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Landmarks of world literature

Joseph Conrad

NOSTROMO

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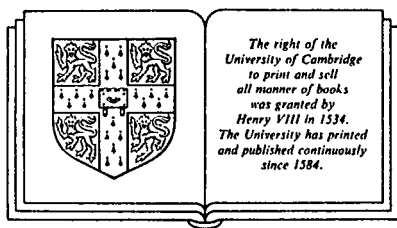
Dickens: *Bleak House* – Graham Storey
Homer: *The Iliad* – Michael Silk
Dante: *The Divine Comedy* – Robin Kirkpatrick
Rousseau: *Confessions* – Peter France
Goethe: *Faust. Part One* – Nicholas Boyle
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Balzac: *Old Goriot* – David Bellos
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JOSEPH CONRAD

Nostromo

IAN WATT



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A Joseph Conrad chronology

- | | | |
|-------------|--|---|
| <i>Life</i> | <p>1857 3 December: Józef Teodor Konrad Korzeniowski born, in Berdyczow in the Ukraine, of Polish parents.</p> <p>1861 His father, Apollo Korzeniowski, poet and translator, arrested for anti-Russian conspiracy.</p> <p>1862 The Korzeniowskis exiled to Vologda, Russia; Conrad accompanies them.</p> <p>1865 Death of his mother, Eva (née Bobrowska), of tuberculosis.</p> <p>1869 Death of Apollo Korzeniowski in Kraków; Conrad adopted by his uncle, Tadeusz Bobrowski.</p> <p>1874 Leaves Poland for Marseilles to become a seaman in the French merchant navy. <i>Voyage on Mont-Blanc</i> to Martinique.</p> <p>1876 'Steward' on the <i>Sainte-Antoine</i>; goes to Caribbean.</p> <p>1877 Possibly involved in smuggling arms to the 'Carlists' (Spanish royalists)</p> <p>1878 March: Shoots himself in the chest in Marseilles; his uncle, Bobrowski, clears his debts. April: Joins his first British ship, the <i>Mavis</i>, probably as apprentice. Later joins <i>The Skimmer of the Sea</i> as able-bodied seaman. On <i>The Duke of</i></p> | <p><i>Significant political and literary events</i></p> <p>The Indian Mutiny. Flaubert's <i>Madame Bovary</i>; Baudelaire's <i>Les Fleurs du Mal</i>.</p> <p>Dickens's <i>Great Expectations</i>.</p> <p>Bismarck comes into power in Prussia.</p> <p>Suez Canal opens. Tolstoy's <i>War and Peace</i>; Alphonse Daudet, <i>Lettres de mon moulin</i>.</p> <p>First Impressionist exhibition, Paris.</p> <p>Russia declares war on Turkey.</p> <p>Congress of Berlin.</p> |
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- | | | |
|-------------|---|--|
| <i>Life</i> | <p><i>Sutherland</i> to Australia as able-bodied seaman.
 1880 Passes second mate's examination.
 1881 On <i>Loch Etive</i>, as third mate.
 1882 On <i>Palestine</i> as second mate.
 1883 Visits Bobrowski in Bohemia; on <i>Riversdale</i> as second mate.
 1884 Passes first mate's examination. On <i>Narcissus</i>; as second mate.
 1885 On <i>Tilkhurst</i>, as second mate.
 1886 Becomes a British subject; passes examinations for a Master's certificate.
 1887 Is injured on the <i>Highland Forest</i> and hospitalised in Singapore. On <i>Vidar</i> meets origin of Almayer in Borneo.
 1888 Master of the barque <i>Otago</i>, his only real command.
 1889 Resigns from the <i>Otago</i>. In London begins to write <i>Almayer's Folly</i>.
 1890 Works in the Belgian Congo for the Société Anonyme pour le Commerce du Haut-Congo.
 1891 First mate of the clipper <i>Torrens</i>; meets John Galsworthy, a passenger who becomes a loyal friend.
 1892</p> | <p><i>Significant political and literary events</i></p> <p>James's <i>Portrait of a Lady</i>.
 Virginia Woolf and James Joyce born; R. L. Stevenson's <i>Treasure Island</i>.
 Marx dies.</p> <p>Gladstone's Franchise Bill extended vote and unified voting requirements.
 Rider Haggard, <i>King Solomon's Mines</i>.
 First Home Rule Bill for Ireland. Cunningham Graham becomes MP.
 'Bloody Sunday', popular protest meeting in Trafalgar Square; Cunningham Graham is arrested and jailed.
 William II, becomes German Emperor, 'Kaiser Bill'.
 Guy de Maupassant, <i>Pierre et Jean</i>; T. S. Eliot born.
 London Dock Strike. Anatole France, <i>Thaïs</i>.</p> <p>Resignation of Bismarck. Henrik Ibsen's <i>Hedda Gabler</i>.
 George Gissing, <i>New Grub Street</i>.</p> <p>Panama scandal in France; work on canal abandoned.</p> |
|-------------|---|--|

