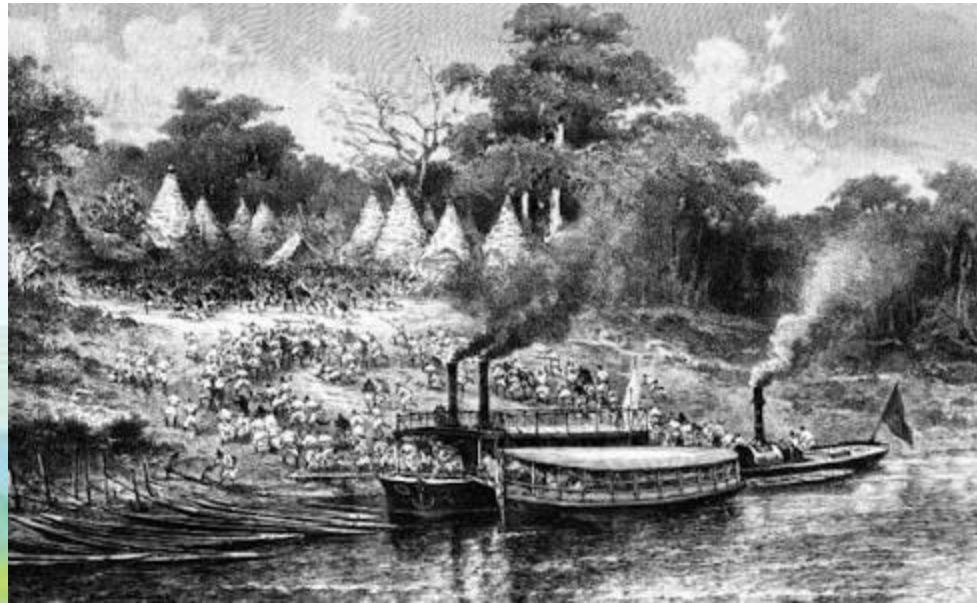
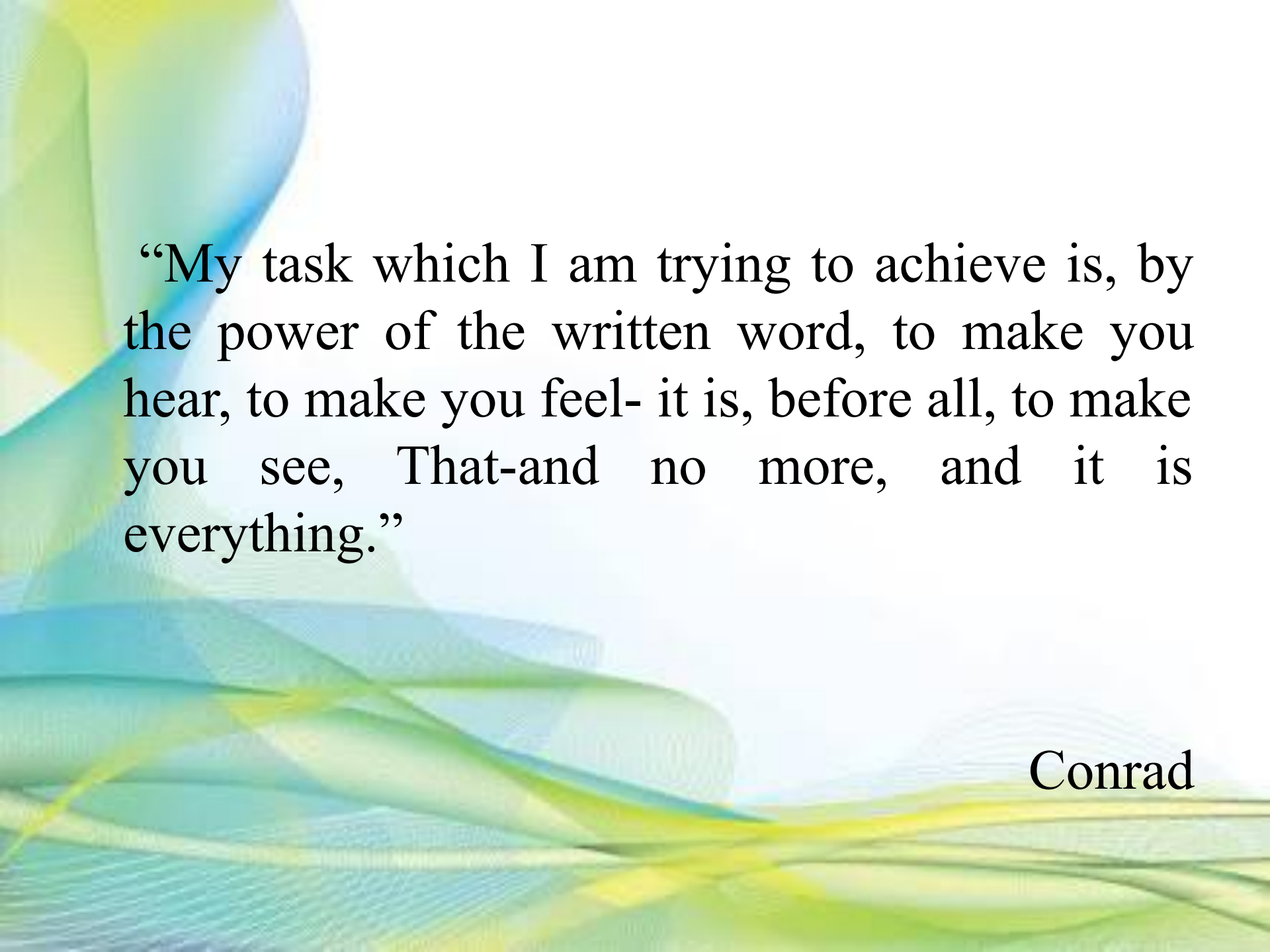


