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Pathways to Making Meaning: Inroads to Interpretation of The Nature of Evil in Heart of Darkness

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Introduction

The thing was to know what he belonged to, how many powers of darkness claimed him for their own. That was the reflection that made you creepy all over—*Heart of Darkness*, Joseph Conrad

You can't just sashay into the jungle aiming to change it all over to the Christian style, without expecting the jungle to change you right back—*The Poisonwood Bible*, Barbara Kingsolver

Although the region in the setting is never identified by name, *Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad gives the reader a dramatic picture of conditions in the Belgian Congo during the period of European Colonialism. The narrator of the story is Marlow, a riverboat captain who has been sent to the region by The Company (a Belgian trading company), where he eventually meets Kurtz, an enigmatic but respected agent of The Company working in the ivory trade, who has established himself as a god among the natives and slowly descended into madness. One main theme of the novella is the nature of evil, which Conrad explores and illustrates through the character of Kurtz, as recounted by Marlow. Conrad highlights Kurtz's evil acts and madness alongside Marlow's recognition that the capacity for evil is a condition of humanity which he can relate to through his sympathy for the character of Kurtz.

In this unit, students will read the novella *Heart of Darkness*, focusing on interpretation of this theme the nature of evil, as well as making connections to both Marlow and Conrad as outsiders (as many of my students see themselves as outsiders as well, both culturally and socially). This unit asks students to begin by interpreting smaller, simpler texts with the same theme (such as a song and a graphic novel version of the book) before proceeding to interpret how evil is illustrated in the novella (using specific references to the work). They will connect what they learn from this exercise to real-world examples and experiences in their own lives, as well as connecting it to other books they have read in order to make the work more accessible and relevant to them. This unit also asks students to interpret background information and draw conclusions about the ways in which the author and his character Marlow are both outsiders and how that connects to their own experiences, so they can better identify with the storyline.

Throughout this unit, students will also discuss the following five essential questions to guide the process of interpretation, giving them big ideas that help them make connections between different parts of the novella:

What happens when one group of people who consider themselves more civilized attempt to impose themselves on another group, and how does that connect to the question of evil as illustrated in the character of Kurtz?

Will there always be an individual who, when removed from the rules and constraints of "civilization", pushes the boundaries of "civilized" behavior?

What happens to this person who considers himself to be free from "civilization" and therefore free to push the boundaries of morality and behave savagely?

What drives people to madness?

Is the capacity for evil conditioned or absolute and is it present in all human beings?

Heart of Darkness can be a challenging work for students who have more limited vocabulary and limited exposure to classic works of literature, but I believe my students will benefit from learning to interpret this challenging work. The main goal of this unit is for my students to develop their comprehension of and ability to interpret literature using a variety of strategies, such as close reading and group discussion, always referring back to the text for support. It is my aim that developing their facility with interpretation will increase their confidence and make other classic works of literature they read more accessible and less intimidating to them.

Teaching Situation and Rationale

I teach at East Central High School in Tulsa, Oklahoma, which is a large inner-city high school in the Tulsa Public School District with approximately 1100 students in 9 th -12 th grades. It is one of the most diverse high schools in the state, with Hispanic students constituting the largest ethnic group. 47.7% of students are Hispanic, with a significant proportion classified as English Language Learners; 22.34% are African American; 15.57% are White; 7.69% are Native American; 4.30 are Asian; .09% are Pacific Islander; and 2.29% identify themselves as Multiracial. 16.2% qualify for Special Education services and 92.77% qualify for the free and reduced lunch program based on their parent's income. The average ACT score for 2011-12 was below the state average at 17.1%, as was the 55% of students passing the English II End of Instruction Exam (one of the high-stakes tests students must pass in order to graduate). I will teach this unit to three different sections of 11 th grade Advanced Placement and Composition students. At East Central we have an open enrollment policy, so my AP Language classes are composed of diverse groups of students of varying levels of ability, several of whom are English Language Learners. While some of my students are reading at or above grade level and are comfortable with the process of interpreting literature, others are reading below grade level and have a more limited vocabulary; several students will never have had an AP English class before, so analyzing literature will be a new skill for them. Our classes are structured on a 7 period schedule; classes meet every day for 50 minutes, which allows me to reinforce concepts daily and incorporate many different hands-on and project-based activities, giving students a variety of ways to learn the material and demonstrate their understanding.

Many of my students (especially ones who are new to the AP program) become easily frustrated with works

that are more challenging to read and are set in a time period or location they are unfamiliar with (such as *Heart of Darkness*). My ELL students are usually quite motivated because they've self-selected a more advanced course, but they often struggle with the vocabulary and syntax and even keeping up with the storyline because of inadequate background knowledge. When encountering these works, sometimes students give up before we've even begun because they feel so intimidated by the reading or disconnected from the work. I want to help students connect with the reading in a way that makes it more engaging for them by giving them small inroads that help them identify with the author, characters and themes before we begin reading the text. My goal is to model the process of interpretation by starting with related works that are more accessible to them before we jump into the story itself. This approach will work for *Heart of Darkness* if we start with a simplified graphic novel version of the story, as well as the song "3AM" by Eminem, which deals with the same theme of a descent into evil and madness.

