**The Heart of Darkness**

1.    What is implied by Marlow's assertion that "This also...has been one of the dark places on the earth"?

A)

When Marlow says "And this also, suddenly, has been one of the dark places on the earth" I think he is implying that, once upon a time, London was also a place of darkness. He is comparing it with Africa and what he thinks Africa is like. Which is a place where savages live and where they are still trying to develop into humans. He says that Africa was like the beginning of time. So by comparing London to Africa, he was saying that London started with savages. And that London has developed into what it is, with civilized people. But it was once, long ago, not that way.

B)

I feel that Marlow is referring to the fact that no matter how "civilized" London was at the time of this story being told, that it has the darkness and evil as Africa does. People are people and we see that imperialism is happening in Africa and how can one act so civilized in England but "savagely" while in Africa - because everyone has an evil part of their soul. It matters how one treats this evil and I think that Marlow was referring to just that. Africa gives that evil trait a field to harvest and men, like Kurtz, were able to feed that evil in Africa But not in London even though at the time London was a being developed there were evil men at the heart of it being civilized.

C)

Marlow figured that England was one of the dark places on earth however after his experience in Africa realized that the Romans that faced darkness would never understand the mysterious jungle and the wild men that inhabited there. The African men were carnivores and ate whatever meat that they could find. Their teeth were shaped like arrows to tear through raw meat. The jungle also seemed dark because of all the dense foliage around hardly let any light in. England was also dark in regards to uncivilized of the Roman invasion of Britain. Marlow could see that the darkness consumed Kurtz to his death.

2.    How does Marlow feel about the natives? Why does he feel this way? How is his attitude different than the other Europeans he meets in Africa?

A)

Marlow treats the natives as if they are people, not animals.  Many of the Europeans treat the natives as animals to do their bidding.  There were, even in those times, people who felt that the treatment of other people, no matter how different, should be respectful.  Many of the Europeans were not respectful of anyone who was different, uncivilized, or primitive in their opinion.  This was especially true if the “lower humans” had things that they valued, in this case it was the Ivory the Europeans wanted.  Perhaps it was because of the lower station that Marlow had growing up that lead him to his belief.  Sometimes people who witness or experience injustice will be the ones to treat others better than they had experienced.  It is still true today, to an extent.  Class distinction still exists along with the attitudes of people in those classes.

B)

Marlow, a product of his time, tries to see the Natives on good terms, but sometimes his good intentions still leave us feeling off. Struggling to find where he fits in with the evolving opinions towards other races, Marlow does a good job of occasionally defending the native African Americans, and even attempts to change the vocabulary used by his fellow crew mates. He feels this way, I think, because he's a good person; simple as that. He doesn't let skin color stand in the way of good intentions, and does what he can to sort of be an advocate for the Africans around him. His attitude is not generally mirrored by other Europeans, who talk about Africans as 'savages' and as 'criminals.' Marlow, on the other hand, begins to feel connected to some of the Africans he meets.

C)

Marlow is a racist. But Marlow still sees the natives as human beings. Marlow believes they are human and should be treated better. He thinks they are being mistreated. Although he believes in everything else that the Europeans believe, he doesn't think it's right that the natives are pretty much starved and are being over worked. They are pretty much dying slowly from being so weak. Marlow feels bad for them. He thinks that they can be good people if they are given the chance to. Marlow believes that if the natives are trained and taught things they can be civilized people. Marlow sees the natives for the people they are, even though he is racist.

3.    How are Marlow and Kurtz alike and different? Why does Marlow feel a kinship with Kurtz?

A)

Marlow and Kurtz both treat the natives as people.  They treat them with respect.  Kurtz, however starts to become like them.  He starts to adopt their rituals and ways and he abandons his intended.  I don’t believe Marlow would have done that.  I believe Marlow is one who would always remain with the sea.  I think that Marlow sees that Kurtz truly respected the native people and instead of enslaving and abusing them, Kurtz won them over and got them to provide the Ivory because he was kind to them, so much more than other whites that came to the land.  I think this is why Marlow felt a kinship with him and tried to protect his reputation to the end.

B)

Marlow and Kurtz have some similarities and differences and I think the clear similarity is both of them came from the same background which is white European families. Also, they came from the same social class and they are from the middle class.  Moreover, both of the two men love to do something and for example, Marlow was obsessed with coming to the African, but Kurtz goal was collect as much ivory as he can.

In the beginning, they were not interested in each other, but after they met they found they are okay. The clear difference is Kurtz did not want to go back to Europe and want to stay in Africa, but Marlow wants to go back to his life and family in Europe.

