulate in every man’s life—a vague impress on the brain of shadows that had fallen on it in their swift and final passage; but before the high and ponderous door, between the tall houses of a street as still and decorous as a well-kept alley in a cemetery, I had a vision of him on the stretcher, opening his mouth voraciously, as if to devour all the earth with all its mankind. He lived then before me; he lived as much as he had ever lived—a shadow insatiable of splendid appearances, of frightful realities; a shadow darker than the shadow of the night, and draped nobly in the folds of a gorgeous eloquence. The vision seemed to enter the house with me—the stretcher, the phantom-bearers, the wild crowd of obedient worshipers the gloom of the forests, the glitter of the reach between the murky bends, the beat of the drum, regular and muffled like the beating of a heart—the heart of a conquering darkness. It was a moment of triumph for the wilderness, an invading and vengeful rush which, it seemed to me, I would have to keep back alone for the salvation of another soul. And the memory of what I had heard him say afar there, with the horned shapes stirring at my back, in the glow of fires, within the patient woods, those broken phrases came back to me, were heard again in their ominous and terrifying simplicity. I remembered his abject pleading, his abject threats, the colossal scale of his vile desires, the meanness, the torment, the tempestuous anguish of his soul. And later on I seemed to see his collected languid manner, when he said one day, ‘This lot of ivory now is really mine. The Company did not pay for it. I collected it myself at a very great personal risk. I am afraid they will try to claim it as theirs though. H’m. It is a difficult case. What do you think I ought to do—resist? Eh? I want no more than justice.’ ... He wanted no more than justice—no more than justice. I rang the bell before a mahogany door on the first floor, and while I waited he seemed to stare at me out of the glassy panel—stare with that wide and immense stare embracing condemning, loathing all the universe. I seemed to hear the whispered cry, ‘The horror! The horror!’”

3 | Analysis

3.1 | How does it make me feel?

- The text feels dreamy, abstract, and almost hallucinatory
- Kurtz is seen as immortalized, due to his extreme intentions and the raw tangibility of the original experience

- the cadence of writing draws the reader and brings them along for an involuntary, exhilarating series of visions
- the above feelings show that Kurtz and his intentions are immortalized and impressed upon Marlow, perhaps the raw tangibility shows the primal, nearly supernatural impact of the wilderness in the heart of darkness
 - because what is “natural” for them is the western world

3.2 | Literary Devices

- Alliteration
- Tail alliteration
- Parallel structure
- Juxtaposition / nonsensicality
- Zooming out

I’m taking a while to figure out how I actually want to write this. I should just bite the bullet and pick some examples to get going.

4 | Thesis

In “Heart of Darkness”, Conrad uses parallel structure of auditory repetition and logical juxtaposition to create the feeling of an invading torrent of overwhelming experience.

5 | Outline

5.1 | Intro

- summarize plot
- thesis

5.2 | Body 1

- Auditory repetition, particularly alliteration and consonance, creates a rhythm of pronunciation that drags the reader along.
- “the gloom of the forests, the glitter of the reach”
 - the parallel use of the structural phrases “the” and “of the”, as well as the initial adjective consonant “gl” emphasizes the constant stream of emotionally provocative adjectives.
- “the wild crowd of obedient worshipers”
 - the spate of hard and soft stressed consonants creates a rhythmic, almost musical pattern of tension and release
 - In “wild” and “crowd”, the /w/ phonic leads the reader to the hard /d/ phonic at the end of the word.
 - In “obedient”, a number of hard sounds are stressed (/b/, /d/, /t/) which creates rhythmic tension to be released by the softer sounds in “worshipers”

5.3 | **Body 2**

- The juxtaposition of opposite adjectives creates a sense of paranormality and mystifies the imagery.
- “the wild crowd of obedient worshipers”
 - wild and obedient are normally opposites, but here they are used to emphasize the abnormality of the scene—the usually obedient worshipers have gone wild in.
- “the glitter of the reach between the murky bends”
 - the murky bends normally do not glitter, but the frothing surface may reflect some light despite silt in the water.
- Both phrases use contradictory adjectives create nuanced, sensical imagery whose complexity creates a fractal-like depth in the imagery.