Heart of Darkness is a complex work that lends itself to rich interpretation of character and theme. I believe this book is interesting and useful to read and teach because it will enable student-readers to come to certain understandings of and conclusions about the nature of evil, how the character of Kurtz illustrates that theme, and how that theme reveals a condition present in all human beings. For example, Kurtz is represented as a powerful man who was once revered and respected, which can lead one to believe that evil is conditioned through experiences, as illustrated through Kurtz's process of "going native". My students can make personal connections to the novella by examining Marlow and Conrad as outsiders, since many of my students are immigrants and will be able to relate to Conrad's background as an immigrant as well as Marlow's experience of seeing the Congo as an outsider. This makes the text a good choice for them because it will increase their engagement with it as well as their interest in reading.

In addition, *Heart of Darkness* is a work that lends itself to varying interpretations which can lead to rich student discussion and facilitate higher-order thinking. With the use of certain strategies with the text, such as essential questions and guided graded discussion, students can come to certain understandings about the nature of evil. It is a text with which it is easy to guide students to discussion of questions that promote higher level thinking, such as the previously listed essential questions. Some teachers feel that it is better to stick to lower order thinking tasks for students who are sometimes lower achieving (such as special education and ELL students), because they think lower-achieving students are frustrated by higher-level thinking activities and unable to perform the tasks. However, studies by Zohar and Dori found that lower-achieving students made as much or more progress academically than their higher-achieving peers when given tasks that involved higher-order thinking. [1] Therefore, these strategies that guide students to higher-order thinking about characters and themes in *Heart of Darkness* will be appropriate and beneficial to all my students, regardless of their academic level when they enter my class. *Heart of Darkness* is also a work that is included on AP reading lists, so studying it will help my students prepare for the AP English exams by exposing them to universal themes. Having thought about these themes will help them when they are asked to draw connections between works.

Objectives

Oklahoma is adopting the Common Core State Standards. In order to meet the standards for Reading: Literature, students will develop their comprehension of and ability to interpret literature through completing close reading activities (including making text connections and answering questions at all levels of Bloom's Taxonomy), as well as participating in guided group discussion focused on higher-level questions. As they look

at the character of Kurtz and examine his connection to the theme of the nature of evil, I want them to make connections between what they are reading and their own experience, as well as making connections between events and characters in the book and events in the modern world. Often my students think of literature as such a remote thing; I want them to see that questions about the nature of evil arise in current news stories, for example. I also want them to understand that a universal theme not only applies to this one work, or only to literature, but that it can be applied to multiple works in different genres, including songs that they listen to.

Students will also cite strong and specific textual evidence to support their analysis of the text, using a four-square journal activity and making specific reference to examples in the text to support their assertions during class discussion. My students sometimes make assertions about their reading based on what they remember, or what they think a character said, or what they believe to be true, without taking the time to go back and check the text to make sure that they are drawing conclusions that can be supported with evidence. The four-square journal activity, as well as the guided discussion activities and digital storytelling project, will require students to support their assertions about Kurtz and Marlow and other aspects of the text with evidence from their reading. In other words, they can't just say, "Because I think so"; they have to back it up. These activities are also a platform for analyzing how the theme of the nature of evil develops over the course of the text, whether through the use of foreshadowing at the beginning of the text or through the character of Kurtz as described by others in the earlier parts of the book or though his words and actions after he finally appears.

During class discussions, students will participate collaboratively, referring to the text to support their observations and assertions and responding thoughtfully to the assertions of others in the group. I believe students benefit greatly from sharing their thoughts orally, as it helps them process and refine their ideas while listening to the perspectives of others. *Heart of Darkness* is a work I'm sure students will have varying opinions about, so listening to differing opinions on the question of Marlow's degree of sympathy with Kurtz, for example, will broaden their thinking by considering another point of view.

And finally, as stated earlier, it is also my hope that developing my students' facility with interpretation will increase their confidence and make other classic works of literature they read more accessible and less intimidating to them. By the end of this four week unit, it is my hope that my students will have begun to view classic literature as something interesting and relevant to them, not something to be dreaded.

Background Information – Colonial Rule in the Congo

Since the setting of *Heart of Darkness* is set in an area believed to be the Congo during Colonial rule, at the beginning of the unit I will introduce some relevant history about the Congo to students to give them some context for the reading. I will provide the following information in handouts and the students will take notes as we discuss the history of the region and the political landscape. Then students will work in pairs to individually create a foldable 'history book' covering the material in a condensed form that makes it more meaningful to them, so they can refer back to it while we are reading (in addition to having their notes). When we read about Marlow's fascination with maps and his desire to visit the Congo, ("when I saw one that looked particularly inviting on a map...I would put my finger on it and say 'when I grow up I will go there") [2] , I will ask students to write about places they have always wanted to explore and share with the class in order to help them draw a text-to-self connection. Then I will give them each a photocopied map of Africa from 1914 and have them sketch in the Congo River while I ask them the following questions: What makes a territory attractive for colonization and colonialism? What are colonizers assuming when they form a view of indigenous people? My students will have studied other examples of colonization in their previous history

