Araby Study Guide

Araby by James Joyce

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Contents

Introduction

"Araby" is one of fifteen short stories that together make up James Joyce's collection, *Dubliners*. Although Joyce wrote the stories between 1904 and 1906, they were not published until 1914. *Dubliners* paints a portrait of life in Dublin, Ireland, at the turn of the twentieth century. Its stories are arranged in an order reflecting the development of a child into a grown man. The first three stones are told from the point of view of a young boy, the next three from the point of view of an adolescent, and so on. "Araby" is the last story of the first set, and is told from the perspective of a boy just on the verge of adolescence. The story takes its title from a real festival which came to Dublin in 1894 when Joyce was twelve years old.

Joyce is one of the most famous writers of the Modernist period of literature, which runs roughly from 1900 to the end of World War II. Modernist works often include characters who are spiritually lost and themes that reflect a cynicism toward institutions the writer had been taught to respect, such as government and religion. Much of the literature of this period is experimental; Joyce's writing reflects this in the use of dashes instead of quotation marks to indicate that a character is speaking.

Joyce had a very difficult time getting *Dubliners* published. It took him over ten years to find a publisher who was willing to risk publishing the stories because of their unconventional style and themes. Once he found a publisher, he fought very hard with the editors to keep the stories the way he had written them. Years later, these stories are heralded not only for their portrayal of life in Dublin at the turn of the century, but also as the beginning of the career of one of the most brilliant English-language writers of the twentieth century.

Author Biography

James Joyce was born on February 2, 1882, the oldest often children born to John and Mary Joyce. Joyce's father, even though he was a good-natured man, was a drinker who wasted the family's resources. The Joyce family moved constantly, and Joyce became familiar with the sight of a pawnbroker's redemption slips and eviction notices.

In spite of his family's lack of money, Joyce was sent to Clongowes Wood College—a Jesuit Catholic boarding school—when he was six years old. Upon arrival, Joyce was asked his age, to which he replied, "Half-past six, " which became his nickname for the rest of that year. Later, he went to another Jesuit school, Belvedere College, where he began to show his brilliance as a writer, winning several national competitions. Joyce spent the money he received from these competitions very quickly, celebrating with his large family at dinners in restaurants and redeeming some of his mother's possessions from the pawnbroker. Joyce was always painfully aware that he, being the oldest son, was given a good education and other privileges that his younger brothers and sisters could not receive.

When Joyce went to University College in Dublin, he began to rebel against his Catholic upbringing. Although successful in academic life, he found the unsophisticated narrowness of Irish politics and the arts stifling. After graduation, he met Nora Barnacle from Galway, Ireland, who would become his lifelong companion. Joyce was opposed to the institution of marriage, and he knew that he and Nora could not live together in Dublin without being married. So, after his mother's death in 1904, Joyce and Nora left Ireland to live the rest of their lives in continental Europe: first in Pola, in the former Yugoslavia; then Trieste, Italy, where their children Giorgio and Lucia were born; then Zurich, Switzerland, during the First World War; and finally, Paris. It was only after he left Ireland that Joyce was able to begin writing about his native country, and the stories in *Dubliners*, including "Araby, " were written in his first years away, although they were not published until 1914.

During these years on the continent, Joyce supported his family by teaching English and holding a variety of other jobs, including managing an English theater troupe and working at a bank. He continued to write, but experienced only scattered commercial success. With the publication of his novel *Ulysses*in 1922, however, he reached a level of financial stability that enabled him to begin writing full-time. In the following years, his already poor eyesight got progressively worse, and he underwent several eye operations. Also during this period, Joyce's daughter suffered a nervous breakdown and was hospitalized in a sanitarium in Zurich. In 1931, after27 years of living together, Joyce and Nora were finally married. They were afraid that after Joyce died, Nora would be left with no rights to his estate. Joyce died on January 13, 1941, following surgery for an ulcer. He was 58 years old.

Plot Summary

"Araby" opens on North Richmond street in Dublin, where "an uninhabited house of two storeys stood at the blind end, detached from its neighbours in a square ground. " The narrator, who remains unnamed throughout the story, lives with his aunt and uncle. He describes his block, then discusses the former tenant who lived in his house: a priest who recently died in the back room. This priest has a library that attracts the young narrator, and he is particularly interested in three titles: a Sir Walter Scott romance, a religious tract, and a police agent's memoirs.

The narrator talks about being a part of the group of boys who play in the street. He then introduces Mangan's sister, a girl who captivates his imagination even though he rarely, if ever, speaks with her. He does stare at her from his window and follow her on the street, however, often thinking of her "even in places the most hostile to romance. " While in the marketplace on Saturday nights, for example, he uses her image to guide him through the thronging crowd who yell their sales pitches and sing patriotic Irish ballads. He becomes misty-eyed just at the thought of her and retreats to the priest's dark room in order to deprive himself of other senses and think only of her.

Finally, Mangan's sister speaks to him. She asks if he will be attending a church-sponsored fair that is coming soon to Dublin—a bazaar called Araby. He is tongue-tied and cannot answer, but when she tells him that she cannot go because of a retreat that week in her convent, he promises to go and bring her a gift from the bazaar. From then on he can only think of the time when he will be at the fair; he is haunted by "the syllables of the word Araby. " On the night he is supposed to attend the fair, his uncle is late returning home and he must wait to get money from him. He gets very anxious, and his aunt tells him that he may have to miss the bazaar, but his uncle does come home, apologetic that he had forgotten. After asking the boy if he knows a poem entitled "The Arab's Farewell to His Steed, " the uncle bids the boy farewell.

The boy takes a coin from his uncle and catches a train to the fair. Araby is closing down as he arrives and he timidly walks through the center of the bazaar. As he looks at the few stalls that are still open, he overhears a conversation between an English shop-girl and two young men. Their talk is nothing but idle gossip. The shop-girl pauses reluctantly to ask the boy if he wishes to buy anything, but he declines. As he walks slowly out of the hall amid the darkening of the lights, he thinks that he is a "creature driven and derided by vanity" and his "eyes burned with anguish and anger. "

Detailed Summary & Analysis

Summary

The narrator describes his adolescent crush on the sister of his friend, Mangan. As a boy, he lived on a quiet cul-de-sac in Dublin. There was an uninhabited house standing at the end of the street, detached from the other houses. These houses faced one another so it was possible for the boy to watch his neighbors. The house in which the boy lived was formerly occupied by a priest. When the priest died, the boy, his aunt, and his uncle moved into the house. They found its rooms musty, and discarded papers had been left in a room behind the kitchen. Among these papers, the boy found several old books: a novel by Walter Scott, a devotional book, and the memoirs of a legendary detective. The narrator remembers that he liked the detective book best because its pages were yellowed. There was a garden behind the house with an apple tree and some ragged bushes. Under one of the bushes, the boy found the priest's rusted bicycle pump. The narrator describes the priest as very charitable because he left all of his money to institutions and his furniture to his sister.

In winter, the early dusk fell before the boy and his friends had eaten dinner. They stayed out in the street as long as they could, however, playing until they were called home. They regularly tried to avoid those who would make them go inside, hiding in the shadows if they saw the narrator's uncle or lurking out of sight by the doorstep where Mangan's sister stood to call him home to tea. The boy paid close attention to the sister, noting how her braided hair and her dress would toss and swing as she moved, and became infatuated with her.

The narrator describes how, when he was a boy, he watched the door of Mangan's house every morning from behind a nearly closed blind. He waited to see the sister come out on the doorstep. When she did, he would grab his school books and follow her. Close to the place where their paths diverged, he would hurry to pass her. He performed these same actions morning after morning, but never spoke to the girl except casually. The narrator remembers how just the mention of her name made his blood rush.

The image of Mangan's sister stayed on his mind even in places that were not in keeping with romantic thoughts. During the shopping trips when he had to accompany his aunt and help her carry things, he moved through the crowded noisy streets thinking about Mangan's sister and feeling emotions and yearnings he did not quite understand.

One dark rainy night the boy went into the room in his house where the priest had died. It was quiet in the room except for the sound of rain. The only light came from a distant source, but the boy was glad the darkness hid his desires. He stayed in the room, giving himself up to feelings of love.

