

## 12<sup>th</sup> Grade Summer Reading

For 12<sup>th</sup> grade summer reading you are to choose one of the following texts:

*Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad

*Lord of the Flies* by William Golding

Each has their own assignment that follows. Students that do both assignments over the summer will receive an extra first quarter test grade which will allow their lowest test grade to be dropped.

Heart of Darkness:

We really can't say it better than Joseph Conrad himself. Heart of Darkness is: A wild story of a journalist who becomes manager of a station in the (African) interior and makes himself worshipped by a tribe of savages. Thus described, the subject seems comic, but it isn't. No—not comic at all.

Set in the African Interior and based on Conrad's own experiences as the captain of a Belgian steamer, Heart of Darkness isn't much like the rousing adventure story that it could be. It's less Indiana Jones and the Ivory Traders than, well, psychological horror. And in February of 1899, readers of Blackwood's Magazine—a highfalutin' literary rag, kind of like The New Yorker—would have been treated to the first of its three parts. Conrad is one of the most important English writers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

And get this: he wasn't even English. Conrad was Polish, and he didn't actually learn English until he was in his twenties—and after he'd already learned French. His works explore the seedy underbelly of imperialism, the move in the nineteenth century for European countries to stake out claim to various far-flung parts of the world.

Heart of Darkness is set right after the Scramble for Africa, the period of the late nineteenth century when imperial powers sliced up and doled out Africa like some particularly delicious—and ivory-rich—birthday cake. None of the Western countries really come off looking good in this whole debacle, but Belgium, unfortunately, looks particularly bad. They were after the valuable ivory hidden away in the African Interior, and they weren't afraid to brutalize and oppress the Africans in order to get it.

Heart of Darkness follows the disturbing journey of English ivory trading agent Marlow, who, working for a Belgian company, travels into the jungles of Africa in search of a mysterious man named Kurtz who appears to have (1) become a god-like figure, and (2) gone totally mad. But Heart of Darkness is much more than a story about a trip up the river. It's a searching exploration of difference: of good and evil, black and white, sanity and insanity.

### **ESSAY:**

Must be typed in MLA format:

12 point font (Times New Roman or Calibri)

Double Spaced

1 inch margins on all sides

*Interesting* Title Centered

with Name, Date, and Teacher's Name in upper right hand corner.

Use at least 3-5 Quotes from the novel

1000 words minimum

Pick one for Heart of Darkness

1. Choose one of the following TENSIONS in *Heart of Darkness* and write an essay that traces its evolution throughout the novella: (a) appearance vs. reality, (b) primitivism vs. civilization, (c) light vs. dark, or (d) innocence vs. experience.
2. Analyze Marlow's obsession with Kurtz. Why does he pursue Kurtz? Why does he defend and attempt to save him? Why does he choose Kurtz over the other colonials? What do Kurtz and Marlow have in common?
3. Many nineteenth and twentieth-century writers (i.e. Nietzsche, Balzac, Ibsen, Hardy, Crane) express a tragic conception of human life—that its purpose is impenetrable, its joys and sorrows meaningless. Write an essay exploring your interpretation of Conrad's conception of human life.

*Lord of the Flies* Summer Reading:

Think carefully about your reading in relation to the following statement:

In his classic novel, *Lord of the Flies*, William Golding suggests that beneath our supposedly civilized façade (outward show) lies a savage beast we thought we had tamed. In his notes, Golding claims that "the theme is an attempt to trace the defects of society back to the defects of human nature." This asks important questions such as:

- What is the nature of Man (at his core, is he basically good, evil, or a blank slate)? Think about this in relation to the different characters within the story.
- Are we civilized or are we savage?
- Which characters represent the most civilized side of man and why?
- Which characters represent the savage side of man and why? • Do any characters within the novel transition from civilized to savage or savage to civilized?
- Do you agree with Golding's statement that Man is at his very core still a savage even with the modern advances that exist as well as his attempts at civilized behavior?
- Do you feel that Golding has no faith that Man is inherently good? • Golding chooses to end his novel by introducing the Naval Officer. Why does Golding reintroduce civilization through the Naval Officer at the height of the boys' savagery? How is this ironic?

Students that choose *Lord of the Flies* will be writing a dialectical journal for their summer reading assignment.

What is a dialectical journal?

The term “dialectic” means “the art or practice of arriving at the truth by using conversation involving questions and answers.” A dialectic journal should help you develop a better understanding of the novel.

Assignment: Complete at least one journal entry per chapter as you read *Lord of the Flies*. As you read, choose passages that stand out to you and record them in the left-hand column of a T-chart (include page numbers).

In the right column, write your response to the text (ideas/insights, questions, reflections, and comments on each passage).

Look for quotes that seem significant, powerful, thought provoking or puzzling. For example:

- Effective &/or creative use of stylistic or literary devices Passages that remind you of your own life or something you’ve seen before
- Structural shifts or turns in the plot
- A passage that makes you realize something you hadn’t seen before
- Examples of patterns: recurring images, ideas, colors, symbols or motifs.
- Passages with confusing language or unfamiliar vocabulary
- Events you find surprising or confusing
- Passages that illustrate a particular character or setting

Respond to passages critically. For example:

- Analyze the text for use of literary devices (tone, structure, style, imagery)
- Make connections between different characters or events in the text
- Make connections to a different text (or film, song, etc...)
- Discuss the words, ideas, or actions of the author or character(s)
- Consider an event or description from the perspective of a different character
- Analyze a passage and its relationship to the story as a whole