classes, so this will give them an opportunity to draw upon that knowledge and connect it to what they are about to learn. After time for discussion of their responses, I will provide the historical information that follows about the Congo.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo was first known as the Congo Free State, and then as the Belgian Congo (from 1908-1960), even though the Congo was Belgian from 1885 until it gained independence in 1960 [3] . In 1884, the Congo became the personal property of King Leopold II of Belgium until 1908, when Leopold gave the Congo to Belgium in exchange for a loan. During Leopold's ownership of the Congo, the Congolese were "slaves in all but name". Brutality was rampant and the Belgians monopolized the ivory trade. [4] Joseph Conrad had dreamed of visiting Africa since he saw it on a map as a youngster (Conrad was always fascinated with maps, as was his character Marlow). But when he finally went in 1890, the Congo he encountered was definitely not what he had expected. "Conrad…discovered just how much its 'explorers' were prompted by the desire for 'loot'. [5] In fact, Conrad became disillusioned "with Africa, with life on deck, with colonial trade, and with white European agents running trading stations throughout the Congo". [6] Such was the state of the Congo that informed *Heart of Darkness*, as Marlow "sees in the behavior of the Europeans, and most tellingly…Kurtz…a self-assertive brutality as savage as any to be found in man's primitive ancestry, and even more dangerous because it is unacknowledged and denied by "civilized" man's blindfolded idealism". [7] So, the atrocities witnessed by Conrad as a result of colonization were also encountered by Marlow on his journey down the Congo.

Background Information – Joseph Conrad

It is also during this time at the beginning of the unit that I will begin to ask students to think about their own backgrounds and their personal connections to Conrad and Marlow as outsiders. I will ask students to write in their writers notebooks (a throughout the year) about a time they felt like outsiders or felt out of their element – like everything around them was new and strange. Several students have come to Tulsa as immigrants from another country; also, because my school has a high mobility rate, many of my students will have moved several times prior to 11th grade, so they will have had the experience of encountering a new place to live, sometimes more than once. After students have had time to volunteer to discuss their responses, I will then introduce the information below about the author, so they can see Conrad's experience as an outsider, as well as understand how certain details in the story overlap with Conrad's experience. As Maier-Katkin relates, although Marlow's voice and Conrad's are not the same, "Conrad invested Marlow with details of his own life and placed Marlow among the friends with whom the author traveled…aboard the Nellie during the time the narrative took form". Marlow is often speculated to be Conrad's alter-ego. [8] In this way, I hope to guide students to see how Marlow was an outsider in the Congo as well. When we discuss Conrad's Congo journey, I will provide a map of the route of Conrad's journey and students will get out their laptops and go to Google Earth and take a virtual voyage of the Congo River themselves, so they can get an idea of the length and shape of the river, and the surrounding terrain, as well as the navigational challenges both Marlow and Conrad faced. I will provide this information in handouts and the students will take notes as we discuss Conrad's history. Then students will work in pairs to individually create a foldable 'mini-biography book' covering the material in a visual format that makes it more meaningful to them, so they can refer back to it while we are reading (in addition to having their notes). In a related issue, I will also be raising the question of the potential unreliability of the first person narrator, as "we learn about "reality" though other people's accounts of it, many of which are, themselves, twice-told tales". [9] This becomes problematic as Marlow is not only the narrator, but also a character within the story. This is a question we will return to during class discussion throughout the unit.

Joseph Conrad was born Joseph Konrad Nalecz Korzeniowski in 1857 in Poland, but because of political instability and the death of both his parents when he was young, Conrad, "found himself, from childhood on, a person without a country". [10] After his parents' deaths, he was adopted by his father's uncle, whom he eventually persuaded to let him join the French Merchant Navy as a young man (French became Conrad's second language, after Polish). When French immigration authorities prevented him from continuing as a sailor, Conrad sailed on British ships for the next 16 years and became a British subject in 1887. [11] Becoming an English sailor allowed him to become fluent in English, the language in which he wrote his novels. Conrad's experience included an expedition up the Congo River, "on a rusty steamboat with a shrill whistle". [12] This experience had a profound impact on him by giving him insights into human nature and showing him ".how easily Europeans who set forth in ships to enlighten and civilize can corrupt and destroy". [13] It was an experience that stayed with Conrad the rest of his life, and provided inspiration for *Heart of Darkness*, as evidenced by details from Marlow's voyage that echo Conrad's diary (even though there are certainly differences as well). [14] Heart of Darkness was written in 1898 and published in 1899, by which time Conrad was already a noted writer, ready to "experiment artistically with very private material." [15] Conrad ultimately wrote 19 novels before his death in 1924, and is considered one of the greatest novelists to write in the English language.

Theme – The Nature of Evil in *Heart of Darkness*

One of the main themes explored in *Heart of Darkness* is the question of the nature of evil. What makes a person commit brutal, evil acts such as the ones Kurtz commits as he "goes native" and descends into madness? During the course of his inner journey, Marlow becomes aware of his "kinship with Kurtz" [16] and, therefore, his own potential for evil, but he chooses not to act on it in the same way Kurtz does; does this indicate that the potential for evil is part of human nature and if so, what leads some people to act on it and not others? These are the sorts of topics and questions my students love to discuss and debate. That is why I've chosen this particular theme to focus on during the course of this unit. I believe the topic will engage students while helping them interpret the theme. They can also find examples in the world around them to relate to the action in the text.