Heart of Darkness-

A peep into imperialism



**Submitted by:-
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Associate Professor in English**

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“My task which I am trying to achieve is, by the power of the written word, to make you hear, to make you feel- it is, before all, to make you see, That-and no more, and it is everything.”

Conrad

Joseph Conrad: Life Sketch (1857-1924)

- Real Name Teodor Joseph Konrad Nelecz Korzeniowski
- Born on 3rd Dec, 1857
- Born at Berdicev in the Polish Province of Podolia
- Father a Polish writer, nationalist and patriot
- A Pole, but wrote in English Language
- Studied Classics & German
- Yearning for the sea. Trip to the Belgian Congo-the basis of Heart of Darkness.
- Sea Journey as a Sailor
- Died in August 1924



Major Works

Wrote fourteen novels and eight volumes of tales

- **Novels**

 - Almayer's Folly

 - An Outcast of the Islands

- **Sea pieces**

 - The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'

- **Short Stories**

 - Tales of Unrest

 - Typhoon and other stories

 - Nostromo

 - 'Twixt Land and Sea

 - Within the Tides

- **Essays**

 - Notes on Life and Letters

 - Last Essays

Technique

- Impressionistic effects
- Appeal to the senses- sight, smell, sound, touch, taste.
- Aesthetic rather than intellectual
- Story within a story- Story told by a character in the novel eg. Marlow in 'Heart of Darkness.'
- Cinematic technique

Contd.....

- Back and forth movement in time – Missing chronological links.
- Episodic
- Use of contrast – black v/s white, darkness v/s light, good v/s bad.
- Third person and first person narrative technique
- Suspense
- Psychological realism

Important Facts



- The Congo sailor becomes Conrad the novelist
- Congo Diary- First entry on 13 June, 1890
- Yearning to go to the centre of Africa since childhood. Fascinated by a look at the map of Congo.

Contd.....

- Africa as the “Dark Continent”.
- Personal experience as captain of a ship, Ville de Receio, to Congo.
- Inspired by his real life experience of journey to Congo.
- Appeared as a novella
- Setting – At the end of the 19th C, Victorian era.

Autobiographical Elements

- The Manager resembles Del-commune, a common ivory trader and a temporary acting manager in real life.
- George – Antoine Klein is transformed into Kurtz.
- Ill – health and inclement weather. In his own words, “a long, long illness and a very dismal convalescence.”

Contd.....

- The Trading Company in real life needed a captain who could speak French, and Conrad met this requirement. Marlow also replaced Fresleven, a Danish captain who had been killed.
- The purpose of Conrad's voyage of the steamship 'Roi des Belges' was to bring back one of the Company's agents at Stanley Falls. The agent in the novel is Kurtz.
- Both the characters died aboard and were buried by the natives.

