CAPITOLO

7

The Empire and its Shadows: Kipling and Conrad

"And this also," said Marlow suddenly, "has been one of the dark places of the earth." — Joseph Conrad, Heart of Darkness (1899)

OBIETTIVI

1. I can describe the British Empire at its height — India, Suez, the Scramble for Africa, the Congo Free State and the Boer War — with the key dates.
2. I can explain what colonial literature is and read Kipling's "The White Man's Burden" critically, as a text of its time.
3. I can analyse the frame, the narrator and the ambiguity of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, and present the debate opened by Chinua Achebe.
4. I can use *that*-, *whether*- and *wh*-clauses and extraposition with *it* in formal writing.
5. I can discuss sensitive topics respectfully and write a clear, neutral object label and exhibition panel.
6. I can explain why the Mercator projection enlarges some regions, and use it as a starting point for the colloquio.

INDICE DEL CAPITOLO

7.1 History and Society: The Empire at its Height 2
7.2 Literature: Writing the Empire 5
7.3 Texts: The Burden and the Map 8
7.4 Language: Noun Clauses 12
7.5 Skills: Sensitive Topics and Museum Texts 15
7.6 Connections: Empire in Italian, on the Map and on Screen 19

English 5 · Parte II · America and Empire · versione 1.0
Capitolo 7: The Empire and its Shadows: Kipling and Conrad · pagine 217–242 del volume completo · estratto per lo studio

On 22 June 1897 Queen Victoria celebrated sixty years on the throne, and soldiers from Canada, Australia, India, Africa and the Caribbean marched through London in her Diamond Jubilee procession. Two years later, in *Blackwood's Magazine*, a Polish-born sea captain who wrote in his third language published a story about a journey up an African river: *Heart of Darkness*.

This chapter is about the British Empire at its height, from 1857 to the First World War, and about two writers who told its story: Rudyard Kipling and Joseph Conrad. You will read Kipling's most criticised poem and two passages from Conrad, and meet the debate that Chinua Achebe opened about him. In Language you will learn **noun clauses**, the grammar of claims and debates (*whether the novel is racist*), and in Connections you will see why a map is never neutral.

7.1 History and Society: The Empire at its Height

By 1914 the British Empire ruled about a quarter of the world's population. It was not one system but many. The **dominions** (*dominion*) — Canada (1867), Australia (1901), New Zealand and Newfoundland (1907) and South Africa (1910) — were settler colonies that governed themselves under the Crown. India was ruled by British officials. Smaller territories were crown colonies, run by a governor, or **protectorates** (*protettorati*), where a local ruler kept his title while Britain controlled defence, trade and foreign policy. Figura 7.1 sets the main events beside the books of this chapter.

7.1.1 India: from the Company to the Crown

For a century much of India had been governed by a trading company, the East India Company, with its own army of Indian soldiers, the **sepoys** (*sepoy*, from a Persian word for "soldier"). In May 1857 sepoys at Meerut, near Delhi, rose against their officers, and the revolt spread across northern India. Its causes included annexations of Indian states, reforms that offended religious customs and the rumour that new rifle cartridges were greased with cow and pig fat. Both sides committed atrocities, and the British repression was savage. Even the name is an interpretation: the British called it the "Indian Mutiny", Indian nationalists the "First War of Independence"; historians often say the **Rebellion of 1857**. In 1858 India passed from the Company to the Crown, governed by a Viceroy — the British **Raj** (Hindi "rule") — and in 1876 the Royal Titles Act made Victoria **Empress of India**. The Indian National Congress, founded in 1885, would lead the country to independence in 1947.

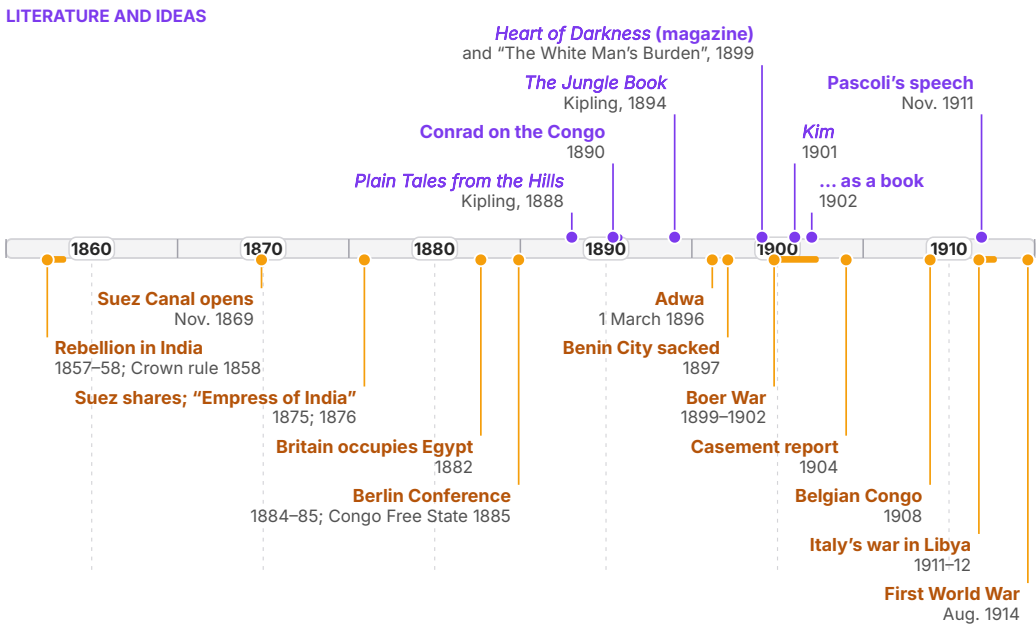

Figura 7.1 The Empire and its writers, 1855–1915, on a proportional time axis (ticks every 5 years). Above the axis, literature and ideas (violet: dates of first publication); below it, history (amber). Bars show events that lasted more than a year.

7.1.2 Suez and the Scramble for Africa

The **Suez Canal**, built by a French company with the labour of tens of thousands of Egyptian workers, opened in 1869 and cut the sea route to India by thousands of kilometres. In 1875 the Prime Minister, Benjamin Disraeli, bought Egypt's shares in the canal (about 44 per cent), and in 1882 British troops occupied Egypt.

In 1870 most of Africa was still ruled by Africans; by 1914 only **Ethiopia** and **Liberia** were independent (Figura 7.2). This rapid conquest is known as the **Scramble for Africa** (*spartizione dell'Africa*). Its causes were raw materials (palm oil, rubber, then diamonds and gold), markets, rivalry between the powers and national prestige; quinine against malaria, river steamers and the Maxim machine gun (1884) made it possible. In 1884–85 Bismarck hosted the **Berlin Conference**: fourteen states — thirteen European countries and the United States — set the rules of the partition. No African was invited. Africans resisted everywhere, but only Ethiopia defeated an invading army: the Italians, at Adwa, on 1 March 1896 (Connections).

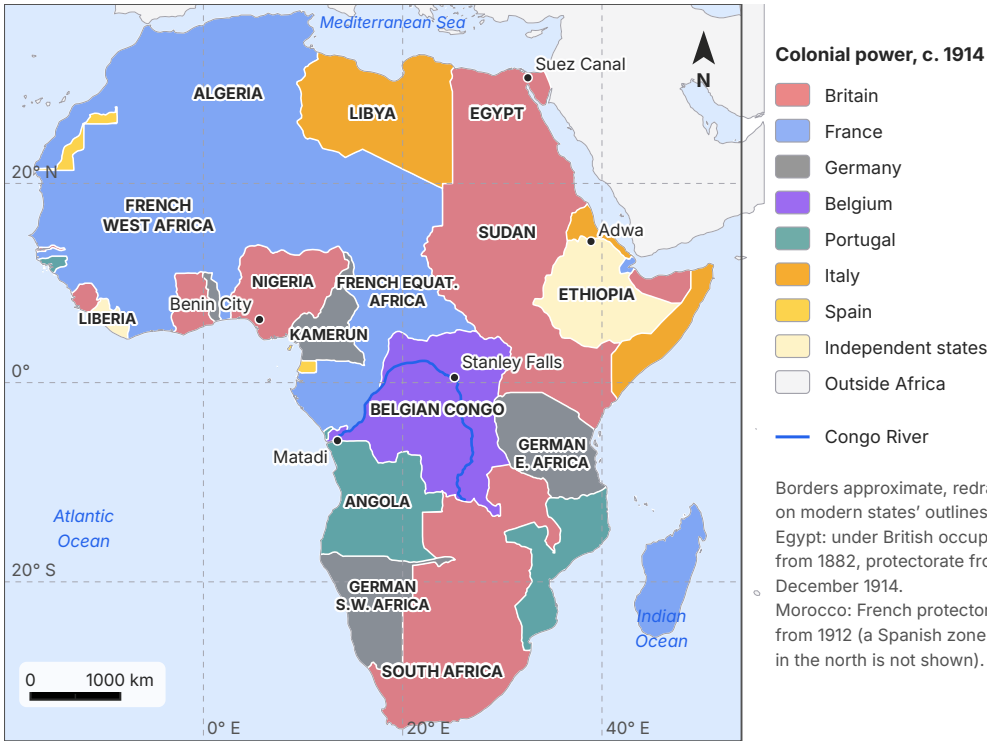

Figura 7.2 Africa c. 1914: the territories of the colonial powers. Colonial borders c. 1914, approximate, redrawn on the outlines of modern states (Natural Earth data, 1:50m); some 1914 names are given. The Congo River and four places mentioned in this chapter are marked: Matadi and Stanley Falls (Conrad's journey, 1890), Benin City (1897) and Adwa (1896).

