

# LORD JIM

by Joseph Conrad



## THE AUTHOR

Joseph Conrad (1857-1924) was born Teodor Jozef Konrad Korzeniowski in Russian-occupied Poland. His father was a notable writer and opponent of the Russian presence in his fatherland. His political activities caused him and his family to be exiled to Siberia, where Joseph's mother died when he was eight. After return from exile, Joseph was sent to live with his uncle; his father died without ever seeing him again.

At age 17, Conrad ran away to Marseille, and spent the next twenty years as a sailor. Among his experiences was a trip on a steamboat up the Congo River in 1890, which became the basis for his most famous novel, *Heart of Darkness*, which understandably contains many autobiographical elements. His time in Africa ruined his health, so he returned to England, his adopted country, to seek his fortune as a writer, though he did on two other occasions return to sea. His novels, including *Lord Jim*, *Nostromo*, and *The Secret Agent*, were widely accepted, and he lived happily in England with his wife and family until his death in 1924.

*Lord Jim* (1900) was Conrad's first important full-length novel, and was published a year after the more well-known *Heart of Darkness*. Like its predecessor, it presupposes a strange and mysterious world far from Europe, yet one dominated by European colonialism. Less a critique of the colonial mindset than *Heart of Darkness*, *Lord Jim* addresses within the colonial environment the universal struggles for courage, meaning, and self-understanding. Like many of Conrad's works, it is based on personal experience and events of the day. The shipwreck that dominates the early part of the novel is based on the wreck of the *Jeddah*, a ship carrying Muslim pilgrims to Mecca that was abandoned by its crew but miraculously survived; James Brooke, an Englishman who became the Rajah of Sarawak, is the model for Jim's adventures in Patusan, a locale based on Conrad's experiences in Borneo. Stylistically, the novel is experimental, using not only the embedded narratives found in *Heart of Darkness*, but also scrambling the chronology so that the reader sometimes struggles to put events in sequence, or even to figure out who is speaking. By the use of these techniques, Conrad became the forerunner of the modern novel, anticipating and influencing stylistic devices developed more fully by writers like William Faulkner and F. Scott Fitzgerald.

## PLOT SUMMARY

At the beginning of the novel we meet Jim, a ship-chandler's water-clerk. He is good at his job, which involves soliciting customers for his employer's business as soon as their ships come into port. He is a restless man, however, and never remains in one place for very long. He is a pastor's son, but takes pains that no one should know this, or even know his last name. With each move he heads farther east until finally he arrives in the Malayan jungles, where the natives call him Lord Jim.

In his early days as a sailor, he often imagines himself as the hero of an adventure story, saving drowning men or surviving as a castaway on a desert island. The first time he has a chance to rescue sailors from a wreck, however, he arrives too late and another sailor does the heroic deed, much to Jim's disappointment. He thrives at sea, and soon becomes the chief mate of a ship. During a storm, he is seriously injured by a falling spar and forced to leave the ship to spend time in the hospital. Once he recovers, he takes a job as chief mate on the *Patna*, a tramp steamer that could accommodate eight hundred passengers.

One day Jim's ship strikes something below the waterline, which turns out to be a submerged wreck, and quickly sinks. Jim is called to testify at the inquiry, which he does in great detail, and there he meets an insightful observer named Marlow – the man who narrates the story found in the novel [as is the case in *Heart of Darkness*, Marlow's narrative of Jim's story is related by an unknown auditor who hears him tell the tale] and who now picks up the account. He begins by giving his initial impressions of Jim, portraying him as a fine and sturdy young man who shows few signs of intelligence. After describing the panel of judges in the case, he notes that Jim bore the full brunt of the interrogation because his fellow officers had fled to avoid the inquiry. Afterwards, Marlow leaves the courtroom and is accosted by Jim, who accuses him of staring at him during the trial. Jim mistakenly thinks that Marlow has insulted him by calling him a cur, but Marlow explains that he was referring to a peculiarly ugly dog then blocking the doorway. Jim is embarrassed and walks away, but Marlow catches up to him and invites him to dinner at his hotel.