Structure

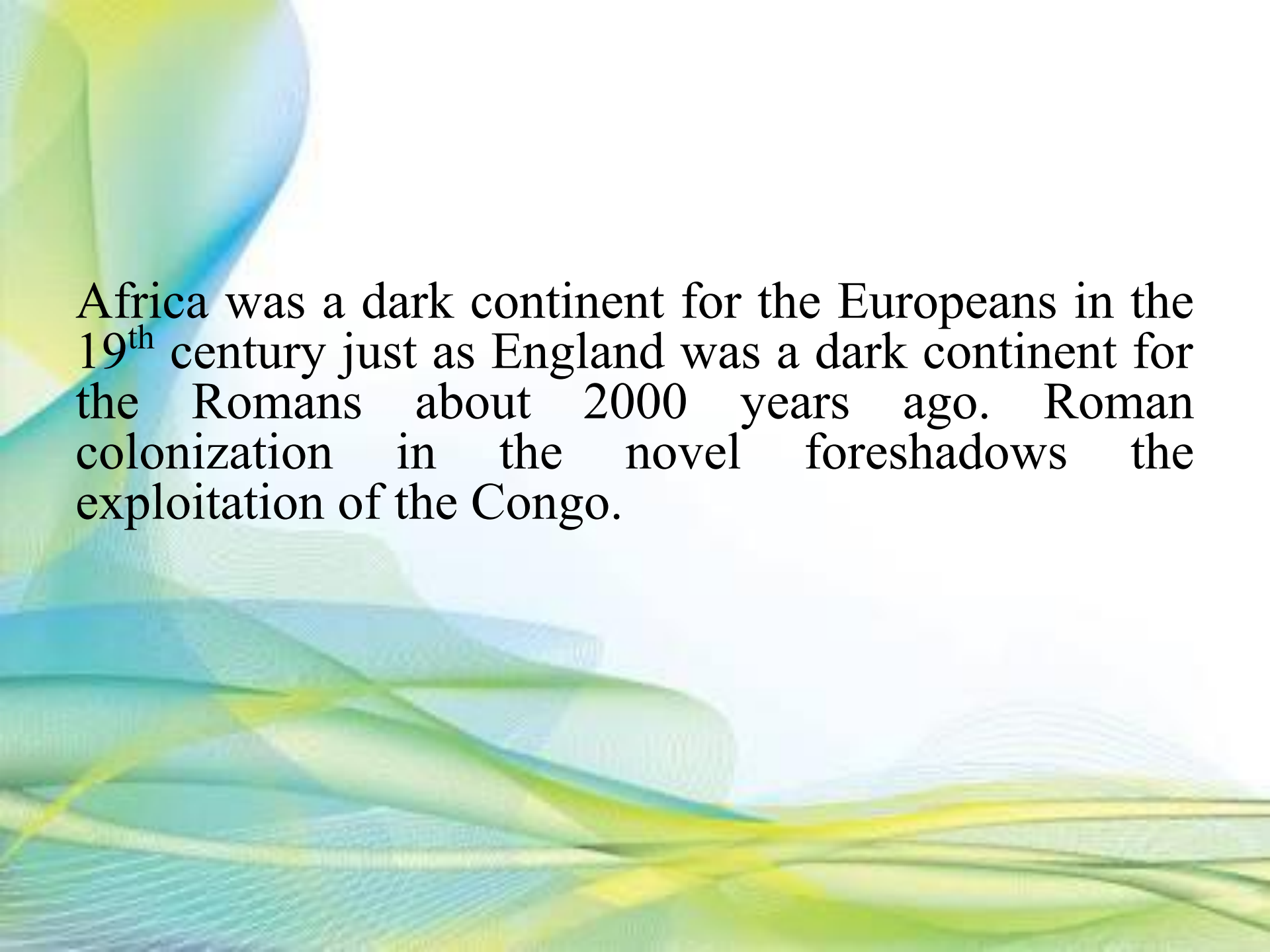
- Divided into Three parts.
- Each part consisting of about 5-6 interwoven incidents
- No title heads given to the various parts
- Dramatic, full of action
- Sub division into scenes.

Publication

- Appeared as a novella
- Published in 1903
- Publication first as a three-part series in Blackwood's Magazine in 1899.
- Classified by the Modern Library website editors as one of the '100 best novels' and part of the Western Canon.

Historical Background

A true historical account of European exploration and exploitation . The Congo basin in Africa with abundance of Ivory was the basic centre of interest for European colonial powers. The location of River Congo was a private colony of Belgium's King Leopold II, who pursued his interest in the name of philanthropy.

The background of the slide features a series of overlapping, flowing, wavy lines in shades of light green, teal, and pale blue. These lines create a sense of movement and depth, resembling a stylized landscape or a digital art pattern. The colors are soft and ethereal, blending into each other. The text is positioned in the upper left quadrant of the slide, set against the white background of the text area.

