Joseph Conrad - *Heart of Darkness*

Test: September 27/28

“There is a taint of death, a flavour of mortality in lies - which is exactly what I hate and detest in the world - what I want to forget.”

Pre-reading study and post-reading analysis:

* Biography of Joseph Conrad
* Two critical reviews of the novel, printed and annotated (should be read and annotated *after* you finish reading the novel); address Chinua Achebe’s response to the text
* You really have to have some context of what was going on, historically, during this novel: <http://loki.stockton.edu/~kinsellt/projects/hod/history.html>

Annotations:

* **Narrative sequence and technique** are critical to understanding this novel. Conrad uses language masterfully, and the ability to tell a story is a major (seriously, major) part of this text.
* Annotate characterizations of Marlow, Kurtz, the pilgrims, the cannibals, etc.
* Keep track of the chapters and parts. Include a one-sentence summary at the end of each chapter. You could imagine that the collection of these statements would well summarize and analyze the novel.
* Identify passages of quotes, which are clearly intended to communicate a broad message or thematic significance.
* Post it notes should mark thematic elements, literary comparison, big ideas.
* Use post-its to mark pages with **imagery and figurative language.** Identify motifs, repetitions, and symbols. There are many words that are repeated incessantly - there’s obviously a reason for that. Mark those words and evaluate why those words are repeated and the difference in each use (some of the words mean different things in different context).
* Ask questions. Write questions which come with a reasonable guarantee of an answer “down river,” but use post-its when you develop questions whose answers will lead to major thematic explanations or questions worthy of asking a small group or the entire class or questions which would lead to deep discussion.
* Vocabulary is also now OPTIONAL. I personally make a habit of defining terms when I read, but that’s because I believe that learning might benefit me somewhere and sometime in the future. I realize time is an issue for you….

In your **composition** book open a series of pages which act first as a receptacle for three main items:

1. Summarize the three major sections.
2. Look back at your post-its. They should mark the pages of the chapter where you have identified points for critical analysis. While a minimum should never exist, you should choose three to five post its for every section. Physically pull them out of your novel, and paste them into your composition book. Once you’ve identified these points, expound. Your analysis should challenge your psychoanalysis of characters, broaden your understanding of symbols, illustrate the effects of Conrad’s style, sew the settings and places to thematic elements, map your insights even if the roads don’t have ends.
3. Engage in a genuine conversation with Conrad and Marlow and Kurtz. Provide authentic answers to questions. Record your thoughts and feelings and reactions to the time period. It’s often (or sometimes) difficult for many to relate to slavery and racial injustice today. This book discusses a culture which is very powerful but may be difficult to understand.