- 1893 Autumn: Meets Jessie George. Briefly second mate of steamship *Adowa*, his last position as seaman.
- 1894 February: Death of Tadeusz Bobrowski; inherits about £1,600. October: *Almayer's Folly* accepted by Unwin. Meets Edward Garnett, Unwin's reader, who becomes a close friend.
- 1895 29 April: *Almayer's Folly: A Story of an Eastern River*. Adopts Joseph Conrad as his pen name. In general very favourable reviews.
- 1896 4 March: *An Outcast of the Islands*. Becomes acquainted with H. G. Wells. 24 March: Marries Jessie George.
- 1897 2 December: *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus': A Tale of the Sea*. Meets Henry James and R. B. Cunningham Graham.
- 1898 26 March: *Tales of Unrest* ('Karain', 'The Idiots', 'An Outpost of Progress', 'The Return', 'The Lagoon'). Enters into collaboration with Ford Madox Ford (then Hueffer). Takes over lease of a Kentish farmhouse, 'The Pent'. Friendship with Stephen Crane. First son, Borys Conrad, born.
- 1899 6 February: 'Heart of Darkness' finished; serialised in *Blackwood's Magazine*. James B. Pinker becomes Conrad's literary agent until his death in 1922.
- 1900 15 October: *Lord Jim: A Tale* published as a book; earlier serialised in *Blackwood's*.
- Annexation of Hawaii; Independent Labour Party formed. Oscar Wilde's *Lady Windermere's Fan*.
- Sir William Harcourt passes budget increasing death duties and other taxes; Dreyfus Affair begins in France.
- Robert Louis Stevenson dies.
- Third ministry of Lord Salisbury. Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure*; Stephen Crane's *The Red Badge of Courage*; H. G. Wells's *The Time Machine*. *Daily Mail* starts; McKinley elected President.
- Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee.
- April–December: Spanish–American War.
- Boer War (to 1902); Fashoda crisis between England and France over their claims to Egypt and Sudan.
- Henri Bergson's *Le Rire*; Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams*; Conrad's friend Stephen Crane dies.

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- Life*
- 1901 26 June: *The Inheritors: An Extravagant Story* (collaboration with Ford).
- 1902 13 November: *Youth: A Narrative and Two Other Stories* ('Youth', 'Heart of Darkness', 'End of the Tether'). 25 December: Starts writing *Nostromo*.
- 1903 22 April: *Typhoon and Other Stories* ('Typhoon', 'Amy Foster', 'Falk', 'Tomorrow'). 16 October: *Romance* (collaboration with Ford).
- 1904 Jessie Conrad injures her knees, partially disabling her for life.
 14 October: *Nostromo: A Tale of the Seaboard*, which had been serialised in *T. P.'s Weekly*, 29 January to 7 October, is published in book form by Harper Brothers in London, 14 October: in New York, 23 November; dedicated to John Galsworthy.
- 1905 Finishes long political essay 'Autocracy and War'.
- 1906 Meets Arthur Marwood, who becomes a close friend. John Conrad born.
 October 4: *The Mirror Of the Sea: Memories and Impressions* published.
- 1907 12 September: *The Secret Agent: A Simple Tale*.
- 1908 6 August: *A Set of Six*. Three of these short stories, 'Gaspar Ruiz', 'An Anarchist', and 'The Informer', have South American subjects.
- 1911 5 October: *Under Western Eyes*.
- Significant political and literary events*
- Queen Victoria dies, succeeded by Edward VII; Theodore Roosevelt President. Thomas Mann's *Buddenbrooks*.
 Anton Chekhov's *Three Sisters*.
 Samuel Butler's *The Way of All Flesh*; James's *The Ambassadors*.
 Russo-Japanese War breaks out; *Entente Cordiale* between England and France.
 James's *The Golden Bowl*; Abbey Theatre, Dublin, founded.
 Wells's *Kipps*; Henryk Sienkiewicz, a Pole, receives the Nobel Prize for Literature.
 Liberal Party wins election; reforming ministries of Campbell-Bannerman and Herbert Asquith;
 Anglo-Russian Entente. John Galsworthy, *The Man of Property*.
 Strindberg's *Ghost Sonata*.
 Austria annexes Bosnia and Herzegovina. Arnold Bennett, *The Old Wives' Tale*.
 Agadir Incident; National Insurance Act; the suffragettes adopt more violent methods 1911–14.