Africa was a dark continent for the Europeans in the 19th century just as England was a dark continent for the Romans about 2000 years ago. Roman colonization in the novel foreshadows the exploitation of the Congo.

Plot Summary



Part I opens on ‘The Nellie’, a boat ‘swung to her anchor’ waiting for the turn of the tide, with four people on board—the captain, the lawyer, the Accountant and Marlow sitting cross-legged, ‘the palms of the hands upwards’, resembling an idol.

Contd.

The story is told by an unknown narrator. Marlow tells his story, how, fascinated by Africa, he was able to secure the post of a river steamboat captain. He takes a French steamer to the mouth of the Congo River, comes across futile activities like French men-of-war shelling.

Contd.....

Disembarks at the Company's Outer Station, witnesses terrible scenes – plies of decaying machinery, a cliff being blasted, a group of black prisoners, a group of dying native labourers, spends 10 days and hears of Kurtz, the central character of the novel, from the accountant for the first time. Travels overland for 200 miles with a caravan of 60 men. Arrives at Central Station after 15 days. Finds his steamer sunk and spends 3 months there before the steamer is repaired. Part I ends with the arrival of motley Eldorado Exploring Expedition.

Part II finds Marlow on the deck of a boat. Overhears the manager and his uncle discussing Kurtz. The trip to the inner station begins with snags across the way, and natives sighted on the shore. Discovers a ruined hut with firewood piled up and a book 'An inquiry into Some Points of Seamanship.' Thick fog. Attack by natives, death of the helmsman. View the trading post and find a harlequin in motley dress. Discover him to be the man who left the wood as well as the book down the river .

Part III describes the harlequin who has been nursing Kurtz. Focus on his mysterious power over the natives and greed for ivory. The posts of his house are topped with human skulls, a symbol of fear for those who protest. Kurtz ill, handed over letters by Marlow, appearance of the native woman, a beloved of Kurtz, disappearance of the harlequin, meeting of Kurtz & Marlow, warning and advice to return to the riverboat. Marlow & Kurtz begin the return journey.

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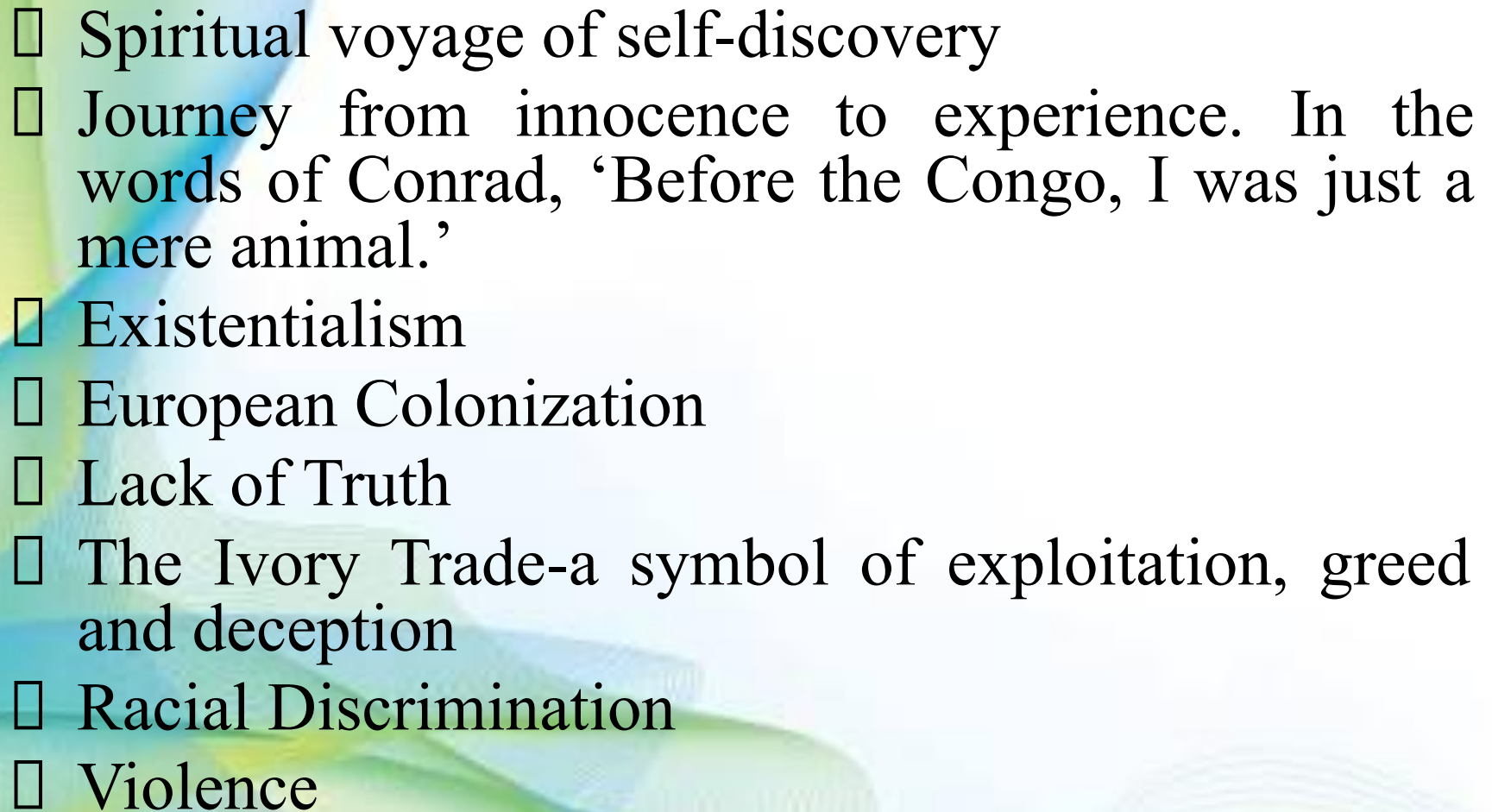
Close to death Kurtz goes through a transformation and dies after uttering his final words, “The horror! The horror!” Marlow goes back to Brussels with Kurtz’s papers and the knowledge of his wicked ways. Goes to meet Kurtz’s beloved, Intended. On finding her devoted to Kurtz, twists the facts and tells her that he died with her name on his lips.