To focus our discussion of the above ideas, interpretation of the nature of evil in this unit will center on five essential questions: What happens when one group of people who consider themselves more civilized attempt to impose themselves on another group and how does that connect to this question of evil as illustrated in the character of Kurtz? Will there always be an individual who, when removed from the rules and constraints of "civilization", pushes the boundaries of "civilized" behavior? What happens to this person who considers himself or herself to be free from "civilization" and therefore free to push the boundaries of morality and behave savagely? What drives people to madness? Is the capacity for evil conditioned or absolute and is it present in all human beings? Focusing reading and discussion around essential questions will also help students make greater sense of the work as a whole and give them continuity by focusing on big ideas. We will revisit these questions during guided discussions throughout our reading of the novella, as passages come up that can inform our understanding of issues raised by them.

In guiding students to draw conclusions about the text, one wants to anticipate some possible answers they could come to about these questions. For example, Marlow says, "All Europe contributed to the making of Kurtz". [17] According to Tony Brown, the "hideous panorama" that Marlow sees when he begins to navigate the Congo "appears the direct result of the colonialists' actions in the area". [18] So Marlow's statement could be used to support an interpretation that Kurtz's evil has been conditioned by his experiences, and that his

madness is a reflection of the evils of colonization in the Congo and his "incommunicable self-knowledge". [19] Hence his awareness in his final moments of the atrocities and brutality —"The horror! The horror!" [20] —that he has been a part of perpetuating. In a larger sense, this implies that evil is not just represented by Kurtz, but also by the larger society that has pillaged the Congo and brutalized and demeaned the native population.

A related case can also be made that the wilderness was responsible in part for Kurtz's descent into madness as "Kurtz, in his isolation, was found out by the wilderness; the hollow core left by the absence of civil law left him open to the wiles of the wilds." [21] Marlow says, "I tried to break the spell...of the wilderness....this alone had beguiled his unlawful soul beyond the bounds of permitted aspirations." [22] In this interpretation, Kurtz has become disconnected from civilization and in his isolation his soul has 'gone native" [23] and is operating by its own rules. According to Tony Brown, this too could be "...the horror" – "the horror of a void resulting from the voiding of civilization". [24] The horror of a place where there is no code, where the "civilizing" effects of Colonialism have become "abuses". [25] A place that overtakes Kurtz and drives him to madness.

As for the question of Marlow's realization of the potential for evil within all men, including himself, the manager relates to Marlow that "Mr. Kurtz's methods had ruined the district." [26] Marlow, however, realizes Kurtz's brilliance as a speaker and sees him as a force of nature: "I was seduced into something like admiration—like envy. Glamour urged him on, glamour kept him unscathed." [27] Marlow recognizes Kurtz's previous greatness and the powerful qualities he possesses, such as the "commanding power of speech." [28] In this way, he can be seen as a "good man gone wrong." [29] Near the end of the book, when Marlow follows Kurtz ashore after he escapes, the beating drums "had a strange narcotic effect" [30] on his senses and he says, "I tell you, it had gone mad. I had-for my sins, I suppose—to go through the ordeal of looking into it myself." [31] The case can be made that Marlow recognizes his "kinship with Kurtz" [32] and realizes that in part because Kurtz's evil is not absolute, he too has the same potential for evil inside himself, as part of his nature. In the end, he resists the lure of the darkness, but returns to England a changed man, having "peeped over the edge myself". [33] These are examples of the types of answers and interpretive conclusions about the nature of evil which I hope my students come to, always grounding them in the text.

Strategies

Because *Heart of Darkness* is a relatively short work, and I will only have one class set of books, the majority of reading will take place in the classroom. This is approximately a four-week unit, so there will be adequate time to complete the reading in class. Any supplemental texts will be provided as photocopies. We will listen to some of the passages on audio book (especially those that could be more difficult for students to follow), as that will support my auditory learners, as well as students who struggle with reading comprehension. During reading, I will stop frequently to check for understanding, provide clarification and introduce and guide activities.

I want to help students connect with the reading in a way that makes it more engaging for them by giving them small inroads to interpretation that help them identify with the author, characters and themes before we begin reading the text; so to model the process of interpretation I will begin the unit by reading a short graphic novel version of the story, *Heart of Darkness* by David Zane Mairowitz. The text is simplified, but it

follows the storyline, so it will give students a good introduction to the main elements of the novella. I will project the pages using a digital presenter/projector and read students the story in an interactive manner, stopping to ask interpretive questions, make predictions and analyze the evocative illustrations. I will also use this as an opportunity to have students begin thinking about the essential questions for the unit. After that, I will use the song "3AM" by Eminem for the same purpose. The song is about a slow descent into homicidal madness, so it is connected thematically to the book. I will play the song and then take students through the process of interpreting the lyrics and ask them to make connections between the theme of the song and the graphic novel (the lyrics will be projected on the Smartboard where students can read them). This will help students further connect to the theme in a meaningful way, especially students to whom literary analysis is a new skill, and further prepare them to begin interpreting the text.

