

Heart of Darkness Character

Writer: Joseph Conrad | Generated: Jan 26, 2026

Major Characters

- **Marlow:** The central character and narrator of the story. He is a sailor who travels on the Congo River. In the depths of Africa, he witnesses the greed, exploitation, and cruelty of European imperialism. Marlow is seen as Conrad's self-portrait, the one who uncovers the truth about human darkness and the hypocrisy of civilization.
- **Kurtz:** A European trader and agent. He achieves great success in collecting ivory in Africa, but collapses morally. To the local villagers, he is almost like a god, yet power makes him cruel and corrupt. His final words, "The horror! The horror!", reveal the dreadful reality of the human soul.
- **The Narrator (Frame-Narrator):** An unnamed narrator who listens to Marlow's story on the Thames. He creates the "frame" of the narrative, making the story mysterious and symbolic.

Minor Characters

- **The Manager:** The chief station manager in the Congo. Incompetent, jealous, and focused only on keeping his position. His envy and intrigue against Kurtz reflect the selfish nature of imperialism.
- **The Brickmaker:** An official at the station who actually does no real work. He flatters and manipulates to keep his position. He symbolizes the emptiness and hypocrisy of the colonial system.
- **The Pilgrims:** European employees who come to Africa only for ivory and wealth. They are symbols of greed and moral emptiness.
- **The Cannibals:** A group of African crewmen. Although called "cannibals," they show more patience and humanity than the Europeans, especially in Marlow's eyes.
- **The Intended:** Kurtz's fiancée, who remains in Europe. She imagines Kurtz as a noble man. Her ignorance represents the hypocrisy of European civilization and its tendency to hide the truth.

- **The Russian Trader:** A devoted follower of Kurtz, who worships him like a god. His colorful clothes and eccentric behavior make him an intriguing figure.

Symbolic Relationships

- **Marlow and Kurtz:** Through Kurtz's life and downfall, Marlow discovers the truth of European imperialism. Their relationship represents the conflict between civilization and savagery, morality and greed.
- **Kurtz and The Intended:** She never knows Kurtz's true self. This relationship symbolizes the falsehood of European civilization, which hides the truth.
- **Europe and Africa:** Europe claims to be the symbol of civilization, but in Africa, its hypocrisy and inhumanity are exposed.