Finally, Mangan's sister spoke to the boy, asking him if he was going to go to the Araby bazaar. She told him that she wanted to go but she was scheduled to go on a religious retreat at the time the bazaar would be held. The boy promised her that if he went to Araby he would bring her a souvenir.

After making this promise to the girl, the boy could think of nothing else. His schoolwork and family chores became obstacles to his goal. He lost patience with all of his regular activities, which seemed childish to him and much less important than going to Araby and bringing something back for Mangan's sister. When he asked his aunt for permission to go she was surprised at his desire but, with some misgivings about the bazaar being a Freemason event, she ultimately agreed that he could go.

On the morning of the day he wanted to go to Araby he reminded his uncle about his plans, since the uncle would have to give him some money for the event. His uncle brushes him aside with an offhand comment and said he knew the boy wanted to go. The boy felt less than comfortable with his uncle's response and was out of sorts all day. When he came home for dinner his uncle had not yet arrived and so he wandered through the empty upstairs rooms of the house, singing. He watched his friends playing in the street below, but could focus on nothing but the image of Mangan's sister in his mind. A neighbor woman came to visit and stayed for tea, and the boy had to listen to the woman and his aunt gossiping. The woman left, and his uncle had still not arrived. His aunt commented that he would have to give up his plan to visit the bazaar because it was getting to be too late.

The uncle finally came home at nine o'clock, having forgotten about the boy's desire to go to Araby. The aunt chided him for this and asked him to give the boy some money so he could go, despite the fact that it was so late. The uncle apologized for forgetting and gave the boy money. He then started to recite poetry about an Arab and his horse.

The boy grasped the money tightly and walked to the train station through the crowded city streets. The train he took was a special one chartered just to take visitors to the bazaar. Because of the late hour, the boy was the only passenger in the train. The train moved slowly through the rainy night and crossed the river. At one station people tried to get on but the conductor said it was a special train and turned them away. At ten minutes to ten, the boy finally arrived at the building housing Araby.

Because he could not find a less expensive entrance, the boy paid a higher than planned price to go inside the large hall. Almost all of the vendor stalls were closed, and much of the hall was dark. There were a few people looking at the merchandise of the stalls that were still open. The boy watched two men counting money in a closed café. He then remembered that he had come to the bazaar to buy a gift for Mangan's sister.

He went to one of the stalls where the sales girl was talking and laughing with two young men. He listened to the conversation and noted that they all had English accents. When the girl saw him, she came over to ask if he wanted to buy anything. The boy was not encouraged by her tone and so he told her no. The girl went back to chatting with the men but looked toward the boy from time to time. The boy stayed at her stall to

show he was interested in the merchandise, but he felt it was useless to be there and walked away. As he walked through the darkened hall, more lights were turned off along the upstairs gallery. He clutched what was left of the money in his pocket. He felt hurt and angry because of his experience. He realized that Araby had been a disappointment and admitted to himself that he had become a victim of his own vanity.

Analysis

The narrator is telling the reader about his adolescent infatuation with the girl next door. Many elements of the story contrast organized religion, spirituality, and worldly society. The story uses metaphors of sight, such as blindness, light, and dark, to emphasize the differences of spirit and matter. The street on which the narrator lived as a boy is "blind" and quiet except during the time of day when the Catholic parochial school dismisses its pupils. This suggests that the people on the street are without "life" until the Church becomes part of them. The empty house at the "blind end" of the street is detached, while the other houses are set close together in a companionable way and are "conscious of decent lives within them." This suggests that without the community fostered by the Church, the individual is separate and without purpose.

The garden behind the boy's house has an apple tree in reference to the Garden of Eden and the introduction of sin. This foreshadows the boy's move from childhood innocence to manhood via his infatuation with Mangan's sister. The dead priest's rusted bicycle pump, found by the boy in the garden, could symbolize the priest's celibacy or his discard of "inflated" religiosity. The character of the priest is used to illustrate the struggle that human beings have when attempting to reconcile their natural impulses with church teachings. The priest's worldly nature is illustrated by the fact that he had money to leave to institutions and furniture valuable enough to form a useful bequest to his sister.

The books found by the boy in the back room of the house also suggest that the priest had "hidden" worldly interests as well as religious ones. The fact that the boy chose as his favorite book the memoir with yellowing pages suggests his romantic nature, since he chose it on the basis of its appearance, which connects with the romance of history rather than its actual content. The author's selection of these three particular titles emphasizes the story's elements of romance, religion, and memory.

The Church and its contrast with worldly life permeate the story. When the boys play outside in winter, the street grows dark early. They play in dark muddy lanes behind the decent houses, in dark gardens with dripping leaves and the smells of trash and manure. These elements suggest the nature of the world without the influence of the Church: dark, animal-like, and dirty. When the boys return to the street, "glowing" from their play and the cold air beyond civilization, light from the kitchen windows of the "decent" houses fills the street, making it less dark.

In this twilight, reminiscent of the interior of a church with lighted candles, Mangan's sister appears in a lighted doorway to call her brother home. She is a figure of worship

like the Virgin Mary as she stands behind the railing on her doorstep with the light behind her. The railing and the way the boy stands before it watching the girl suggest the altar rail in a church during Communion.

As the boy "worships" Mangan's sister, he experiences strong physical and emotional sensations in a combination of religious feeling and adolescent lust at the sight of her. The combination of these feelings confuses the boy, and he separates himself from his family and friends both to submerge him in the feelings and to hide his shame at having them. He watches the girl from a small gap below a nearly closed "blind" or wanders among dark empty rooms, singing, in an image that suggests the singing of hymns in a darkened church interior.

He keeps the image of the girl with him as he goes about his daily life. Hers is an image of devotion that he protects from the crass material world. For example, when he goes shopping with his aunt he carries his "chalice" through a "throng of foes," like a knight in a romance. He repeats the girl's name as a form of prayer. Her "words and gestures" play his body like "a harp," suggesting again the combination of religious devotion, romance, and lust experienced by the adolescent boy in the story.

When he finally has a real conversation with the girl, it concerns her desire to go to Araby, a commercial bazaar in reality, but a place that symbolizes foreign and exotic things to both the boy and the girl. She says she would like to visit the bazaar but she must attend a religious retreat instead. This is another example contrasting the spiritual and material worlds.

The idea of the bazaar and its name become holy elements surrounding Mangan's sister, the object of the boy's worship. The name, Araby, suggests a part of the world considered pagan by the Church, however, emphasizing the boy's mixed feelings about what is sinful and what is good. When he tells Mangan's sister that he will bring her something from the bazaar the boy becomes a romantic hero on a quest.

Once he decides to embark on his quest, he becomes obsessed with going go to the bazaar, regardless of the obstacles put in his way, such as the late return of his uncle on the day he plans to go to Araby. The fact that the "hero" must wait for permission and money from an adult in order to pursue his "quest" shows that the boy is still a boy in the real world. This contrasts with his self-image as a hero in regard to Mangan's sister. The quest idea is reinforced by the fact that he must take a special train only for those going to the bazaar. Common people are turned away from this special form of transportation. The boy as hero must go alone to face whatever awaits him at the end of the journey.

At the end of the train ride, he finds the Araby bazaar housed in a large dark hall with an upstairs gallery. The interior of this building is described in another church image with most of the hall in darkness and a "silence like that which pervades a church after a service." This metaphor compares the commercial nature of the bazaar to a church service. The two men counting money inside the hall symbolize the moneychangers in the temple, reinforcing the contrast between the church and the material world. They

also introduce a notion of sin within the "holy" place the boy has come to visit. The fact that the boy must give a shilling to the man at the turnstile before entering the bazaar references the Greek myth of giving a coin to the boatman who ferries souls across the river Styx to the underworld.

When the boy remembers that he has come to find a souvenir of this "promised land" to bring back to Mangan's sister, he has little choice of where to go. Most of the vendors have closed their stalls by the time he arrives at Araby, and reality continues to conflict with his expectations.