Because several of my students struggle with vocabulary, I will incorporate vocabulary development throughout the unit, using Robert Marzano's approach, Building Academic Vocabulary. At the beginning of each week, students will receive a list of key vocabulary words from the reading and will be asked for their understanding of each word. For each word that students are unfamiliar with, they will explain the meaning into their own words, draw a picture they connect with the meaning, and make a list of synonyms for or associations they have with the word. Later in the week, we will play word games to reinforce their understanding of the vocabulary as they encounter it in the story, as understanding the vocabulary is key for interpretation.

I want students to draw connections between the book and their lives and experience as well as the world around them, so they will use post-it notes to mark their personal text-to-text, text-to-self and text-to-world connections as they read. I will model this strategy for them at the beginning of our reading, after introduce them to the concept of the novella as a frame story, by making a text-to-self connection as we read "The sea-reach of the Thames stretched before us like the beginning of an interminable waterway", [34] explaining how I have stood on the banks of the Thames on a gloomy day before, so I can imagine the scene being described. Making text connections will increase their engagement with and retention of the text as they demonstrate the higher level of thought required to make these connections.

As students will be engaging in discussion of big ideas and interpreting theme throughout the unit, they will be participating in a format called Guided Graded Discussion to allow them to think "deeply and critically" [35] about the text. This is important for all my students, but especially for my ELL students, who must have opportunities to practice expressing their opinions about what they have read in a "meaningful" way that capitalizes on the "social nature of literacy learning." [36] This format allows students to both respond to the ideas of others and present their own opinions. It often requires higher-level thinking and usually leads to more discussion. This strategy will be used at least twice during the course of the unit, in addition to regular, daily classroom discussion.

To support students' understanding and interpretation of the theme of the nature of evil, they will complete a series of six four-square journals, each related to the theme and how it is revealed and developed throughout the novella. In each one they will choose a passage related to the theme, identify how the theme is revealed (through the character of Kurtz, etc.), draw a visual they associate with the passage, and write a response to the passage that explains how the theme is developed in the chosen passage. I will choose a passage and model the first journal during the second day of reading, then students will choose appropriate passages to write the remainder of the journals about as they encounter them in their reading. This will require them to make connections between different sections of the text and read closely to determine where the theme is represented, as well as how it can be interpreted.

Near the end of the unit, students will complete a Digital Storytelling project using Photostory software, which they have access to in the classroom laptop lab. They will synthesize information to create a digital story centered on their conclusions about one of the essential questions we have discussed throughout the unit. Digital technology has been shown to improve English proficiency, [37] and the software is engaging and fun for students to work with while promoting active learning and improving comprehension. [38]

Finally, to expose students to another interpretation of the book, I will show the movie *Apocalypse Now* during class at the end of the unit, and students will compare and contrast the novella with the film, looking particularly at the similarities and differences in how the main characters are portrayed in each. I also want them to draw conclusions about how the theme of the nature of evil is approached in both. Watching the movie will help the visual learners in my class and give all my students additional text connections.

I will use formative and summative assessments to allow students to demonstrate their learning throughout the unit, including an in-class essay modeled after an AP exam essay. There will be a full exam at the end that will be focused on written responses and allow students to convey their interpretation of the text. Students will also complete a final digital storytelling project so they can demonstrate their understanding of the big ideas in the work by creating a digital story centered on their conclusions about one of the essential questions.

Activities

First Activity: Four-Square Reading Journal

This is an activity designed to help students understand the theme of the nature of evil and how it is developed in the text. This activity is introduced during the first few days of reading the book, after the plot, main characters and theme have been introduced during the reading of the graphic novel version. This activity gives students practice writing about literature and increases their ability to read closely and connect the text to a specific device (or theme).

The Process

Pick a specific passage from *Heart of Darkness* related to the theme of the nature of evil. It could be a passage where the theme is revealed through foreshadowing, where it is revealed through what other characters say about Kurtz, or through what Kurtz says or does after he appears in the book. Read the passage to the students and initiate a discussion about how the passage is connected to the theme, based upon what they have read so far in the book. Tell the students to divide a blank sheet of paper into four squares. In the top left quadrant tell them to record the passage that they have just been discussing along with the page number. In the top right quadrant, tell them to create a visual that represents the passage to them (it could be a drawing, a collage, a symbol, etc.). In the lower left quadrant, tell them to write out the aspect of the text that they will be focusing on. In the bottom right quadrant, tell them to write a response of at least one paragraph, commenting on how the theme is developed in the selection (model the first response for students and discuss). Students will create six different journals for the book. Each journal is worth ten points.

Second Activity: Guided Graded Discussion

This activity is designed to give students a structured format for discussion of ideas that emerge during their reading of *Heart of Darkness*, in addition to daily discussion of the theme and essential questions. The idea is to promote the exchange of ideas and develop the skills that make that exchange happen. There will be two discussions. The first will be when we have read to the point where Marlow is fifty miles from the Inner Station (page 55). The second will take place right after we have finished the book.