During dinner, Jim unburdens himself to Marlow. He states firmly that he can never go home again because his father would not understand his involvement in the wreck and ensuing inquiry, which by now must be in all the papers. Because the captain and the other officers have fled, leaving him to take the blame, he fears losing his certification and being unable to find a decent job. As he tells Marlow the story of the wreck, he reveals that the collision with the underwater obstacle had happened so fast that nothing could be done to save the eight hundred passengers – there wasn't enough time, nor were there enough lifeboats. In hindsight, he believes he should have stayed with the ship, but nothing can be done about that now. The white men had abandoned ship, leaving the passengers and native crew to their fate, while Jim remained, immobile in the face of impending death. Jim continues to describe the wreck of the ship, noting that while their desperate rescue efforts went forward, a large dark cloud arose and a storm approached the sinking vessel. As the squall overtakes the ship, it begins to go down and Jim jumps from the deck. Jim reaches the ship's boat containing the other white crew members, which he had managed to cut free, and soon the *Patna* goes "down like a flat-iron," drowning all who remain on board, or so they believe. Those in the boat listen for the cries of the doomed souls, but hear nothing but the silence and blackness of the sea. Through the rest of the night and the following day, the four survivors wait for rescue in the boat, with the other three cooking up a

story intended to blame Jim for everything. At this point Jim pauses in the narrative, both to bewail his failure to stay with the sinking ship and to thank Marlow for listening to his story so patiently. That evening Jim and the other crew members are picked up by a ship called the *Avondale*. The others tell their predetermined tale, while Jim remains silent in the face of their distortions. Later they find that the *Patna* had not sunk at all, but had been towed to a nearby port by a French steamer with no lives being lost except for one white crewman who had been killed in the original wreck. Marlow encourages Jim to flee before the verdict of the court concerning the shipwreck is rendered, but he refuses, arguing that he might have jumped, but he will not run.

The court, to no one's surprise, cancels Jim's certificate, making him ineligible to sail again. After the trial, Marlow is approached by an Australian named Chester who intends to buy an island covered with guano and harvest it for sale. He wants to give Jim a job there, but Marlow refuses to help because he is convinced that Chester is mad and will never be able to realize his dream. Marlow then brings Jim back to his room. They say nothing, and Marlow occupies his time writing letters while Jim suffers in silence. The loneliness of the man is profound, and Marlow wonders whether he might indeed be better off dead. At this point the narrator reminisces about the contrast between this moment of low spirits and the Arcadian bliss Jim ultimately experienced in the bush, which Marlow had witnessed the final time he saw him. After falteringly thanking Marlow for his hospitality, Jim prepares to leave the room despite the fierce storm blowing outside, but Marlow stops him. Jim, after angrily rejecting Marlow's offer of help, suddenly alters his mood and seems to recognize that he is being offered a fresh start in life, a clean slate after the tragedy of the shipwreck. He thanks Marlow and agrees to deliver a letter to a friend containing Marlow's recommendation of employment.

Six months later, Marlow receives a letter from his friend indicating that Jim is working out nicely in his new position. The next letter, however, informs Marlow that Jim has disappeared after writing a brief letter of apology. Jim soon writes to Marlow, explaining that his previous employer had been too familiar. He had run away and found employment with a ship chandler called Egstrom and Blake in Samarang, to whom Marlow writes a letter of recommendation. Later Marlow passes through the port where they do business and finds that Jim is making himself useful for the firm. The next time he comes through, however, he finds that Jim has abruptly left for parts unknown. Marlow is now able to recognize the pattern of behavior that is developing; in both cases, Jim left after some visitor began to speak of the wreck of the *Patna*. In the years that follow, Jim continues to flee the ghosts of his past, being driven by his fears from port to port around the Indian Ocean, Southeast Asia, and the South Pacific. The irony of Jim's constant wandering is that his story became widely known by everyone in the seafaring community within a three thousand mile radius, and despite his fears, they thought none the less of him for it.

One night in Bangkok, Jim gets involved in a barroom brawl. A ship's officer, drunk and frustrated because he is losing to Jim at billiards, throws Jim's past in his face. Jim cracks a billiard cue over his head and throws him into the river outside the bar. Such a display of temper against an officer is too much for his employer to handle, and Jim is forced to move on again. Marlow offers him passage on his ship, then finds him work with several more merchants of his acquaintance. One of these is a man named Stein, a successful and trustworthy man who had gained some small reputation as an amateur entomologist.

