Socratic Seminar Prewrites

*Heart of Darkness*

Due: Tues, Jan 13th

45pts

Respond to **four** of these questions. Each response should be a well-developed paragraph (or more) including **at least two pieces of textual evidence** to support your position. Please properly cite quotations. (Ex: When Conrad writes, “She came forward, all in black, like a pale head, floating towards me in the dusk” (p 57), he is showing us that…)

1. In his narrative, Marlow gives details descriptions of his encounters with Africans. Some critics have used these descriptions to condemn *Heart of Darkness* as a racist book. Using the book as a guide, decide whether you think that the book is more critical of the Africans or the white characters. Then share three or four reasons to support your decision.
2. At the Central Station Marlow notices “a small sketch of oils, on a panel, representing a woman, draped and blindfolded, carrying a lighted torch”. What views does Marlow express about women in the book; how are the female characters portrayed? How does the description of this sketch correspond or differ from those views?
3. Early in the novel, Marlow says, “…I hate, detest, and can’t bear a lie…” However, his final act in the African narrative is lying to Kurtz’s Intended about the dying man’s last words. Using your understanding of Marlow’s character, identify and discuss what you consider to be the main reasons Marlow violates one of his core beliefs.
4. Are Kurtz’s last words, “The horror! The horror!” summation, judgment or realization? Did he realize something about himself? The Dark Continent? His methodology? Humanity in general? Using textual evidence, support your claims.
5. How doe these characters reflect the society in which they live?
6. What do these characters' decisions and actions say about human nature and how we respond to our environment?
7. What makes us human? What does it mean to act humanely?
8. Are we required to act when we see other human beings treated inhumanely, and if so, do the times and culture we live in negate that obligation or excuse our failure to do so?

**Required:**

Generate at least **four questions that you can pose to your peers during the Socratic Seminar**. They could be questions that will help you understand the material more clearly, open-ended questions to inspire discussion, etc. Please have them composed and with you, ready to reference, for our Seminar on Tues.

**Grading:**

A+ =All four questions are answered with two pieces of textual evidence (correctly cited) to support each answer. Four or more questions have been generated to pose to peers during the Socratic Seminar.

B+= Three questions are answered with two pieces of textual evidence (correctly cited) to support each answer. Four or more questions have been generated to pose to peers during the Socratic Seminar.

C+= Two questions are answered with two pieces of textual evidence (mostly correctly cited) to support each answer. Three or more questions have been generated to pose to peers during the Socratic Seminar.

D+= One question is answered with two pieces of textual evidence (somewhat correctly cited) to support. Two or more questions have been generated to pose to peers during the Socratic Seminar.