HEART OF DARKNESS
Conrad’s Style
Modern Novel

• For modern novelists, the messiness and confusion and darkness of experience is interesting.

• Rather than trying to simplify and abstract a particular meaning from experience, novelists tend to wallow in the multiplicity of ideas and meanings and sensations that experience can provide.
Modern Novel

- Novelists are in the business of recreating and communicating the rich complexities of the experience itself.

- Their purpose is to get the reader to re-live an experience, with all its complexity and messiness, all its darkness and ambiguity
For Conrad, the world as we experience it is not a sort of place that can be reduced to a set of clear, explicit truths.

Its truths—the truths of the psyche, of the human mind and soul—are messy, vague, irrational, suggestive, and dark.

Conrad’s intention?: to lead his readers to an experience of the “heart of darkness,” not to shed the light of reason on it... but to recreate his experience of darkness in our feelings, our sensibilities, our own dark and mysterious hearts.
Modern Novel

• Since its publication, *Heart of Darkness* has fascinated readers and critics, almost all of whom regard the novel as significant because of its use of ambiguity and (in Conrad's own words) "foggishness" to dramatize Marlow's perceptions of the horrors he encounters.

• Critics have regarded *Heart of Darkness* as a work that in several important ways broke many narrative conventions and brought the English novel into the twentieth century.
Conrad’s Use of Diction

Very Descriptive words
“Trees, trees, millions of trees, massive, immense, running up high; and in their foot, hugging the bank against the stream, crept the little begrimed steamboat, like a sluggish beetle crawling on the floor of a lofty portico.”

Uses synonyms for “dark” for emphasis
“All this was in the gloom, while we down there were yet in the sunshine, and the stretch of the river abreast of the clearing glittered in a still and dazzling splendor, with a murky and overshadowed bend above and below.”

Vivid sound imagery
“It is the gift of the great,’ she went on, and the sound of her low voice seemed to have the accompaniment of all the other sounds, full of mystery, desolation, and sorrow, I had ever heard- the ripple of the river, the soughing of the trees swayed by the wind, the murmurs of wild crowds, the faint ring of incomprehensible words cried form afar, the whisper of a voice speaking from beyond the threshold of an eternal darkness.”
Diction continued…

- Uses anaphora, which is emphasizing words by repeating them at the beginning of neighboring clauses, to help build tension.
  
  “I looked around, and I don’t know why, but I assure you that never, never before, did this land, this river, this jungle, the very arch of this blazing sky, appear to me so hopeless and so dark, so impenetrable to human thought, so pitiless to human weakness.”

- Very patronizing
  - While describing a black man Marlow says “The man seemed young- almost a boy- but you know with them it’s hard to tell.” About his crew he says “They wandered here and there with their absurd long staves in their hands, like a lot of faithless pilgrims bewitched inside a rotten fence.”
Diction continued…

❖ Negative connotations
  ❖ “Droll thing life is- that mysterious arrangement of merciless logic for a futile purpose.”

❖ Conversational choice of words and punctuation
  ❖ “He forgot I hadn’t heard any of these splendid monologues on, what was it? on love, justice, conduct of like- or what not.”
Punctuation

Dashes

- Used frequently
- Help put a greater emphasis on his point
  - “We live, as we dream- alone…."
- Used as appositives
  - “He allowed this “boy”- an overfed young negro from the coast- to treat the white men, under his very eyes, with provoking insolence.”
- Used for a conversational effect
  - “But this must have been before his- let us say- nerves went wrong, and caused him to preside at certain midnight dances ending with unspeakable rites, which- as far as I reluctantly gathered from what I heard at various times- were offered up to him- do you understand?- to Mr Kurtz himself.”
Punctuation

Exclamation Points
- Used for the basic use of emphasis.
  - “But it was a victory!”
- Sometimes followed by a word that is not capitalized, simply for the conversational aspect to come across.
  - “I said Hang!- and let things slide.”

Ellipses
- Shows Marlow’s thoughts trailing off.
  - “The danger, if any, I expounded, was from out proximity to a great human passion let loose. Even extreme grief may ultimately vent itself in violence- but more generally takes the form of apathy…."
- Leaves certain ideas and thoughts hanging for his listeners to think about for themselves.
  - “It seems to me I am trying to tell you a dream- making a vain attempt, because no relation of a dream can convey the dream-sensation, that commingling of absurdity, surprise, and bewilderment in a tremor of struggling revolt, that notion of being captured by the incredible which is of the very essence of dreams…. “