ERRORE FREQUENTE

✗ «Alla Conferenza di Berlino le potenze si divisero l'Africa tracciandone i confini.» → ✓ La Conferenza (1884–85) fissò le **regole** della spartizione (l'«occupazione effettiva» delle coste, la libertà di commercio nel bacino del Congo) e riconobbe le pretese di Leopoldo II sul Congo. I confini furono tracciati dopo, con trattati e con la conquista militare.

7.1.3 The Congo Free State and the Boer War

Leopold II, king of the Belgians, ruled the **Congo Free State** (1885–1908) as his personal possession. When the world's demand for rubber exploded in the 1890s, his agents and private army imposed quotas on villages and enforced them with hostage-taking, flogging, mutilation and killing. No census was taken and estimates of the deaths vary widely; all historians agree that the human cost was enormous. E. D. Morel, a Liverpool shipping clerk, noticed that ships sailed to the Congo full of guns and came back full of rubber and ivory; the British consul Roger Casement documented the abuses in a report of 1904. In 1908 Belgium annexed the territory.

COLLEGAMENTI

Chemistry: why rubber? Natural rubber is a polymer, *cis*-polyisoprene, obtained from latex. Raw rubber is sticky when hot and brittle when cold; in 1839 Charles Goodyear found that heating it with sulphur makes it elastic and stable. In this **vulcanisation**, sulphur atoms form bridges (cross-links) between the polymer chains. Vulcanised rubber made possible insulated cables and, from 1888, Dunlop's pneumatic tyre — the demand that the Congo paid for.

In southern Africa, diamonds (1867) and gold (1886) set Britain against the two Boer republics, founded by Afrikaans-speaking descendants of Dutch settlers. In the **Boer War** (1899–1902) the British army burned farms and moved civilians into camps, where tens of thousands of Boer and Black African civilians, many of them children, died of disease.

7.1.4 The idea of empire and its critics

Empire was justified as a **civilising mission** (*missione civilizzatrice*): a supposed duty to bring Christianity, trade and "progress" to peoples considered inferior, a belief that Social Darwinism, a misuse of Darwin's theory (chapter 3), dressed up as science. At home empire was popular entertainment, and a music-hall song of 1878 ("by Jingo") gave English the word **jingoism** (*sciovinismo*): loud, aggressive patriotism. Critics answered. In *Imperialism: A Study* (1902) J. A. Hobson argued that empire served a small class of investors; Mark Twain joined the American Anti-Imperialist League; and the colonised organised their own resistance. **Imperialism** (*imperialismo*) — extending a nation's power over other territories and peoples by conquest, settlement or economic control — was the word of the age, a boast for some and an accusation for others.

DA RICORDARE

1857–58 rebellion in India · **1858** the Raj · **1869** Suez Canal · **1876** Empress of India · **1882** Egypt occupied · **1884–85** Berlin Conference · **1885–1908** Congo Free State · **1896** Adwa · **1899–1902** Boer War.

7.2 Literature: Writing the Empire

7.2.1 Colonial literature

The Empire produced a huge literature: memoirs, soldiers' songs, stories of British life in India, adventure novels such as H. Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* (1885). Critics call it **colonial literature** (*letteratura coloniale*): writing of the colonial period, mainly by authors from the colonising country, about the colonies and their peoples, usually for readers at home. Elleke Boeh-

mer distinguishes it from *colonialist* writing in a narrower sense, which openly promotes expansion. Colonial literature can doubt and criticise; but it sees the colonies from the outside, and the colonised rarely speak in it with their own voices. In English 3 (chapter 14) you met "colonial readings" of *The Tempest*; in chapter 15 you will meet *postcolonial* writers, many of whom answered Kipling and Conrad.

7.2.2 Rudyard Kipling (1865–1936)

Kipling was born in Bombay (today Mumbai), sent to England at five, and back in India at sixteen as a journalist in Lahore. *Plain Tales from the Hills* (1888) made him famous; *Barrack-Room Ballads* (1892) gave the ordinary soldier a voice; *The Jungle Book* (1894) and *Kim* (1901), the story of an Irish orphan on the roads of India, are still read worldwide. In 1907 he became the first writer in English to receive the Nobel Prize in Literature (his "If—" is in English 2). He loved India's landscapes and languages and believed firmly in British rule — a double view that makes him hard to read today. Early in his essay on him (1942) George Orwell put the charge bluntly: "Kipling is a jingo imperialist, he is morally insensitive and aesthetically disgusting"; then he spent the rest of the essay explaining why Kipling was still read.

"**The White Man's Burden**" appeared in February 1899 with the subtitle "The United States and the Philippine Islands". It was written for America: the United States had just taken the Philippines from Spain, and Filipino fighters were defending their own republic. In seven stanzas Kipling presents conquest as a duty and a sacrifice. It was answered at once with parodies, such as Henry Labouchère's "The Brown Man's Burden", and its title became an ironic phrase for imperial hypocrisy.

7.2.3 Joseph Conrad (1857–1924)

Conrad was born Józef Teodor Konrad Korzeniowski in Berdychiv (then in the Russian Empire, today in Ukraine) to Polish patriots who were exiled for their politics; he was an orphan at eleven. He went to sea from Marseille at sixteen, joined the British merchant navy in 1878, became a British subject and a master mariner in 1886, and wrote in English, his **third** language after Polish and French: *Lord Jim* (1900), *Nostromo* (1904), *The Secret Agent* (1907). In 1890 he went to the Congo Free State to command a river steamer for a Belgian company, travelled up the river to Stanley Falls, fell ill and came home within months, deeply shaken. At Matadi he had met Roger Casement.

APPROFONDIMENTO

Conrad and the Congo campaign. When Casement began to gather evidence against Leopold's regime, Conrad wrote to him (December 1903) that it was extraordinary that the conscience of Europe, which had put down the slave trade, should tolerate the Congo State. He sympathised with the campaign but took little part in it himself. Who was Kurtz? Scholars have proposed several models, among them an agent, Georges-Antoine Klein, who died on board Conrad's steamer in 1890; most agree that Kurtz is a composite.

7.2.4 *Heart of Darkness* (1899)

The novella — in English a short novel, not a tale like the Italian *novelle* of English 3, chapter 12 — appeared in *Blackwood's* in 1899 and as a book in 1902. On a sailing boat, the *Nellie*, anchored in the Thames at sunset, an unnamed narrator and three friends listen to **Marlow**, a sailor, telling of a journey in Africa. A "Company" sends him to command a steamer on a great river — never named, but clearly the Congo. On the way he sees the waste and cruelty of the Company's stations and hears of **Kurtz**, its most successful ivory agent, a man of great gifts: "All Europe contributed to the making of Kurtz". At the Inner Station Marlow finds that Kurtz has made himself a god and collected ivory by terror; his eloquent report on "civilising" Africa ends with a scrawled call to exterminate the people he was meant to civilise. Kurtz dies on the way back, crying "The horror! The horror!". In Europe Marlow lies to Kurtz's fiancée, "the Intended": he tells her that Kurtz's last word was her name.

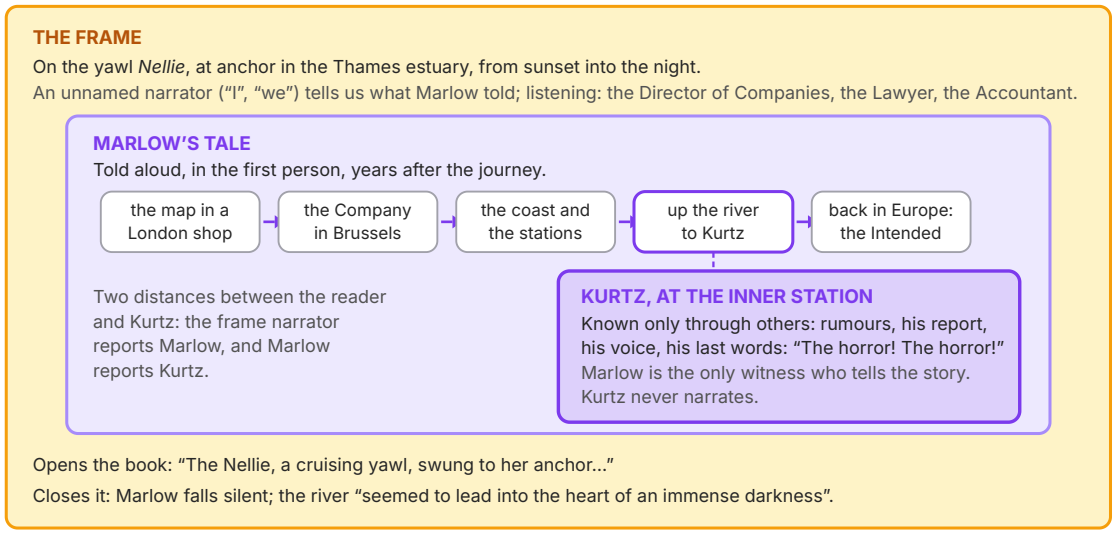

Figura 7.3 The frame of *Heart of Darkness*: an unnamed narrator on the *Nellie* reports Marlow's spoken tale, and Kurtz reaches the reader only through Marlow. The stages of Marlow's journey follow the order of the text.