- 1912 19 January: *Some Reminiscences*, later renamed *A Personal Record*. 14 October: *Twixt Land and Sea*.
- 1913 18 September: *Chance* published, his first big economic success. Meets Bertrand Russell.
- 1914 The four Conrads visit Poland (25 July–3 November), nearly trapped by outbreak of war.
- 1915 24 February: *Within the Tides: Tales*, and 27 March: *Victory: An Island Tale* published.
- 1917 19 March: *The Shadow Line: A Confession*. Conrad begins to write author's notes for collected editions of his works.
- 1918 Finishes 'The Crime of Partition'; takes up cause of Polish independence.
- 1919 6 August: *The Arrow of Gold: A Story Between Two Notes* published.
- 1920 21 May: *The Rescue: A Romance of the Shallows*, begun in 1896, published.
- 1921 Visit to Corsica for research on *Suspense*. Conrad in poor health. 25 March: *Notes on Life and Letters*, his collected essays and reviews, published.
- 1922 Play of *Secret Agent* a failure.
- 1923 Conrad visits America, gives a reading, and is lionised. 1 December: *The Rover*.
- 1924 May: Declines offer of a knighthood from Ramsay MacDonald. 3 August: dies of a heart attack at Oswalds, Bishopscourt, and buried at Canterbury.
- First Balkan War.
- Woodrow Wilson President; Second Balkan War. D. H. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers*; Proust's *Du Côté de chez Swann*.
- Deadlock over Home Rule Bill for Ireland; Archduke Ferdinand assassinated at Sarajevo; the First World War begins; Panama Canal opened. Joyce's *Dubliners*. First Zeppelin attack on London; Italy joins Allies. Somerset Maugham's *Of Human Bondage*. February and October Revolutions in Russia; US enters the war. T. S. Eliot's *Prufrock and Other Observations*.
- The War ends; Poland becomes independent republic. *The Little Review* begins serialising Joyce's *Ulysses*. Treaty of Versailles; Lloyd George forms Coalition ministry.
- League of Nations established; Panama Canal officially opened. W. B. Yeats, *Michael Robartes and the Dancer*.
- Treaty with Ireland. D. H. Lawrence's *Women in Love*, G. B. Shaw's *Heartbreak House*.
- Mussolini seizes power in Italy. Eliot's *The Waste Land*; Joyce's *Ulysses*.
- Lenin dies; first Labour government. E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India*.

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A Nostromo chronology

(assumes 1890 to be date of main events; numbers in parentheses after names of characters are their stated or estimated ages)

The novel

- 1492
 1521
 1524
 Before
 1800
 1808
- 1811–22
- 1823–5(?)
 1836
 1844–6
- c. 1852–68
- 1860
- Historical events in Central and South America*
 Columbus's first voyage
 Cortés conquers Mexico
 Pizarro establishes vice-royalty of Peru.
- Napoleon conquers Spain and establishes his brother Joseph as king. This encourages separatist movements throughout Latin America.
- Garibaldi in South America from 1836 to 1848.
- 1852: Cavour becomes premier of Piedmont. Under Benito Juárez, Mexico adopts a liberal constitution (1857–63).
 Garibaldi and his thousand redshirts conquer Sicily on behalf of Piedmont.
- San Tomé mine worked by Indian slaves.
- Wars of Independence; Sulaco part of Federation of Costaguana. Charles Gould's grandfather fights with Bolívar.
- San Tomé mine reopens under English owners.
- Viola fights alongside Garibaldi in Uruguay; then in Italy 1848–62.
- Dictatorship of Guzman Bento; he unites Costaguana. The mine prospers. Gould's uncle, president of Sulaco, shot by Bento.

