“Heart of Darkness” – questions

- How does Conrad establish atmosphere in the opening pages?
- What concerns might he be setting up in the opening pages?
- How does the narrator describe London?
- At what point does the narration shift from one speaker to another?
- “At that time there were many blank spaces on the earth” – p.8 – who considers these spaces blank?
- How does Marlow talk about these first discussion of the “natives”? – p.10
- How does Marlow’s background determine how he describes the coast? – p.15
- Why does Marlow often describe the natives as though they are animals? – p.18
- How does Conrad comment of the colonial treatment of the natives?
- What does the Company trade in?
- How is Kurtz explored on page 22?
- How has the Company stripped the landscape? P.23
- How does Conrad’s language describe the manager and who may he represent? – p.25
- How do the manager’s actions suggest unease?
- What more do we learn about Kurtz on page 30? How is he linked to Marlow?
- What is the dumb thing? P.32
- What narrative is being shaped without the need for human lips? P.33
- How does Marlow describe the newcomers? P.37
- What more do we learn about Kurtz on page 38?
- What effect does the word/name “pilgrims” have? P.42
- “To keep the eyes so long on one thing was too much for human patience.” P.47 – What does Marlow mean by this?
- How does Conrad establish a sense of a brooding threat on p.48?
- “it was the sense of real presence, was his ability to talk, his words – the gift of expression, the bewildering, the illumination, the most exalted and the most contemptible, the pulsation stream of light, or the deceitful flow from the heart of an impenetrable darkness”- p.58 – what is the importance of these words?
- How is language described on page 61?
- “burning noble words” – p.61 – what nuances/implications are suggested here?
- What are the “dead cats of civilisation”? p.62
- What does the Russian symbolize?
- What is Marlow’s view of the Russian?
- Explain the gothic nature of the description on page 72.
- At what point are words not enough to explain feelings? – p.73 – tricky question!!
- Why does Marlow turn to the wilderness? P.77
- “The monotonous beating of a big drum filled the air with muffled shocks and a lingering vibration” p.79- what does this sound like?
- Using page 85 and pages around this discuss how Marlow might be building to a climax.
- “The horror! The horror!” – p.87 – what does this mean?
- What’s Conrad’s point?!!