

**M.A II-Semester**  
**ENGLISH LITERATURE**  
**FICTION**

**JOSEPH CORNRAD**

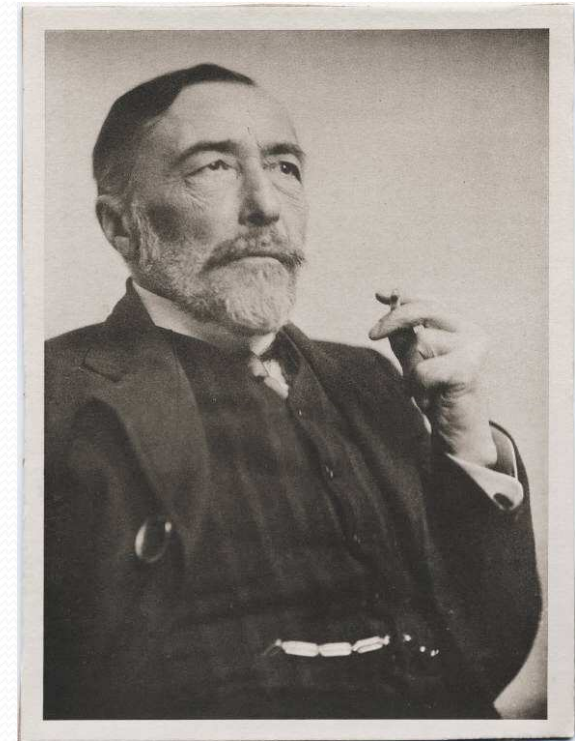
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# Joseph Conrad

Prolific Polish Writer

(03<sup>rd</sup> December 1857 \_ 03<sup>rd</sup> August 1924)

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## Birth and Childhood

- **Józef Teodor Konrad Korzeniowski** was born on **03<sup>rd</sup> December, 1857** in Berdichev (formerly Poland), Ukraine
- His parents names are Apollo Korzeniowski and Ewa (nee Bobrowska).
- Conrad's early childhood is described as being rather harsh, when he was only three, his father was imprisoned in Warsaw for his supposed revolutionary political affiliations.
- At the tender age of eight, Conrad experienced the loss of his mother to tuberculosis.
- His father passed away when Joseph was only twelve and also himself (Conrad) became a victim of tuberculosis.
- At the age of twelve, Conrad was placed under the care of his maternal uncle Tadeusz Bobrowski, who introduced a new approach to life to the young Joseph.

## Marine Career

- On September **26,1874** Conrad left Poland for Marseilles to become a seaman.
- In the subsequent years ahead, it was reported from Conrad's uncle that the youth attempted suicide after setbacks with his status as a seaman among the French, and losing his money in a failed smuggling expedition, along with foolish gambling .
- In **1878**, Conrad yet again underwent a drastic change in his life when he made his first contact with the British Merchant Service. On July 11, he joined his first British ship, the Skimmer of the Sea .
- Life during the British Merchant Service reminded Conrad of home, since many of his fellow sailors had a strong foundation in values such as fidelity and solidarity, strict class divisions were an integral part of the environment, and a system of established traditions was introduced.

## Visit To CONGO

- In August of **1886** he became a British subject, and later in the year, passed his examination for Ordinary Master of the British merchant marine.
- Joseph Conrad's visit to the Belgian Congo from **1890-1894** had both positive and negative effects on his life.
- The positive aspect of the voyage was the fact that he was able to write a famous novel, "*Nostromo*" filled with chilling commentary about his daily experiences among the natives of the Congo.
- On the other hand, while in the Congo he underwent a physical and mental breakdown that would affect his health for the rest of his life.

## Last Years

- When Conrad returned from the Congo to resettle in London. His mind and thoughts were fragmented, and he went into exile for several reasons, including political, aesthetic, and personal .
- Thus, Conrad ended a sea career that spanned twenty years, from which he was able to achieve success in imaginative fiction writing .
- The last years of his life were very painful, during which he suffered from rheumatism.
- When he was offered honorary degrees from five universities, he refused an offer of knighthood in **1924**.
- Joseph Conrad died of heart attack on **03August, 1924** and he was buried in Canterbury .

## Conrad's Literature

- Joseph Conrad's father was a language translator, so he was exposed to literature from several nations while his guardian was alive, including English, the literature of exploration, French, Spanish, and American.
- Joseph Conrad always dislike the Christian religion, its doctrines, ceremonies, and festivals.
- Instead of the revolutionary beliefs that Conrad was accustomed to; from his father, Joseph was instead implanted with ideas of conservatism, or strict social discipline.
- Conrad's literature was consistent with his gloomy nature, which was predominantly a result of his early experiences as a child and his own disordered young manhood.
- *Heart of Darkness* (1899), *Lord Jim* (1899-1900), *Nostromo* (1904) explores man's vulnerability and corruptibility.

## Literary Career

- Joseph's literary career was divided into three periods:
- (1) Getting accustomed to a literary culture that was still strange to him.
  - His first two novels, *Almayer's Folly* and *An Outcast of the Islands*.
  - settings in the Far East established his reputation for exotic fiction, which paralleled the likes of Robert Louis Stevenson and Rudyard Kipling.
- (2) Major phase: - began in **1897** with his novel, *The Nigger of the Narcissus*; full of detail and it represents his "in between" position as a writer.
- (3) Dark Phase:- During the years **from 1898 to 1902**, Conrad became a family man with the birth of his son, but this time period is also arguably the most prolific part of his career
  - During this time, he continued his struggle to negotiate with his English cultural identity and audience with novels such as *Youth, Lord Jim, and Heart of Darkness*.



## Plot of Novels

- Most of Joseph Conrad's popular novels were filled with dark irony, so even if they ended well, his method of storytelling made the tale seem disturbing.
- In each novel, Conrad used the character **Marlow** to find an English identity and voice among other things .
- **Lord Jim** - offers the reader a glimpse of the tragic faults of mankind when he includes blood thirsty pirates as essential characters in the plot.
- Its observed that Conrad base this novel on his personal experiences during marine life in the Caribbean Ports and Venezuela when he was a teenager.
- **Heart of Darkness** - Not only does the title of the novel make a reference to the dark and gloomy way of life in the heart of Africa, it also signifies the corruption of Kurtz (an important character) and touches upon many other examples of moral and physical darkness .

## NOSTROMO

- Conrad's most famous novel, *Nostromo* was based primarily on his experiences in the Congo. It is a deeply symbolic text that is full of paradoxes.
- Conrad's aim in this novel was to make a symbolic use of colors. Throughout the text, he makes constant references of white and black, of light and dark.
- He confuses the two by giving them different characteristics than we would usually associate with the terms.
- The story of novel *Nostromo* also seems to be about imperialist aims, as Conrad employs one of his most suggestive symbols, the silver mine.
- "In the story, the Italian Nostromo ('our man') is destroyed for his appetite for adventure and glory, but with his death the secret of the silver is lost forever" (Joseph Conrad).

## Conrad's Technique

- Joseph Conrad's odd way of using oblique symbolism was both his greatest strength and weakness.
- His narrative style and anti-heroic characters have influenced many authors.
- He wrote stories and novels, predominantly with a nautical setting, that depict trials of the human spirit by the demands of duty and honor.
- Conrad brought a distinctly non-English tragic sensibility into English literature. While some of his works have a strain of romanticism, he is viewed as a precursor of modernist literature.
- Writing in the heyday of the British Empire, Conrad drew upon his experiences in the French and later the British Merchant Navy to create short stories and novels that reflect aspects of a worldwide empire while also plumbing the depths of the human soul.

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{Thanks}