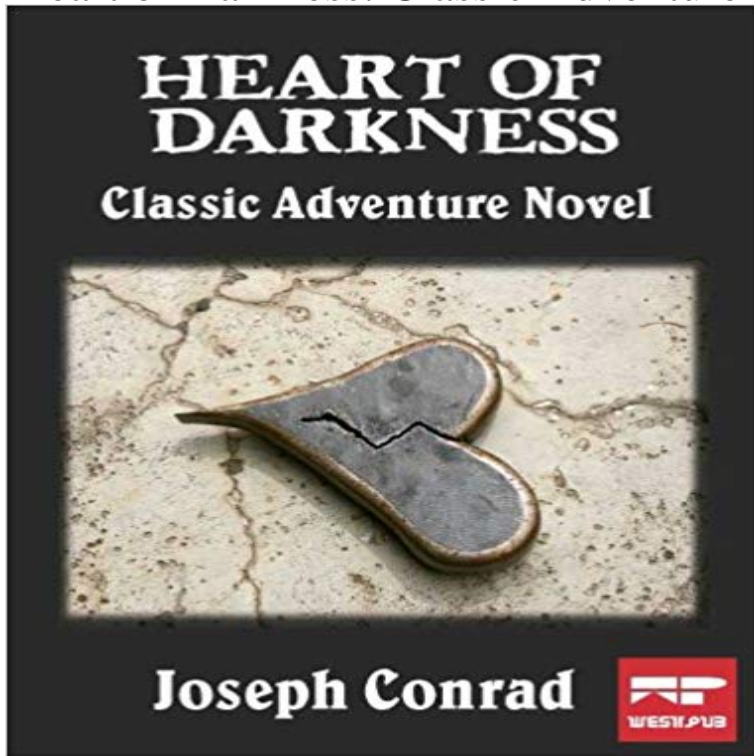


Heart of Darkness: Classic Adventure Novel (Illustrated)



Amazon Review; Several people I am acquainted with have questioned my reading of Heart of Darkness, using as argument the fact that they read it in high school. Apparently, for these very well-read souls, if the book was in their high school reading list, then it should never be approached again. Well, both the poem of El Cid and the novel Don Quijote first revealed their wonders to me when I was in high school, and now that I have read them again (and Don Quijote complete this time), they have just proved to be timeless classics with something to tell a person of any age. Heart of Darkness, by Joseph Conrad, is a classic that, given its length, invites several readings, particularly if one goes beyond the high school-depth sadly evident in those acquaintances of mine. The different, dark, alien world of the Congo as barely seen through Marlow's eyes, juxtaposed with the author's subtle-but-powerful condemnation of a system that promotes exploitation of those seen as inferior, is one of this novella's most important, and often missed, commentaries. Marlow is the English sailor who does not, and cannot, understand anything that is not English, from the nameless city across the Channel (Brussels, most probably), to the ghost-like figures that people his employers' offices, to the multi-coloured map that shows how Africa has been carved, to the multi-coloured Russian whose language Marlow cannot recognize and believes is cypher, to the river itself, to the native inhabitants of the land he is invading. This trip up the Congo river that Marlow tells his shipmates about while on the Thames is a journey after a man's voice, his treasure of ivory, and his report on the natives. This man, Kurtz, is the one who will state kill the brutes! in his report, expressing the opinion of so many Europeans regarding most, and maybe all, non-European races. Heart of Darkness can be read simply as an adventure, but

there are several, better, adventure books that have better hooks and are, at the same time, more easily forgotten. This is an extraordinary short book by an extraordinary author. Do not deprive yourself of a magnificent, early 20th century masterpiece of literature, just because someone was not hooked by it, or because someone read it in high school and it just wouldn't do to read it again. The power of this book is not in its easy prose, because its prose is definitely not easy. It is not in an artificially complex prose, either. This second fault seems more the refuge of other writers, plenty of them modern ones, who have confused good with obscure, and better with unreadable. Conrad knows how to tell a story, and there is a method to this dark tale told by Marlow, a man much closer to Kurtz than he would like to admit. Since the reader is presented only with Marlow's account, the jump from the reader to Marlow to Kurtz and back to the reader is a troubling one. Here is Conrad's mastery. Read the book. If you have read it, try it again. It may surprise you what new revelations prowl its pages. This 3rd Norton Critical edition is the best I have seen so far. The essays are all good, but Chinua Achebe's deserves special attention: the Nigerian author advocates not reading Heart of Darkness at all, a statement that, coming from a writer, is not just surprising, but deeply disturbing. I sincerely believe that this form of intentional ignorance, of voluntary censorship on the part of the reader, only serves to foment a generalized, public ignorance of the world around us. This edition includes free audio book for download.

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