Literary Device Expansion Assignment

Objective: Students will analyze an author’s use of literary elements to explore the meaning of the work as a whole.

Lit Device

Example

Scene

Meaning of the novel/play as a whole -- theme, character, conflict, irony, etc.

Student Sample:

Name

Date

Period

**Personification:** a form of metaphor in which human characteristics are attributed to non-human things.

**Example:** “The wilderness had patted him on the head, and, behold, it was like a ball- an ivory ball; it had caressed him, and -- lo! He had withered; it had taken him, loved him, embraced him, got into his veins, consumed his flesh, and sealed his soul to its own by the inconceivable ceremonies of some devilish initiation. He was its spoiled and pampered favorite.” *The Heart of Darkness* (125)

**Function:** Mother Nature has enveloped Kurtz in her arms. Conrad describes the jungle as a nurturing parent, embracing and indulging her charge. Lovingly, the wilderness, as a moth, has taken in her lost lamb -- at first. Quickly, the actions of the jungle shift from sweet and serene, “loved him, embraced him”, to sinister and poisonous, “got into his veins, consumed his flesh.” It has injected Kurtz with its own evil, and has transformed him into its beloved babe. The reader sees Kurtz as getting more than his fair share in the jungle as its “spoiled and pampered favorite.” Feeling powerful and supported by his jungle matriarch, Kurtz feels that he has more leeway to do this passage, it is clear that the jungle has a strong hold on Kurtz, and he, consequently, has changed. The question is whether he chooses to change, or whether the jungle’s primeval forces revoked his ability to make that decision. Marlow, the narrator, describes in detail some of the evil atrocities that Kurtz committed, such as the beheading of some of the African natives and further displaying their severed crania on wooden poles. It is unclear, however, if Kurtz acted of his own volition, or if the jungle coerced him into his actions. Because of the jungle’s own personality, one cannot place the blame solely on the jungle or on Kurtz, who is portrayed often as a morally ambiguous character. Are we all inherently evil? Or does the jungle bring out a more violent side of the human soul? Such questions touch on the theme of civilized savagery that is pervasive throughout Joseph Conrad’s novel. The aforementioned civilized savage is, not only Kurtz, but Marlow, the narrator, another morally ambiguous character. One cannot tell whether Marlow sees Kurtz as inhumane, or simply an embodiment of the wilderness.