Marlow visits him and finds him gazing with wonder on one of his rarest butterfly specimens. Stein tells him the story of his experiences in the Indonesian archipelago and relates the account of how he had obtained this particular butterfly. Marlow then asks his advice about

Jim, and Stein wisely observes that Jim is a romantic whose fundamental problem is, paraphrasing Hamlet, figuring out “how to be.” Stein argues that, just as a drowning man must not struggle against the elements, but allow the water to support him, so must Jim immerse himself in the destructive elements of life in order to continue to pursue his dream. Stein admits that he achieved one dream – capturing the elusive species of butterfly for which he sought so long – but failed to achieve many others. Whether Jim will ever be able to recapture the dream he had lost is more than they can say. During their entire long discussion, however, they are unable to come up with any practical solution for Jim’s problems.

Stein finally advises Jim to go to the island of Patusan in the realm of Batavia (the Dutch East Indies; what we now call Indonesia). No government official had ever gone there, though Stein had earlier tried unsuccessfully to establish a trading post, so Jim would be free from the rumors of his failure that had dogged him wherever he went, free to pursue his dreams without fear. Jim agrees to serve as Stein’s agent in Patusan and try to make a success of the venture.

Patusan had at one time been a source of pepper sought by Europeans as part of the spice trade, but now is an impoverished backwater ruled by an imbecile boy whose uncles steal him blind and fight over the spoils that remain. Into this dark and dangerous environment comes Jim, a beacon of light who seeks nothing more than refuge from his shame. He intends never to return to civilization, and when Marlow urges him to take a pistol and some cartridges, he agrees, but then forgets the ammunition in his hurry to be on his way. He then sets sail and debarks on the shore, prepared to travel thirty miles inland to Patusan. The locals who row him upstream plan to turn him over to Rajah Tunku Allang upon arrival, but this suits Jim very well, since he intends to acquaint himself with the head man in any case. The Rajah imprisons him for three days while the men of the village debate his fate. Jim then escapes and flees to Doramin, a friend of Stein and the leader of the Malays from Celebes who are the Rajah’s chief rivals. There he is taken in and accepted as part of the community, and Dain Waris, Doramin’s son, becomes his close friend.

The two in turn plan to lead a war party against the followers of the renegade Arab Sherif Ali, whom they defeat soundly. The superstitious villagers soon come to consider Jim superhuman, referring to him as Tuan Jim, looking at him with awe and coming to him to settle disputes among them. The Rajah, thinking he is next, cowers in fear of Jim, but the young Englishman’s sense of fair play will not allow him to overthrow the old tyrant as long as he behaves himself. Jim thus becomes the *de facto* ruler of Patusan, though Doramin still wants to see the Rajah deposed and Dain Waris elevated to his post.

Jim soon falls in love with the stepdaughter of his predecessor as Stein’s agent in Patusan. He calls the girl Jewel, and they soon marry. Wild rumors begin to spread of a white man who had obtained a fabulous emerald and concealed it under the clothing of his mistress. Jewel’s stepfather, Cornelius, had been an incompetent agent, and now he is a jealous father who continually abuses Jewel as he had earlier abused her mother. He hates Jim and looks for any opportunity to undermine or destroy him, in which cause he is encouraged by the Rajah. Jim nonetheless fearlessly lives with Cornelius for six weeks after leaving the home of Doramin. He hears constantly about plots against his life, and Jewel stands over him day and night like a watchful angel, one night saving his life by warning him of four men who are about to assault him in his sleep. When Marlow visits, she fears somehow that he will take her beloved away from her, but he assures her that nothing on earth could separate them. Jim had tried to tell her of his shameful past, but she refused to accept what he was saying. Marlow attempts to reassure her by insisting that the outside world is no threat to her happiness because no one out there wants Jim

– they don't believe him to be good enough for them. She cannot believe this of the greatest, bravest, truest man she has ever known, though it is the same thing Jim had tried to communicate. As Marlow walks away from his conversation with Jewel, he is met by Cornelius, who alternates between threats directed at Jim and pleas for Marlow to intercede with him for some sort of financial remuneration for the loss of his daughter, whom he expects to retrieve when Jim leaves the island. When Marlow assures him that Jim will never leave, the little wretch becomes furious. When Marlow leaves the island, Jim accompanies him as far as his landing craft. Jim wavers briefly, longing for acceptance in the world he has left behind but recognizing that he can never go back; he is needed where he is, he has regained his self-respect, and above all he loves Jewel and cannot bear the thought of leaving her. He regrets parting from Marlow, his only real friend in the outside world, and realizes that the two will never meet again.