The book is a **frame narrative** (English 3, chapter 6): the frame narrator reports Marlow, and Marlow reports Kurtz (Figura 7.3). Marlow is a limited and at times unreliable narrator (English 4, chapter 7): he does not understand all he saw, and he lies in the last scene. For him, says the frame narrator, "the meaning of an episode was not inside like a kernel but outside, enveloping the tale". Conrad's style is a literary impressionism: sensations come before explanations. When the steamer is attacked, Marlow first sees "Sticks, little sticks" flying about; only later does he understand that they are arrows. The title points three ways: to Africa as Europeans imagined it, to Kurtz's heart, and to Europe itself — Marlow begins with London (see the epigraph of this chapter), and the book ends with the Thames leading "into the heart of an immense darkness".

7.2.5 Reading Conrad after Achebe

For decades critics read the novella as an attack on imperialism: Marlow calls conquest — the Romans' in Britain first, then all conquest — "robbery with violence, aggravated murder on a great scale". In a lecture of 1975 the Nigerian novelist **Chinua Achebe** (1930–2013) challenged that reading. He argued that the book uses Africa as a backdrop for one European's breakdown, that its Africans are bodies and noise rather than people and hardly speak, and that Conrad shared the racism of his time; he asked whether such a book can be called great art. Some critics replied that Marlow is not Conrad and that the frame invites us to judge Marlow too; others agreed with Achebe, or argued, like Edward Said, that Conrad saw the evil of empire but could not imagine Africans outside it. A strong answer presents both positions, with evidence for each.

> **ERRORE FREQUENTE**
>
> ✗ «*Heart of Darkness* è narrato da Kurtz.» → ✓ Kurtz non racconta mai: la storia è di **Marlow**, riferita da un narratore senza nome.
>
> ✗ «È un romanzo razzista» oppure «è un romanzo anti-imperialista», come sentenza finale. → ✓ Denuncia la violenza coloniale e rappresenta gli africani con gli stereotipi del suo tempo: presenta il **dibattito**, con citazioni per ciascuna tesi.
>
> ✗ «"The White Man's Burden" celebra l'Impero britannico in India.» → ✓ Fu scritto nel 1899 per gli **Stati Uniti**, a proposito delle Filippine.

7.3 Texts: The Burden and the Map

7.3.1 T1 · Rudyard Kipling, "The White Man's Burden" (1899), stanza 1

Context. February 1899: the poem addresses the people of the United States. Lines 7–8 use an insult many readers then found acceptable; we print them to analyse the poem, not to repeat its

judgement.

Tabella 7.1 T1 — Kipling, "The White Man's Burden", stanza 1 (text of *The Five Nations*, 1903, as transcribed by Wikisource; first published in February 1899).

Take up the White Man's burden—	
Send forth the best ye breed—	
Go bind your sons to exile	
To serve your captives' need;	
To wait in heavy harness,	5
On fluttered folk and wild—	
Your new-caught, sullen peoples,	
Half-devil and half-child.	

Glosses. *ye*: you (archaic plural) · *breed*: produce (normally said of animals) · *bind… to exile*: commit… to a life far from home · *captives*: prisoners · *wait on*: serve · *harness*: the straps of a working horse · *fluttered*: restless · *new-caught*: just captured · *sullen*: silent and resentful.

Analysis

Voice. The stanza is a chain of commands (*Take up*, *Send forth*, *Go bind*); the archaic *ye* gives the speaker the authority of a preacher, and the first line, repeated at the start of every stanza, works like a slogan.

Argument. Kipling turns conquest upside down. The conquerors give their "best" sons, accept "exile", "serve" and "wait in heavy harness" like working horses: empire becomes a **burden**. Yet the people they "serve" are *captives*, *new-caught* — the poem admits in passing that they have been conquered — and the last line denies them full humanity: "half-devil", dangerous, and "half-child", unable to govern themselves, which is exactly the claim that justified ruling them.

Form. Short lines with three strong beats; the even lines rhyme (*breed / need*, *wild / child*), the odd ones end on an unstressed syllable (*BURden*, *EXile*). The music of a hymn or a march makes the argument easy to remember and hard to question.

1. To whom are the commands addressed? Find three verbs in the imperative.
2. Which words present the conquerors as people who suffer and serve? Which reveal that the colonised have been conquered?
3. Explain the image of lines 5–6 (*wait in heavy harness*).
4. Many readers in 1899 called the poem noble; many today call it racist propaganda. Use the text to explain both reactions.

7.3.2 T2 · Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (1899), part I: the map

Context. On the *Nellie*, after dark, Marlow begins his story by remembering his childhood. Each paragraph opens with quotation marks because the frame narrator is reporting Marlow's words.

Tabella 7.2 T2 — *Heart of Darkness*, part I (Project Gutenberg eBook #219).

"Now when I was a little chap I had a passion for maps. I would look for hours at South America, or Africa, or Australia, and lose myself in all the glories of exploration. At that time there were many blank spaces on the earth, and when I saw one that looked particularly inviting on a map (but they all look that) I would put my finger on it and say, 'When I grow up I will go there.' The North Pole was one of these places, I remember. Well, I haven't been there yet, and shall not try now. The glamour's off. Other places were scattered about the hemispheres. I have been in some of them, and... well, we won't talk about that. But there was one yet—the biggest, the most blank, so to speak—that I had a hankering after.

"True, by this time it was not a blank space any more. It had got filled since my boyhood with rivers and lakes and names. It had ceased to be a blank space of delightful mystery—a white patch for a boy to dream gloriously over. It had become a place of darkness.

Glosses. *chap*: boy · *inviting*: attractive · *the glamour's off*: the magic has gone · *yet*: still · *hankering after*: a strong wish for · *patch*: small area.

Analysis

The blank space. On European maps of the 1860s much of central Africa was white, and for the boy the white patch is a promise. The adult Marlow knows better: the space was blank only for Europeans. Millions of people lived there; what was missing was European knowledge. When it "got filled", it was with "rivers and lakes and names" — the names given by explorers, the first step of possession.

From white to dark. The words change in three stages — *blank space*, *delightful mystery*, *place of darkness* — and the darkness arrives with the mapmakers. Marlow does not explain this; he lets the words suggest it, and a joke (*well, we won't talk about that*) stops him saying more. This is his voice: oral, digressive, ironic, never fully explicit.

1. What did the young Marlow do when he saw a blank space on a map?
2. What "filled" the space? What does the word *names* suggest about exploration?
3. Find two signs that Marlow is speaking to listeners, not writing.
4. Was the "blank space" really empty? Explain the difference between the boy's view and the adult's.

7.3.3 T3 · Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (1899), part III: "The horror!"

Context. Kurtz, dying, is on Marlow's steamer going back down the river. One evening Marlow comes into his cabin with a candle.

Tabella 7.3 T3 — *Heart of Darkness*, part III (Project Gutenberg eBook #219).

"Anything approaching the change that came over his features I have never seen before, and hope never to see again. Oh, I wasn't touched. I was fascinated. It was as though a veil had been rent. I saw on that ivory face the expression of sombre pride, of ruthless power, of craven terror—of an intense and hopeless despair. Did he live his life again in every detail of desire, temptation, and surrender during that supreme moment of complete knowledge? 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!'

"I blew the candle out and left the cabin.

Glosses. *features*: face · *touched*: moved to pity · *rent*: torn (from *rend*) · *ivory face*: pale as ivory, the material Kurtz collected · *sombre*: dark · *craven*: cowardly · *surrender*: giving up.

Analysis

Kurtz's face shows four contradictory expressions in one sentence — *pride*, *power*, *terror*, *despair* — and the dash before the last slows the sentence, as if Marlow were looking harder. The key sentence is a **question**: Marlow cannot enter Kurtz's mind, only guess. "The horror!" is never explained: it may refer to Kurtz's crimes, to the darkness he found in himself, to the enterprise he served, or to death.

1. Why does Marlow say "I wasn't touched. I was fascinated"? What is the difference?
2. List the four expressions on Kurtz's face. Why are they contradictory?
3. Give two possible meanings of "The horror! The horror!", with a reason for each.
4. Compare the "burden" of T1 with the "horror" of T3: what does each word say about empire?

ESEMPIO SVOLTO

Writing about an ambiguous text. Task: in about 80 words, answer "What does Kurtz mean by 'The horror!'?" Do not choose too fast: the silence of the text is part of its meaning. Give two readings with evidence, then add the narrative point.

Kurtz's last words are never explained. On one level they are a personal judgement: Marlow sees "hopeless despair" on his face and imagines him reliving "every detail of desire, temptation, and surrender". On another, they judge the enterprise he served: the man who wrote about civilising Africa has seen what it meant. Both readings, however, are Marlow's guesses, offered as a question. The horror is named, not described.