The Process

Members of the class sit in a circle so that all members can see each other. The discussion begins with a student moderator offering his or her personal observation about the book. They might read a quote, or begin a line of discussion based on a discussion question. There will be no hand-raising or calling out from the floor. The next student simply responds. This continues, with other students responding in turn to the idea. No two people should speak at the same time. It is the job of the moderator to remind students of this, as needed.

After three or four comments on one idea, it is time to go on to another question or point of discussion. This may be based on a discussion question, a dialectical journal entry, or a reflection on a text-to-text, text-to-self or text-to world connection. I will also provide a list of possible questions students could raise, such as, "The first clue about Kurtz is so vague that most people miss it, as it does not name Kurtz and only alludes to him. What is this clue and what do you think it tells us about him and his importance?" And "During their trip downriver, Marlow says that Kurtz's was 'an impenetrable darkness.' What do you think this darkness represents?"

The moderator should encourage the flow of discussion and intervene during any back-and-forth exchanges between students in which they are monopolizing the conversation. It is the responsibility of each student to join in the discussion and participate. However, if the discussion comes to a standstill, the moderator or the teacher may call upon a student who has not yet spoken. In addition, students should never belittle the ideas or comments of a classmate.

Total points will be based upon the quantity and quality of responses during the class period. To receive full credit, each student should initiate at least two threads of discussion and contribute two responses to or elaborations on the ideas of others. Responses will be scored on a scale of 1 to 10 (1 = poor ; 10 = insightful).

Third Activity: Digital Story

This activity is designed to give students another format to demonstrate what they have learned about the theme of the nature of evil and the essential questions we have discussed throughout the unit. This also gives students who are more visually oriented, and perhaps did not fully participate in discussions or struggled with journal writing a chance to show their understanding. This is a culminating activity that will be introduced when students are almost finished reading the book. It will give them an opportunity to improve their comprehension, solidify their ideas about and understanding of the essential questions and support that with specific references to the text, along with visuals and music. This project is worth 50 points.

The Process

Each student is assigned to a computer that has Photostory software (the software can be downloaded for free from windowsphotostory.com). Google 'photostory examples' and find different examples of completed

photostories to show students, so they can become familiar with the format (it is similar in many ways to Powerpoint, so most students pick it up quickly). Next, take students through the process of creating a story. First, show them how to complete the process on the computer, using a single frame as an example (there is a link on windowsphotostory.com, 'Beginners Guide to Photostory', that gives step by step instructions for he process, from importing pictures to adding narration and music). Next, students can begin to storyboard and develop their ideas and then open up Photostory on their laptop computers and begin building their story. They will synthesize information to create a digital story centered on their conclusions about one of the essential questions we have discussed throughout the unit. For example, if they choose 'What happens to this person who considers himself or herself to be free from "civilization" and therefore free to push the boundaries of morality and behave savagely?", they could create a story that focuses on the fate of Kurtz, incorporating specific quotes from the text. Their Photostories should have at least eight slides and include music and narration. When students complete their digital stories, they take turns presenting them to the class, enhancing everyone's understanding of the work and the essential questions.

Appendix

Standards

The Oklahoma State Department of Education has adopted the Common Core State Standards, which my district follows. This unit meets the following Reading Literature Standards: 11.RL.1 (through the four-square journal assignment and the digital storytelling project, both of which require students to reference the text for support while developing their comprehension of and ability to interpret literature), 11.RL.2 (through the focus on development of the theme of the nature of evil over the course of the text), 11.RL.4 (by incorporating vocabulary study throughout the unit), and 11.RL.7 (by viewing Apocalypse Now and asking students to make connections between the film and the novella). The unit meets the following Speaking and Listening Standards: 11.SL.1 (through the guided graded discussion activity, which requires students to participate in a collaborative discussion expressing their own ideas and building on the ideas of their classmates), and 11.SL.5 (through the digital storytelling project, which requires students to use digital media in a presentation to enhance understanding). Finally, the unit meets Writing Standard 11.W.9 (through the four square journal assignment, which requires students to connect specific evidence from the text to their written analysis), as follows:

Four-Square Response Journal - Heart of Darkness

For Heart of Darkness, you will be completing a series of 6 four-square response journals to help you focus on the theme of the nature of evil and how it is developed throughout the novella.

Divide a blank sheet of paper into four squares. As you read, look for passages that are connected to the theme of the nature of evil. This theme may be revealed through foreshadowing, through the descriptions of Kurtz by other characters or through the words and actions of Kurtz himself after he appears in part III.

In the top left quadrant, record the passage and the page number. In the top right quadrant, create a visual that represents the passage to you (it could be a drawing, a collage, a symbol, etc.). In the lower left quadrant, write out the aspect of the text that you will be focusing on (ex: theme of the nature of evil as revealed through foreshadowing). In the lower right hand quadrant, write a response of at least one paragraph

in which you comment on how the theme is developed in the selection (connect the device to the passage). Work to make your responses specific and relevant. (Each journal is worth 10 points.)

