



**Staring Into the  
*Heart of Darkness*  
with Students  
of Varied Abilities  
and Levels**

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# Context

- Give students relevant background that will help them to read—not a long, facts-filled history lecture.
- Provide short primary documents for reading and analysis that allow students to explore larger issues.
- Use images for engagement and as tools for improving close-reading skills.

***Senator Albert J. Beveridge on Expansion, 9 January 1900  
(from the 56<sup>th</sup> Congressional Record)***

Mr. President, this question is deeper than any question of party politics: deeper than any question of the isolated policy of our country even; deeper even than any question of constitutional power. It is elemental. It is racial. God has not been preparing the English-speaking and Teutonic peoples for a thousand years for nothing but vain and idle self-contemplation and self-admiration. No! He has made us the master organizers of the world to establish systems where chaos reigns. He has given us the spirit of progress to overwhelm the forces of reaction throughout the earth. He has made us adept in government that we may administer government among savage and senile peoples. Were it not for such a force as this the world would relapse into barbarism and night. And of all our race He has marked the American people as His chosen nation to finally lead in the regeneration of the world. This is the divine mission of America, and it holds for us all the profit, all the glory, all the happiness possible to man. We are trustees of the world's progress, guardians of its righteous peace.

***Examine the images depicting Imperialism, and choose two to discuss in depth.***

1. literal level

What's going on?

2. close-reading level

imagery, detail, caricature, composition, text

3. interpretive level

meaning, theme, tone, satire

4. synthesis level

intertextuality with *Heart of Darkness* (at least 3 quotations with explanation of connection)



FROM THE CAPE TO CAIRO

# Strategies to Improve Understanding

- Teach the novella as art (*chiaroscuro* and Impressionism).
- Distinguish between reading for plot and reading for analysis.
- Utilize thematically related literature and readings.
- Model analysis: connecting specific textual details to meaning. Write your own, and share stellar student work.
- Provide templates as a form of scaffolding.
- Create your own AP free response questions with text.

# *Chiaroscuro*

- Contrasting light and shade for effect
- From Italian, meaning “bright dark”
- a term referring to the effect obtained in a painting or literary work when light and dark images or patterns of imagery are contrasted or emphasized

# Focusing on Complexity in Close-Reading Analysis

For **THESIS**, select precise adjectives that show two distinct characteristics AND address thematic meaning or tone.

- \_\_\_\_\_ yet \_\_\_\_\_ *OR* \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_
- revealing \_\_\_\_\_

STUDENT SAMPLE: *Marlow depicts the members of the Company as destructive and hypocritical, revealing his disdainful attitude toward European Imperialism.*



# Incorporating & Explaining Evidence

Marlow *identifies* the newly-arrived Europeans as the Eldorado Exploring Expedition, and thus, through their name alone, he *illuminates* their true purpose and his contempt for them. The allusion to Eldorado, the mythical city of gold and riches sought by the Spanish explorers in the 1500s, *reveals* that they are not a group with "serious intention" or "moral purpose." Marlow *shows* his derision for the entire enterprise when he states that their true "desire" is only to "tear treasure out of the bowels of the land." His use of the word "tear" *suggests* a violence in their actions, and the personification of an Africa whose "bowels" are eviscerated *manifests* the truly destructive nature of European Imperialism.

***textual detail*** \_\_\_\_\_ ***comment about meaning***

- characterizes
- contributes
- demonstrates
- depicts
- develops
- displays
- emphasizes
- epitomizes
- establishes
- exemplifies
- highlights
- identifies
- illuminates
- illustrates
- magnifies
- manifests
- portrays
- reaffirms
- reflects
- represents
- reveals
- shows
- signifies
- suggests

