

## UNIT 4 | ACTIVITY 4.2 (A)

## LEADS ABOUT LITERATURE

**Instructions:** *Literature does not belong solely to the poets and novelists. Non-fiction writers and essayists also compose literature. But what about journalists? When Adam Hochschild published his non-fiction book *King Leopold's Ghost* in 1998, reviews in newspapers around the world soon followed. Read the lead paragraphs from reviews below, then answer the questions that follow on the next page.*

**Passage A:**

Salon.com, 9-9-98

In *King Leopold's Ghost*, journalist Adam Hochschild chronicles the depredations of Belgian rule of the Congo (today's Zaire) between the 1880s and 1909, when Leopold, the king of Belgium, died. During this period, five million to ten million people were killed, or died of starvation, disease, and being worked to death. All of this for rubber, harvested from the thick vines that contained that precious gelatinous sap. Hochschild understandably wanted to know why so few of us have ever heard about the atrocities of Leopold's rule.

**Passage C:**

*The Vancouver Sun*, 3-14-99

First, they killed all the men, women and children they could find. Then the soldiers passed through the villages, their hands full of fire. "A party of men had been detailed with torches to fire every hut," wrote Edgar Canisius, the young American officer in command. "As we progressed, a line of smoke hung over the jungle for many miles, announcing to the natives far and wide that civilization was dawning."

Canisius wasn't writing about Vietnam. His war was on another continent, and more than a half century earlier. The natives the young officer slaughtered were members of the Budja people of the Congo River Basin, and Canisius was one of the white mercenaries from Europe and North America who conducted, during the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and first of the 20<sup>th</sup>, a campaign of murder, forced labour and starvation there for King Leopold II of Belgium, the proprietor and CEO of the blood drenched Congo Free State.

**Passage B:**

*The Financial Times*, London, 4-3-99

In 1961, Adam Hochschild was a student visiting Leopoldville. A drunken CIA agent was boasting how they had organized the murder of Patrice Lumumba, and driven the body of the slain Congolese leader round the city in the boot of the agent's car to find a place where it could be disposed of. Hochschild never forgot the Congo, and three decades later he has produced a history like none other.

**Passage D:**

*London Sunday Times*, 4-18-99

Many readers have been chilled by the images in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, such as Marlow's boat rising and falling on the greasy swell, its guns firing shells into the continent of Africa at regular intervals for no clear reason, or the wooden posts in front of Kurtz's house, each one topped with a shrivelled human head.

Conrad's novel can fruitfully be read not as allegory, fable or myth, but as an accurate portrayal of events in the Congo at the end of the last century. Under the eye of King Leopold of the Belgians, who ran the Congo as his personal fiefdom, it was systematically despoiled of rubber, ivory and people. Conrad, whose political views were far from anti-imperialist, described Leopold's rape of central Africa as "the vilest scramble for loot that ever disfigured the history of human conscience."

## LEADS ABOUT LITERATURE

**Instructions:** Answer the questions below using the excerpts from newspaper reviews of Adam Hochschild’s book, *King Leopold’s Ghost*, found on the preceding page.

**Questions:**

- Lead paragraphs are perhaps the most important part of a journalist’s article, at least in terms of hooking and holding a reader. When writing a feature story or column, journalists need not stick to the journalism jigsaw puzzle for news stories: Who-did-what-to-whom-when-and-why? In writing about *King Leopold’s Ghost*, which passage or passages—A, B, C, or D—uses the following attention-getting techniques? Write the letter in the space below.

an anecdote (or interesting story) to appeal to the reader	
a shocking statistic	
a comparison between two seemingly unsimilar events, people, or ideas	

- Journalists also write with a specific audience in mind. In doing so, the writer makes assumptions about that audience. Which passage or passages—A, B, C, or D—makes these assumptions about the reader? Write the letter in the space below.

the audience are readers of classic literature	
the audience may not be knowledgeable about the historical period covered by the book	

- Journalists write with a specific purpose in mind—in the case of book reviews, that purpose is not to inform but rather to influence or persuade. Which passage or passages states an opinion about Hochschild’s book? What is that opinion?

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- Three of the passages use “horror” in their headlines. Circle specific words or phrases in each passage that seem to mirror the horror of which Hochschild writes in his book.