LEARNING TO LEARN

Reading a source critically. A poem, a speech or a museum label is a source: someone speaks, to someone, for a reason. Ask: **Who speaks**, from which position? **To whom** — and who is talked about without being addressed? **With what interest**: to persuade, justify, sell, warn? **Whose voice is missing?** (In T1 the Filipinos never speak; in T2 the people of the "blank space" are absent.) The same questions work for Pascoli's speech (Connections), for a Fascist newspaper or a Risorgimento proclamation, and for Caesar's *De bello Gallico*, written by the conqueror; in the INVALSI reading test they help you identify a writer's purpose and attitude.

7.4 Language: Noun Clauses

Debates about books are full of sentences like *Achebe argued* ***that the novel dehumanises Africans*** or *Critics disagree about* ***whether Marlow speaks for Conrad***. In each, a whole clause does the job of a noun. A **noun clause** (*proposizione sostantiva*: *soggettiva*, *oggettiva*...) is a subordinate clause that fills the place of a noun phrase: subject, object, complement, or the object of a preposition. There are three kinds: *that*-clauses (statements), *whether* / *if*-clauses (yes / no questions) and *wh*-clauses (Figura 7.4).

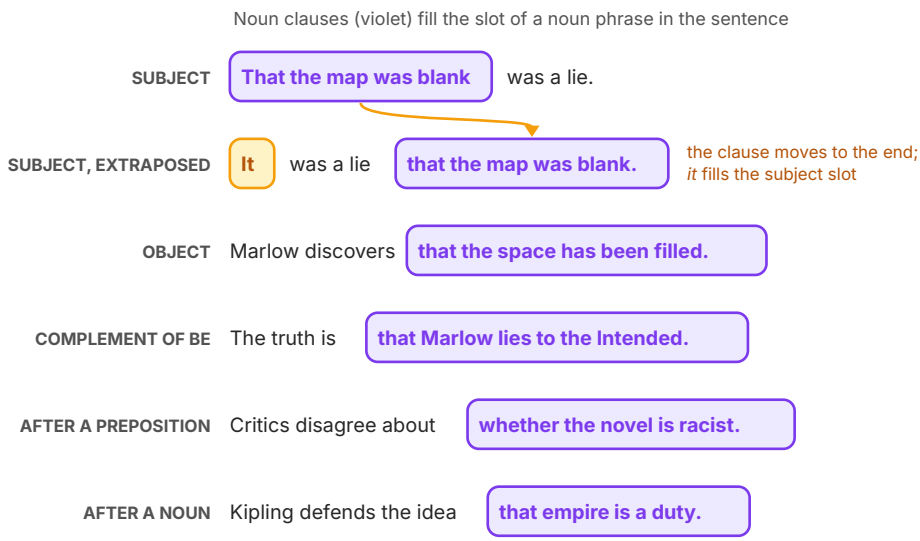

Figura 7.4 Noun clauses (violet) in the positions of a noun phrase. A long subject clause is usually moved to the end of the sentence, and *it* (amber) takes its place: this is extraposition.

7.4.1 *That*-clauses

Tabella 7.4 *That*-clauses: positions

Position	Example
subject (formal, rare)	*That the map was blank* was a lie.
object of a verb (*say, argue, claim, realise…*: reporting verbs, English 3, chapter 6)	Achebe argued *that Africa is only a backdrop*.
complement of *be*	The truth is *that Marlow lies to the Intended*.
after an adjective (*sure, aware, afraid, convinced*)	Marlow was sure *that Kurtz was dying*.
after a noun (*the fact / idea / belief / claim that*)	Kipling defends the idea *that empire is a duty*.

In speech *that* is often dropped after a verb or adjective (*I think it's his best book*); keep it in formal writing, and always when the clause is the subject or follows a noun. Do not confuse a noun clause after a noun with a relative clause (English 3, chapter 5): in *the idea that empire is a duty* the clause says what the idea **is**, and *that* cannot become *which*; in *the idea that Kipling defended* it says **which** idea, and *that* = *which*, the object of *defended*.

7.4.2 Extraposition: *it is clear that…*

English dislikes long subjects (heavy noun phrases, chapter 5). A subject clause is normally moved to the end, and *it* fills the empty subject position: this is **extraposition** (*estraposizione*). The meaning does not change, but the short, known information comes first and the long, new information last, where readers expect it: *That the map was blank was a lie* → ***It** was a lie that the map was blank*; *Whether Kurtz was mad is not clear* → ***It** is not clear whether Kurtz was mad*. The common patterns are *It is clear / likely / true / surprising that…*, *It is a fact / no secret that…*, *It seems / appears that…* (hedging, English 4, chapter 4), *It struck me / never occurred to him that…*, and the passive reporting structure *It is said / believed that…* (English 3, chapter 4). It also works with infinitives: *It is impossible to say what Kurtz meant.*

GRAMMAR IN ITALIANO

Le proposizioni sostantive. *that* = *che* (dichiarative), *whether / if* = *se*, *what, who, why, how…* = *che cosa, chi, perché, come…* (interrogative indirette).

Confronto con l'italiano. (1) L'italiano omette il soggetto (*È chiaro che…*); l'inglese riempie il posto del soggetto con **it** (*It is clear that…*). (2) Dopo *il fatto che*, *è possibile che*, *non so se* l'italiano usa spesso il **congiuntivo**; l'inglese l'**indicativo** (*the fact that he left*). (3) Nelle interrogative indirette l'inglese mantiene l'ordine soggetto + verbo, senza ausiliare: *Mi chiedo che cosa significhi* = *I wonder what it means*.

7.4.3 *Whether* and *if*

A yes / no question becomes a noun clause with *whether* or *if*: *Critics ask whether / if the novel is racist.* After *ask, wonder, know, doubt, not be sure* both are correct (*if* is more informal). Only **whether** is possible after a preposition (*They argued **about whether** to teach it*; ✗ *about if*), as subject (***Whether** Conrad shared Marlow's views is debated*), before a *to*-infinitive (*He did not know **whether** to tell the truth*), directly before *or not*, and after a noun (*the question **whether** empire can be justified*).

7.4.4 *Wh*-clauses

A *wh*-clause turns a *wh*-question into a noun: *What did Marlow see?* → ***What Marlow saw** changed him*; *The novel shows **how the Company made its profits***. The word order is that of a statement, with no *do / does / did* (indirect questions: English 1–2). A *what*-clause subject is also the first half of a *wh*-cleft (*What Marlow sees is a place of darkness*: English 4, chapter 6). In formal writing a *wh*-clause can replace a vague noun: *the reason for his silence* → *why he was silent*.

ERRORE FREQUENTE

✗ *Is clear that Kipling admired the Empire.* → ✓ ***It** is clear that…* (in inglese il soggetto non si omette).

✗ *That Conrad was Polish it is well known.* → ✓ *It is well known that Conrad was Polish* / *That Conrad was Polish is well known* (o *it* o la frase soggetto, mai entrambi).

✗ *We talked about if the novel is racist.* → ✓ *We talked about **whether**…* (dopo una preposizione solo *whether*).

✗ *I wonder what does "the horror" mean.* → ✓ *I wonder what "the horror" **means**.*

✗ *The fact that he lie to her is important.* → ✓ *The fact that he **lies / lied** to her…* (indicativo, non congiuntivo).

7.5 Skills: Sensitive Topics and Museum Texts

7.5.1 Vocabulary: empire and exploitation

These words appear in history books, museum texts and today's debates about the colonial past. Learn them with their collocations, and notice which carry a judgement (*exploitation*, *propaganda*) and which are neutral (*colony*, *annex*).

Tabella 7.5 Empire and exploitation: key words

Word	Meaning	Typical collocation
colony (n.)	a territory ruled by another country	a former colony; found a colony
annex (v.)	take a territory and make it part of a state	annex a territory
conquest (n.)	taking land or people by force	wars of conquest
exploitation (n.)	unfair use of people or resources for profit	the exploitation of workers / resources
rubber, *ivory* (n.)	an elastic material from latex; the material of elephants' tusks	rubber quotas; the ivory trade
resistance (n.)	fighting back against an occupier	armed resistance; crush resistance
civilising mission (n.)	the claimed duty to "civilise" others (a period phrase)	the so-called civilising mission
propaganda (n.)	information used to promote a political cause	imperial propaganda
independence (n.)	freedom from another country's control	gain / declare independence

Word formation: loanwords from the Empire

Empire moved words as well as goods: hundreds of English words are loanwords (English 3, chapter 2) from the languages of the colonised world, especially India. Some changed meaning on the way: *jungle*, a word for dry land, became the word for the wettest forests on earth. Origins as given by the main English dictionaries:

- *bungalow* — Hindi / Gujarati: "(a house) in the style of Bengal"
- *pyjamas* — Urdu, from Persian: "leg garment", i.e. loose trousers
- *shampoo* — Hindi: "press!, knead!" — a massage, before it meant washing hair
- *jungle* — Hindi, from Sanskrit: rough, dry, uncultivated land
- *thug* — Hindi: "swindler, thief"
- *khaki* — Urdu, from Persian: "dusty", dust-coloured

- *loot* — Hindi: goods stolen in war
- *safari* — Swahili, from Arabic: “journey”
- *boomerang* — an Aboriginal language of the Sydney area (probably Dharug): a curved throwing stick

7.5.2 Reading: Should We Still Read *Heart of Darkness*?

Before you read. Can a book be great and offensive at the same time? Think of a book, film or song that people disagree about.