He approaches a stall selling porcelain and china, breakable items that suggest the boy's fragility in this situation, but is not encouraged to buy anything by the girl tending the stall. The girl is flirting and talking with two young men and is somewhat annoyed at having to pay attention to a boy. The fact that she pays little attention to the boy emphasizes his youth and how "useless" his infatuation with Mangan's sister is. The girl at the bazaar forces the boy to acknowledge he is not a hero, not ready to enter the world of men, a world that is shown to be crass and materialistic compared to the romantic quest he had envisioned.

There is nothing for him at Araby, and all his hopes about entering a romantic world beyond the quiet, decent, brown street of his childhood have been reduced to fantasy. His realization and acceptance represent a loss of innocence, which makes him angry. The loss also wounds him. He realizes that his strong emotions were aroused only by a fantasy, for the idea of Mangan's sister and not for the real girl. This reality is symbolized by the English shop girl at the bazaar, with her discouraging tone of voice and her flirting ways toward the two men.

The boy must admit to himself that his worshipful love was tainted with lust. He experiences a painful disappointment when he acknowledges that he is a victim of his own vanity. He is not a pure spiritual being, but a boy growing to manhood in the material word and a human being subject to self-delusion and "blindness".

Characters

Mangan

Mangan is the same age and in the same class at the Christian Brothers school as the narrator, and so he and the narrator often play together after school. His older sister is the object of the narrator's confused feelings.

Mangan's Sister

Mangan is one of the narrator's chums who lives down the street. His older sister becomes the object of the narrator's schoolboy crush. Mangan's sister has no idea how the narrator feels about her, however, so when they discuss Araby, the bazaar coming to town, she is only being polite and friendly. She says she would like to go to the bazaar but cannot because she has to attend a school retreat that weekend. The narrator promises to buy her something at the bazaar if he goes, but it is unlikely that she takes this promise seriously. While on the one hand the narrator describes her romantically, he also describes her in reverential terms which call to mind the Virgin Mary. This dual image description of Mangan's sister represents the religious and romantic confusion of the narrator.

Mrs. Mercer

Mrs. Mercer is the pawnbroker's widow who waits at the house for the narrator's uncle, perhaps to collect money that he owes her. Joyce includes her character to show that the uncle is unreliable in the payment of his debts.

Narrator

The narrator of this story is a young, sensitive boy who confuses a romantic crush and religious enthusiasm. All of the conflict in this story happens inside his mind. It is unlikely that the object of his crush, Mangan's sister, is aware of his feelings for her, nor is anybody else in this boy's small world. Because the boy's thoughts only reveal a part of the story, a careful reader must put together clues that the author gives. For example, the narrator mentions that the former tenant of the house he shares with his aunt and uncle was a priest, a representative of the Catholic church, who left behind three books which became important to the narrator. One is a romantic adventure by Sir Walter Scott; one is a religious pamphlet written by a Protestant; and the third is the exciting memoirs of a French policeman and master of disguise. These three books are not what a person would expect a Catholic priest to have in his library. So if this priest has non-religious literature in his library, then how devout can an average church goer be expected to be? This turns out to be the case for the narrator, who confuses religious idealism with romance.

The boy confuses the religious and secular worlds when he describes himself at the market with his aunt. He bears the chalice—the Communion cup—through a "throng of foes. " He also describes Mangan's sister in terms often associated with the Virgin Mary. For the narrator, then, an ordinary grocery-shopping trip becomes a religious crusade, and a pretty girl down the street becomes a substitute for the Mother of God. The boy fuses together religious devotion for the Virgin Mary with his own romantic longing.

Joyce is famous for creating characters who undergo an epiphany—a sudden moment of insight—and the narrator of "Araby" is one of his best examples. At the end of the story, the boy overhears a trite conversation between an English girl working at the bazaar and two young men, and he suddenly realizes that he has been confusing things. It dawns on him that the bazaar, which he thought would be so exotic and exciting, is really only a commercialized place to buy things. Furthermore, he now realizes that Mangan's sister is just a girl who will not care whether he fulfills his promise to buy her something at the bazaar. His conversation with Mangan's sister, during which he promised he would buy her something, was really only small talk—as meaningless as the one between the English girl and her companions. He leaves Araby feeling ashamed and upset. This epiphany signals a change in the narrator—from an innocent, idealistic boy to an adolescent dealing with harsh realities.

Narrator's Aunt

The narrator's aunt, who is a mother figure in the story, takes the narrator with her to do the marketing. When it seems as though the uncle has forgotten his promise to the narrator that he could go to the bazaar, she warns the boy that he may have to "put off' the bazaar "for this night of Our Lord. " While this statement makes her seem strict in a religious sense, she also exhibits empathy for the boy's plight. She pleads his case when the uncle forgets about the boy's plans to go to Araby.

Narrator's Uncle

The narrator's uncle seems self-centered and very unreliable. When the narrator reminds him that he wants to go to the bazaar, he replies, "Yes, boy, I know. " But on the Saturday evening of the bazaar, he has forgotten, which causes the narrator to arrive at the bazaar very late. When the uncle finally shows up, he has been drinking, and as the boy leaves for the bazaar he begins reciting the opening lines of the poem, "The Arab's Farewell to his Steed. " Joyce's characterization of the uncle bears resemblance to his own father, who liked to drink and was often in debt. Joyce's inclusion of Mrs. Mercer, the pawnbroker's widow who waits for the uncle to return, suggests that the uncle owes money.

Themes

Alienation and Loneliness

The narrator never shares any of his feelings concerning Mangan's sister with anyone. He isolates himself from his friends, who seem terribly young to him once his crush begins, and from his family, who seem caught up in their own world. Mangan's sister is also completely unaware of the narrator's feelings for her. Consequently, when he suddenly realizes how foolish he has been, his anger at himself is intensified by his alienation from everyone and the resulting feeling of isolation.

Change and Transformation

The narrator experiences emotional growth— changing from an innocent young boy to a disillusioned adolescent—in the flash of an instant. This insight occurs through what Joyce called an "epiphany, " which is a moment of intense insight and self-understanding. Although the narrator suddenly understands that he has allowed his feelings to get carried away, this understanding makes him neither happy nor satisfied. If anything, he is very angry at himself for acting foolishly. This realization marks the beginning of his maturation from a child into an adult.

God and Religion

At the beginning of the story, the narrator sees himself as a religious hero and sees Mangan's sister as the living embodiment of the Virgin Mary. He has not yet learned how to separate the religious teachings of his school with the reality of his secular life. Part of his understanding at the end of the story involves his finally separating those two aspects of his life. He realizes that the church-sponsored bazaar is just a place to buy trinkets, that Mangan's sister is just a girl, and that he himself is just a boy. It is not clear at the end of the story what impact the narrator's epiphany will have on his religious beliefs. Joyce's own disillusionment with Catholicism, however, lends credence to the possibility of the boy adopting a cynical attitude toward his religion.

Style

Point of View

The first-person point of view in "Araby" means that readers see everything through the eyes of the narrator and know what he feels and thinks. If the narrator is confused about his feelings, then it is up to the readers to figure out how the narrator really feels and why he feels that way, using only the clues given by the author. For example, when the narrator first describes Mangan's sister, he says that "her figure [is] defined by the light from the half-opened door, " In other words, she is lit from behind, giving her an unearthly "glow, " like an angel or supernatural being such as the Virgin Mary. Readers are left to interpret the meaning behind the narrator's words, because the boy is not sophisticated enough to understand his own longings.

Symbolism

The symbolism Joyce includes also helps readers to fully understand all of the story's complexities. The former tenant of the narrator's house, the Catholic priest, could be said to represent the entire Catholic church. By extension, the books left in his room—which include non-religious and non-Catholic reading—represent a feeling of ambiguity toward religion in general and Catholicism in particular. The bazaar, Araby, represents the East—a part of the world that is exotic and mysterious to the Irish boy. It could also represent commercialism, since it is really just a fundraiser used to get people to spend money on the church. Mrs. Mercer, the pawnbroker's widow, represents the uncle's debt and irresponsibility; she too could represent greed and materialism. To the narrator, Mangan's sister is a symbol of purity and feminine perfection. These qualities are often associated with the Virgin Mary, who also symbolizes the Catholic church. While the boy is at Araby, the various, and often contrasting, meanings of these symbols converge to produce his epiphany.