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|---------|--|---|
| 1861 | Monygham tortured; Avellanos imprisoned. | Garibaldi's victory at Volturno. |
| 1865 | Bento dies; Avellanos pardoned; Monygham released. | |
| 1868 | | |
| 1870 | Series of weak and corrupt governments in Santa Marta. The mine is closed; then made a perpetual concession to the Goulds. | Guzman Blanco becomes 'progressive' dictator of Venezuela. |
| 1874 | Father writes to his son, Charles Gould, in English school, warning him not to return to Sulaco or to touch mine. | |
| 1879–84 | | |
| 1884 | Charles's father dies; Charles marries Emilia in Italy. | Chile defeats Peru and Bolivia and gains control of Atacama nitrate fields. |
| 1885 | Holroyd visits Goulds in Sulaco. Goulds tour Sulaco seeking labour for mine. | |
| 1888 | Holroyd and Gould finance a new 'Blanco' government. May: Don Vicente Ribiera elected President of Costaguana. November: Ribiera inaugurates National Central Railway. | Abolition of slavery in Brazil. |
| 1889 | April: General Montero revolts; he and his brother Pedrito retreat to Entre Montes province. May: Decoud arrives in Sulaco with new rifles. | First Pan-American conference in Washington. |
| 1890 | Monterist revolt gains ground. Around 20 April Ribiera defeated at Socorro. | Large investments by the US in Mexican silver mines. |

The novel

- 28 April: Sulaco garrison leaves for Cayta, under Barrios. Decoud (then aged 28) learns of Ribiera's defeat that night, and tells Mrs Gould (about 30). She agrees not to tell Charles (about 30), and to let the silver come down to Sulaco.
- 29 April: Silver arrives in Sulaco, c. 5 a.m.
- 1 May: Riot in Sulaco quelled. The outlaw Hernandez' aid accepted by Blancos.
- 2 May: 4 a.m. to 8 a.m.: Nostromo (24) meets Decoud at *Porvenir* office. Nostromo says his cargadores will help authorities. Nostromo saves Ribiera from mob, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.: Ribiera and other political supporters escape on *Minerva*. Hernandez rides to Los Hatos to receive refugees. 4 p.m.–9 p.m.: Deputies Gamacho and Fuentes join the Monterists. At the Casa Gould Don Juste Lopez and Provincial Assembly of Sulaco prepare to capitulate to Montero; Decoud proposes that Sulaco secede from Costaguana. Barrios arrives at Cayta. Pedrito Montero arrives at railroad. Decoud convinces Gould, and Antonia (29), to support his plan.
- 3 May: 1 a.m.–6 a.m.: Nostromo takes Decoud to Casa Viola, and fetches doctor for Teresa Viola. 6 a.m.: Pedrito leaves railroad. Sotillo seizes ship at Esmeralda. 8 p.m.: Decoud writes to his sister. 9 p.m.: Decoud and Nostromo take out lighter. 11.00 p.m. or so: Sotillo accidentally rams lighter in darkness. Later Sotillo lands Sulaco harbour.
- 4 May: Nostromo and Decoud bury silver on Great Isabel. As day breaks, Nostromo swims ashore. Sotillo seizes Mitchell and Monygham. Sulaco under the rule of Gamacho and Fuentes. Entry of Pedrito Montero. 10 a.m.: he speaks in Plaza. 6 p.m.: Pedrito sends messenger to demand the obedience of the mine. Don P  p   refuses and so does Gould in Sulaco. 6.30 p.m.: Nostromo awakens. Sotillo kills Hirsch and evacuates Custom House. 7 p.m.: Monygham (50) meets Nostromo at Custom House, and suggests Nostromo ride to Cayta to bring back Barrios.
- 5 May: Nostromo sets out for Cayta.
- 14 May: Decoud's suicide at dawn after ten days alone.
- 17 May: Nostromo returns with Barrios. Barrios attacks Sotillo's ship, and saves Monygham. Don P  p   attacks Sulaco at Land Gate, saving Gould. Barrios attacks by Harbour Gate, and, with P  p   and Hernandez, they save Sulaco. Nostromo sees Decoud's boat, and takes it to Great Isabel.
- 1 June: Lopez announces a new constitution for an independent Sulaco. In the next weeks Gould goes on mission to San Francisco and Washington; Civil War continues.