The Link, Year Five · Part II — posted by Sam Taylor. Our Part II novel is *Heart of Darkness*, and my seminar tutor has set the first essay of the term on it. Here are my notes. Giulia, Aoife, Callum: tell me where I’m wrong before I hand it in.

Should we still read *Heart of Darkness*? — essay notes

1. What the question asks. “Should we still read…?” is really two questions. Should the novel be read at all, at school and at university? And if so, how? My answer to the first is yes, but only with a clear answer to the second. The word *still* matters too: it admits that something has changed since the book was first praised.

2. The case against. The strongest case was made by Chinua Achebe in a lecture of 1975. He argued that the novel uses Africa as a stage set for one European’s breakdown, and that its Africans are almost never people: they are bodies, shapes and noise, and hardly any of them speak. That is not a small point in a book about voices. A student in Lagos and a student in Bristol do not read those pages from the same place. There is also a practical argument. A course has room for only so many books. If we keep giving one of those places to a novel that silences Africans, we are not giving it to Achebe himself, or to the many African writers who answered him. Our tutor put it neatly: a “classic” is a decision somebody made, not a fact of nature.

3. The case for. The book was one of the first in English to show colonial violence from the inside: the chain gangs, the starving workers left to die in the shade, the Company’s greed dressed up as progress. Marlow calls conquest “robbery with violence”, and that was not a common thing to say in a British magazine in 1899. The frame matters as well. We never hear Marlow directly: an unnamed listener reports him, so we are invited to judge Marlow, his prejudices included, and not simply to agree with him. Finally, so many writers have replied to this novella that you cannot fully understand the replies without reading what they are replying to.

4. My view (so far). Read it — but never alone. Pair it with Achebe’s lecture; ask whose voices are missing; mark the moments where the irony seems to work and the moments where it seems to fail. A book can be a powerful criticism of empire and also a product of the racism of its time. That is not a contradiction I need to solve in 2,000 words; it is the reason the book is still worth arguing about.

Comments

Giulia: This helps me for the exam! In Italy we read Pascoli’s speech on the war in Libya next to Kipling, and our teacher asked the same thing: whose voices are missing? I’d add one point to

section 3: Conrad was an outsider too, a Pole writing in his third language.

Callum: Geography angle: the "blank space" on Marlow's map wasn't blank for the people who lived there. Our lecturer says every map is an argument. I'm doing an exhibition text on exactly this.

Aoife: Agree with "never alone". But I'd cut "so far" from the heading of section 4. Your view is clear — say it with confidence.

Language in context. Find three noun clauses after a verb and one *wh*-clause in Sam's notes. The tasks on this text are in the exercises (Towards INVALSI).

7.5.3 Speaking: discussing sensitive topics respectfully

Empire, slavery and racism are topics on which classmates may feel very differently, sometimes because of their own families' histories. **Frame** the topic; **separate** a text's language from your own (*Kipling's phrase*) and never repeat an insult as your own word; **acknowledge** other views before you disagree; prefer facts and dates to adjectives; disagree with ideas, not people.

Tabella 7.6 Useful language — discussing sensitive topics

Function	Expressions
Framing	This is a sensitive question for many people, so I'd like to look at it carefully.
Distancing	In Kipling's words… · what the poem calls… · the period's term, which we wouldn't use today
Acknowledging	I understand why some people feel… · I can see where you're coming from.
Reminding	It's worth remembering that… · We should keep in mind that…
Disagreeing	I see it slightly differently. · I'm not sure the evidence supports that.
Checking	Have I understood you correctly? · Does anyone see it differently?

1. **Groups of four.** "Should a statue of a colonial figure stay in a public square?" One student frames the question, two take opposite positions, one chairs and checks that each speaker acknowledges the other side. Then report the two strongest arguments.
2. **Pairs.** Explain to a partner who has not read it why "The White Man's Burden" is controversial, quoting at most two phrases and distancing yourself from them. Your partner asks two questions; then swap, with T2 and the "blank space".

7.5.4 Writing: an exhibition text

An **object label** (*didascalia*) identifies an object — what, who, when, material, owner — and adds 40–60 words of interpretation; a **panel** (*pannello*) of 150–250 words introduces a room or a theme. Visitors read standing, for thirty seconds: one idea per sentence, no jargon, checked facts, a neutral register. Neutral is not vague: say who did what (*British troops took the objects*, not

the objects were removed). Callum wrote these texts for a student exhibition; the map is imaginary.

Tabella 7.7 Model text — an object label and a panel

OBJECT LABEL
Wall map of the world, Mercator projection
Printed in Edinburgh, c. 1910 · colour lithograph on linen · lent by a private collector

Maps like this hung in thousands of British classrooms. British territory is coloured red, so the Empire looks vast and united. The projection makes it look even bigger: Canada, far from the equator, looks about five times its real size. Pupils learned geography and pride from the same picture. (49 words)

PANEL
Colouring the World: Maps and Empire, 1880–1914

In 1880 European maps of Africa still showed large blank spaces. By 1914 almost the whole continent was coloured in the colours of seven European powers. This room asks what those colours meant.

A map is never just a picture of the Earth. Mapmakers choose what to show, what to name and which projection to use. The Mercator projection, designed for sailors in 1569, keeps angles correct but enlarges areas far from the equator. On it, Greenland looks as large as Africa, which is in fact about fourteen times bigger.

The blank spaces were never empty. Millions of people lived there, with their own states, trade routes and names for rivers and mountains. Many of those names disappeared from European maps, replaced by the names of explorers and kings.

The maps in this room were made to inform, to sell and to persuade. As you look at them, ask who made each map, for whom, and whose knowledge it left out. (161 words)

Structure and checklist. Label: a "tombstone" line, then one answer to the question *why does this object matter?* Panel: a heading; an opening that sets time and place; two body paragraphs, one idea and one checked fact each; a closing that makes the visitor an active reader. ✓ present simple for what the object shows, past for history ✓ at least two noun clauses (*asks what those colours meant*) ✓ active voice when the agent matters ✓ no loaded adjectives (*savage, heroic*) except as a source's words.

Task. Write an object label and a panel (200–280 words in all) for an exhibition, *Empire: Objects and Questions*. Choose one object: (a) *Blackwood's Magazine*, February 1899, open at the first page of *Heart of Darkness*; (b) a bicycle tyre advertisement of the 1890s; (c) a souvenir postcard of the opening of the Suez Canal, 1869. Invent only what a label may invent (the lender, the size); check every historical fact.

7.6 Connections: Empire in Italian, on the Map and on Screen

7.6.1 Italy's empire and its rhetoric

Italy came late to the Scramble: Eritrea became a colony in 1890, Somalia followed, and an attempt to conquer Ethiopia ended at **Adwa** (1 March 1896), where the army of the emperor Menelik II defeated the Italian forces. In 1911 Italy went to war with the Ottoman Empire for Libya, which it obtained in 1912. On 26 November 1911, in the theatre of Barga, near Lucca, Giovanni Pascoli spoke "for our dead and wounded" of that war:

> *La grande Proletaria si è mossa.* [...] *Ma la grande Proletaria ha trovato luogo per loro: una vasta regione bagnata dal nostro mare, [...] e ora, da un pezzo, per l'inerzia di popolazioni nomadi e neghittose, è per gran parte un deserto.*

("The great Proletarian has moved. [...] But the great Proletarian has found a place for them: a vast region washed by our sea, [...] and now, for a long time, through the idleness of nomadic and lazy peoples, is for the most part a desert." Translation by the editors; Italian text of the Zanichelli edition, 1911, as transcribed by Wikisource.)

The "great Proletarian" is Italy, a poor nation whose emigrants were despised abroad; the war will give them land of their own, and avenge Adwa ("Abba-Garima" in the speech). Beside Kipling, the shared rhetoric is clear: both turn conquest into **labour and sacrifice**; both dismiss the colonised in a few words (*sullen*; *nomadi e neghittose*) and never let them speak; both see the land as **empty or wasted** — like the "blank space" on Marlow's map. The difference: Kipling speaks of duty to others, Pascoli of justice for Italy's poor. The poet of the *fanciullino* (chapter 6) was also a public orator, and Fascism later reused the idea of the "proletarian nation" for the war in Ethiopia (1935–36).

DA RICORDARE

For the exam. *Starting point:* in the Company's office Marlow sees "a large shining map, marked with all the colours of a rainbow. There was a vast amount of red—good to see at any time, because one knows that some real work is done in there".

- **English literature:** Kipling, "The White Man's Burden" — the rhetoric the red stood for; Achebe's answer to Conrad.
- **Italian literature:** Pascoli, "La grande proletaria si è mossa" (1911) — Libya as an "empty" land.
- **Another subject:** geography and mathematics — the Mercator projection; history — the Berlin Conference.

7.6.2 Geography and mathematics: why the map is never neutral

In 1569 the Flemish cartographer Gerardus Mercator published a world map for navigators. On the **Mercator projection** (*proiezione di Mercatore*) every angle is the true angle, so a course of constant compass bearing is a straight line. The price is area: regions far from the equator are enlarged, and the enlargement grows very fast (Figura 7.5). Greenland, about 2.2 million km², looks as large as Africa (on the map it is even slightly larger), although Africa, about 30.3 million km², is almost fourteen times larger in reality.