Stream of Consciousness

Joyce is famous for using a stream-of-consciousness technique for storytelling. Although stream of consciousness does not figure prominently in "Araby, " a reader can see the beginnings of Joyce's use of this technique, which he used extensively in his subsequent novels, *Ulysses*and *Finnegans Wake*, A major feature of stream-of-consciousness storytelling is that the narration takes place inside the mind of main characters and follows their thoughts as they occur to them, whether those thoughts are complete sentences or not. Although this story uses complete sentences for its storytelling, the narration takes place inside the boy's mind. Another feature of stream-of-consciousness narration is that the narrator's thoughts are not explained for the reader. This is true of "Araby" as well, especially during and after the boy's epiphany.

Historical Context

While Dublin, Ireland, has seen change since the turn of the twentieth century, when Joyce wrote "Araby," many of the conditions present then remain today. In 1904, all of Ireland was under British control, which the Irish resented bitterly. The nationalist group, Sinn Fein (part of which later became the Irish Republican Army—the IRA), had not yet formed, but Irish politics were nonetheless vibrant and controversial. The question of Irish independence from Britain was one of primary importance to every citizen.

Ireland's major religion, Roman Catholicism, dominated Irish culture. Many families sent then-children to schools run by Jesuit priests (like the one the narrator in "Araby" attends) and convent schools run by nuns (like the one Mangan's sister attends). Folklore, fairy tales, and homespun stories—told and retold for generations—provided a common form of family entertainment. Many turn-of-the-century stereotypes about the Irish came from their cultural traditions. Some common ones included large families, drunkenness, poverty, and imaginative storytelling.

The large families seen in Ireland at the turn of the century stemmed largely from the Catholic religion. Divorce went against church doctrine, and abortion and birth control were considered mortal sins. It was also a mortal sin for husbands and wives to refuse to engage in sexual relations to prevent having more children. As a consequence, it was not unusual for Irish Catholic families at the turn of the century to be quite large. While the modern Catholic church does not exercise quite as much influence, these issues still figure strongly in Irish culture today.

There were no televisions or radios for entertainment at the turn of the century. Many homes had no electricity and were heated only by a central fireplace. Therefore, the custom of storytelling after dinner (or "tea") was one common form of entertainment. In light of these living conditions, it is clear why an event like the bazaar in "Araby" could cause such great expectations.

The stereotype of the drunken Irishman arose partly in response to the poverty experienced by the majority of people in Ireland after the Great Potato Famine of the 1840s. Beer was cheap and often more sanitary than the water. The Irish were also famous for their whiskey, which many still claim to be the finest in the world. The local public house— or pub—was the central gathering place of the village, and also served as a small hotel for weary travelers. People were certain to find warm hospitality, good beer and mutton stew, and good stories around the hearth to lift their spirits there. In the evening, the men would gather at the pub to drink, talk of politics or sports, and hear music. Unfortunately, this led to many men wasting their families' meager resources, thereby reinforcing the stereotype of the drunk, irresponsible Irishman. The narrator's uncle in "Araby, " who keeps the narrator and the pawnbroker's widow waiting before coming home drunk, fits this mold.

In larger cities like Dublin and Belfast, many Irish cultural stereotypes have disappeared as Ireland has become modernized. In many parts of Ireland, though, poverty still exists and the pub is still the town's social center.

Critical Overview

Joyce had a hard time getting *Dubliners*published. Although he wrote the stories between 1904 and 1906, and some of them were published in magazines, the entire collection was not published in book form until 1914. The book was first accepted for publication by the Grant Richards publishing company in 1906, but after a long controversy and many arguments between Joyce and the editors over changes the company wanted to make to the stories, they withdrew their offer to publish.

The second company that accepted the manuscript for publication in 1909 was Maunsel and Company, a Dublin publisher. This company had second thoughts about publishing the work as well, and in 1912 they destroyed the proofs that Joyce had corrected. This left Joyce extremely bitter. Finally, in 1914, Grant Richards, the company that originally accepted the manuscript for publication again agreed to publish Joyce's work.

This troubled road to publication influenced the early reviews and criticism of *Dubliners*. According to Robert Scholes and A. Walton Litz, the editors of the 1996 edition of *Dubliners*published by Viking Press, these stories were mostly dismissed by early critics as Joyce's "apprentice" work, or given a secondary place as "skillful but depressing 'slices' of Dublin life. "

*Dubliners*was published four months after the publication of Joyce's next work, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Its reception was overshadowed by excitement and attention given to both *Portrait* and early chapters of *Ulysses*, which Joyce was publishing in magazines around the same time. Many readers during this time found *Portrait*—a revealing story of a troubled young man searching for his place in life—far more interesting than the stories in *Dubliners*. For many years Joyce's problems with publishers and printers were discussed more frequently than the stories themselves.

Early reviews of *Dubliners* set the pattern for subsequent critical discussion. Many critics protested against the sordid incidents related in some of the stories and the overall pessimistic tone of the collection. These critics complained that these stories lacked a "point, " and that they were merely anecdotes or sketches without any definite structure. At least two reviewers found the longer stories the least satisfactory because Joyce did not sustain a "mood" in them as he did in the shorter pieces.

The turning point in *Dubliners* criticism came in the 1940s and 1950s, when critics began to find in Joyce's work interesting and novel connections between such elements as tone, atmosphere and action. While some critics still focus on these stories as evidence of the young Joyce developing his distinctive style, or emphasize that Joyce provides a truthful, skillful depiction of life in Dublin at the turn of the century, the criticism now encompasses a wide range of interpretations and appreciation. Most critics now agree that *Dubliners*stands on its own merits as a great work by one of the most important writers of the twentieth century.

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1
- Critical Essay #2
- Critical Essay #3

Critical Essay #1

Greg Barnhisel is an educator and Assistant Director of the Undergraduate Writing Center at the University of Texas at Austin. In the following essay, he explores the major themes in "Araby, " including nationality, religion, and relationships between the sexes.

In his early story "Araby, " James Joyce prefigures many, if not all, of the themes which later became the focus of his writing. Joyce, often considered the greatest English-language novelist of the twentieth century, published few books in his lifetime. Chamber Music, a book of poems, appeared in 1907; *Dubliners*, a collection of short stories from which "Araby" is taken, was published in 1914; and his first novel, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, came out in the same year. The book for which Joyce is most famous, *Ulysses*, appeared in 1922 and was quickly banned. Finally, in 1939, Joyce published *Finnegans Wake*. Notwithstanding his small output, Joyce's work has been highly influential, and many of the themes and details he uses in his work have become common currency in English literature. In "Araby," a story of a young boy's disillusionment, Joyce explores questions of nationality, religion, popular culture, art, and relationships between the sexes. None of these themes can be adequately explored in a short essay; however, a brief exposition of the most important themes of "Araby" indicates the marvelous complexity of Joyce's insight.

"Araby" is narrated by a young boy who is, like most of Joyce's characters, a native of Dublin, Ireland. Since the conflict in the story occurs primarily within the boy's consciousness, Joyce's choice of first-person narration is crucial. The protagonist, as with most of Joyce's main characters, is a sensitive boy, searching for principles with which to make sense of the chaos and banality of the world. We know immediately that Catholicism has served as one of these principles; he attends a Christian Brothers school and at home is attracted to the library of a former tenant of his family, a priest. His identification with Catholicism is more than casual. On Saturday evenings, when the boy goes "marketing " with his aunt he sees the crowds in the market as a "throng of foes" and himself as a religious hero who "bears his chalice" through the crowd.

The narrator's dedication to Catholicism, however, does not run as deep as he might believe. In fact, he channels the emotional devotion that his religion requires towards questionable recipients. Readers learn first that the priest's library contains three books especially important to the protagonist: a romantic novel, a religious tract written by a Protestant, and the memoirs of a French police agent and master of disguise. If this priest does not maintain a sufficiently pious library, how can this boy be expected to properly practice his religion?

