

Mikerline Laurent
Conrad and Joyce

Refer to Slide 21-22 on Chinua Achebe's response to Heart of Darkness. How does the frame narrative exempt or allow for certain examinations of real political and cultural conditions that might otherwise be criticized or dismissed given the author's background as a European writer?

After eight years of returning home from Africa, Conrad was inspired by his travel journals to write a novel based on the continent of Africa. Heart of Darkness is a story of a journalist who becomes manager of a station in the middle of Africa and makes himself worshipped by a "tribe of savages". The people in Heart of Darkness are represented as savages who are criminals and enemies. They were described as cannibals who were poorly treated and only fed hippopotamus meat, and refused food by the Europeans. They were also demonstrated as savages due to their lack of knowledge in technology. "To apply such a reading, he says, is to reduce an entire people to a literary device and to agree that Africa is the "antithesis of Europe and . . . civilization," a mere "metaphysical battlefield." As Achebe points out, Conrad denies Africans the power of language and facial expressions". This was Chinua Achebe's response to Joseph Conrad's "Heart of Darkness". Achebe takes a strong stand against Conrad's Heart of Darkness. He claims that Conrad was a racist and that a novel that depersonalizes a part of the human race should not be considered a great work of art. This novel terribly portrays the people of Africa and highlights the ignorance of the European political and cultural conditions. Spending some time in a continent does not mean you understand the people nor the cultures. The motherland is filled with different countries and cultures and though they may not be as technologically advanced as the Europeans were back then or even now, the way Conrad spoke of the people is truly disheartening. It is downright racist and portrays the same way of thinking when colonizers invaded other countries and continents.