Marlow having spoken of his last contact with Jim and thus ended his narrative, his listeners disperse. Two years later, one of them receives an envelope from Marlow containing the end of Jim's story. Marlow had pieced the story together from encounters with Jewel and Jim's servant Tamb' Itam at Stein's house in Samarang and a sailor named Gentleman Brown who, with his dying breath, claimed credit for Jim's downfall. Brown had stolen a schooner from the Spanish and was heading for Madagascar when he ran out of supplies. He put into Patusan to replenish his stores, thinking to find easy pickings there. Instead, word of his arrival was sent inland from the coastal village and Brown was met with an armed fusillade, forcing him to retreat to a nearby hill with his contingent of fourteen men. Jim at this time was further inland, so the defense was managed by Dain Waris and Jewel. The latter argued for driving the invaders out immediately, but Doramin thought that they could be defeated without a pitched battle by surrounding the hill and guarding the boat. Messengers were then sent to locate Jim. Meanwhile, Cornelius and the Rajah conspired to betray Jim and his people. They merely wanted to get rid of their rival, whom they viewed as an interloper, but Brown hoped to take over the whole island by eliminating his fellow-conspirators after he won the coming battle.

Brief exchanges of fire between Brown's pirates and the villagers produced one death on each side, then Jim returned from the interior. Cornelius assured Brown that Jim would walk straight into his camp to tell him to leave his people alone, at which time he could easily be murdered. Jim and Brown met on opposite sides of the creek; Jim wanted Brown to stop shooting his villagers, while Brown wanted either to be allowed to leave peaceably or to meet in open battle. Jim agreed that one or the other would take place, then returned to the village. Cornelius promptly excoriates Brown for not killing Jim when he had the chance. Jim went back to the fort and told his people that he intended to let the strangers go in peace in order to avoid further bloodshed, despite the objections of both Tamb' Itam and Jewel. The plan was for Jim and his men to guard the village from the Rajah's stockade while Dain Waris manned the banks of the creek until the intruders had passed safely. Tamb' Itam was entrusted with the message instructing Dain Waris to refrain from attacking Brown's contingent.

Cornelius carried the message to Brown that his men would be permitted to leave in peace, then told Brown about another narrow waterway that would allow them to avoid the troop commanded by Dain Waris. They set upon the encampment from behind and ambushed the men unawares, killing Dain Waris in the process. Tamb' Itam escaped by pretending to be dead, but made sure to end the life of the treacherous Cornelius before returning to Jim to report what had happened. Brown and his men escaped, though all but Brown himself ultimately died at sea. Doramin, blaming Jim for the death of his son, prepared to attack the fort. Jim wanted to avoid

any more death and destruction, and chose to take the blame for the disaster on himself. Despite Jewel's pleas to fight or flee, he calmly opened the gates of the fort, traveled alone to Doramin's encampment and, after viewing the body of his dead friend, stood silently before the corpulent old man, who calmly drew a pistol and shot Jim through the chest.

## MAJOR CHARACTERS

- Jim – The protagonist is the son of a country pastor who goes to sea, rises to the position of chief mate on a tramp steamer, later becomes a water clerk for a ship chandler, and finally lives in the jungles of Malaya, where he is known as Tuan Jim or Lord Jim. Early in his career he abandons a sinking ship and loses his officer's license. After wandering for some time, he becomes an agent of a trading company on Patusan. There he defeats a local bandit and becomes the leader of the local people, marries, and seems happy until he makes the tragic decision to release a pirate who then kills his best friend. He then submits to being shot by the man's father, the local chief.
- Marlow – A sea captain, he is the narrator who tells the story of Lord Jim, which he knows from personal encounters with the sailor. He is also the narrator, as well as a major participant, in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*.
- Stein – A successful South Seas trader who sets Jim up as his agent on the island of Patusan, displacing Cornelius in the process. He collects beetles and butterflies.
- Tunku Allang – Rajah of Patusan, he imprisons Jim when he first arrives, but later comes to fear and revere him. Near the end of the story, he conspires with Gentleman Brown against Jim and Doramin.
- Doramin – The head man of the Bugis tribe of Malays in Patusan, he is Allang's chief rival; he befriends Jim and accepts him into the Malay community. He later kills Jim because he holds him responsible for the death of his son.
- Dain Waris – Doramin's son, he becomes Jim's closest friend in Patusan. He is killed when Cornelius conspires with Gentleman Brown and enables him to ambush the young man.
- Sherif Ali - A Muslim bandit defeated by Jim, which enables Jim to become the leader of the local Malay settlement.
- Cornelius – Stein's former agent in Patusan, he is lazy, dishonest, and abusive. He hates Jim and ultimately betrays him.
- Jewel – Cornelius' abused stepdaughter; she and Jim fall in love and marry. She does everything she can to protect him against his enemies, but is unable to prevent his chosen death at the end of the story.

