**Heart of Darkness: Literary Choices**

**Subject area/course**: English/Language Arts, English Literature

**Grade level/band**: 11–12

**INSTRUCTOR PROCEDURES**

1. **Task overview**:

Students write an argumentative essay addressing a real-world question of reading requirements in English Literature courses. After reading Conrad's "Heart of Darkness" and Achebe's "An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's 'Heart of Darkness,'" students will write a 4-page paper in which they compare the presentations of Africa and consider the value of including Joseph Conrad’s “Heart of Darkness” in the English literature curriculum.

1. **Prior knowledge required:**

Students should be able to:

* Analyze, with guidance, works of literature.
* Write argumentative essays.
* Support assertions with textual evidence from the works.
* Use MLA style.

1. **Common Core State Standards aligned to this task:**

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.1 Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.5 Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.1 Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

CCSS.ELA‐Literacy.RL.11-12.2 Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text.

1. **Time requirements:**

Plan about one and a half weeks for students to complete the reading and in-class discussion of the literature for this task. Students will need guided analysis of each work. Plan one week for completion of the essay.

1. **Instructor materials to use during administration:**

* “An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad’s ‘Heart of Darkness’” <http://kirbyk.net/hod/image.of.africa.html>
* “Heart of Darkness,” <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/219/219-h/219-h.htm>
* <http://www.victorianweb.org/authors/conrad/pva46.html>
* <http://haroldowilson.com/literary-criticism-another-look-at-conrads-heart-of-darkness/>
* <http://www.wwnorton.com/college/english/nael/20century/topic_1/welcome.htm>

1. **Instructor procedures during administration:**

* Students should complete reading in advance of class discussion.
* The teacher should provide information about British colonialism during the Victorian era. The teacher should also discuss characteristics of Victorian and Modern writing and how "Heart of Darkness" provides readers evidence of the transition between the two eras of British Literature. Students should read and participate in guided analysis of ”Heart of Darkness" before reading and discussing Achebe's essay.
* Students typically agree immediately with Achebe's position. However, they need to be reminded that whether or not "Heart of Darkness" is racist in its representation of Africa is not the question. The question is whether the novella should be required reading as representative of an era. Students should be encouraged to develop their own positions and reminded that they may not all agree.
* Before students begin writing, the teacher should remind them that argumentative essays should acknowledge and refute the opposing views.

1. **Student support:**

The following suggestions are examples of scaffolding that can be used to meet the diverse student needs within the classroom.

* Provide class time for research on students’ topics.
* Provide definitions of new vocabulary words ahead of time.
* For the final product, all learners will benefit from peer assistance while brainstorming their topics, as well as a peer or teacher review of their papers before final submission.
* Some students will have good research skills, but some will need guidance in the determination of appropriate sources and where to look for them. It is important to spend class time in review of what constitutes an appropriate source in advance of students’ independent work time.

1. **Extensions or variations:**

* Students could present the results of their research to the class via an oral or multimedia presentation.
* A debate could be organized where students discuss opposing views on a particularly interesting or controversial topic.

1. **Scoring and assessment considerations:**

EPIC developed the *College and Career Ready (CCR) Task Bank Scoring Rubric* to accompany this task. If your school or department uses a standardized rubric that would fit the content and requirements of this task, you may choose to use your existing rubric. The following notes and suggestions are meant to clarify the intent of the rubric and include considerations for the assessment of student work.

* When assigning the task, provide students with the rubric that will be used to score their final product and discuss it as a class.
* Unlike some rubrics, the *CCR Task Bank Rubric* does not predetermine “point values” for the scoring criteria. The rubric thus allows for flexibility with different instructors’ scoring systems and individual determination of the “weight” of each criterion.
* Student work that scores at the *Accomplished* level is considered to be entry-level college work.
* The *Exceeds* category on the rubric provides an example of how a student can go above and beyond the *Accomplished* level. These examples are intended to be only ONE way a work product can exceed expectations, thus allowing room for your professional judgment.
* If needed, consider including task-specific criteria as an additional scoring category to the rubric or providing a checklist of requirements for the task.