Heart of Darkness Quotes to Consider

1. “I had my passage on a little sea-going steamer. Her captain was a Swede, and knowing me for a seaman, invited me on the bridge. He was a young man, lean, fair, and morose, with lanky hair and a shuffling gait. As we left the miserable little wharf, he tossed his head contemptuously at the shore’ Its funny what some people will do for a few francs a month. I wonder what becomes of that kind when it goes up the country’ I said to him I expected to see that soon. ‘So-o-o!’ he exclaimed. He shuffled forward, keeping one eye ahead vigilantly. ‘Don’t be too sure,’ he continued. ‘the other day I took a man who hanged himself on the road. He was a Swede, too.’ ‘Hanged himself! Why, in God’s name?’ I cried. HE kept on looking out watchfully. ‘Who knows? The sun too much for him, or the country perhaps.’
2. [Speaking of the manager] “He was a common trader, from his youth up employed jn these parts—nothing more. He was obeyed, yet he inspired neither love nor fear, nor even respect. He inspired uneasiness. That was it! Uneasiness […]He had no genius for organizing, for initiative, or for order even…He had lo learning and no intelligence. His position had come to him—why? Perhaps because he was never ill…He had served three terms of three years out here…because triumphant health in the general rout of constitutions is a kind of power in itself. When he went home on leave, he rioted on a large scale—pompously […] But we was great. He was great by this little thing that it was impossible to tell what could control such a man. He never gave that secret away. Perhaps there was nothing within him. Such a suspicion made one pause—for out there there were no external checks….”
3. “Kurtz—Kurtz—that means ‘short’ in German—don’t it? Well, the name was as true as everything else in his life—and death. He looked at least seven feet long.”
4. “—but in this, that I had to deal with a being to whom I could not appeal in the name of anything high or low. I had, even like the niggers, to invoke him—himself—hos own exalted and incredible degradation. There was nothing either above or below him—and I knew it. He had kicked himself loose of the earth. Confound the man! he had kicked the very earth to pieces. He was alone, and I before him did not know whether I stood on the ground or floated in the air. […] but his soul was mad. Being alone in the wilderness, it had looked within itself, and, by Heavens! I tell you, it had gone mad. I had—for my sins, I suppose, to go through the ordeal of looking into it myself.”
5. “I found myself back in the sepulchral city resenting the sight of people hurrying through the street to filch a little money from each other, to devour their infamous cookery, to gulp their unwholesome beer, to dream their insignificant and silly dreams”
6. “’You knew him best’ I repeated. And perhaps she did. But with every word spoken the room was growing darker, and only her forehead, smooth and white, remained illuminated by the unextinguishable light of belief and love…bowing my head before the faith that was in her, before that great and saving illusion that shone with an unearthly glow in the darkness, in the triumphant darkness from which I could not have defended her—from which I could not even defend myself.”
7. “’The last word he pronounced was—your name.”

“I heard a light sigh and then my heart stood still, stopped dead short by an exulting and terrible cry, by the cry of inconceivable triumph and of unspeakable pain. ‘I knew it—I was sure!’… She knew. She was sure. I heard her weeping; she had hidden her face in her hands. It seemed to me that the house would collapse before I could escape, that the heavens would fall upon my head. But nothing happened. The heavens do not fall for such a trifle. Would they have fallen, I wonder, if I had rendered Kurtz that justice which was his due? Hadn’t he said he wanted only justice? But I couldn’t. I could not tell her. It would have been too dark—too dark altogether…”

Directions: As a group, read the following passage and discuss. Consider the quote in terms of theme, style, symbolism, and any other literary devices you discover. Then, write down the most important revelations that your group discovered.

1. “I had my passage on a little sea-going steamer. Her captain was a Swede, and knowing me for a seaman, invited me on the bridge. He was a young man, lean, fair, and morose, with lanky hair and a shuffling gait. As we left the miserable little wharf, he tossed his head contemptuously at the shore’ Its funny what some people will do for a few francs a month. I wonder what becomes of that kind when it goes up the country’ I said to him I expected to see that soon. ‘So-o-o!’ he exclaimed. He shuffled forward, keeping one eye ahead vigilantly. ‘Don’t be too sure,’ he continued. ‘the other day I took a man who hanged himself on the road. He was a Swede, too.’ ‘Hanged himself! Why, in God’s name?’ I cried. He kept on looking out watchfully. ‘Who knows? The sun too much for him, or the country perhaps.’

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1. “I have wrested with death. It is the most unexciting context you imagine. It takes place in an impalpable greyness, with nothing underfoot, with nothing around, without spectators, without clamour, without glory, without the great desire of victory, without the great fear of defeat, in a sickly atmosphere of tepid skepticism, without much belief in your own right, and still less in that of your adversary…” was within a hair’s breadth of the last opportunity for pronouncement and I found with humiliation that probably I would have nothing to say. This is the reasons why I affirm that Kurtz was a remarkable man. He had something to say. He said it. Since I had peeped over the edge myself, I understand better the meaning of his stare, that could not see the flame of the candle, but was wide enough to embrace the whole universe, piercing enough to penetrate all the hearts that beat in the darkness. He had summed up—he had judged. ‘The horror!’

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1. “I found myself back in the sepulchral city resenting the sight of people hurrying through the street to filch a little money from each other, to devour their infamous cookery, to gulp their unwholesome beer, to dream their insignificant and silly dreams. They trespassed upon my thoughts. They were intruders whose knowledge of life was to me an irritating pretense, because I felt so sure they could not possibly know the things I knew. Their bearing, which was simply the bearing of commonplace individuals going about their business in the assurance of perfect safety, was offensive to me like the outrageous flauntings of folly in the face of a danger it is unable to comprehend. I had no particular desire to enlighten them, but I had some difficulty in restraining myself from laughing in their faces, so full of stupid importance.”

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