- Tamb' Itam – Jim's faithful servant on Patusan.
- Gentleman Brown – A cruel and heartless buccaneer who loves to humiliate those he robs, he brings about Jim's downfall on Patusan and kills Dain Waris in an ambush.

## NOTABLE QUOTATIONS

“When yet very young, he became chief mate of a fine ship, without ever having been tested by those events of the sea that show in the light of day the inner worth of a man, the edge of his temper, and the fibre of his stuff; that reveal the quality of his resistance and the secret of his pretences, not only to others but also to himself.” (ch.2, p.6)

“The odious and fleshy figure, as though seen for the first time in a revealing moment, fixed itself in his memory for ever as the incarnation of everything vile and base that lurks in the world we love: in our own hearts we trust for our salvation in the men that surround us, in the sights that fill our eyes, in the sounds that fill our ears, and in the air that fills our lungs.” (ch.3, p.15)

“It's easy enough to talk of Master Jim, after a good spread, two hundred feet above sea-level, with a box of decent cigars handy, on a blessed evening of freshness and starlight that would make the best of us forget we are only on sufferance here and got to pick our way in cross lights, watching every precious minute and every irremediable step, trusting we shall manage yet to go out decently in the end – but not so sure of it after all – and with dashed little help to expect from those we touch elbows with right and left.” (Marlow, ch.5, p.25-26)

“The occasion was obscure, insignificant – what you will: a lost youngster, one in a million – but then he was one of us; an incident as completely devoid of importance as the flooding of an ant-heap, and yet the mystery of his attitude got hold of me as though he had been an individual in the forefront of his kind, as if the obscure truth involved were momentous enough to affect mankind's conception of itself.” (Marlow, ch.8, p.68)

“The real significance of crime is in its being a breach of faith with the community of mankind.” (Marlow, ch.14, p.114)

“He stood on the brink of a vast obscurity, like a lonely figure by the shore of a somber and hopeless ocean.” (Marlow, ch.15, p.125)

“It is when we try to grapple with another man's intimate need that we perceive how incomprehensible, wavering, and misty are the beings that share with us the sight of the stars and the warmth of the sun.” (Marlow, ch.16, p.131)

“A clean slate, did he say? As if the initial word of each our destiny were not graven in imperishable characters upon the face of a rock.” (Marlow, ch.17, p.135)

“Strictly speaking, the question is not how to be cured, but how to live.” (Marlow, ch.20, p.155)

“I think it is the lonely, without a fireside or an affection they may call their own, those who return not to a dwelling but to the land itself, to meet its disembodied, eternal, and unchangeable spirit – it is those who understand best its severity, its saving power, the grace of its secular right to our fidelity, to our obedience.” (Marlow, ch.21, p.163)

“His opportunity sat veiled by his side like an Eastern bride waiting to be uncovered by the hand of the master.” (ch.24, p.179)

“It is not Justice the servant of men, but accident, hazard, Fortune – the ally of patient Time – that holds an even and scrupulous balance.” (Marlow, ch.34, p.236)

“Is not mankind itself, pushing on its blind way, driven by a dream of its greatness and its power upon the dark paths of excessive cruelty and excessive devotion. And what is the pursuit of truth, after all?” (Marlow, ch.37, p.259)

“To me the conversation of these two across the creek appears now as the deadliest kind of duel on which Fate looked on with her cold-eyed knowledge of the end.” (Marlow, ch.42, p.286)

## ESSAY QUESTIONS

Discuss the following in a five-paragraph essay:

1. In chapter 20 of Joseph Conrad’s *Lord Jim*, Marlow describes Jim’s basic problem as one of figuring out how to live. Conrad draws a parallel with the words of Hamlet in the famous soliloquy – “To be or not to be.” Compare and contrast the existential dilemmas faced by Shakespeare’s protagonist and the wandering sailor of Conrad’s novel. In what sense does each man struggle with the fundamental questions of existence? How are their struggles, the ways they approach them, and the solutions at which they arrive similar? How are they different? How do these connections reveal important truths about the perspectives of the two authors?
2. In chapter 20 of Joseph Conrad’s *Lord Jim*, Stein tells Marlow that the only way for Jim to survive the great struggle in which he finds himself is to “in the destructive element immerse.” What does he mean by this? How is this advice reminiscent of Kurtz’ behavior in *Heart of Darkness*? How does this single phrase bring together central themes of the two works? Be sure to cite specifics from both novels in your answer.
3. In chapter 20 of Joseph Conrad’s *Lord Jim*, Marlow and Stein discuss the importance of fulfilling one’s dreams. Why does Conrad consider this such an important matter? Do you agree with the prominence he gives to it in the narrative? To what extent is this an accurate description of Jim’s struggle?