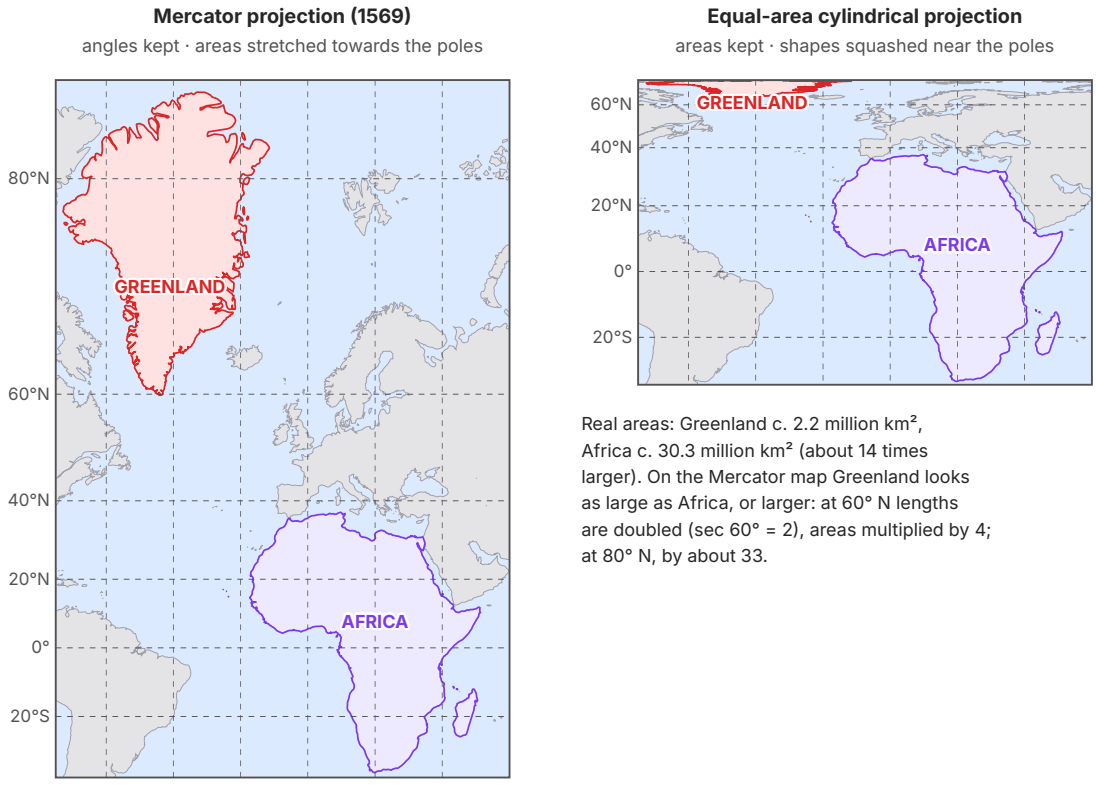

Figura 7.5 The same part of the world on two cylindrical projections, computed from Natural Earth outlines (1:50m). Left, Mercator: parallels spaced by ln tan(π/4 + φ/2), so Greenland (red) looks as large as Africa (violet). Right, an equal-area cylindrical projection (Lambert, 1772): parallels spaced by sin φ, so areas are correct and shapes near the poles are squashed. Same horizontal scale in both panels.

COLLEGAMENTI

Mathematics: the Mercator formula. On a sphere of radius R, a point of longitude λ and latitude φ (in radians) is placed at

$$x = R\,\lambda \qquad y = R\,\ln\tan(\pi/4 + \varphi/2)$$

A parallel, really $2\pi R\cos\varphi$ long, is drawn as long as the equator: lengths are multiplied by $\sec\varphi$ in every direction (so angles are kept) and areas by $\sec^2\varphi$ — by 4 at 60°, by about 33 at 80°. **Equal-area projections** (*proiezioni equivalenti*), such as Lambert's (1772) or the Gall–Peters map (Gall 1855, promoted by Arno Peters in 1973), keep areas and give up angles. No flat map keeps both.

Mercator did not design his map to flatter Europe, but the classroom map shaped how generations imagined the world: Europe large and central, Africa smaller than it is. The red map in the Company's office, Kipling's "new-caught" peoples, Pascoli's "deserto" and the projection on the wall all answer one question — who is at the centre, and who is drawn small.

7.6.3 Screen, music and art

On screen. Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now* (1979) moves *Heart of Darkness* to the Vietnam War: an American officer travels up a river to find a renegade colonel called Kurtz. It transposes the journey and the name, not the novel scene by scene.

Art and restitution: the Benin Bronzes. The royal court of the Kingdom of Benin, in today's southern Nigeria (not the Republic of Benin), commissioned for centuries brass and bronze heads and relief plaques recording its kings and history. In February 1897 a British military expedition captured and burned Benin City and took thousands of these objects, which were sold to museums in Europe and America. They are now at the centre of a debate on **restitution** (*restituzione*): the return of objects taken unjustly. In 2021–22 universities and museums in Britain, Germany and the United States returned objects or transferred their ownership to Nigeria; the British Museum is bound by a law of 1963 that limits removals from its collections. The situation changes year by year: check the latest news before you discuss it.

SINTESI

- By 1914 the British Empire ruled about a quarter of the world's population: self-governing dominions, India under the Raj, crown colonies and protectorates.
- After the rebellion of 1857 (its name is itself an interpretation), India passed from the East India Company to the Crown (1858); Victoria became Empress of India in 1876.
- The Suez Canal (1869) shortened the route to India; Britain bought canal shares in 1875 and occupied Egypt in 1882.
- The Scramble for Africa: by 1914 only Ethiopia and Liberia were independent. The Berlin Conference (1884–85) set the rules of the partition; it did not draw the borders.
- Leopold II's Congo Free State (1885–1908) exploited rubber and ivory through terror; Morel and Casement exposed it, and Belgium annexed it in 1908. After the Boer War (1899–1902) came the Union of South Africa (1910).
- Empire was justified as a "civilising mission" and celebrated with jingoism; Hobson, Twain and the colonised themselves criticised it.
- Colonial literature looks at the colonies from the colonising country, for readers at home. Kipling (Nobel 1907) wrote "The White Man's Burden" (1899) for the United States, about the Philippines.
- Conrad, a Pole writing in his third language, went up the Congo in 1890. *Heart of Darkness* (1899; book 1902) is a frame narrative: an unnamed narrator reports Marlow, who reports Kurtz.
- Marlow is a limited, partly unreliable narrator; Conrad's impressionism shows sensations before explanations; "The horror!" is never explained.
- Achebe (1975) argued that the novella dehumanises Africans and questioned its status as great art; the debate continues, and a good answer presents both sides with evidence.
- Noun clauses (*that*, *whether / if*, *wh-*) fill the place of a noun; long subject clauses are extraposed with *it*; only *whether* after prepositions, as subject and before *to*-infinitives.
- Pascoli's "La grande proletaria si è mossa" (1911) shares Kipling's rhetoric of sacrifice and empty land; the Mercator projection (1569) shows that even a map takes a point of view.

ESERCIZI

History and Literature

1. ● What did the Berlin Conference (1884–85) do?

   A. It divided the whole of Africa among the European powers, with fixed borders.

   B. It set rules for claiming African territory and accepted Leopold II's claims to the Congo.

   C. It created the Union of South Africa.

   D. It ended the war between Italy and Ethiopia.

2. ● Kipling wrote “The White Man’s Burden” (1899) to persuade

   A. the British government to keep India.

   B. the French to stay in Algeria.

   C. Belgium to annex the Congo Free State.

   D. the United States to rule the Philippines.

3. ●● English was Conrad’s

   A. first language.

   B. second language, after Polish.

   C. third language, after Polish and French.

   D. language of conversation only at sea.

4. ●● In *Heart of Darkness* the story of Kurtz reaches the reader

   A. through Marlow’s spoken tale, reported by an unnamed narrator on the *Nellie*.

   B. through Kurtz’s own diary, found by Marlow after his death.

   C. through an omniscient narrator who enters every character’s mind.

   D. through the letters of the Intended.

5. ● True or false? Correct the false statements. a) The rebellion of 1857 began among the Indian soldiers of the East India Company. b) Victoria became Empress of India in 1858. c) The Suez Canal was built by a British company. d) In 1914 Ethiopia and Liberia were the only independent states in Africa. e) The Congo Free State was a Belgian colony from 1885. f) Kipling was the first writer in English to receive the Nobel Prize in Literature.

6. ●● Complete the timeline with the dates. a) The Suez Canal opens: ____ b) Britain occupies Egypt: ____ c) The Berlin Conference: ____ d) The battle of Adwa: ____ e) *Heart of Darkness* in *Blackwood’s Magazine*: ____ f) The Boer War: ____ g) Belgium annexes the Congo: ____ h) Pascoli’s speech at Barga: ____.

7. ●●● Short answer (100–130 words, about 10–12 lines). What is colonial literature? Give a definition, one example from Kipling or Conrad, and one link to another text or subject.

Text Analysis

8. ● T1. Whom is the speaker addressing? List the actions he asks them to do, and the words he uses for the colonised peoples.

9. ●● T1. Describe the rhyme scheme and the rhythm of the stanza: which lines rhyme, and how many strong beats are there in each line? What effect do the imperatives and the hymn-like rhythm have on the reader?