More importantly, the boy takes the Catholic idea of devotion to the Virgin Mary and finds a real-world substitute for the Mother of God. We learn that he is especially fascinated by the older sister of one of his schoolmates. In the narrator's first description of Mangan's sister she is lit from behind, like a saint. "[H]er figure defined by the light from the half-opened door.... Every morning I lay on the floor in the front parlour watching her door," the narrator tells us, presenting an image of himself as a prostrate

worshipper. Furthermore, he relates that "her image accompanied [him] even in places the most hostile to romance." Although the boy explains his feelings for Mangan's sister as romantic, his confusion between her and the Virgin Mary are easily discernible: "Her name sprang to my lips at moments in strange prayers and praises of which I myself did not understand." The boy is as rapturous as if he had seen a vision of the Mother of God herself. And when the girl finally speaks to him, he cannot respond coherently: "When she addressed the first words to me I was so confused that I did not know what to answer."

Joyce also makes the nonreligious, and even sexual, elements of the boy's devotion to Mangan's sister clear throughout the story. Her dress, her hair, and her "brown figure" are "always in [the narrator's] eye," and when he finally speaks to her, the same light that once made her glow like a saint now catches "the white border of a petticoat, just visible as she stood at ease." The boy melds religious devotion for the Virgin with his own romantic longing, and the combined force is powerful. When Mangan's sister asks him if he will be attending Araby, a church bazaar to be held soon, he is caught by surprise: "I forgot whether I answered yes or no." She tells him she must attend a retreat and cannot attend the fair. As his eyes fix upon the silver bracelet she twists on her wrist, he resolves to go and bring her back something that could compare with that bracelet. Here, the narrator ventures dangerously close to idolatry and the pre-Christian tradition of offerings to the gods. In a punning reference to this, he relates that because of his recent distraction in class, his schoolmaster "hoped I was not beginning to idle."

The shift from the boy's initially religious longings to more worldly concerns is accentuated by images of Araby that reverberate in his mind, taking on a very unreligious cast: "The syllables of the word 'Araby' were called to me through the silence in which my soul luxuriated and cast an Eastern enchantment over me." This is a very ominous sentence; the boy's religious leanings are being completely overthrown by the lure of the mysterious, and possibly sensual, bazaar. The sensuality that he wished to obliterate earlier ("All my senses seemed to desire to veil themselves," he tells us when he is in the priest's room, thinking of Mangan's sister) is now the very thing that he wants to indulge. The fact that Araby suggests a non-Christian culture is also significant here, for in his dedication to Mangan's sister the boy is willing to forsake the safe and familiar world of Catholic Ireland for what he believes to be the exotic and decadent East. As he stands in the upper-story room of his house, he looks upon his old playmates from above as they play in the street, and then looks up on the house across to where Mangan and his sister live. He feels himself chosen, like Sir Galahad (a noble knight from the legend of King Arthur) and prepares himself for his quest.

After withstanding the peril of the drunken uncle and the aunt who hints he might have to "put off [his] bazaar for this night of Our Lord," the protagonist is finally ready to embark upon his quest. His excitement is palpable as he rushes towards the festival, trying to get there before it closes. As he approaches the darkening hall, his once-clear purpose is now muddy: he "remember [s] with difficulty why [he] had come." The futility and purposelessness of his project begins to dawn upon him as he hears an English shop-girl and two young English gentlemen chatting:

"O, I never said such a thing!"
"O, but you did'"
"O, but I didn't!"
"Didn't she say that?"
"Yes. I heard her."
"O, there's a... fib!"

One of die recurring themes in Joyce's stories is the "epiphany," a Greek word meaning "revelation." In one of the drafts of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Joyce's character Stephen Dedalus is preoccupied by epiphanies: "By epiphany he meant a sudden spiritual manifestation, whether in the vulgarity of speech or of gesture of in a memorable phrase or the mind itself. He believed that it was for the man of letters to record these epiphanies with extreme care, seeing that they themselves are the most delicate and evanescent of moments." Joyce, like his fictional counterpart Stephen, saw the epiphany as a crucial building-block of fiction, because it was the moment at which a character understands that the illusions under which he or she has been operating are false and misleading.

At this point in "Araby," the narrator experiences an epiphany. As the protagonist nears the end of his quest and is about to buy a gift for Mangan's sister, he changes his mind. As he leaves the hall where the bazaar is closing down, the narrator says: "[glazing up into the darkness I saw myself as a creature driven and derided by vanity; and my eyes burned with anguish and anger." Somehow, the overheard conversation between the English shopgirl and her friends has changed his outlook.

Here at the end of the story, the various symbols Joyce employs converge. The light in which the narrator has always seen Mangan's sister now meets the darkness of the hall as the bazaar shuts down. Our narrator begins to see Mangan's sister not as the image of the Virgin, but as a mundane English shopgirl engaging in idle conversation. His quest, he now realizes, was misconceived in the first place, and he now recognizes the mistake of joining his religious fervor with his romantic passion for Mangan's sister. Although he does not say, it seems clear that the protagonist will fully reject both.

The story, like much of his work, is taken almost directly from Joyce's own life. Like the narrator of this story, Joyce lived on North Richmond Street in Dublin and attended the Christian Brothers' School. The aunt and the uncle of "Araby" bear some resemblance to Joyce's own parents. Even Araby is factual: advertisements survive that date the bazaar to May, 1894.

In Joyce's later fiction, characters almost identical to the narrator in "Araby" recur; the most prominent is Stephen Dedalus, the hero of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, and one of the main characters in *Ulysses*. Both wrestle with a similar predicament—they must free themselves from the "nets" of their society, family, and religion in order to be entirely self-determined. Although many of the characters in *Dubliners*prefigure Joyce's later characters, the boy in "Araby" seems closest to being a younger version of Stephen Dedalus/James Joyce. He goes through almost the same struggle as Joyce

shows Stephen fighting in *Portrait*. In the words of the critic Harry Stone, in *The Antioch Review*, "'Araby' is a portrait of the artist as a young boy."

Source: Greg Barnhisel, for *Short Stories for Students*, Gale Research, 1997.

Critical Essay #2

In the following essay, Freimarck suggests that "Araby" has a "Grail Quest" story pattern, and uses this classification to examine the boy's quest for the idealized girl, Mangan's sister. (In medieval English legend The Grail was a cup Jesus drank from at the Last Supper that was later used to collect drops of his blood at the Crucifixion. Many of King Arthur's noblest knights went on a "Quest" in search of The Grail and its magical powers.)

The story of a young boy journeying to Araby in hope of winning the favor of an idealized girl immediately raises echoes of the Grail Quest story-pattern. Indeed, several actions and images in "Araby" common to basic versions of the Quest suggest this theme stimulated Joyce's imagination in ordering his modern material, and of course the reader who recognizes them is tempted to look for clues. Yet even in the case of Joyce such a reader can rest assured that it is not as important to scrutinize what goes into a story as to assess what comes out.

In "Araby" a boy ignores the reality of his bleak, winter surroundings and allows the word 'araby' to suggest the exciting summer world of Romance. But, if it is a land of spices he dreams of, classical writers note that the richest part of Araby was infested with snakes. The very title of the story is the first of several images promising the apocalyptic world of romance, but containing the demonic.

In a world hostile to romance, Mangan's sister is the object of the boy's "confused adoration.1' By the time his lady speaks, his naive crush has lead to the heroic bearing of her image like a chalice through market streets, and worship in a chapel-like room where the boy presses his hands together and murmurs "O love! O love!" Hearing she longs to go to Araby, but cannot, he promises to return with a gift if he should make the trip. Imprisoned on the other side of the railing before the house, turning the silver bracelet "round and round her wrist," the girl is the supplicant woman. The quest and marriage theme is strengthened when "she held one of the [railing] spikes, bowing her head towards me." In some versions of the Quest, the knight may marry or sleep with the maiden who carries the grail or bleeding lance. In any case, no favor is lightly given; the journey preempts his thoughts and the everyday world is denied: "I had hardly any patience with the serious work of life."

The boy's confusion is something he causes himself. The girl's brown dress suggests she may not be the true lady, and the boy's love is itself suspect. The image he conjures up includes the border of her slip; and lying on the floor, prostrating himself before her, peeking under the drawn shade, the boy is a voyeur. He is already doomed to failure because he does not have the chaste mind and body essential to the quest. This is emphasized shortly before he leaves for the bazaar. After going upstairs (a position of relative height) he receives the traditional vision, seeing "nothing but the brown figure cast by my imagination," a figure complete with the petticoat showing. Not only is the vision imagined, rather than beheld, but it is not even pure.

