

Significance of the Congo River in Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness

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Significance of the Congo River in Heart of Darkness

The Significance of the Congo River For Marlow, the journey on the Congo River is one of the most difficult and ominous journeys he will ever take. The fact that it takes him around and not completely into the jungle is significant of [Marlow's](#) psychological journey as well. He never really goes on land but watches the [shore](#) from the outside. The only time he goes on shore he finds a wasteland. For Marlow the jungle of the Congo is representative of evil that man is capable of. In Heart of Darkness, it seems that the further Marlow travels into the jungle, the deeper he looks into himself. All this time is spent on the Congo River as he looks from the outside. This is symbolic as he is looking at his soul from the outside but never really sees himself until he goes on land to get Kurtz. When he arrives on land is symbolic of when he looks the deepest into himself. He goes to find Kurtz on his deathbed and is given he choice to take over for him as a god among an African tribe. Marlow is faced with the ultimate choice between good and evil. For a moment it is uncertain what choice Marlow will make. But, unlike Kurtz, Marlow picks the good over evil, as he rescues Kurtz back to the steamer. The fact that Marlow sailed along the Congo

River, around the jungle, and not actually into the jungle is an important symbol also. Marlow never walks the path that Kurtz did to self-destruction. He went around the jungle to avoid getting captured by evil. Kurtz was a decent Englishman until he gave into the desires of his heart of darkness. Kurtz spent all his time in the jungle and eventually forgot all of his self-control, manners, and [upbringing](#). He truly looked in the deepest part of himself and found that his evil desires would reign. This is symbolic because he was deep inside the jungle. In this respect Conrad uses two men to show the reader both the good and bad of humankind. He shows the true evil and good that man is capable of. If proper restraints had been there would Kurtz have done things differently?

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