10. ●● T2. Paraphrase in simple modern English: “It had ceased to be a blank space of delightful mystery—a white patch for a boy to dream gloriously over. It had become a place of darkness.” Then explain why the “blank space” was not really empty.

11. ●● T3. Find: a) an image of uncovering; b) the adjective that links Kurtz's face to his trade; c) a sentence that shows the limits of Marlow's knowledge; d) the sentence with which Marlow ends the scene. What is the effect of that short final sentence?

12. ●● Look at figura 7.3. Explain how the frame makes it difficult to say what Conrad himself thinks about Kurtz and about empire. Give one example.

13. ●●● Write a PEE paragraph (100–130 words): How do T1 and T2 represent the lands and the peoples of the colonies? Refer to the "burden" and to the "blank space", and make a link with Pascoli's speech.

Language

14. ● Complete with *that*, *whether*, *if* or *what*. Where two are possible, give both. a) ____ Kurtz meant by "the horror" is still discussed. b) Marlow realised ____ the Company cared only about ivory. c) Critics argue about ____ Marlow speaks for Conrad. d) I wonder ____ Achebe would say about *Apocalypse Now*. e) The Intended asked Marlow ____ Kurtz had spoken of her. f) The fact ____ Conrad wrote in his third language surprises many readers. g) Marlow could not decide ____ to tell her the truth. h) It is clear ____ Pascoli supported the war.

15. ●● Rewrite each sentence with extraposition, beginning with *It*. a) That Conrad had seen the Congo himself is well known. b) Whether the novel should be taught at school is a matter of debate. c) That an African army had defeated Italy at Adwa shocked Europe. d) What Kurtz meant is never explained. e) To read the novel without Achebe's lecture would be a mistake. f) That Kipling wrote the poem for Americans surprises many students.

16. ●● Correct the mistakes. a) ✗ *Is obvious that Marlow admires Kurtz's eloquence.* b) ✗ *We talked about if Kipling was a racist.* c) ✗ *Marlow wondered what did the Intended know.* d) ✗ *That the poem is a hymn it is clear from its rhythm.* e) ✗ *The fact that Conrad be Polish explains some features of his style.* f) ✗ *If the novel is racist is a question many teachers ask.*

17. ●● Join the two sentences with the words in brackets. a) Empire was a duty. Kipling defended this idea. (*the idea that*) b) Will Marlow tell the Intended the truth? The question stays open until the last page. (*whether*) c) The map was coloured red. This made the Empire look united. (*the fact that*) d) Why did Conrad never name the river? Critics have discussed it. (*why*) e) The Africans in the novel hardly speak. Achebe pointed this out. (*that*)

18. ●● Report these questions from a seminar, beginning with the words given. a) "Is Marlow a reliable narrator?" → *The tutor asked us…* b) "Why did Conrad write in English?" → *I wonder…* c) "Where does Kurtz get his ivory?" → *Marlow wanted to know…* d) "Did Kipling write the poem for Britain?" → *Many students ask…* e) "What does the word 'burden' suggest?" → *Explain…*

19. ●●● Rewrite these informal notes as a formal paragraph, using at least three noun clauses and one extraposition: "Lots of people think Conrad hated empire. Maybe. But the book also makes Africans look scary and primitive, you can see that. Was Conrad racist? Hard to say. Achebe says yes. Me, I'm not sure."

20. ●●● Translate into English. a) È chiaro che Kipling credeva nella missione dell'Impero. b) Il fatto che Marlow menta alla fidanzata di Kurtz è importante per capire il romanzo. c) Molti studenti si chiedono se il romanzo debba essere ancora letto a scuola e che cosa abbia voluto dire Kurtz.

Vocabulary

21. ● Match the words with the definitions: *colony, exploitation, resistance, propaganda, annex, restitution*. a) the return of something taken unjustly b) unfair use of people or resources for profit c) take control of a territory and make it part of a state d) information used to promote a political cause e) fighting back against an occupier f) a territory ruled by another country.

22. ●● Loanwords. Match each word with its source and original meaning: *bungalow, shampoo, jungle, thug, safari, khaki* — 1) Swahili, "journey" 2) Hindi, "press!, knead!" 3) Hindi, "swindler, thief" 4) Hindi / Gujarati, "in the style of Bengal" 5) Urdu, from Persian, "dusty" 6) Hindi, from Sanskrit, "rough, dry land". Which two words have changed their meaning most?

23. ●● Complete the collocations with *gain, crush, exploit, annex, launch, call for* (one each). a) ____ a campaign against forced labour b) ____ the natural resources of a colony c) ____ armed resistance d) ____ independence e) ____ the restitution of the Benin Bronzes f) ____ a neighbouring territory.

Writing and Speaking

24. ●● Writing. Do the task in the Writing section: an object label and a panel for the exhibition *Empire: Objects and Questions* (200–280 words in all). Check your text against the checklist.

25. ●● Speaking. Prepare a two-minute contribution to a class discussion: "Should *Heart of Darkness* still be on the school syllabus?" Frame the topic, acknowledge the opposite view, use two expressions from the Useful language table and at least two noun clauses.

Towards INVALSI

26. ● (B1) Read Sam's notes in the Reading section and choose the correct answer. a) Sam posts his notes because A) he has already handed in his essay. B) he wants his friends' comments before handing it in. C) his tutor asked him to publish them. D) the club must choose the next novel. b) According to Sam, the word *still* in the question A) shows that the novel is old. B) refers to the novel's last scene. C) means "quietly". D) admits that something has changed since the novel was first praised. c) Sam's tutor says that a "classic" is A) a decision somebody made. B) a fact of nature. C) a book more than a century old. D) a book written in Europe. d) Aoife advises Sam to A) change his opinion. B) read more of Achebe. C) remove two words from a heading. D) add a section on geography.

27. ●● (B2) True (T), false (F) or not given (NG)? a) Sam thinks the novel should be read only together with other texts. b) Achebe gave his lecture in Lagos. c) According to Achebe, as Sam reports him, most Africans in the novel speak. d) Sam thinks Marlow's description of conquest was unusual for a British magazine of 1899. e) Giulia's class has read Pascoli's speech in class. f) Callum's lecturer believes that every map is an argument. g) Aoife thinks Sam's view is unclear.

28. ● (B1) Answer in no more than four words. a) Who gave the lecture that Sam discusses? b) In which year? c) Which three nouns describe the novel's Africans in Achebe's argument? d) How long will Sam's essay be? e) What should the novel be paired with, according to Sam?

29. ●● (B2) Which person — Sam (S), Giulia (G), Callum (C) or Aoife (A) — a) compares the novel with an Italian text read at school? b) gives advice about the tone of a heading? c) reports a lecturer's view about maps? d) quotes a tutor? e) points out that Conrad was himself an outsider? f) admits that a course has limited space for books?

Towards the Exam

30. ●●● Colloquio. Starting point: Marlow in the Company's office, looking at "a large shining map, marked with all the colours of a rainbow. There was a vast amount of red—good to see at any time, because one knows that some real work is done in there". Talk for 3 minutes and link it to two other subjects.

31. ●●● Colloquio. Starting point: an image described in words — two maps of the same part of the world side by side; on the first, Greenland looks as large as Africa; on the second, Africa is many times larger (figura 7.5). Talk for 3 minutes: explain the image, then link it to an English text of this chapter and to Italian literature or history.

PER APPROFONDIRE

- [NOR] S. Greenblatt (ed.), *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, the selections from Kipling and Conrad.
- [BOE] E. Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature*: the chapters on imperial writing and on Conrad.
- [SAN] A. Sanders, *The Short Oxford History of English Literature*: the pages on Kipling and on Conrad.
- [BRA] M. Bradbury, *The Modern British Novel*: the opening chapter, on Conrad and the turn of the century.
- [ABR] M. H. Abrams, G. G. Harpham, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*: the entries on point of view, narrator and postcolonial studies.
- [SWA] M. Swan, *Practical English Usage*: the entries on *that*-clauses, *whether* and *if*, and preparatory *it*.
- [HEW] M. Hewings, *Advanced Grammar in Use*: the units on *that*-clauses, *wh*-clauses and *it* + verb / adjective + clause.

Glossario del capitolo

Berlin Conference
Conferenza di Berlino — the meeting of fourteen states (1884–85) that set the rules for the European partition of Africa.

Civilising mission
missione civilizzatrice — the claimed duty of European powers to "civilise" other peoples, used to justify empire.

Colonial literature
letteratura coloniale — writing of the colonial period, mostly by authors from the colonising country, about the colonies, for readers at home.

Dominion
dominion — a self-governing settler colony of the British Empire (Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Newfoundland, South Africa).

Equal-area projection
proiezione equivalente — a map projection that shows areas in their true proportions, distorting shapes.

Extraposition
estraposizione — moving a clause from the subject position to the end of the sentence and putting *it* in its place (*It is clear that…*).

Imperialism
imperialismo — a policy of extending a nation's power over other territories and peoples by conquest, settlement or economic control.

Jingoism
sciovinismo, nazionalismo aggressivo — loud, aggressive patriotism (from a music-hall song of 1878).

Mercator projection
proiezione di Mercatore — the map projection of 1569 that keeps angles but enlarges areas far from the equator.

