Joseph Conrad Biography
Writer (1857–1924)
The British writer Joseph Conrad is remembered for novels like Heart of Darkness and Lord Jim, which drew on his experience as a mariner and addressed profound themes of nature and existence.

Synopsis
Joseph Conrad was born Józef Teodor Konrad Korzeniowski on December 3, 1857, to Polish parents in Berdichev (now Berdychiv), Ukraine, and was raised and educated primarily in Poland. After a sea-faring career in the French and British merchant marines, he wrote short stories and novels like Lord Jim, Heart of Darkness and The Secret Agent, which combined his experiences in remote places with an interest in moral conflict and the dark side of human nature. He died in England on August 3, 1924.

Early Life and Background
Joseph Conrad was born Józef Teodor Konrad Korzeniowski on December 3, 1857, in Berdichev (now Berdychiv), Ukraine. His parents, Apollo and Evelina (nee Bobrowska) Korzeniowski, were members of the Polish noble class. They were also Polish patriots who conspired against oppressive Russian rule; as a consequence, they were arrested and sent to live in the Russian province of Vologda with their 4-year-old son. When Conrad's parents died several years later, he was raised by an uncle in Poland.
Conrad's education was erratic: He was first tutored by his literary father, then attended school in Krakow and received further private schooling. At the age of 16, Conrad left Poland and traveled to the port city of Marseilles, France, where he began his years as a mariner.

Seafaring Years
Through an introduction to a merchant who was a friend of his uncle, Conrad sailed on several French commercial ships, first as an apprentice and then as a steward. He traveled to the West Indies and South America, and he may have participated in international gun-smuggling. After a period of debt and a failed suicide attempt, Contrad joined the British merchant marine, where he was employed for 16 years. He rose in rank and became a British citizen, and his voyages around the world—he sailed to India, Singapore, Australia and Africa—gave him experiences that he would later reinterpret in his fiction.

Literary Career
After his sea-faring years, Conrad began to put down roots on land. In 1896 he married Jessie Emmeline George, daughter of a bookseller; they had two sons. He also had friendships with prominent writers such as John Galsworthy, Ford Madox Ford and H.G. Wells.
Conrad began his own literary career in 1895 with the publication of his first novel, Almayer's Folly, an adventure tale set in the Borneo jungles. Before the turn of the century he wrote two of his most famous and enduring novels. Lord Jim (1900) is the story of an outcast young sailor who comes to terms with his past acts of cowardice and eventually becomes the leader of a small South Seas country. Heart of Darkness (1902) is a novella describing a British man's journey deep into the Congo of Africa, where he encounters the cruel and mysterious Kurtz, a European trader who has established himself as a ruler of the native people there. Lord Jim and Heart of Darkness contain the signature elements of Conrad's writing: faraway settings; dramatic conflicts between human characters and the brutal forces of nature; and themes of individualism, the violent side of human nature and racial prejudice. Conrad was
interested in showing "psycho-political" situations that drew parallels between the inner lives of single characters and the broader sweep of human history.

Conrad continued to achieve success as an author, publishing such further novels as *Nostromo* (1904) and *The Secret Agent* (1907), short-story collections and a memoir titled *A Personal Record* (1912). Many of his major works first appeared as serialized pieces in magazines, followed by the publication of the complete novel. As his career progressed, Conrad also collected income through reprints of his novels and the sale of film rights for several books.

**Later Life**

Over the last two decades of his life, Conrad produced more autobiographical writings and novels, including *The Arrow of Gold* and *The Rescue*. His final novel, *The Rover*, was published in 1923. Conrad died of a heart attack on August 3, 1924, at his home in Canterbury, England. Conrad's work influenced numerous later 20th century writers, from T.S. Eliot and Graham Greene to Virginia Woolf, Albert Camus and William Faulkner. His books have been translated into dozens of languages and are still taught in schools and universities.