5.4 | **Body 3**

- The imagery in the excerpt increments in scale and intensity, creating a sense of uncontrollable expanding cognizance.
- “the stretcher, the phantom-bearers, the ... worshipers, the ... forests”.
 - Each image is engulfed by the previous
- From “the worshipers” to “the gloom” to “regular and muffled like the beating of a heart”
 - Each image is allocated increasing specificity of adjective, starting with no detail at all to some description to an entire simile.

5.5 | **Conclusion**

- The use of evolving parallel structure ties this repetition together and coheres

6 | **Essay**

Joseph Conrad’s “Heart of Darkness” tells Marlow’s experience with a voraciously driven Mr. Kurtz and his death in the pre-colonial Congo. As Marlow is visiting the late Kurtz’s fiancée he has a flashback to a moment in the wilderness: “the stretcher, the phantom-bearers, the wild crowd of obedient worshipers the gloom of the forests, the glitter of the reach between the murky bends, the beat of the drum, regular and muffled like the beating of a heart—the heart of a conquering darkness” (91). In this excerpt, Conrad uses a three pronged parallel structure of auditory repetition, logical juxtaposition, and progression of imagery to illustrate an invading sensory overload. Auditory repetition, particularly alliteration and consonance, creates a rhythm of language that drags the reader along. When describing the scene, Marlow intones “the gloom of the forests, the glitter of the reach”. The structural correspondence of the clauses creates a rhythmic flow and emphasizes the differing adjectives; the alliterative hard consonant beginnings of each word also add to the rhythmic feel. This repetitive structure imagines a relentless march of stimulus flooding Marlow’s senses. Marlow also notes “the wild crowd of obedient worshipers”, a lyric whose spate of hard and soft consonants creates a rhythmic, nearly musical pattern of tension and release. In “wild” and “crowd”, the /w/ phonic leads the reader along to a hard /d/ phonic at the end of the word—setting a pace for the rest of the clause. Then, in “obedient”, a string of hard consonants makes the pronunciation feel fast paced and torrential. The softer consonants in “worshipers” and the hard /p/ near the end creates a quick trill to end the thought. The staccato repetition of the /d/ phonic also creates a sense of urgency, furthering the avalanche of imagery. As Marlow speaks in his trance-like state, Conrad uses the juxtaposition of opposite adjectives to create a sense of paranormality and mystify the imagery. For example, Marlow mentions “the wild crowd of obedient worshipers” who are normally obedient but have become rowdy following Kurtz’s

departure. Here, the use of contradictory adjectives highlights the distinction between the mindset and actions of the individual native and the collected tribe. Similarly, Marlow also speaks of “the glitter of the reach between the murky bends”, whose muddy water can still reflect the dwindling sunlight at the right angle. This description separates the beautiful, rippled surface of the river from the imprecise depths below. Both use contradictory adjectives to create nuance. Although the their adjectives seem paradoxical at first glance, the imagery is subtle and sensical. This nuance increases the depth of imagery and makes the scene more visceral for the reader; the compactness of the complexity weights each clause and increases the density of the sensory tsunami. Finally, instead of following a rigid parallel structure, the imagery in the excerpt increments in scale and intensity—increasing the sense uncontrollable expanding cognizance. Marlow focuses first on stretcher, then the bearers, then the forest and the river, and finally the oppressive drums and inner continent itself. As each piece of imagery engulfs the previous, the reader imagines the situation in a broader and broader context—as if through the viewfinder of a camera, zooming out into space. It is as if Marlow is bringing us along for a non-lucid out of body experience. Not only does the object of focus become physically larger, but the nuance of description also increases. At first, Kurtz’s stretcher is simply a stretcher—but as the vision goes on the forest is “gloomy” and the water glitters in a specific reach between the bends. This culminates in the description of the beating of a drum: “regular and muffled like the beating of a heart—the heart of a conquering darkness”. Not only does Conrad use an entire simile and an em-dash, but he also ties it back to the title and thus the entire progression of the story. This zoom-out reveals the structure of the plot—the lay of the land, so to speak. This vision is a defining moment of Marlow’s life flashing before his eyes, the epitome of sensory overload. Each aspect of Marlow’s vision conveys a feeling of being overwhelmed. The intensity of the vision and it’s freshness in his memory creates a sensory overload conveyed to the reader through phonetics, language, and content.

7 | Export

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1j8QsHTNkcqGI8mAIR5ddp1CdKODsplTYg2Eaf-H0MA/edit>
