

Microscopic Skills #7: Part I of *Heart of Darkness*

Mr. Eble, AP Language & Composition

Directions: Read the selection below from Part I of *Heart of Darkness*. Annotate the text as you read. Then, on your blog, respond to the questions below the selection.

Be sure that in your response (which should cover a few paragraphs) that you analyze the text at the word and sentence level to demonstrate your understanding of tone, schemes, and tropes.

Consider:

"I left in a French steamer, and she called in every blamed port they have out there, for, as far as I could see, the sole purpose of landing soldiers and custom-house officers. I watched the coast. Watching a coast as it slips by the ship is like thinking about an enigma. There it is before you -- smiling, frowning, inviting, grand, mean, insipid, or savage, and always mute with an air of whispering, 'Come and find out.' This one was almost featureless, as if still in the making, with an aspect of monotonous grimness. The edge of a colossal jungle, so dark-green as to be almost black, fringed with white surf, ran straight, like a ruled line, far, far away along a blue sea whose glitter was blurred by a creeping mist. The sun was fierce, the land seemed to glisten and drip with steam. Here and there greyish-whitish specks showed up clustered inside the white surf, with a flag flying above them perhaps. Settlements some centuries old, and still no bigger than pinheads on the untouched expanse of their background. We pounded along, stopped, landed soldiers; went on, landed custom-house clerks to levy toll in what looked like a God-forsaken wilderness, with a tin shed and a flag-pole lost in it; landed more soldiers -- to take care of the custom-house clerks, presumably. Some, I heard, got drowned in the surf; but whether they did or not, nobody seemed particularly to care. They were just flung out there, and on we went. Every day the coast looked the same, as though we had not moved...The idleness of a passenger, my isolation amongst all these men with whom I had no point of contact, the oily and languid sea, the uniform sombreness of the coast, seemed to keep me away from the truth of things, within the toil of a mournful and senseless delusion. The voice of the surf heard now and then was a positive pleasure, like the speech of a brother. It was something natural, that had its reason, that had a meaning. Now and then a boat from the shore gave one a momentary contact with reality. It was paddled by black fellows. You could see from afar the white of their eyeballs glistening."

Microscopic Skills Questions for your blog:

- **Describe how Conrad controls diction, syntax to shape his tone.** *Be sure to use specific textual examples.*
- **More broadly,** how does this selection fit Conrad's continual depiction of Africa (and the Europeans and Africans there) throughout Marlow's introduction to Africa in Part I? *Be sure to reference specific parts of the text.*

This exercise is worth a 30-point blog under your Microscopic Skills grade.