

group of men are aboard an English ship that is sitting on the Thames. The others do not understand him because he does not fit into a neat category in the same manner that the others do. He mentions colonization and says that carving the earth into prizes or pieces is not something to examine too closely because it is an atrophy. After ten days of observing the Chief Accountant's ill temper, Marlow departs for his 200-mile journey into the interior of the Congo, where he will work for a station run by a man named Kurtz. The journey is arduous. His aunt has a connection in the Administration Department of a seafaring and exploration company that gathers ivory, and she manages to get Marlow an appointment. With the exception of two or three small paragraphs, the perspective shifts to Marlow, who becomes the main narrator for the rest of the novel. Marlow befriends this man and frequently spends time in his hut while the Accountant goes over the accounts. Marlow crosses many paths, sees deserted dwellings, and encounters black men working. While they await the delivery of the rivets needed to fix it, Marlow spends his time on more mundane tasks. While they are loitering about, waiting for the wind to pick up so that they might resume their voyage, Marlow begins to speak about London and Europe as some of the darkest places on earth. He then begins to narrate a personal experience in Africa, which led him to become a freshwater sailor and gave him a terrible glimpse of colonization. When Marlow arrives at the company office, the atmosphere is extremely dim and foreboding. Throughout the novel, the white characters refer to them in animalistic terms. Marlow finally arrives at a secondary station, where he meets the Manager, who for now will oversee his work. The group includes a Lawyer, an Accountant, a Company Director/Captain, and a man without a specific profession who is named Marlow. Marlow decides he wants nothing more than to be the skipper of a steamship that travels up and down a river in Africa. This puzzles Marlow, but he does not think much of it. The next day he embarks on a one-month journey to the primary Company station. The African shores that he observes look anything but welcoming. Marlow is a stationary man, very unusual for a seaman. He replaces a captain who was killed in a skirmish with the natives. He tells Marlow that nothing could persuade him to join the Company down in the Congo. They are dark and rather desolate, in spite of the flurry of human activity around them. When he arrives, Marlow learns that a company member recently committed suicide. There are multitudes of chain-gang types, who all look at him with vacant expressions. The narrator appears to be another unnamed guest on the ship. The narrator and other guests do not seem to regard him with much respect. Marlow has always had a passion for travel and exploration. The doctor who performs his physical asks if there is a history of insanity in Marlow's family. A young boy approaches Marlow, looking very empty. Marlow can do nothing but offer him some ship biscuits. He is very relieved to leave the boy behind as he comes across a very well-dressed man who is the picture of respectability and elegance. Marlow never describes them as humans. The Manager smiles in a manner that is very discomfiting. Maps are an obsession of his. He feels as if everyone is looking at him pityingly. They introduce themselves: he is the Chief Accountant of the Company. The ship on which Marlow is supposed to set sail is broken. It is a strange meeting.