

Heart of Darkness

Joseph Conrad

Why does Marlow replace Kurtz's actual last words with the Intended's name?

CONTENT NOTE · Colonial violence and racist/imperialist language.

TOTAL TIME

PASSAGE

30 minutes	Marlow lies to the Intended
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FIND THE ANCHOR TEXT

Use the Anchor Text Table of Contents in the Enhanced Reader to open the START anchor. Then use the dropdown to select the END anchor.

SECTION / LOCATION Part III

START Ah, but I believed in him more than any one on earth—more than his own mother, more than—himself. END It would have been too dark—too dark altogether....

PASSAGE ID	sec-hod-04
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THE MOVE

Judge a lie by what the speaker thinks it protects

WHY THIS PASSAGE

Marlow knows Kurtz's final words but tells the Intended that Kurtz died speaking her name. The lie protects an idealized story she needs to believe, so the ethical question is not simply truth versus falsehood but truth versus the speaker's idea of mercy.

MARK

Underline what the Intended believes about Kurtz. Circle the point where Marlow is asked for the last word. Then box the answer he gives and write what truth it replaces.

NOTICE

- What belief about Kurtz is the Intended trying to preserve?
- What would the actual last words do to that belief?

- Does Marlow's lie protect her, protect Kurtz's memory, protect Marlow himself, or some combination of the three?

THINK

Answer provisionally: Why does Marlow replace Kurtz's actual last words with the Intended's name? Choose the strongest interpretation you can defend from this passage alone.

WRITE

Write a short evidence-based response to: Why does Marlow replace Kurtz's actual last words with the Intended's name? Use at least two details from the assigned passage and explain how they support your interpretation.

CLOSE

Name the single detail that most changed or sharpened your interpretation, and explain why.

STRONG ANSWER	Marlow substitutes the Intended's name because he believes the truth would destroy the idealized Kurtz she depends on. The lie is presented as protection, but it may also protect Marlow from forcing the horror he knows into her world.
EVIDENCE	Use the Intended's idealized statements about Kurtz, Marlow's memory of the real last words, and his explanation for why he cannot tell her.
WATCH FOR	Do not declare the lie simply good or bad. Judge it by what Marlow thinks he is protecting and what else the lie may preserve.
SOLO	Read the exact passage independently.
SUPPORTED	Use narration and sentence highlighting while reading the same passage.
LISTENING	Listen to the exact passage; visual following is optional. Same question and evidence demand.

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Why does Marlow replace Kurtz's actual last words with the Intended's name?

START ANCHOR	Ah, but I believed in him more than any one on earth—more than his own mother, more than—himself.
END ANCHOR	It would have been too dark—too dark altogether....

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OPEN THE MARKED PASSAGE IN TUMBLELIT

SOLO: read independently. SUPPORTED: use narration + highlighting. LISTENING: listen to the exact passage. The question and evidence task stay the same.

1. MARK - Underline what the Intended believes about Kurtz. Circle the point where Marlow is asked for the last word. Then box the answer he gives and write what truth it replaces.
2. NOTICE - What belief about Kurtz is the Intended trying to preserve? What would the actual last words do to that belief? Does Marlow's lie protect her, protect Kurtz's memory, protect Marlow himself, or some combination of the three?
3. THINK - Answer provisionally: Why does Marlow replace Kurtz's actual last words with the Intended's name?
4. WRITE - Write a short response using at least two pieces of evidence from this passage.

Use evidence from the assigned passage. Show what you noticed and how the text supports your interpretation.