4. In chapter 21 of Joseph Conrad's *Lord Jim*, Marlow muses on the connection between man and the earth in these words: "I think it is the lonely, without a fireside or an affection they may call their own, those who return not to a dwelling but to the land itself, to meet its disembodied, eternal, and unchangeable spirit – it is those who understand best its severity, its saving power, the grace of its secular right to our fidelity, to our obedience." Discuss the theological implications of this statement, especially in the light of its allusion to the famous definition of God in the Westminster Shorter Catechism. Is this an accurate description of Jim's condition? What does it tell you about the worldview of the author?
5. Compare and contrast the status attained by the protagonist in Joseph Conrad's *Lord Jim* and that of Daniel in Rudyard Kipling's *The Man Who Would Be King*. Consider how that status is attained, the qualities ascribed to the Englishmen by the natives, the ways in which the men use their status, and the ultimate ends of their reigns. Use those comparisons and contrasts to discuss the themes advanced by the authors of the two works.
6. In Joseph Conrad's *Lord Jim*, Marlow, the narrator, often speaks of the protagonist by affirming that "he is one of us." What does he mean by that statement? What does it indicate about Jim and his relationship to the auditors of the tale? What is Conrad trying to communicate about the universality of his narrative? To what extent may Jim be considered an Everyman? Support your conclusions with specifics from the novel.
7. F. Scott Fitzgerald, when talking about *The Great Gatsby*, once said that the greatest single influence on his classic novel was Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. One might also make the case, however, for the impact of Conrad's *Lord Jim* on Fitzgerald's work. Compare and contrast the careers of Jim and Jay Gatsby, giving special attention to the early years, height of influence, and tragic demise of the two protagonists. How do these parallel lives reflect similar themes in the two works? Support your discussion with details from both books.
8. The protagonist of Joseph Conrad's *Lord Jim* is often described in the novel as a romantic, a dreamer. Discuss the author's treatment of the clash between dreams and reality, between romantic ideals and experience of the corrupt world in which all must live. Does Conrad consider romanticism and idealism noble or foolish? Why do you think so? Support your conclusion with specifics from the novel.
9. Though only secondary to the novel's purpose, Joseph Conrad's *Lord Jim* nonetheless addresses the problem of European colonialism. What is the nature of Conrad's critique? To what extent does he depend on language rather than narrative to bring out the negative aspects of the colonial enterprise? Cite specific incidents and quotations from the novel as you answer the question.
10. Joseph Conrad's *Lord Jim* uses a great deal of non-chronological narrative, jumping back and forth in time to the extent that the reader is sometimes confused about the sequence of events. Why do you think the author chooses to do this? Is he perhaps painting a picture as much as telling a story? Support your analysis with specifics from the novel.

