Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* is not only a narration of Marlow’s journey up the Congo River as a part of an ivory quest through the dense vegetation but also Conrad’s commentary on the political elements of imperialism and racism along with the social flaws in human nature. Conrad employs literary elements throughout the work in order to lay focus on neglected aspects in the politics in human societies around the world, irrespective of the size, language, diversity, culture and tradition of the society. In addition to the author’s focus on vagueness and repetition, *Heart of Darkness* exposes the unfathomable darkness that thrives within everyone that inspires immoral actions and blinds one from realizing the true extent of his savagery. The brutality of human nature and the systems established by human communities has led to the belief that differences among human beings give rights to control, suppress and dominate and has allowed humans to pursue their individual desires for wealth at the expense of others and without any sentiments of remorse or consideration. Justice in human society is fairness in the treatment of people. Through literary elements and vivid details of human nature, Joseph Conrad hopes to inform mankind of the inevitable regret over unscrupulous deeds in order to prevent the suffering from guilt at death that arises from ignorance of justice.

Conrad’s employment of vagueness both in the setting of *The Heart of Darkness* and in the personalities of the supporting characters along with the continuous repetition of the theme of good versus evil portrays to the reader the scale of the widespread human ideologies and allows
for comparisons in human treatment for the purpose of compelling mankind to reconsider of current actions. The metonymic descriptions, vague suggestive wording for the greater concept, of the geographic setting with the specific location hardly known place the reader in a global outlook and opens eyes to weigh the spread of flawed human political concepts such as imperialism and the drive for wealth. Conrad successfully depicts the imperial control of the river as a mere representation of the circumstances and purposefully abstains from specificity to hint at a greater concept: “The broadening waters flowed through a mob of wooded islands; you lost your way on that river as you would in a desert, and butted all day long against shoals, trying to find the channel, till you thought yourself bewitched and cut off forever from everything you had known once -somewhere- far away in another existence perhaps” (Conrad 103). The geographical vagueness in description implies the lack of necessity in explicitly stating the precise location of such events. Conrad emphasizes the brutal nature of the dreams of men and of commonwealths but hints at their prevalence in all societies so that the reader is not subject to regarding the Congo as the sole example but is left open to view similar events in other nations with equal contempt of human nature. Conrad forces action upon mankind through this understanding of the spread of human vices to abstain from suppression and control over those considered inferior in any situation, in any civilization, at any time on this earth. Just as vagueness highlights the international perspective of imperialism and flaws in human society’s rules, repetition and analogies inscribed within the text allow Conrad to comment on human prejudice. The repeated mentions of what constitutes good and evil and the analogies surrounding the uncertainty in the black darkness depict the human nature of resigning to preconceived notions and regarding differences with reservation, permitting Conrad to illuminate mankind of facets of the minds that are often overlooked. Marlow, the narrator and protagonist,
struggles to maintain his moral virtues in a society dominated by racism as he remarks on the stark difference in the perception of blacks, “It was Unearthly, and the men were--- No, they were not inhuman. Well, you know, that was the worst of it---this suspicion of their not being inhuman” (106). The subjugation to slavery and labor of those who have different skin completion or follow a different culture is justified solely by the comparisons. The false belief of superiority to the Africans permits the white colonists to distinguish between good and evil, white and black, pure and impure. In their desire for wealth, the colonists are hindered from realizing the innate evil in their own actions as they pursue unjust means of acquiring affluence by taking advantage of others and denying fair treatment. Through the vivid detail of inequality, Conrad strives for mankind’s illumination to both the spread of morally flawed political policies and to the injustice that is overlooked. The realization would permit mankind to redeem itself from the savagery and not be subject to regrets at the death bed with the realization of the worthlessness of materialistic possessions and of the value of ethics and integrity.

In addition to the importance for mankind to reconsider current policies established by various societies globally and to reevaluate the norms established that deprive complete justice, it remains vital to identify how human society has shaped mankind. Conrad exposes the social imperfections that give rise to imbalance in human society through exploitation of those without power and motivate the pursuit for fortune, fame and control in hopes of minimizing the effects of such social influences on an individual’s actions. Striking details of Kurtz’s prevailing nature despite a social orders that serves to civilize human society grants mankind comprehension of how a civilized man in solitude or bound to a belief of being above the law is beyond restraint and capable of disregarding unjust actions in his society. Marlow narrates of Kurtz’s lack of restraint and his inability to come into accords with his wrong doings before it was too late, “But
The wilderness found him out early, and had taken vengeance for the fantastic invasion. I think it had whispered to him things about himself which he did not know [...] and the whisper had proved irresistibly fascinating.” (133). The solitude without a superior force compels Kurtz to no longer be bound by any restrictions and this high-self view consumed him rendering him incapable of being governed by morals. Restraint is natural to human nature and continues to thrive in its raw form until sparked by a greater desire. The aspirations of establishing himself as the most superior enable such savagery in his actions whose horror is only realized at the end when supremacy in human dealings loses all value. Conrad uses the vivid details surrounding the belief that engulfed Kurtz alert mankind of the need of reforming society through adherence to virtues and fewer deviations towards malice. Conrad further comments, through a dramatic monologue of Marlow’s struggles to differentiate between good and evil, on the extents followed by humans in pursuing wealth to propel the reader and mankind to question the high regard human society gives to the few who are unrelenting in their efforts despite the means employed in reaching dominance. Marlow contemplates on the jealousy and admiration that saw Kurtz rise in his society in hopes of identifying Marlow’s own desire of meeting him, “The point was in his being a gifted creature [...] the gift of expression, the bewildering, the illuminating, the most exalted and the most contemptible, the pulsating stream of light, or the deceitful flow from the heart of an impenetrable darkness” (119-120). The end of his journey through the heart of darkness that is the jungle enables Marlow to distinguish between light and darkness and come to the realization that the apparent unsympathetic nature of Kurtz that allowed him to be consummated by the idea of wealth and gain admirers in society has harbored an innate darkness within him. Conrad’s use of depictive language and high tone in Marlow’s monologue enables the reader to realize the weight of such a “Gift.” Kurtz achieves his purpose of enlightening
mankind of society’s flaw that regards one’s ability to rise up with awe while disregarding the
toll. Conrad seeks to allow mankind a means of avoiding the suffering experienced by
“Admirable” personalities such as Kurtz. Wealth, territory gained, fame acquired and power are
zeroed in value in the long run if the means of attainment involve exploitation of the inferior and
unfairness.

Mankind must reconsider current actions to be saved from the suffering and the pangs of
regret at the end of life. Joseph Conrad’s vagueness in addressing the political issue of
imperialism opens consideration of such injustice globally and the vivid details outlay the effects
of an individual’s society on his actions. In order for humanity to be salvaged from savagery,
reforms in political norms and social interactions are necessary. It is important to holistically
regard an individual’s actions in order to not promote unethical means: society must not be
swayed by accomplishments of grand magnitude without comprehension of the origins.
Inevitably, the realization that a country and an individual must aspire to gain esteem in a moral
fashion would enable a prideful reflection of the past rather than one of guilt and remorse.