The writer takes us back to the deck of the ‘Nellie’ where Marlow is once again seen ending his story and sitting in the ‘pose of a meditating Buddha’ which confirms his alienation and isolation.

Themes

- The Theme of Restraint.
- The Theme of isolation or Alienation- physical and moral.
- The ravages and hypocrisy of Imperialism
- Duality of Human Nature- Moral Corruption
- Hypocrisy and Absurdity
- Power inevitably Corrupts
- Absurd and Brutal exploitation of African continent by European colonial powers.

Contd....

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- Spiritual voyage of self-discovery
 - Journey from innocence to experience. In the words of Conrad, ‘Before the Congo, I was just a mere animal.’
 - Existentialism
 - European Colonization
 - Lack of Truth
 - The Ivory Trade-a symbol of exploitation, greed and deception
 - Racial Discrimination
 - Violence

Characters

- The First Narrator
- Charles Marlow, an adventurous sailor
- The Company doctor, who measures Marlow's skull
- The knitting women, who act as company's representatives
- The Clerk
- The Chief accountant
- The Company Manager

Contd....

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- The pilgrims
 - The Brick maker
 - The Manager's Uncle
 - The Helmsman
 - The Harlequin or The Russian
 - The Foreman
 - The Journalist
 - Mr. Kurtz

Major Characters

Marlow

Main character, an Englishman, joins a company in Brussels to work in Congo, the heart of Africa. Fascinated by maps since childhood- 'Now when I was a little chap I had a passion for maps.' Employed as a seafarer, sees exploitation of the African natives, understands it as the darkness of the heart. Also witnesses the death of Kurtz.

Kurtz

Half French and half English, a genius, in charge of the main station in the Congo river, deceptive, an ivory trader, invokes horror in the name of spreading civilization, slow degradation witnessed.

Likened to Faustus and Satan- 'My ivory, my station, my river'. Worshipped as a godly figure by the natives. Symbol of imperialism.

General Manager

Head of the Company's central station in Brussels. Survives in Africa with the ability to bear African diseases in inner stations. Conspires to overthrow Kurtz.

The Russian

Dressed as a harlequin, otherwise innocent, a true well-wisher of Kurtz, makes appearance in Part III of the novel.

The Brickmaker

An agent and secretary of the General Manager, ambitious, called a 'papier-mache Mephistopheles', actually a power hungry plotter.

The Chief Accountant

Depiction is Ironic, appears to be methodical and keeps his books in 'apple-pie order', recognized by Marlow as absurd and imperialistic, 'a sort of vision', 'a-miracle' dressed in a high starched Collar, white cuffs and snowy trousers in contrast to the dark jungle around. Lacks compassion for a dying man brought to the station.