C)

Marlow is compassionate, lovable, sympathetic, and a protagonist. But Marlow and Kurtz have similarities as well. They both can be identified as arrogant. They both are obsessive. Marlow becomes very obsessed with Africa and finding Kurtz and Kurtz is obsessed with getting as much ivory as he can. Both of them are very powerful men on their own spectrums.  At one point in the story they both lose touch with reality and end up in their own heads. Marlow gets lost in the jungle mentally and Kurtz gets infatuated and lost in his power. I would say Marlow does have a kinship with Kurtz. They are very similar men because Marlow used to be like Kurtz and one day Kurtz could develop to be like Marlow, they are like mirror images of each other. I think he feels that kinship because Marlow sees himself in Kurtz over time.

4.    Why are all the heads but one facing Kurtz’s house? Does this explain anything about the way Kurtz feels about the natives? About the way he influences people?

A)

I suspect that the one head facing away from the house is a warning to those approaching. The other heads facing the house denote the importance of the Dweller. Kurtz may have originally intended to simply make attempts to subjugate the natives without violence, but he really held no regard for them at all. In the beginning, he believed that he could use his great force of personality to persuade them into service. He believed in his mission and his capability at its completion. However, the longer he spent in the dark country, the more he bought into its darkness. Using his influence over certain folk, he had them do his dirty work and became more immersed in his new course. He seemed to look at the natives as things rather than people; an annoyance to be dealt with. Once he started resorting to violence, with no one above him present to check his runaway ambition, it drove him to madness and murder.

B)

The symbolism of the heads facing Kurtz’s house seems to be that he wanted to be admired, and even demanded admiration. Those who went against him or did not worship his words and ideas the way he wanted were killed and beheaded. Their heads placed on stakes, facing his home, probably gave him a warped sense of admiration and control; he had finally forced them to adore him. The one head facing away may have been the one from when the manager explained that the knowledge of Kurtz’s wrongdoings finally came to him and he realized that nature was seeking its revenge on him and speaking to him in a way he would understand.

The displaying of the heads on posts shows a blatant disrespect for the natives as well as makes his point that he will not be gone against

5.    What is Kurtz's report titled? What is the postscription? Does this explain anything?

A)

Kurtz's report, which was commissioned by The International Society for the Suppression of Savage Customs, begins as an attempt at civilizing imperialized people. By the end however, Kurtz writes that it would be best to simply, “exterminate all the brutes.” This change in thought is brought about by Kurtz’s immersion into native life. While he may have started with “noble” intentions, Kurtz quickly realized the natives viewed him as a god. The power that came with this acknowledgement soon aligned him with native customs. His inability to separate himself from this experience made the culture that much harder to change and ultimately he finds that the best way to rid the world of “savage customs” is to get rid of “savage people.”

B)

The International Society for the Suppression of savage customs had given Kurtz the responsibility of making the report for future guidance. The postscript seems to be "Exterminate all the brutes". His report begins with an argument, "that we whites, from the point of development he had arrived at, must necessarily appear to them (savages)in the nature of supernatural beings". I think that this explains that he had power. Marlow read the report by Kurtz to the international community about suppressing of savage customs. The title of this report is Request for International Society for the Suppression of Savage Customs. Marlow is later shocked at the end when he notices that the same Kurtz had written that, "Exterminate all the brutes." The evil man had not ceased, but he was hiding that in the good writing that he possesses. This was the same evil man whose compound posts had the heads of those who opposed him.

C)

“Suppression of Savage Customs,” was the name of the report. He was obviously attempting to write a report that would be useful the cause of Imperialism in Africa. He likely started with the most ordinary of intentions, offering what he could of methods of suppression that worked for him, or did not work, as the case may be. He may have argued that suppression of the culture was the only way to subjugate the natives. While he was, after a fashion, successful in his attempts to steal power from the natives, in the end, he lost and they remained as they always had been. That, I believe is the message of the postscription. Subjugation was not really possible. The only sure method of furthering the cause of Imperialism in the case of Africa was to exterminate the entire populace. This clearly makes the argument that Imperialism was a doomed enterprise.

6.    What do the old women knitting symbolize? Do they remind you of any mythological characters? How do they set the mood for the rest of the story?

