



JOSEPH CONRAD AND
HISTORICAL
BACKGROUND OF
HEART OF DARKNESS

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JOSEPH CONRAD'S EARLY LIFE

- Born Józef Teodor Konrad Korzeniowski in 1857 in Berdychiv (now Ukraine)
- Father: Polish nationalist exiled by Russian authorities
- Orphaned by age 12, raised by maternal uncle
- Dreamed of traveling to Central Africa

CONRAD'S MARITIME CAREER

- Left Poland at 17 to become a sailor
- Traveled globally: Caribbean, Southeast Asia, Africa
- Became a British citizen in 1886
- 1890: Journey to the Congo Free State as a steamboat captain



CONGO RIVER



TRANSITION TO LITERATURE



- Started writing in English, his third language
- Major works: *Heart of Darkness* (1899), *Lord Jim* (1900), *Nostromo* (1904), *The Secret Agent* (1907)
- Died in 1924, buried in Canterbury, England



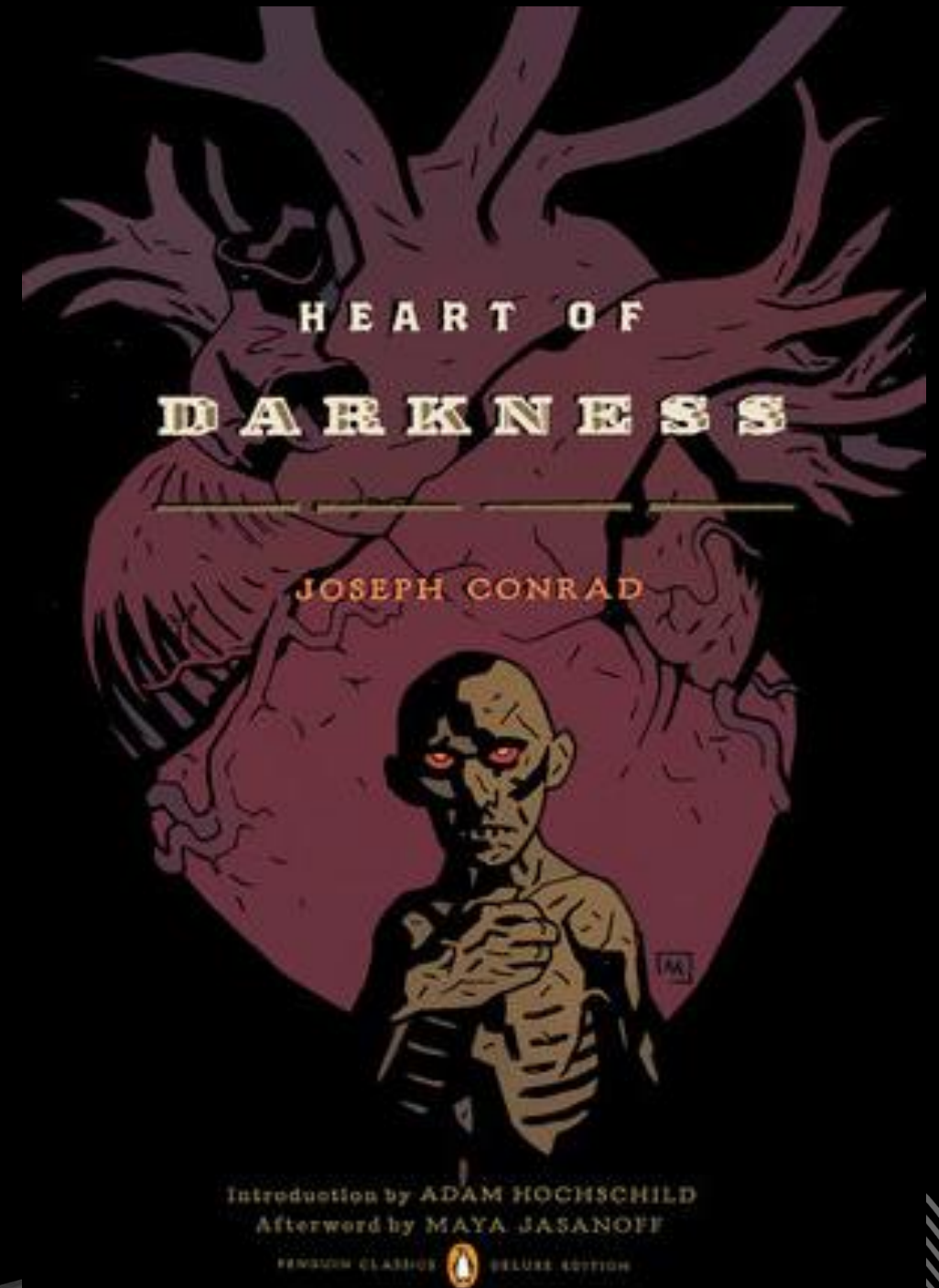
CONRAD'S LITERARY STYLE

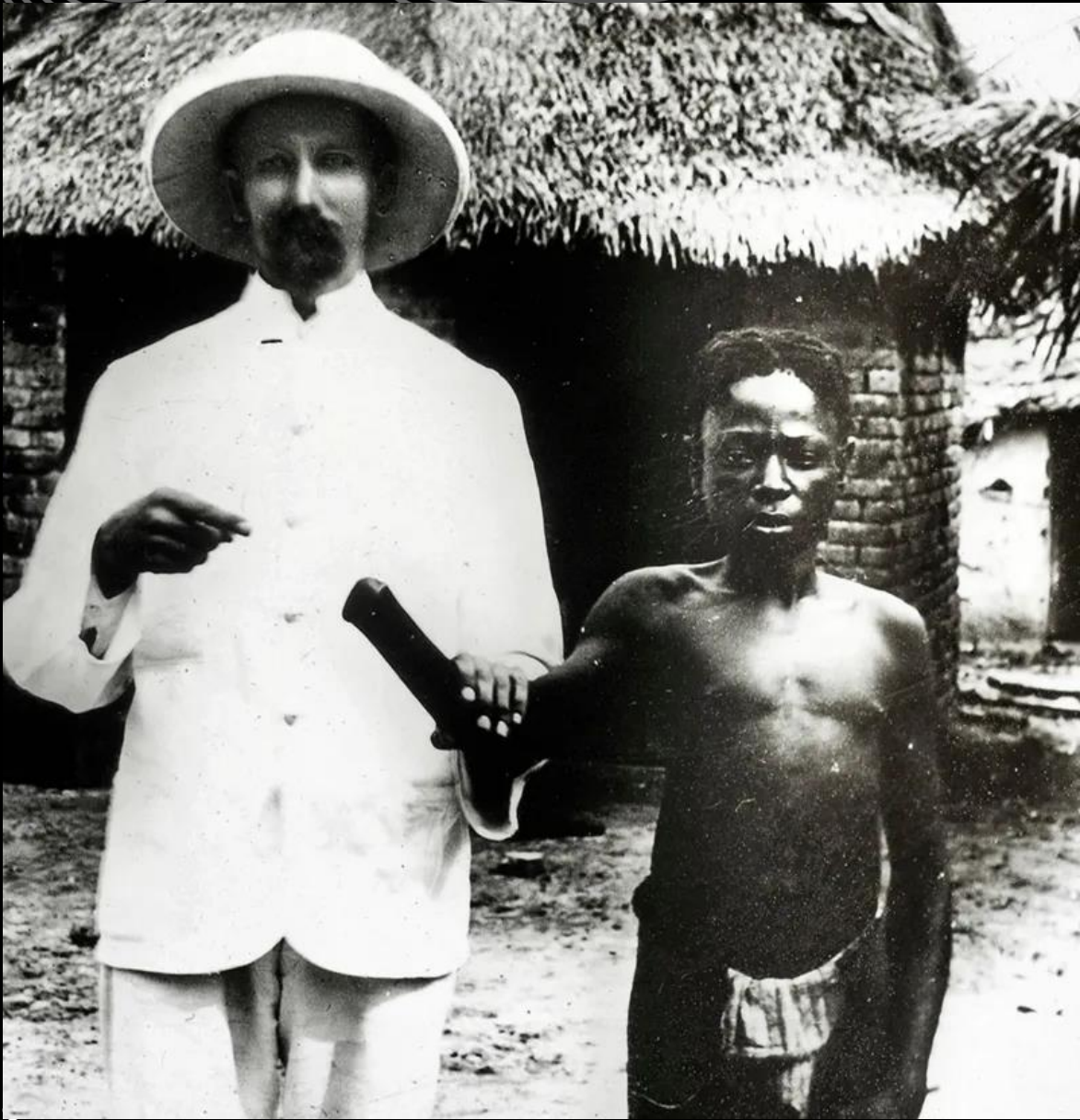
- Realism + Impressionism + Modernism
- Impressionistic descriptions: vivid sensory details
- Moral ambiguity: no clear heroes or villains
- Psychological depth: characters face existential crises
- Colonial critique: exposes brutality of imperialism

HEART OF DARKNESS: HISTORICAL CONTEXT

- Published in 1899, set in the Congo Free State
- Inspired by Conrad's real experiences in the Congo
- Critiques European imperialism and its exploitation

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THE CONGO FREE STATE

- Ruled by King Leopold II of Belgium
- Known for extreme violence, forced labor, and exploitation
- Millions of Congolese people died under Leopold's rule



VICTORIAN IMPERIALISM

- Late 19th century: peak of British Empire
- Ideology of racial superiority justified colonialism
- Contrast: Rudyard Kipling's "White Man's Burden" vs. Conrad's critique



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HEART OF DARKNESS AND MODERNISM

- Transition from Victorian literature to Modernism
- Framed narrative structure
- Ambiguous moral conclusions



KEY THEMES

- Imperial Hypocrisy: False justifications for exploitation
- Moral Ambiguity: No clear distinction between good and evil
- Psychological Disintegration: Madness and alienation



KEY CHARACTERS

- Charlie Marlow: Skeptical, philosophical protagonist
- Kurtz: Charismatic but morally corrupt ivory trader



THE MEANING OF DARKNESS

- Literal: The unexplored African jungle
- Symbolic: The moral and psychological darkness within humanity



LEGACY AND IMPACT

- Inspired modernist writers like T.S. Eliot and William Faulkner
- Criticized for its portrayal of Africa (Chinua Achebe's response)
- Remains a central text in discussions of imperialism and race



THANK YOU

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