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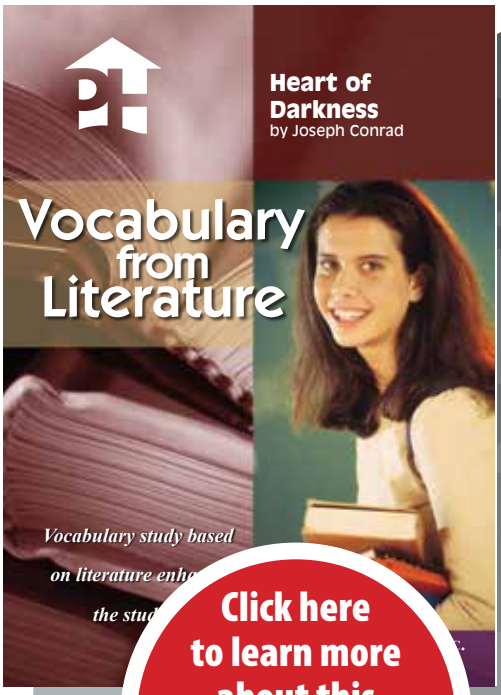

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Vocabulary From Literature for…

Heart of Darkness

by Joseph Conrad

written by Kelley Stewart McConathy

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Information for Instructors

The activities in this Unit are designed to help students increase their vocabulary by studying the meanings of words selected from Joseph Conrad's novel *Heart of Darkness*. All definitions provided in these activities are based on the contexts in which the vocabulary words appear, which may not always convey the words' conventional usage.

It is the goal of this Unit to familiarize students with vocabulary words that they will re-encounter in life and in other readings. The words are carefully selected to meet this goal. Many unfamiliar words not covered by the Unit are defined in a Glossary following the Activities section; the Glossary may also contains slang expressions and proper nouns.

Rather than matching *Heart of Darkness* chapter-for-chapter, we have divided the book into segments depending on the number of vocabulary words from each chapter. While all of the activities may be completed by students individually, we have had the best results when students worked on them in pairs or small groups. The following activities are provided for each segment.

While the words in this reproducible do represent those necessary for a better understanding of the text, our primary concern is that we select words not only pertinent to the literature, but also useful in other aspects of the students' lives. In addition, activities may vary slightly among the various chapters.

All page references come from the Prestwick House Literary Touchstone Press edition of *Heart of Darkness,* published 2005.

Activity I

Objective: Using a dictionary to find definitions and interpret them

Activity II

Objective: Deciphering the meaning of vocabulary words using context clues
Replacing the vocabulary word with appropriate definition or synonym(s)

Activity III

Objective: Writing definitions, synonyms, and/or sentences based on context clues

Activity III
Writing Definitions and Sentences from Context Clues
Chapter 1

Directions: For each highlighted word, write a definition that fits the context of the passage. Then, check your answers by looking the words up in the dictionary. Finally, write a sentence using each word.

1. The Director of Companies was our captain and our host. We four affectionately watched his back as he stood in the bows looking to seaward. On the whole river there was nothing that looked half so nautical. He resembled a pilot, which to a seaman is trustworthiness **personified**. It was difficult to realize his work was not out there in the **luminous estuary**, but behind him, within the brooding gloom. (Pg. 9)

   personified:

   _____

   _____

   luminous:

   _____

   _____

   estuary:

   _____

   _____

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Activity V
Roots and Prefixes
Chapter 1

Directions:

I. *Interminable* is from *in*, "not," + *terminus,* "end, limit, boundary." Use the right word from the list of *term* words below to fill in each sentence that follows. If you don't know a definition, use a dictionary.

a. terminal
b. exterminate
c. terminus
d. indeterminate
e. term

1. If we cannot find a way around this rock, we may have to admit we've reached the _____ of our journey.

2. The _____ during which the contract is active is about to expire.

3. From far away, we saw animals of a(n) _____ species, which turned out to be giraffes.

4. Lulu was relieved to learn that her illness was not _____.

5. Early pioneers helped _____ the buffalo; now there are few of the animals left.

II. *Sedentary* comes from the Latin *sedere*, "to sit." Each of the *sed* words in the left column below is joined to a prefix to make an imaginary new word. Match each of these words with its definition. Hint: Use a dictionary to look up the words in the middle column if you need help.

	prefix	word		meaning
1.	pre +	reside =	a.	not very hard-working
2.	in +	assiduous	b.	to rule over together
3.	post +	subsidy	c.	to live in before
4.	con +	preside	d.	not very sneaky
5.	re +	sediment	e.	a payment that comes after
6.	dis +	insidious	f.	material that has settled again

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Activity II
Writing Definitions and Sentences from Context Clues
Chapter 3

Directions: For each highlighted word, write a definition that fits the context of the passage. Then, check your answers by looking the words up in the dictionary. Finally, write a sentence using each word. The first one is done for you as an example.

1. "The glamour of youth enveloped his parti-colored rags, his **destitution**, his loneliness, the essential desolation of his futile wanderings." (Pg. 53)

   Example: **destitution**: a state of poverty

   Since her father lost his job, her family's **destitution** is a constant source of worry.

2. "For months—for years—his life hadn't been worth a day's purchase; and there he was **gallantly**, thoughtlessly alive, to all appearances indestructible solely by the virtue of his few years and of his unreflecting **audacity**. I was **seduced** into something like admiration—like envy. Glamour urged him on, glamour kept him **unscathed**." (Pg. 53)

   Definition for **gallantly**:

   _____

   _____

   Definition for **audacity**:

   _____

   _____

   Definition for **seduced**:

   _____

   _____

   Definition for **unscathed**:

   _____

   _____

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