A)

The old knitting women reminded me of the mythological fates.  The fates were responsible for weaving people’s lives and cutting them off, or putting them to an end.  To many the fates are a symbol of death, because eventually they would cut your string and you would die.  At first I thought that Marlow’s journey would come to an early end, failure, but as the story progressed I came to see that really they were foretelling Kurtz’s death.  Because of the women, I was watching for a sudden end, expecting the story to end when Marlow says that the boat was damaged.  However, the story continued and he managed to fix the boat.  Then I was expecting the story to end when the boat was attacked, perhaps Marlow being killed, but then they survived that.  Once Kurtz died, I knew that that was the death I was waiting and waiting and waiting for.

B)

The knitting women represent the spin of life. The knitting wool represents human life and when a human dies, the wool is cut as if it’s a thread. The black wool represents bad life and death whereas the white wool represents good life. Marlow’s life is symbolized by these two knitting women with the white and black wool for the rough voyage that he is about to conquer. The mythological characters would seem like the good witch and the bad witch in The Wizard of Oz. These women set the mood of the story by symbolizing the knitting as a way of life and how to control it.

C)

The old women knitting each represent death. When I read this part of the story, I immediately thought of the Greek mythological characters, the Fates, who each represent birth, mid-life, and death. In this story, I found the use of the two old women ironic because two old ladies knitting is not exactly a menacing scene that one would compare to death. However, how Conrad uses these two women as symbols works perfectly and sets an even more melancholy tone for the rest of the story.The foresight that we have in that piece of the story gave me chills almost. It really doesn't inspire much fear or dread in the reader, but the image I got in my head was almost that of two crypt keepers. The author really does allow this scene to set a more melancholy tone for the rest of the story.

7.    Why doesn’t Marlow tell Kurtz’s fiancé what his real final words were?  Does the fiancé symbolize anything?

A)

Marlow’s decision to lie to Kurtz’s intended is ultimately an act of kindness. Kurtz left to Africa a civilized gentleman with noble intentions. Once there however, Kurtz became power hungry and reverted to native customs. Kurtz had also become so detached from the life he left that he’d taken on a native mistress. His final words could be understood as his realization that he’d strayed very far from civilization. To tell Kurtz’s intended his final words would have required either a revelation of Kurtz’s actions or the revelation that he died anguished. In the end, it could be said the intended symbolized civilized society. By keeping Kurt’s final words secret, Marlow preserves him as the man he was before his experiences in Africa.

B)

Marlow lies to Kurtz's fiance about the last final words he said before Kurtz died. He died with his last words being "The horror! The horror!" I think the reason he lied to her is because if he told her the truth she would be heartbroken that he died in that way. Instead, saying her name as his last words keeps her heart thinking he died in peace. I think Marlow thinks that she may not be prepared to know what they had seen and if he told him Kurtz last words, he might have to explain it to her. I think he was trying to protect her feelings and maybe from knowing the truth.

C)

Marlow doesn't tell Kurtz's fiancé what his true final words were because he wants her to think that his last cherish moments was the thought about her. His last significant moment was the thought of her, how much he loved her and nothing else. Although Kurtz's last words weren't about her, Marlow might want Kurtz's fiancé to feel special and loved by Kurtz. The fiancé symbolizes how women were treated during this time. They were treated differently then they are treated now. When Marlow lied, it was normal to lie to women about such thing.

8.    Who is narrating this story? Why do you think the story is framed in this way?

A)

Through out this story, there seems to be two narrators. The first is narrator tells this story in a first person perspective to others who are listening to the story. The second is Marlow as described in first person perspective.

The frame of the story gives the first person perspective as they see what happened. In the details, it paints the settings and gives a better perspective of the situations. Which gives the impression of dark and gloomy, giving the reader the feeling of the setting the writer wanted presented.

B)

While there are clearly two narrators, I do think Marlow’s perspective is the most important. As you said, the majority of this story is the result of Marlow’s first-person narrative. Because of this, we grow attached to Marlow, have a better understanding of his psyche, and receive a more complete account of his experiences.

Although there is another anonymous narrator, he plays a very small part in the story. What I found interesting was this narrator also seems to view Marlow much like Marlow viewed Kurtz. There seems to be an air of awe, bewilderment, and respect coming from these narrators in relation to other characters. Still, Marlow’s feelings are widely more developed by this story.

c)

Marlow is narrating the story. It is told in Marlow’s point of view and in great detail because the majority of the story is featuring himself. It also is portrayed as a story within a story. This style of frame writing was popular in the nineteenth century. This story seemed tailed toward Marlow’s life than about Kurtz’s experiences. Marlow’s passage to Africa is like a passage into a human heart. The story is dark like the physical location of Africa. With the mists and the dense foliage that exists there, the “Heart” is in the midst of the jungle for this narrative.