Noun clause
proposizione sostantiva — a subordinate clause that does the job of a noun phrase (*that…*, *whether…*, *what…*).

Object label
didascalia — a short museum text that identifies an object and explains why it matters.

Protectorate
protettorato — a territory whose local ruler kept his title while a foreign power controlled defence, trade and foreign policy.

Raj
Raj britannico — British Crown rule in India, 1858–1947 (from the Hindi word for "rule").

Restitution
restituzione — the return of objects taken unjustly, for example in colonial wars, to the communities they came from.

Scramble for Africa
spartizione dell'Africa — the rapid conquest and division of Africa by European powers, c. 1880–1914.

Sepoy
sepoy, soldato indiano — an Indian soldier in the army of the East India Company or of British India.

Soluzioni

1. B (the Conference set the rules — "effective occupation", free trade in the Congo basin — and accepted Leopold II's claims; the borders were drawn later).

2. D (it was published in February 1899 with the subtitle "The United States and the Philippine Islands").

3. C.

4. A (Kurtz never narrates; see the frame in figura 7.4).

5. a) True. b) False: India passed to the Crown in 1858; Victoria became Empress of India in 1876. c) False: it was built by a French company (Ferdinand de Lesseps) with Egyptian labour; Britain bought shares in 1875. d) True. e) False: it was Leopold II's personal possession; it became a Belgian colony in 1908. f) True (1907).

6. a) 1869 (17 November) b) 1882 c) 1884–85 d) 1 March 1896 e) February–April 1899 f) 1899–1902 g) 1908 h) 26 November 1911.

7. Traccia: *Colonial literature is the writing of the colonial period, mainly by authors from the colonising country, about the colonies and the encounter with colonised peoples, usually for readers at home. It sees the colonies from the outside, and the colonised rarely speak with their own voices. Kipling's "The White Man's Burden" (1899) is an example: it urges the United States to rule the Philippines and describes the Filipinos as "half-devil and half-child". Colonial literature is not always propaganda: Conrad's* Heart of Darkness *exposes the violence of the Congo, yet its Africans hardly speak, as Achebe pointed out. A link: Pascoli's speech on Libya (1911) uses the same rhetoric of sacrifice and empty land.* (Any accurate definition with an example and a link is acceptable.)

8. He addresses the people of the United States ("ye", "your sons"), as a nation about to become an imperial power. Actions: take up the burden, send forth the best young men, bind their sons to exile, serve the captives' need, wait in heavy harness. The colonised are called *captives, fluttered folk and wild, new-caught, sullen peoples, half-devil and half-child.*

9. The even lines rhyme (*breed / need, wild / child*): x a x a x b x b; the odd lines are unrhymed and end on an unstressed syllable. Each line has three strong beats (*Take UP the WHITE Man's BURden*). The imperatives and the regular, hymn-like rhythm give the poem the authority of a sermon or a marching song: easy to remember and hard to question, they turn a political choice into a moral duty.

10. Paraphrase: *It was no longer an empty, mysterious place that a boy could have wonderful dreams about. It had become a dark, frightening place.* The space was blank only on European maps: millions of people lived there, with their own names for its rivers and lakes. What was missing was European knowledge; when the space was "filled" with European names, conquest followed, and with it the darkness.

11. a) "It was as though a veil had been rent." b) *ivory* ("that ivory face"). c) "Did he live his life again in every detail of desire, temptation, and surrender during that supreme moment of complete knowledge?" (Marlow can only ask.) d) "I blew the candle out and left the cabin." After the long, intense sentences, the short, plain one is a sudden return to darkness and to action: Marlow refuses to comment, and leaves the meaning of the words to the reader.

12. Traccia: the reader hears Kurtz only through Marlow, and Marlow only through the unnamed narrator. When Marlow calls conquest "robbery with violence" or describes Africans with the prejudices of his time, we cannot be sure whether Conrad agrees with him or is showing us Marlow's limits. Example: Marlow's lie to the Intended shows that he is not a fully reliable narrator, so his judgements

need to be tested. This is why critics disagree (Achebe vs. those who separate Marlow from Conrad).

13. Traccia: *Point* — both texts present the colonies as places that exist for the conqueror. *Evidence* — in T1 the peoples are "new-caught" captives, "half-devil and half-child", who must be served and ruled; in T2 central Africa is a "blank space of delightful mystery", a "white patch for a boy to dream gloriously over", as if no one lived there. *Explanation* — Kipling denies the colonised maturity, Marlow's boyhood map denies them existence; but Marlow's adult voice shows that the "blank" became "a place of darkness" once Europeans filled it. Pascoli uses the same figure when he calls Libya "un deserto" wasted by "popolazioni nomadi e neghittose".

14. a) What b) that c) whether d) what e) whether / if f) that g) whether h) that.

15. a) It is well known that Conrad had seen the Congo himself. b) It is a matter of debate whether the novel should be taught at school. c) It shocked Europe that an African army had defeated Italy at Adwa. d) It is never explained what Kurtz meant. e) It would be a mistake to read the novel without Achebe's lecture. f) It surprises many students that Kipling wrote the poem for Americans.

16. a) *It is obvious that…* b) *We talked about whether…* c) *Marlow wondered what the Intended knew.* d) *That the poem is a hymn is clear…* / *It is clear from its rhythm that the poem is a hymn.* e) *The fact that Conrad was Polish…* f) *Whether the novel is racist is a question…*

17. a) Kipling defended the idea that empire was a duty. b) The question (of) whether Marlow will tell the Intended the truth stays open until the last page. c) The fact that the map was coloured red made the Empire look united. d) Critics have discussed why Conrad never named the river. e) Achebe pointed out that the Africans in the novel hardly speak.

18. a) The tutor asked us whether / if Marlow was a reliable narrator. b) I wonder why Conrad wrote in English. c) Marlow wanted to know where Kurtz got (had got) his ivory. d) Many students ask whether / if Kipling wrote the poem for Britain. e) Explain what the word "burden" suggests.

19. Model: *Many readers believe that Conrad condemned imperialism, and the novel supports them in places. It is equally clear, however, that the book represents Africans through the stereotypes of its time, as frightening and "primitive". Whether Conrad himself shared these views is difficult to establish. Achebe argued that he did; what remains open is whether the frame narrative distances the author from his narrator.* (Noun clauses: *that Conrad condemned…*, *that the book represents…*, *Whether Conrad himself…*, *that he did*, *what remains open*, *whether the frame…*; extraposition: *It is equally clear that…*.)

20. a) It is clear that Kipling believed in the mission of the Empire. b) The fact that Marlow lies to Kurtz's fiancée is important for understanding the novel. c) Many students wonder whether the novel should still be read at school, and what Kurtz meant.

21. a) restitution b) exploitation c) annex d) propaganda e) resistance f) colony.

22. bungalow 4; shampoo 2; jungle 6; thug 3; safari 1; khaki 5. The biggest changes: *shampoo* (a massage → washing the hair) and *jungle* (dry, uncultivated land → tropical forest). Accept other well-argued choices, e.g. *bungalow* (a Bengali-style house → any one-storey house).

23. a) launch b) exploit c) crush d) gain e) call for f) annex.

24. Marking guide: the label has a complete "tombstone" line and a 40–60-word interpretation; the panel has a heading, an opening that sets time and place, two body paragraphs with one idea and one checked fact each, and a closing that addresses the visitor; neutral register, active voice when the agent matters, no loaded adjectives except as quotations; at least two noun clauses.

25. Model answer: *I'd like to look at this carefully, because some people in this class may feel strongly about it. My view is that the novel should stay, but not alone. I understand why some people feel it shouldn't be taught at all: as Achebe argued, its Africans hardly speak, and what students learn from that silence matters. It's worth remembering, though, that the book was one of the first in English to show colonial violence from the inside. So the question isn't whether we read it, but how: with*

Achebe's lecture beside it, asking whose voices are missing. Does anyone see it differently?

26. a) B b) D c) A d) C (she advises him to cut "so far").

27. a) T ("Read it — but never alone") b) NG (the place is not mentioned) c) F ("hardly any of them speak") d) T e) T f) T g) F (she says "Your view is clear").

28. a) Chinua Achebe b) 1975 c) bodies, shapes and noise d) 2,000 words e) Achebe's lecture.

29. a) G b) A c) C d) S e) G f) S.

30. Traccia: describe the image — a map in the Company's office, red for British territory, Marlow's irony ("some real work is done in there"). English: Kipling's "White Man's Burden" and the rhetoric of the civilising mission; Achebe's critique and the question of who is on the map. History: the Scramble for Africa and the Berlin Conference; Italy's colonies and Pascoli's "La grande proletaria" (1911). Geography / mathematics: map projections, Mercator's enlargement of high latitudes. Conclude with the idea that maps are arguments. (Any two well-developed links are enough.)

31. Traccia: explain that the Mercator projection (1569) keeps angles but multiplies areas by $\sec^2 \varphi$, so Greenland (c. 2.2 million km^2) looks as large as Africa (c. 30.3 million km^2); the equal-area map shows the true proportions. English: Marlow's "blank space" and the coloured map in the Company's office — maps as instruments of empire. Italian: Pascoli's Libya described as "un deserto", or the history of Italian colonialism (Adwa, 1896; Libya, 1911–12). Possible ending: a map is a point of view, and so is a poem.