11. One of the themes of Joseph Conrad's *Lord Jim* is the impossibility of escaping one's past. As hard as Jim tries to get a fresh start in life after his shameful behavior during the shipwreck, he is unable to do so. Analyze this truth in the light of the Bible's teaching about forgiveness and redemption. What should we make of an author who believes that sin must always be punished, no matter how hard one tries to put it behind him?
12. In Joseph Conrad's *Lord Jim*, the narrator Marlow finds himself strangely drawn to the protagonist. How do you explain this attraction? What about Jim makes him an object of fascination? Do you as a reader find him fascinating? Why or why not? Does your reaction depend on the way he is described by Marlow? Be sure to use specifics from the book to support your answer.
13. A foil is a character who brings out the salient qualities of another character by contrast. In Joseph Conrad's *Lord Jim*, many characters serve as foils for the protagonist in different ways. Choose one such character and describe the ways in which he is a foil for Jim, and how the contrast serves to emphasize key qualities in the protagonist. How do these contrasts contribute to the themes of the novel?
14. In Joseph Conrad's *Lord Jim*, would you consider the story a tragedy and the protagonist a tragic hero? Why or why not? If Jim qualifies as a tragic hero, what is the tragic flaw that brings about his downfall? If not, why does he not qualify?
15. Two characteristics that are often ascribed to the protagonist of Joseph Conrad's *Lord Jim* are that he is a romantic and that he is a man of great pride. Which of these qualities is more central to his character? Which is more closely tied to his downfall? Defend your choice with details from the narrative.
16. Analyze the role of pride in the downfall of the protagonist in Joseph Conrad's *Lord Jim*. Be sure to incorporate biblical teachings into your analysis. Does the author's treatment of *hubris* in Jim's personality correspond to what Scripture would lead us to expect or conclude? Why or why not?
17. In Joseph Conrad's *Lord Jim*, the author often puts racial stereotypes into the mouths of his characters, including the narrator. Some critics have for this reason accused Conrad himself of racism. Is this a legitimate accusation, or are these racial stereotypes instead intended to ridicule through irony the racism implicit in the colonial enterprise? Defend your conclusion with specific incidents and quotations from the novel.
18. Evaluate the pivotal decision of the protagonist in Joseph Conrad's *Lord Jim* to allow Gentleman Brown to escape from the island. Was his decision the right one? Why or why not? Be sure to base your conclusion on more than the consequences that resulted. Consider also biblical principle in assessing the decision on moral grounds.

19. Evaluate the final decision of the protagonist in Joseph Conrad's *Lord Jim* to present himself before the aggrieved Doramin for execution. Was his decision the right one? Why or why not? Be sure to base your conclusion on more than the consequences that resulted. Consider also biblical principle in assessing the decision on moral grounds.
20. In Joseph Conrad's *Lord Jim*, the narrator often expresses doubt about his ability to make sense of the story he is telling, describing Jim as inscrutable or enigmatic. Did the author share the narrator's confusion? What, in your opinion, is the meaning of Jim's story, or does it have none? Support your conclusion with specifics from the novel.
21. Many narrative voices provide the sources from which Marlow pieces together the story of the protagonist in Joseph Conrad's *Lord Jim*. Because of this, critics have often questioned the reliability of the narrative. To what extent can the reader believe the accounts that are given of Jim's life? To what extent are they shaped by the speakers or writers? How does the answer to this question influence our interpretation of the novel? What might it be saying about the nature of language or the nature of history?
22. In Joseph Conrad's *Lord Jim*, the protagonist is haunted by guilt for deserting the passengers aboard the ship on which he was an officer. Despite all his efforts, he is unable to rid himself of that guilt. Analyze the treatment of sin, guilt, forgiveness, and redemption in the novel. Be sure to include a biblical critique of the author's treatment of these things.
23. In Joseph Conrad's *Lord Jim*, does the final act of the protagonist bring redemption for his past act of cowardice? Why or why not? Answer the question from the perspective of Scripture as well as from the perspective of the author.
24. Compare and contrast the protagonists in Joseph Conrad's *Lord Jim* and Herman Melville's *Billy Budd*. What do these young idealists have in common? Consider their backgrounds, their treatment by their peers, and the circumstances of their deaths. Which is the more admirable character? Why do you think so? Support your conclusions with details from the two novels.
25. In Joseph Conrad's *Lord Jim*, is the protagonist more concerned with gaining the approval of others or with forgiving himself? In other words, is he more concerned with his reputation or his self-image? Use specifics from the novel to support your answer.
26. Discuss the use of light and darkness in Joseph Conrad's *Lord Jim*. Be sure to consider descriptions of various settings, the times of day in which different events occur, and the imagery of white versus black. To what extent are these all related to the struggle between good and evil, both in the world and in the soul of the individual?

