

# Poor Assumptions and Flawed Conclusions of Conrad's Heart of Darkness

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During the period when Joseph Conrad's novel *Heart of Darkness* was written, a common theme in literature was the testing of the moral life through actual experience. One could not realize an ethical principle without it being justified through the outcome of some practical conflict. This idea of testing morality through experience is exactly what is presented in [Conrad's](#) novel as [Marlow's](#) journey results in a trial that not only defines his own beliefs but allows him to make a rather pessimistic conclusion on the morality of mankind. This realization comes about through the author's double presentation of imperialism in which it is both glorified and criticized. Marlow begins his narration with a vague position on the issue that appears to find justification for both sides. As the story progresses and Marlow begins to play a more active role in his situation, the two sides of anti-imperialism and colonization become muted. Slowly the two opposing beliefs are pressed together until the climax of the novel during Marlow's exchange with the dying [Kurtz](#). At this point, Marlow reaches the understanding that the differences between the two sides of the issue no longer exist for him, and although he is unwilling to continue the moral trial himself, he judges the grim outcome through the experiences of Kurtz.

Through much of the first half of the novel, Marlow attempts to remain an observer of the events around him and so he is able to offer his contradictory perceptions on the issue of imperialism. Because he takes very little deliberate action, he can pass his judgement on what he sees without actually having to take a moral stand one way or another. In fact, the journey itself, at first, began as noth...

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...ally means."(pg.51) Marlow never actually takes the final step, he remains an observer, and so his conclusion can never really be justified.

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