	<i>The novel</i>	<i>Historical events in Central and South America</i>
1891	May: War ended by international naval demonstration off Sulaco. Montero assassinated. Occidental Province becomes the Occidental Republic.	
1897	Mitchell (55) tours Sulaco with visitor.	
1898	Lighthouse built on Great Isabel; Violas installed there.	Spanish-American War; US gains Puerto Rico and the Philippines, and Cuba comes under US control.
1900	Labour unrest; prominent Sulacans planning war to annex Costaguana to Sulaco. Goulds return from European tour. Nostromo killed by Viola (70?). Viola dies.	
1903		3 November: Panama secedes from Colombia; two days later sells its rights to a ten-mile strip of land across all the isthmus to the US.

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Abbreviations

Works cited frequently in the text are referred to by the following abbreviations. Other bibliographical references may be found in the *Guide to further reading* on pp. 96–8 below. To save space, page numbers are used only for works whose titles are cited in the text or are given an abbreviated title.

*Indicates major work

†Indicates good general introduction

- A** Jean-Aubry, G. *Joseph Conrad: Life and Letters*. 2 vols. London, 1927.
- B** Baines, Jocelyn. *Joseph Conrad: A Critical Biography*. London, 1960.
- BE†* Berthoud, Jacques. *Joseph Conrad: The Major Phase*. Cambridge, 1978.
- BL* Blackburn, William, ed. *Joseph Conrad: Letters to William Blackwood and David S. Meldrum*. Durham, NC, 1958.
- CH*†* Sherry, Norman, ed. *Conrad: The Critical Heritage*. London, 1973.
- E* Eastwick, Edward B. *Venezuela: Sketches of Life in a South American Republic*. London, 1868.
- FO** Ford, Ford Madox. *Joseph Conrad: A Personal Remembrance*. London, 1924.
- GA* Garnett, Edward, ed. *Letters from Conrad: 1895–1924*. London, 1928.
- GL* Watts, C. T., ed. *Joseph Conrad's Letters to R. B. Cunninghame Graham*. Cambridge, 1969.
- GU*†* Guerard, Albert. *Conrad the Novelist*. Cambridge, Mass., 1958.
- H* Hay, Eloise Knapp. *The Political Novels of Joseph Conrad*. Chicago, 1963.
- J* James, Henry. *Literary Criticism: Essays on Literature: American Writers: English Writers*, ed. Leon Edel. New York, 1984.
- K** Karl, Frederick. *Joseph Conrad: The Three Lives. A Biography*. New York, 1979.

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Abbreviations

xvii

- M* Conrad, Joseph. *The Mirror of the Sea: Memories and Impressions*. London, 1946.
- MA* Masterman, G. F. *Seven Eventful Years in Paraguay*. London, 1869.
- N†* Conrad, Joseph. *Nostromo: A Tale of the Seaboard*, ed. Keith Carabine. Oxford, 1984.
- NA** Najder, Zdzisław. *Joseph Conrad: A Chronicle*. New Brunswick, NJ, 1983.
- NLL* Conrad, Joseph. *Notes on Life and Letters*. London, 1949.
- NN* Conrad, Joseph. *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'*. London, 1950.
- P* Conrad, Joseph. *A Personal Record*. London, 1946.
- SE* Senn, Werner. *Conrad's Narrative Voice: Stylistic Aspects of his Fiction*. Swiss Studies in English, 100. Bern, 1980.
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- T* Tillyard, E. M. W. *The Epic Strain in the English Novel*. London, 1958. 199–203.
- W†* Watts, Cedric. *A Preface to Conrad*. London, 1982.

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