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Joseph Conrad

Youth
and
Heart of Darkness

Read by **Brian Cox**



NA309412D

Youth

- | | | |
|----|---|------|
| 1 | Men and sea interpenetrate... | 9:17 |
| 2 | 'We went to sea next day' | 8:42 |
| 3 | 'There were more delays – more tinkering' | 6:36 |
| 4 | An unexpected explosion | 8:13 |
| 5 | 'It was at noon the steamer began to tow' | 7:45 |
| 6 | 'She went down, head first, in a great hiss of steam' | 7:23 |
| 7 | 'And then I saw the men of the East' | 4:22 |
| 8 | Heart of Darkness | 5:47 |
| 9 | 'I did once turn fresh-water sailor for a bit' | 5:08 |
| 10 | 'A whited sepulchre, two women, knitting...' | 4:28 |
| 11 | 'I left in a French steamer...' | 5:24 |
| 12 | 'There's your company's station' | 5:27 |
| 13 | 'High starched collar, white cuffs...' | 3:07 |
| 14 | 'In the interior you will no doubt meet Mr Kurtz' | 9:32 |
| 15 | 'Oh, these months!' | 3:26 |

16	“Tell me, pray,” said I, “who is this Mr Kurtz?”	7:52
17	‘One evening, as I was lying flat on the deck’	5:00
18	‘Like travelling back to the earliest beginnings...’	6:56
19	‘Some fifty miles below the Inner Station’	6:58
20	“Will they attack us?”	8:49
21	‘Sticks, little sticks, were flying about – thick’	11:46
22	“My intended, my ivory, my station, my river, my –”	9:53
23	‘A long decaying building’	7:19
24	“You take Kurtz away quick”	13:06
25	‘An improvised stretcher’	15:22
26	‘I think I would have raised an outcry’	8:22
27	‘A mass of naked, breathing quivering...’	11:46
28	‘No, they did not bury me’	6:19
29	‘Before the high and ponderous door’	15:22

Total time: 3:49:45

Joseph Conrad

Youth *and* Heart of Darkness

In 1902, Joseph Conrad's *Youth: A Narrative; and Two Other Stories* was published. The second story in the collection was *Heart of Darkness*, destined to become the best-known of the three and to be widely regarded as a seminal work of modernist literature. The first two stories are narrated by Marlow, an experienced seaman, to a group of old friends, between all of whom 'there was the strong bond of the sea'.

Youth, as its title suggests, is concerned with Marlow's rite of passage from youth to manhood, and is filled with the glamour, optimism and strength of purpose of a young man who believes in himself, and that anything, is possible. The actual journey is from London to Bangkok with a cargo of coal, and nothing – not the terrifying Atlantic gale which besets them on their first attempt, nor the burning cargo which threatens their lives in the Indian Ocean – can defeat the young Marlow's determination to see the East. His romanticism is resolute, but it is given meaning by the incredible exertions and

dangers which the voyage imposes on him, and in which he is not found wanting. The forty-two-year-old Marlow who looks back on his younger self does so with a touching affection and nostalgia: 'Ah! The good old time – the good old time. Youth and the sea. Glamour and the sea! The good, strong sea, the salt, bitter sea, that could whisper to you and roar at you and knock your breath out of you...'

Heart of Darkness is an altogether more disturbing work. Marlow is an older and wiser man in this second tale: at a loose end, and seeking to fulfil a childhood ambition to explore the 'mighty big river...on the map, resembling an immense snake uncoiled', he takes a post as captain of a river-steamer owned by a Belgian trading company working in the Congo. Thus begins the most dreadful 'adventure' of his life. The narrative works continuously on two levels: there is the physical journey itself, penetrating deeper and deeper into the heart of Africa, and then there is the spiritual or metaphysical journey which Marlow must make into the essential heart

of man, which turns out to be a place of darkness and terror – a place of utterly corrupted and betrayed ideals. In the second half of the novella, all this is mediated through the enigmatic character of Kurtz. Marlow gradually realises that he is being used to ‘rescue’ Kurtz who, ill and near to death, lies at the Inner Station. Here he has established a reign of grossly corrupt terror over the native population who worship him as a kind of god and by whom ‘monstrous passions’ are gratified. Kurtz, it is clear, had set out for Africa as a genuine idealist, aiming to bring light into the dark places of the earth, but the wilderness had ‘beguiled his unlawful soul beyond the bounds of permitted aspirations’. He has become, in other words, a modern Faust. Yet his significance goes deeper than this: what is most disturbing for Marlow is the sense that Kurtz has discovered in himself, and at least confronted with a kind of honesty, what is ultimately true for all of us: as he lies dying, ‘he cried in a whisper at some image, at some vision – he cried out twice, a cry that was no more than a breath – “The horror! The horror!” The outworkings of this truth are evident throughout the story – nowhere more vividly than when Marlow stumbles across a scene of hideous exploitation where

discarded black workers are left to die in ‘the grove of death’, while above them the representatives of ‘civilization’ work on their ledgers, irritated by the groans of the dying...

Joseph Conrad was born in 1857 to Polish parents, both of whom died while he was still a child. In 1874 he embarked on a seafaring career, first based in France and then in England. He became a British subject in 1886 and in 1894 he began his second career – as a writer. English was in fact his third language, but his mastery of it was quickly established by such novels as *Lord Jim* (1900), *Nostromo* (1904), *The Secret Agent* (1907) and *Under Western Eyes* (1911) are the novels of his middle period, but it was not until the publication of *Chance* (1913) that he began to enjoy any popular success. Critical success was also hard to come by, although by the time of his death in 1924 perceptive critics – including, for instance, the philosopher Bertrand Russell – had begun to see him as the modern master he is now universally acknowledged to be.

Notes by Perry Keenlyside

**The music on this recording is taken from
the NAXOS and MARCO POLO catalogues**

PARRY OVERTURE TO AN UNWRITTEN TRAGEDY 8.553469
Royal Scottish National Orchestra, Andrew Penny

BANTOCK HEBRIDEAN SYMPHONY 8.223274
Czechoslovak State Philharmonic (Kosice), Adrian Leaper

SZYMANOWSKI SYMPHONY NO. 3 8.553684
Polish State Philharmonic Orchestra (Katowice), Karol Stryja

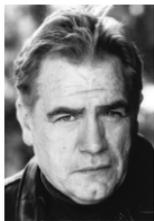
Music programming by Nicolas Soames

Cover picture: The Ma-Robert on the Zambeze.
Courtesy of Mary Evans Picture Library, London.

Joseph Conrad *Youth and Heart of Darkness*

Read by **Brian Cox**

In these two magnificent novellas Conrad explores the question of self-discovery through powerful and exciting narratives: in *Youth*, the experienced seaman Marlow tells the story of a young man's coming of age on his first voyage to the East, while in *Heart of Darkness* he describes with terrifying depth and vividness the slide into corruption of an idealistic trader – Kurtz, who has become the demi-devil of the Inner Station in the Belgian Congo.



Brian Cox is one of Britain's leading actors and directors, having won two Olivier Awards for his roles with the RSC and Royal National Theatre. His TV and film work are equally varied, among them being *Rob Roy*, *Braveheart*, *Manhunter* and *Hidden Agenda*. He is now increasingly active as a director (*Richard III* and *The Master Builder*). He also reads Stoker's *Dracula* for Naxos AudioBooks.

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Total time
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