Passage	A visual
Device	Response
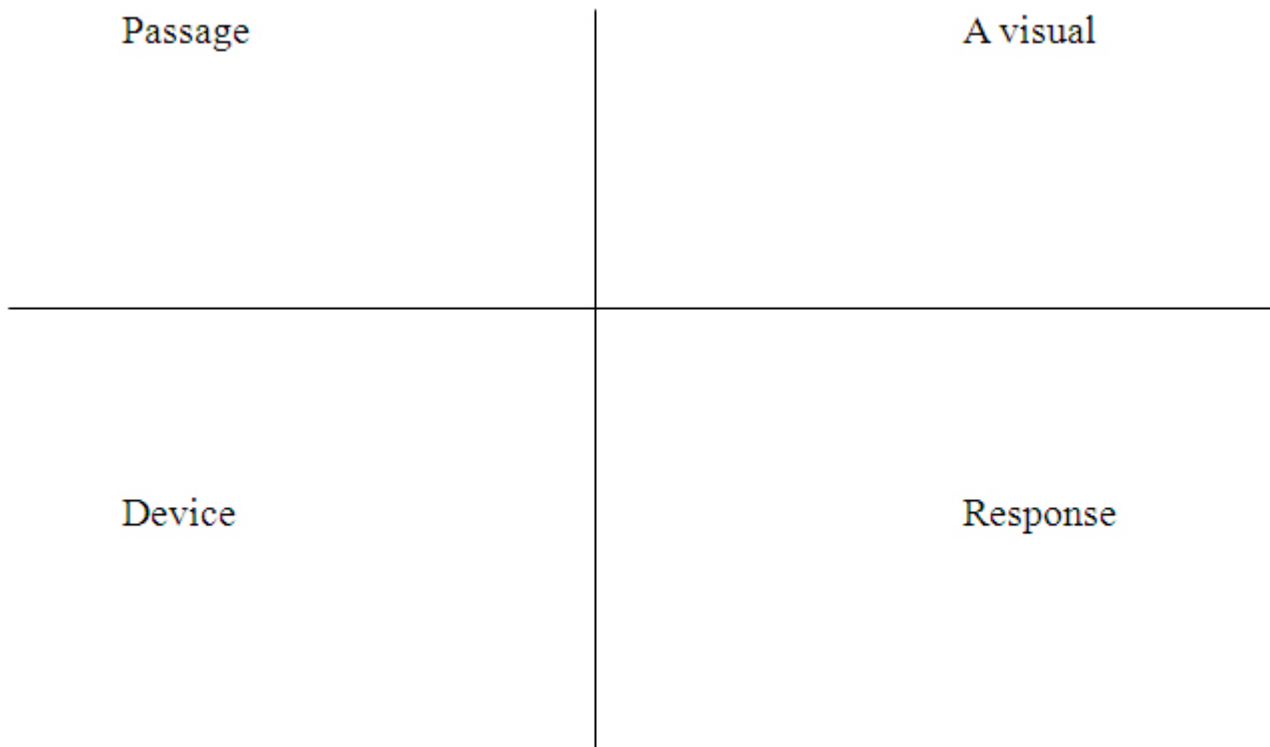
Resources

Bibliography

Brown, Tony C. "Cultural Psychosis on the Frontier: The Work of the Darkness in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*." In *Heart of Darkness: a case study in contemporary criticism*, edited by Ross Murfin, 350-366. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989. This is an article that was very helpful when researching the theme of the nature of evil in *Heart of Darkness*.

Conrad, Joseph, and Franklin Walker. *Heart of Darkness and the Secret Sharer*. New York: Bantam Classics [Imprint], 1982. The edition of *Heart of Darkness* that my students read in class.

Conrad, Joseph, and Ross C. Murfin. *Heart of darkness: a case study in contemporary criticism*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989. Excellent resource which contains the text along with seeral critical essays that were very helpful when researching the work. This contains sections with detailedbackground information on Conrad as well as the history of the Belgian Congo.

Conrad, Joseph, and Robert Kimbrough. "Introduction." In *Heart of darkness: an authoritative text, backgrounds and sources, criticism*. 3rd ed. New York: Norton, 1988. ix-xvii. Excellent comprehensive resource for information about *Heart of Darkness*.

Maier-Katkin, Birgit, and Daniel Maier-Katkin. "At the Heart of Darkness: Crimes Against Humanity and the Banality of Evil." *Human Rights Quarterly* 26, no. 3 (2004): 584-604. This article was useful because it contains specific examples of the nature of evil in *Heart of Darkness* and its connection to Kurtz.

Murfin, Ross C. and Kayla Walker Edin. "A Critical History of *Heart of Darkness*." In *Heart of Darkness: a case study in contemporary criticism*, edited by Ross Murfin, 137-162. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989. A section in the previous text which gave an overview of various themes and criticism related to *Heart of Darkness*.

Purdy, Joyce. "Inviting Conversation: meaningful talk about texts for English language learners." *Literacy* 42, no. 1 (2008): 44-51. Contains suggestions for facilitating meaningful conversations about literature from ELL's.

Renner, Stanley. "Kurtz, Christ, and the Darkness in "Heart of Darkness". *Renascence,* Winter 1976. Interpretation of *Heart of Darkness* which emphasizes Kurtz as a Christ figure.

