Some critics – among them Chinua Achebe – believe that Marlow is little more than Conrad’s alter-ego and mouthpiece. This is largely due to the similar seafaring careers that Conrad and Marlow (his best-known storyteller) led. However, because Marlow is an intradiegetic narrator, there is a sense of critical distance between the author and his character, and this allows Conrad to raise questions rather than simply giving answers. One important example of this is Marlow’s concern with “truth,” which word is mentioned repeatedly across the novella. Marlow speaks often of searching for a “truth” that is forever symbolically hidden, either in the literal and metaphorical “heart of an impenetrable darkness” (which is both the mystery of colonial Africa and the mysterious darkness of Kurtz) or beneath the surface of “the oily and languid sea” (the water being a recurring symbol for time and memory in the novella).

It may be, then, that Conrad was still trying to interpret and understand the “truth” of his Congo experiences when he wrote *Heart of Darkness*, and that by situating Marlow as an intradiegetic narrator, he was able to examine his own experiences from a more critical distance. It is never entirely clear what “truth” Marlow was – and perhaps still is – searching for. Perhaps Marlow himself is not always quite sure. But it is hard not to think that it ends up being the “horror” of European colonialism. After all, it is this “horror” that echoes in Kurtz’s last words (“The horror! The horror!”) and in Marlow’s memory for so many years. We know from Conrad’s letters to Roger Casement that, so disgusted was Conrad with King Leopold II’s colonization of the Congo and its people, that he was tempted to say “there is no more Europe”. Through Marlow’s failed search for “truth,” then, and by using the intradiegeticstructure of the novella to make Marlow a somewhat distanced and obscure narrator, Conrad symbolically and literally *shows* his readers – rather than simply *telling them about* – the senseless horror and brutality of the colonial project and is able to gain critical distance from his own experiences.