Finally the boy begins his journey, leaving the house to the strains of "The Arab's Farewell to his Steed." The deserted train takes the place of a horse, passing through the waste land of "ruinous houses" and crossing the body of water, a river, on its way to Araby.

Araby, the building with the "magical name," is likened to a church; this, and the attendant at the door link it to the magic castle which the knight approaches in the evening. Inside, the young boy examines vases and flowered tea-sets, grail-like containers. Approaching the two men and the woman he is deterred by their attitude and the trivia of their conversation. In the grail castle the knight's success depends on his asking the right question concerning the grail which is carried past him. The woman questions the boy: "I looked humbly at the great jars [grails] that stood like eastern guards [the cherub at the East wall of Eden?] at either side of the dark entrance to the stall and murmured: 'No, thank you'." The wrong answer has been given and the boy asks no questions. The lights go out. When the knight does not ask the correct question in the castle it disappears and he wakes up at the edge of a cliff by the ocean, or in a manure wagon being driven through a town where people insult him because of his failure to heal the land. Here the boy realizes his journey is over and feels humiliated. His failure brings an increase in knowledge, which, continuing the story's ironic counterpoint to Romance, does not bring hope or felicity.

To press these parallels further is possible, but to do so would be to pass the point of diminishing critical returns. The problem is one of perspective which, in *Dubliners*, involves always keeping in mind the fact that the main impact of the story is on the naturalistic level, the faithfulness to the detail of Irish family life. It may be more to this level that Joyce's notion of paralysis really refers than to any other. The continual wonder is how Joyce can introduce so intricate and faithful a Quest story-pattern and yet subdue it to the naturalistic one we read at face value. The myth element enriches the story, but we are never really on the quest for the grail—we are in Dublin all the time with the psychologically accurate story of the growth of a romantic boy awakening to his sexuality, idealizing Mangan's sister and encountering frustration in the process.

Source: John Freimarck, "'Araby': A Quest for Meaning," in *James Joyce Quarterly*, Vol. 7, no 4, Summer, 1970, pp. 366-8.

Critical Essay #3

Stone is an educator, editor, and Charles Dick-ens scholar. In the following excerpted essay, he discusses some of the autobiographical elements of "Araby," which include Joyce's childhood in Dublin, Ireland, and how the exoticism of the real-life Araby festival, with its Far Eastern overtones, impacted the young Joyce. Stone also discusses the poet James Mangan's influence on Joyce's framing of the narrator's adoration of (the character of) Mangan's sister.

For "Araby" preserves a central episode in Joyce's life, an episode he will endlessly recapitulate. The boy in "Araby," like the youthful Joyce himself, must begin to free himself from the nets and trammels of society. That beginning involves painful farewells and disturbing dislocations. The boy must dream "no more of enchanted days." He must forego the shimmering mirage of childhood, begin to see things as they really are. But to see things as they really are is only a prelude. Far in the distance lies his appointed (but as yet unimagined) task: to encounter the reality of experience and forge the uncreated conscience of his race. The whole of that struggle, of course, is set forth in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. "Araby" is the identical struggle at an earlier stage; "Araby" is a portrait of the artist as a young boy.

The autobiographical nexus of "Araby" is not confined to the struggle raging in the boy's mind, though that conflict—an epitome of Joyce's first painful effort to see—is central and controls all else. Many of the details of the story are also rooted in Joyce's life. The narrator of "Araby" —the narrator is the boy of the story now grown up— lived, like Joyce, on North Richmond Street. North Richmond Street is blind, with a detached two-story house at the blind end, and down the street, as the opening paragraph informs us, the Christian Brothers' school. Like Joyce, the boy attended this school, and again like Joyce he found it dull and stultifying. Furthermore, the boy's surrogate parents, his aunt and uncle, are a version of Joyce's parents: the aunt, with her forbearance' and her unexamined piety, is like his mother; the uncle, with his irregular hours, his irresponsibility, his love of recitation, and his drunkenness, is like his father.

The title and the central action of the story are also autobiographical. From May fourteenth to nineteenth, 1894, while the Joyce family was living on North Richmond Street and Joyce was twelve, Araby came to Dublin. Araby was a bazaar, and the program of the bazaar, advertising the fair as a "Grand Oriental F6te," featured the name "Araby" in huge exotic letters, while the design as well as the detail of the program conveyed an ill-assorted blend of pseudo-Eastern romanticism and blatant commercialism. For one shilling, as the program put it, one could visit "Araby in Dublin" and at the same time aid the Jervis Street Hospital....

Other literary prototypes also contribute to "Araby." In "Araby" as in Joyce's life, Mangan is an important name. In life Mangan was one of Joyce's favorite Romantic poets, a little-known Irish poet who pretended that many of his poems were translations from the Arabic although he was totally ignorant of that language. Joyce championed him in a paper delivered as a Pateresque [Walter Pater was a nineteenth-century English

essayist and critic] twenty-year-old before the Literary and Historical Society of University College, Dublin, and championed him again five years later, in a lecture at the Universita Popolare in Trieste, as "the most significant poet of the modern Celtic world, and one of the most inspired singers that ever used the lyric form in any country." In "Araby" Mangan is the boy's friend, but, what is more important, Mangan's sister is the adored girl. In each lecture Joyce discussed Mangan's poetry in words which could serve as an epigraph for the boy's mute, chivalric love for Mangan's sister and for his subsequent disillusionment and self-disdain. In the latter lecture, Joyce described the female persona that Mangan is constantly adoring:

This figure which he adores recalls the spiritual yearnings and the imaginary loves of the Middle Ages, and Mangan has placed his lady in a world full of melody, of lights and perfumes, a world that grows fatally to frame every face that the eyes of a poet have gazed on with love. There is only one chivalrous idea, only one male devotion, that lights up the faces of Vittona Colonna, Laura, and Beatrice, just as the bitter disillusion and the self-disdain that end the chapter are one and the same

And one of Joyce's favorite poems by Mangan—a poem whose influence recurs in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, *Ulysses*, and —is "Dark Rosaleen," a love paean to a girl who represents Ireland (Dark Rosaleen is a poetic name for Ireland), physical love, and romantic adoration. In "Araby" Joyce took Mangan's idealized girl as an embodiment of the artist's, especially the Irish artist's, relationship to his beloved, and then, combining the image of the girl with other resonating literary associations, wrote his own story of dawning, worshipful love....

These and other ambiguously worded ironies had already been sounded by the three opening sentences of "Araby." Joyce begins by telling us that North Richmond Street is blind. That North Richmond Street is a dead end is a simple statement of fact; but that the street is blind, especially since this feature is given significant emphasis in the opening phrases of the story, suggests that blindness plays a role thematically. It suggests, as we later come to understand, that the boy also is blind, that he has reached a dead end in his life. Finally, we are told that the houses of North Richmond Street "conscious of decent lives within them, gazed at one another with brown imperturbable faces." These words, too, are ironic. For the boy will shortly discover that his own consciousness of a decent life within has been a mirage; the imperturbable surface of North Richmond Street (and of the boy's life) will soon be perturbed.

In these opening paragraphs Joyce touches all the themes he will later develop: self-deluding blindness, self-inflating romanticism, decayed religion, mammonism, the coming into man's inheritance, and the gulf between appearance and reality. But these paragraphs do more: they link what could have been the idiosyncratic story of the boy, his problems and distortions, to the problems and distortions of Catholicism and of Ireland as a whole. In other words, the opening paragraphs (and one or two other sections) prevent us from believing that the fault is solely in the boy and not, to some extent at least, in the world that surrounds him, and still more fundamentally, in the nature of man himself.

The boy, of course, contributes intricately to his own deception. His growing fascination for Mangan' s sister is made to convey his blindness and his warring consciousness. Joyce suggests these confusions by the most artful images, symbolisms, and parallelisms. The picture of Mangan's sister which first sinks unforgettably into the boy's receptive mind is of the girl calling and waiting at her doorstep in the dusk, "her figure defined by the light from the half-opened door," while he plays in the twilight and then stands "by the railings looking at her." "Her dress, "he remembered, "swung as she moved her body and the soft rope of her hair tossed from side to side."