27. Both Joseph Conrad's *Lord Jim* and Cervantes' *Don Quixote* picture, in very different settings and with very different tones, the dangers of basing one's worldview on romantic literature. Compare and contrast the two works, including the characters of the protagonists, the tones set by the authors, the consequences of romanticism as portrayed in the stories, and the implied cultural critiques included in the novels.
28. Does Joseph Conrad's *Lord Jim* picture a universe in which moral absolutes exist or one in which all values are relative? Support your answer with incidents and quotations from the novel, being sure to consider the key turning points in the life of the protagonist as well as the morals of those who are portrayed in the story as either good or evil. Does the moral universe constructed by Conrad correspond to that of Scripture? Why or why not?
29. Joseph Conrad has sometimes been called an Impressionist novelist. Discuss this assessment by comparing Conrad's literary technique in *Lord Jim* with the salient characteristics of nineteenth-century Impressionist paintings. Include considerations of qualities such as reliance on sensory experience and concern with the effects of light and darkness.
30. Joseph Conrad's *Lord Jim* falls neatly into two sections, the first dealing with the *Patna* incident and the second dealing with events on Patusan. Some critics have argued that the tones set in the two sections are so different as to undermine the unity of the novel. Do you agree or disagree? Support your conclusion with specifics from both sections of the book.
31. Stein, the wealthy merchant in Joseph Conrad's *Lord Jim*, is a noted collector of beetles and butterflies. The two kinds of creatures are often used in the novel as symbols of two kinds of people; for instance, Jim is a butterfly while Cornelius is a beetle. What does such imagery reveal about the author's view of human nature? Evaluate his understanding of man in the light of biblical teachings on the subject.
32. In Joseph Conrad's *Lord Jim*, the narrator Marlow likes Jim personally, but is ambivalent about the extent to which Jim is trustworthy. What is your view of the protagonist? Do you consider him trustworthy? Would you place him in charge of a ship you owned, or submit to him as the leader of your village? Why or why not? Support your conclusion with details from the novel.
33. In chapter two of Joseph Conrad's *Lord Jim*, the protagonist is described in the following words: "When yet very young, he became chief mate of a fine ship, without ever having been tested by those events of the sea that show in the light of day the inner worth of a man, the edge of his temper, and the fibre of his stuff; that reveal the quality of his resistance and the secret of his pretences, not only to others but also to himself." Discuss the importance of testing by adversity as a way of revealing character in the novel. What does such testing reveal about Jim? From a biblical standpoint, is Conrad's point a valid one? Why or why not?

34. In chapter five of Joseph Conrad's *Lord Jim*, Marlow says, "It's easy enough to talk of Master Jim, after a good spread, two hundred feet above sea-level, with a box of decent cigars handy, on a blessed evening of freshness and starlight that would make the best of us forget we are only on sufferance here and got to pick our way in cross lights, watching every precious minute and every irremediable step, trusting we shall manage yet to go out decently in the end – but not so sure of it after all – and with dashed little help to expect from those we touch elbows with right and left." How does the view of life expressed in these words summarize the underlying philosophy of the author as seen in the novel? Evaluate Marlow's words, and the way they are developed in the novel, on the basis of Scripture.
35. In chapter 17 of Joseph Conrad's *Lord Jim*, Marlow scoffs at Jim's desire for a second chance in life by saying, "A clean slate, did he say? As if the initial word of each our destiny were not graven in imperishable characters upon the face of a rock." How is Marlow's belief in the role of fate in human existence worked out in the events of the novel? Be sure to cite specifics in developing your answer.
36. In chapter 33 of Joseph Conrad's *Lord Jim*, Marlow tries to reassure Jewel by insisting that Jim will never leave her. When asked why he can never return to the world he left, Marlow responds that he "is not good enough," but then adds, "Nobody is good enough." Is Marlow's statement an affirmation of the universality of sin, or is he deploring the strict and artificial code of conduct by which men often judge one another? Support your conclusion with specifics from the novel.
37. Tony Tanner, in his commentary on Joseph Conrad's *Lord Jim*, states that "The realists have no ideals – thus their lives are ugly. But the idealist has no grip on reality: he cannot live properly at all. *Lord Jim* is a prelude to profound pessimism." Do you agree or disagree with his assessment? Is the only choice people have one between ugliness and unreality? Be sure to answer the question both from the standpoint of the novel and from the standpoint of a biblical worldview.
38. When Marlow ends his account of Jim's life in Joseph Conrad's *Lord Jim* by saying that the protagonist "passes away under a cloud, inscrutable at heart, forgotten, unforgiven, and excessively romantic," is this a fair description of the central character in the story? Why or why not? Be sure to analyze each part of Marlow's description and support your conclusions with specifics from the novel.
39. George Panichas, in his critique of Joseph Conrad's *Lord Jim*, says, "From a moral perspective the Official Court of Inquiry literally takes place throughout [the novel]. Jim never ceases to react to charges of cowardice and of irresponsibility; never ceases to strive earnestly to prove his moral worthiness." If the entire story constitutes a judgment on the protagonist, what is your verdict? What is Jim's verdict about himself? Support your conclusion with specifics from the novel.