

Imperialism In “Heart Of Darkness”

Posted on September 5, 2019

Imperialism simply refers to the colonization period of African and Asian nations by the European countries, Japan, and the United States in the nineteenth century. In order for us to discuss the theme of imperialism in detail, we shall consider the book, “Heart of Darkness,” which was written by Joseph Conrad, entailing the journey up the Congo River and into the Congo Free State in Africa (Conrad n.p).

The play “[Heart of Darkness](#)” explores various issues related to imperialism in complex ways. To begin with, we see that Marlow’s voyages from the outer station move into the central station and finally journey up the river to the inner location. Marlow encounters cruelty, near-slavery, and also some acts of suffering. At the very least, the related décor of the book provides a harsh portrayal of the expatriate initiative (Cheng et al. n.p). Similarly, the push behind the adventures of Marlow is also linked to the hypocrisy intrinsic in the oratorical use in the course of justifying imperialism. The people who work for the company go ahead and describe what they do as “trade”, and they also claim the way they treat the Native Americans is a part of the compassionate project of “evolution”. On the other hand, Kurtz goes ahead and opens up to the fact that he also trades, but he takes ivory through the use of force. Correspondingly, he goes ahead to describe his personal treatment of the Native Americans through words like “extermination” and “suppression” (Conrad n.p). He is not afraid to hide the datum that he governs through the use of intimidation and violence. Unfortunately, his obstinate honesty resulted in his downfall, and this was because his success threatened to expose the malevolent carryout behind the European undertakings in Africa.

Nevertheless, for Kurtz, as much as Marlow and the Company, Africans in the book are depicted merely as objects. Kurtz’s African concubine is at best a portion of statutory, and according to Marlow Africans are simply helmsman as a piece of equipment. Arguments can be made that the book “*Heart of Darkness*” partakes in the oppression and discrimination of the non-whites is much more menacing, and it becomes much more difficult to remedy as compared to the mere open manipulations of Kurtz or the company’s men (Firchow n.p). Africans, therefore, become a simple framework for Marlow, a hominid screen alongside which he is able to produce his existential and philosophical brawls. In addition, their exoticism and their existence made his self-contemplation possible. This form of dehumanization is very hard to recognize as compared to the expatriate ferocity or the act of open racism. Although “*Heart of Darkness*” offers a more influential censure of the two-faced manoeuvres of imperialism, it also goes forward to present a convention on issues surrounding race, which is eventually disturbing.

Imperialism Result in Madness

The issue of madness is closely linked to imperialism in the book “*Heart of Darkness*”. Africa is liable

for psychological breakdown, as well as bodily disorders (Achebe 24). In the book, madness serves two main functions. First, madness acts as an ironic device to engage the reader's compassion. It is told from the beginning of the book that Marlow and Kurtz are mad. Conversely, Marlow and the readers start to create a more multifaceted depiction of Kurtz, and it appears that his madness is only relative. Hence, both the reader and Marlow start to empathize with Kurtz, and they begin to see the company with misgiving.

In addition, Conrad's interpretation of the pre-colonial period is very interesting in the way that it supersedes other books. In the majority of the scenes within the book, Joseph Conrad shows the imperialists' exploitation of retrograde. In the same way, the way in which Conrad treated this theme of imperialism was dictated and influenced by his personal visit to Congo, coupled together with his exploitation of the dark nation (Congo). Likewise, his rendering of Marlow's sub-conscious and conscious viewpoints is also based on his personal reactions to what Conrad himself had viewed in the course of his travels throughout Congo (Firchow n.p).

The significance of imperialism is hit at the very outset of Marlow's tale. Marlow speaks at the commencement of the primordial Roman subjugation of Britain and claims that the Romans became conquerors through the use of brutal force (Joseph n.p). According to Marlow, Rome's conquest of Britain was nothing but "theft with ferocity" and by violence. In this case, it was a large-scale murder.

Lastly, in Conrad's *"Heart of Darkness"*, the main character of the book is a sign of constructive imperialism. As a character, Marlow comes to the realization of the evils related to negative imperialism, and he comes to the conclusion that it is truly unnecessary. When Marlow says, "I had got a heavenly mission to civilize you," he expresses this on good terms by helping the Africans to develop and improve (Hawkins 289). Additionally, when he claims that "I was an imposter," Marlow clearly recognizes the fact that he had invaded into a foreign nation, thus far he still sticks to his ethical values. Marlow observes different forms of abuse of power by the white community just because they had better artillery for war. But, to Marlow these unjust treatments is seen as abuse to the African people, nonetheless, he does not physically stop it. Instead, he just shies away and accepts that it is happening. This was one of Marlow's flaws, for he failed to back his principles. For instance, in chapter one of the book, page seven, there is an example of imperialism since the Africans refer to him as "their enemy". This is a perfect example of the rivalry between the Natives and the Europeans.

Works Cited

Achebe, Chinua. "An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's Heart of Darkness." *The Massachusetts Review* 57.1 (2016): 14-27.

Cheng, Hsiang-Yun, et al. "Core vs. uncore: The heart of darkness." *Proceedings of the 52nd Annual Design Automation Conference*. ACM, 2015.

Conrad, Joseph. *Heart of Darkness (Fourth International Student Edition)(Norton Critical Editions)*. WW Norton & Company, 2016.

Firchow, Peter Edgerly. *Envisioning Africa: Racism and Imperialism in Conrad's Heart of Darkness*. University Press of Kentucky, 2015.

Hawkins, Hunt. "Conrad's Critique of Imperialism in Heart of Darkness." *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* (1979): 286-299.

Joseph, Conrad. *Heart of Darkness*. Strelbytskyy Multimedia, 2017.