This highly evocative, carefully staged, and carefully lit scene—it will recur throughout the story with slight but significant variations—gathers meaning as its many details take on definition and thematic importance. That importance was central to Joyce, and versions of the scene occur often in his writings. As his Mangan essay (1902) indicates, he had early chosen the adored female as an emblem of man's vanity, an emblem of false vision and self-delusion followed by insight and self-disdain. The female who appears in "Araby" (she appears again and again in his other writings) is such an emblem. The prototypical situation in all these appearances is of a male gazing at a female in a dim, veiled light. There are other features: the male usually looks up at the female; he often finds her standing half obscured near the top of some stairs and by a railing; he frequently notices her hair, her skirts, and her underclothes. But though the scene varies from appearance to appearance, the consequences are always the same. The male superimposes his own idealized vision upon this shadowy figure, only to have disillusioning reality (which has been there unregarded all the time) assert itself and devastate him. Joyce found this scene—with its shifting aureola of religious adoration, sexual beckoning, and blurred vision—infinitely suggestive, and he utilized it for major effect___

Araby—the very word connotes the nature of the boy's confusion. It is a word redolent of the lush East, of distant lands, Levantine riches, romantic entertainments, mysterious magic, "Grand Oriental Fetes." The boy immerses himself in this incense-filled dream world. He tells us that * 'the syllables of the word *Araby*were called to me through the silence in which my soul luxuriated and cast an Eastern enchantment over me." That enchantment, or to put it another way, Near Eastern imagery (usually in conjunction with female opulence or romantic wish fulfillment), always excited Joyce. It reappears strongly in *Ulysses*in a highly intricate counterpoint, which is sometimes serious (Molly's Moorish attributes) and sometimes mocking (Bloom's dream of a Messianic Near Eastern oasis). But the boy in "Araby" always interprets these associations, no matter how disparate or how ambiguous they are, in one way: as correlatives of a baroquely beatific way of living. Yet the real, brick-and-mortar Araby in the boy's life is a bazaar, a market, a place where money and goods are exchanged. The boy is blind to this reality lurking beneath his enchanted dream. To the boy, his lady's silver bracelet is only part of her Eastern finery; his journey to a bazaar to buy her an offering is part of a romantic quest. But from this point on in the story the masquerading pretenses of the boy—and of his church, his land, his rules, and his love—are rapidly underlined and brought into a conjunction which will pierce his perferad dream world and put an end to "enchanted days...."

Joyce has succeeded, here, in taking the raw, rather humdrum, unpromising facts of his own life and transforming them into abiding patterns of beauty and illumination. He has taken a universal experience—a more or less ordinary experience of insight, disillusionment, and growth—and given it an extraordinary application and import. The experience becomes a criticism of a nation, a religion, a civilization, a way of existing; it becomes a grappling hook with which we can scale our own well-guarded citadels of self-delusion. Joyce does all this in six or seven pages. He manages this feat by endowing the simple phrases and actions of "Araby" with multiple meanings that deepen and enlarge what he is saying.

The image of Mangan's sister is a case in point. Joyce takes this shadowy image, this dark scene which fascinated and obsessed him and which he returned to again and again, and shapes it to his purposes. He projects this image so carefully, touches it so delicately and skillfully with directive associations and connotations, that it conveys simultaneously, in one simple seamless whole, all the warring meanings he wishes it to hold—all the warring meanings it held for him. The pose of the harlot is also the pose of the Virgin; the revered Lady of Romance (kin to Vittoria Colonna, Laura, Beatrice, Levana, Dark Rosaleen, and the beloved of any artist) is also Ireland and at the same time a vulgar English shopgirl. One need not belabor the point. These meanings are conveyed not merely by the juxtapositions and evocations of the chief images— of Mangan's dark sister and the English shopgirl, for example—but by the reiterated patterns, allusions, and actions which bind the whole work together: the dead priest's charitableness, Mrs. Mercer's used stamps, the fall of money on the salver; Araby, Eastern enchantment, the knightly quest for a chivalric token; the swaying dress, the veiled senses, the prayerful murmur, "O love! O love!" Scarcely a line, an evocation, on object—the central apple tree, the heretical book of devotions by Abednego Seller, "The Arab's Farewell to His Steed," the blind street—but adds its harmony to the whole and extends and clarifies the story's meaning.

Source: Harry Stone, "'Araby' and the Writings of James Joyce," in TheAntiochReview, Vol. XXV, no. 3,Fall, 1965, pp 375-445.

Adaptations

The Dead, a film based on one of the stories in *Dubliners*, was directed by John Huston {starring his daughter, Anjelica) and produced by Vestron Pictures in 1987.

Topics for Further Study

Joyce once said that in *Dubliner s*he intended "to write a chapter of the moral history of Ireland, because Dublin seemed to him to be at the "centre of paralysis. " What do you think he meant by that? If you were to write a chapter of the moral history of your country, which city would you choose to be at the center? Why?

A recurring theme in many of the stories in *Dubliners*is a longing for escape expressed through fantasies of flight to someplace Eastern and exotic. What place represents the unknown to you? Research this place and discuss whether it is truly exotic and mysterious or just different.

Catholicism figures prominently in much of Joyce's work. Compare the influence of the Catholic Church in Ireland at the turn of the century and today. Would the themes of religious confusion and doubt in "Araby" create controversy in modern-day Ireland?

Compare and Contrast

1906: The Abbey Theatre forms in Dublin as part of a push by notable literary figures such as W. B. Yeats to influence a cultural renaissance in Ireland.

Today: Irish theater and Irish playwrights, including Neil Jordan (*The Crying Game*) achieve critical acclaim and popular success all over the world.

1906: Irish nationalist group, Sinn Fein (Gaelic for "We Ourselves") forms with the goal to achieve Irish independence from England, which rules all of Ireland.

Today: Although the majority of Ireland became a sovereign nation in 1948, Northern Ireland, which consists of six counties, is still under English rule. English troops occupy Northern Ireland, and the IRA (Irish Republican Army) continues its terrorist attacks.

1899: W. B. Yeats publishes *The Wind Among the Reeds*, a poetry collection that incorporates ancient Irish-Gaelic myths and cultural traditions into its subject matter.

Today: Irish poet Seamus Heaney, who mines Ireland's cultural and physical landscapes for his subject matter, wins the 1995 Nobel Prize for Literature.

What Do I Read Next?

Dubliners is the complete collection of 15 short stories by James Joyce, all loosely connected as each one describes people living in Dublin, Ireland, at the turn of the century.

A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man. This first novel by Joyce describes the early life of Stephen Dedalus, a sensitive, intelligent young man struggling to understand life and his role in it

Ireland: A Terrible Beauty(1975). A collection of photographs by Jill Uris, accompanied by text written by her husband, author Leon Uris. This book not only gives an overview of the history of the Emerald Isle, but also shows off the beauty of the island in many exquisite photographs.

Ireland: Art into History(1994). This book, edited by Brian P. Kennedy and Raymond Gillespie, traces the history of Ireland through its art, from prehistoric times to the present. It presents both art and history, without being too academic.

The Common Chord: Stories and Tales(1947), by Frank O'Connor, is a collection of short stories from this famous Irish writer. Written from the point of view of a young boy, O' Connor's stones are funny, truthful, and many times touched with an edge of sadness.

The Commitments(1988) and *Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha* (1993), both by Irishman Roddy Doyle, are novels set in contemporary working-class Ireland. The Commitments describes the efforts of Jimmy Rabbitte to start a band which covers American soul songs of the 1960s by such greats as Otis Redding and Sam Cooke. Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha gives the reader a look at life through the eyes of a ten-year-old boy in modern-day Ireland.

Further Study

Roberts.R P "*The Palimpsest of Cnticism*;or,*Througha Glass Eye Darkly*," in *The Antioch Review*, Vol. XXVI, 1966-67, pp. 469-89.

Roberts's sarcastic attack on what he sees as Harry Stone's excessively reaching reading of "*Araby*." Where Stone holds that "*Araby*" must be seen in light of Joyce's other writing, Roberts insists that it is self-contained.