Rogers, Charlotte. *Jungle fever exploring madness and medicine in twentieth-century tropical narratives.* Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2012. Book which looks at the theme of madness in *Heart of Darkness*. Very useful for exploring the theme of the nature of evil and connecting it to specific examples in the book.

Won Hur, Jung, and Suhyun Suh. "Making Learning Active with Interactive Whiteboards, Podcasts, and Digital Storytelling in ELL Classrooms." *Computers in the Schools* 29, no. 4 (2012): 320-338. http://dx.doi.org/10.1353/hrq.2004.0038 (accessed May 20, 2013). Study revealing the positive effects of using various forms of technology with ELL's.

Zohar, Anat, and Yehudit J. Dori. "Higher Order Thinking Skills and Low-Achieving Students: Are They Mutually Exclusive?." *Journal of the Learning Sciences* 12, no. 2 (2003): 145-181. Study revealing the positive effects on low-achieving students of assigning tasks that require higher-order thinking skills.

Classroom Resources

Achebe, Chinua. "An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's 'Heart of Darkness'." In *Heart of darkness: an authoritative text, backgrounds and sources, criticism*, edited by Richard Kimbrough, 251-261. 3rd ed. New York: Norton, 1988. In this essay, Achebe accuses Conrad of racism through his portrayal of Africans in the text, which he says perpetuates stereotypes. This is another perspective that could be examined when reading this work.

Apocalypse now. DVD. Directed by Francis Ford Coppola. Hollywood, Calif.: Paramount, 1999.

Keene, Ellin Oliver, and Susan Zimmermann. *Mosaic of thought: teaching comprehension in a reader's workshop*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1997. Excellent resource illustrating ways to help students make text connections.

Mairowitz, David Zane, and Catherine Anyango. *Heart of darkness: adapted from the original novel by Joseph Conrad*. London: SelfMadeHero, 2010. Graphic novel of *Heart of Darkness* used to introduce students to the novella.

Phillips, Caryl. "'Was Joseph Conrad Really a Racist?' (2007): An Interview with Chinua Achebe." In *Heart of Darkness: a case study in contemporary criticism*, edited by Ross Murfin, 129-134. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989. This would be a good companion piece to read when examining the perspective of Chinua Achebe.

"Photo Story 3 for Windows." Photo Story 3 for Windows. http://windowsphotostory.com (accessed July 29, 2013). Software used to create digital stories.

Notes

1. Zohar, Anat, and Yehudit J. Dori, ""Higher Order Thinking Skills And Low-Achieving Students: Are They Mutually Exclusive?," in *Journal of the Learning Sciences,* 10.

2. Conrad, Joseph, and Franklin Walker, *Heart of Darkness and the Secret Sharer*, 10.

3. Conrad, Joseph, and Ross C. Murfin, *Heart of darkness: a case study in contemporary* Criticism, 5.

4. Ibid,6.

5. Ibid.,9.

6. Ibid,11.

7. Renner, Stanley, "Kurtz, Christ, and the Darkness of "Heart of Darkness", in *Renascence*, 98.

8. Maier-Katkin, Birgit, and Daniel Maier-Katkin, "At The Heart Of Darkness: Crimes Against Humanity And The Banality Of Evil." In *Human Rights Quarterly*,602.

9. Conrad, Joseph, and Ross C. Murfin, 15.

10. Ibid., 3.

11. Ibid., 4.

12. Ibid., 4.

13. Ibid., 9.

14. Ibid., 13.

15. Conrad, Joseph, and Robert Kimbrough. "Introduction." In *Heart of darkness: an authoritative text, backgrounds and sources, criticism*,ix.

16. Murfin, Ross C. and Kayla Walker Edin. "A Critical History of Heart of Darkness." in *Heart of Darkness: a case study in contemporary criticism*, 141.

17. Conrad, Joseph, and Franklin Walker, 74.

18. Brown, Tony C. "Cultural Psychosis on the Frontier: The Work of the Darkness in Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness." in *Heart of Darkness: a case study in contemporary criticism*, 363.

19. Renner, 58.

20. Conrad, Joseph, and Franklin Walker, 74.

21. Brown, 363.

22. Conrad, Joseph, and Franklin Walker, 99.

23. Rogers, Charlotte, *Jungle fever exploring madness and medicine in twentieth-century* tropical narratives, 48.

24. Brown, 366.

25. Rogers, 19.

26. Conrad, Joseph, and Franklin Walker, 87.

27. Ibid., 82.

28. Rogers, 48.

29. Renner, 101.

30. Conrad, Joseph, and Franklin Walker, 96.

31. Ibid., 100.

32. Murfin, Ross C. and Kayla Walker Edin, 141.

33. Conrad, Joseph, and Franklin Walker, 106.

34. Ibid., 3.

35. Purdy, Joyce. "Inviting Conversation: meaningful talk about texts for English language learners." in *Literacy,* 44.

36. Ibid., 45.

37. Won Hur, Jung, and Suhyun Suh. "Making Learning Active with Interactive Whiteboards, Podcasts, and Digital Storytelling in ELL Classrooms." In *Computers in* the Schools, 321.

38. Ibid., 322, 324.