Brown, Homer Obed. *James Joyce's Early Fiction,*

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Short Stories for Students (SSfS) is to provide readers with a guide to understanding, enjoying, and studying novels by giving them easy access to information about the work. Part of Gale's□For Students□ Literature line, SSfS is specifically designed to meet the curricular needs of high school and undergraduate college students and their teachers, as well as the interests of general readers and researchers considering specific novels. While each volume contains entries on □classic□ novels

frequently studied in classrooms, there are also entries containing hard-to-find information on contemporary novels, including works by multicultural, international, and women novelists.

The information covered in each entry includes an introduction to the novel and the novel's author; a plot summary, to help readers unravel and understand the events in a novel; descriptions of important characters, including explanation of a given character's role in the novel as well as discussion about that character's relationship to other characters in the novel; analysis of important themes in the novel; and an explanation of important literary techniques and movements as they are demonstrated in the novel.

In addition to this material, which helps the readers analyze the novel itself, students are also provided with important information on the literary and historical background informing each work. This includes a historical context essay, a box comparing the time or place the novel was written to modern Western culture, a critical overview essay, and excerpts from critical essays on the novel. A unique feature of SSfS is a specially commissioned critical essay on each novel, targeted toward the student reader.

To further aid the student in studying and enjoying each novel, information on media adaptations is provided, as well as reading suggestions for works of fiction and nonfiction on similar themes and topics. Classroom aids include ideas for research papers and lists of critical sources that provide additional material on the novel.

Selection Criteria

The titles for each volume of SSfS were selected by surveying numerous sources on teaching literature and analyzing course curricula for various school districts. Some of the sources surveyed included: literature anthologies; Reading Lists for College-Bound Students: The Books Most Recommended by America's Top Colleges; textbooks on teaching the novel; a College Board survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; the NCTE's Teaching Literature in High School: The Novel;and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) list of best books for young adults of the past twenty-five years. Input was also solicited from our advisory board, as well as educators from various areas. From these discussions, it was determined that each volume should have a mix of □classic□ novels (those works commonly taught in literature classes) and contemporary novels for which information is often hard to find. Because of the interest in expanding the canon of literature, an emphasis was also placed on including works by international, multicultural, and women authors. Our advisory board members□educational professionals□ helped pare down the list for each volume. If a work was not selected for the present volume, it was often noted as a possibility for a future volume. As always, the editor welcomes suggestions for titles to be included in future volumes.

How Each Entry Is Organized

Each entry, or chapter, in SSfS focuses on one novel. Each entry heading lists the full name of the novel, the author's name, and the date of the novel's publication. The following elements are contained in each entry:

- Introduction: a brief overview of the novel which provides information about its first appearance, its literary standing, any controversies surrounding the work, and major conflicts or themes within the work.
- Author Biography: this section includes basic facts about the author's life, and focuses on events and times in the author's life that inspired the novel in question.
- Plot Summary: a factual description of the major events in the novel. Lengthy summaries are broken down with subheads.
- Characters: an alphabetical listing of major characters in the novel. Each character name is followed by a brief to an extensive description of the character's role in the novel, as well as discussion of the character's actions, relationships, and possible motivation. Characters are listed alphabetically by last name. If a character is unnamed□for instance, the narrator in Invisible Man-the character is listed as □The Narrator□ and alphabetized as □Narrator.□ If a character's first name is the only one given, the name will appear alphabetically by that name. □ Variant names are also included for each character. Thus, the full name □Jean Louise Finch□ would head the listing for the narrator of To Kill a Mockingbird, but listed in a separate cross-reference would be the nickname □Scout Finch.□
- Themes: a thorough overview of how the major topics, themes, and issues are addressed within the novel. Each theme discussed appears in a separate subhead, and is easily accessed through the boldface entries in the Subject/Theme Index.
- Style: this section addresses important style elements of the novel, such as setting, point of view, and narration; important literary devices used, such as imagery, foreshadowing, symbolism; and, if applicable, genres to which the work might have belonged, such as Gothicism or Romanticism. Literary terms are explained within the entry, but can also be found in the Glossary.
- Historical Context: This section outlines the social, political, and cultural climate in which the author lived and the novel was created. This section may include descriptions of related historical events, pertinent aspects of daily life in the culture, and the artistic and literary sensibilities of the time in which the work was written. If the novel is a historical work, information regarding the time in which the novel is set is also included. Each section is broken down with helpful subheads.
- Critical Overview: this section provides background on the critical reputation of the novel, including bannings or any other public controversies surrounding the work. For older works, this section includes a history of how the novel was first received and how perceptions of it may have changed over the years; for more recent novels, direct quotes from early reviews may also be included.
- Criticism: an essay commissioned by SSfS which specifically deals with the novel and is written specifically for the student audience, as well as excerpts from previously published criticism on the work (if available).

- Sources: an alphabetical list of critical material quoted in the entry, with full bibliographical information.
- Further Reading: an alphabetical list of other critical sources which may prove useful for the student. Includes full bibliographical information and a brief annotation.

In addition, each entry contains the following highlighted sections, set apart from the main text as sidebars:

- Media Adaptations: a list of important film and television adaptations of the novel, including source information. The list also includes stage adaptations, audio recordings, musical adaptations, etc.
- Topics for Further Study: a list of potential study questions or research topics dealing with the novel. This section includes questions related to other disciplines the student may be studying, such as American history, world history, science, math, government, business, geography, economics, psychology, etc.
- Compare and Contrast Box: an □at-a-glance□ comparison of the cultural and historical differences between the author's time and culture and late twentieth century/early twenty-first century Western culture. This box includes pertinent parallels between the major scientific, political, and cultural movements of the time or place the novel was written, the time or place the novel was set (if a historical work), and modern Western culture. Works written after 1990 may not have this box.
- What Do I Read Next?: a list of works that might complement the featured novel or serve as a contrast to it. This includes works by the same author and others, works of fiction and nonfiction, and works from various genres, cultures, and eras.

Other Features

SSfS includes □The Informed Dialogue: Interacting with Literature,□ a foreword by Anne Devereaux Jordan, Senior Editor for Teaching and Learning Literature (TALL), and a founder of the Children's Literature Association. This essay provides an enlightening look at how readers interact with literature and how Short Stories for Students can help teachers show students how to enrich their own reading experiences.

A Cumulative Author/Title Index lists the authors and titles covered in each volume of the SSfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the SSfS series by nationality and ethnicity.

A Subject/Theme Index, specific to each volume, provides easy reference for users who may be studying a particular subject or theme rather than a single work. Significant subjects from events to broad themes are included, and the entries pointing to the specific theme discussions in each entry are indicated in boldface.

Each entry has several illustrations, including photos of the author, stills from film adaptations (if available), maps, and/or photos of key historical events.

Citing Short Stories for Students

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume of Short Stories for Students may use the following general forms. These examples are based on MLA style; teachers may request that students adhere to a different style, so the following examples may be adapted as needed. When citing text from SSfS that is not attributed to a particular author (i.e., the Themes, Style, Historical Context sections, etc.), the following format should be used in the bibliography section:

□Night.□ Short Stories for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234-35.

When quoting the specially commissioned essay from SSfS (usually the first piece under the □Criticism□ subhead), the following format should be used:

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on □Winesburg, Ohio.□ Short Stories for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 335-39.

When quoting a journal or newspaper essay that is reprinted in a volume of SSfS, the following form may be used:

Malak, Amin. □Margaret Atwood's □The Handmaid's Tale and the Dystopian Tradition,□ Canadian Literature No. 112 (Spring, 1987), 9-16; excerpted and reprinted in Short Stories for Students, Vol. 4, ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski (Detroit: Gale, 1998), pp. 133-36.

When quoting material reprinted from a book that appears in a volume of SSfS, the following form may be used:

Adams, Timothy Dow. □Richard Wright: □Wearing the Mask,□ in Telling Lies in Modern American Autobiography (University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 69-83; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 1, ed. Diane Telgen (Detroit: Gale, 1997), pp. 59-61.

We Welcome Your Suggestions

The editor of Short Stories for Students welcomes your comments and ideas. Readers who wish to suggest novels to appear in future volumes, or who have other suggestions, are cordially invited to contact the editor. You may contact the editor via email at: ForStudentsEditors@gale.com. Or write to the editor at:

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