Dubliners Study Guide

Dubliners by James Joyce

BOOKRAGS

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Overview

Dubliners is a short-story cycle, but unlike other such cycles, Sherwood Anderson's Winesburg, Ohio (1919), for instance, or Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories, its stories are not linked by recurring characters, but by theme and setting, two elements that are intimately related in this collection. Joyce's initial intention, as he explained in a letter to the publisher Grant Richards, was to hold a mirror up to Dublin, to present as realistic a portrait of the city as possible by depicting Dubliners of various ages and from various walks of life. That portrait is, generally speaking, a disparaging one, but the negative tone is not consistently maintained throughout. By the time the volume concludes, with "The Dead" a story written slightly later than the others and which differs markedly from his earlier writing, a more sympathetic note is sounded, and we may glimpse there the far more generous vision that would characterize Joyce's later comic masterpiece, Ulysses.

About the Author

James Joyce is one of the most celebrated and influential English-language writers of the twentieth century, and his later works of fiction, Ulysses (1922) and Finnegans Wake (1939), are generally regarded among the most challenging (and, for many, rewarding) works of literature produced in any language. All of his fictional writing drew somehow upon the circumstances of his own life, and, despite a self-imposed exile that lasted most of his adult life, his fiction always took place in the city of his birth, Dublin. In fact, Joyce has rendered Dublin so powerfully on his pages that generations of readers have been drawn to the city to experience a place they have already, in a sense, come to know.

Joyce was born in the south Dublin suburb of Rathgar, on February 2, 1882, the eldest of ten children born to John Stanislaus Joyce and Mary Jane (Murray) Joyce. At the time of his birth, the family was very well off, his father having inherited several properties in Cork and a fair sum of money in addition to holding the highly paid position of Collector of Rates for Dublin. Within a few years, however, John Joyce lost his lucrative position; the family's debts grew rapidly, and by the time the last child was born all of the properties were gone.

Before those hardships arrived, six-yearold James was enrolled in the prestigious Jesuit-run Clongowes Wood College in County Kildare, his father being determined that his eldest son would receive the very best education to be had in Ireland. After three years, though, his father was no longer able to pay the fees, and Joyce was placed in the far less prestigious Christian Brothers school on North Richmond street (mentioned in the opening lines of "Araby") for two years until his father managed to arDubliners 133 range a free place for him at another Jesuit school, Belvedere College in Dublin. He excelled in school, earning several national academic prizes. Between 1898 and 1902 he studied languages at University College, Dublin, causing a sensation when he published a review of Henrik Ibsen's When We Dead Awaken that received a complimentary response from the celebrated Norwegian playwright himself. Joyce was only 18 at the time.

After brief sojourns in Paris in 1902 and 1903, Joyce left Dublin for good in October 1904, accompanied by his lifelong companion Nora Barnacle, whom he had met and fallen in love with only months before.

Years later, he would commemorate the day on which they first walked out together at Ringsend, June 16, 1904, by setting his latter-day epic Ulysses on that date. Today, legions of readers remember this day as Bloomsday, after that novel's quietly heroic central character, Leopold Bloom. Continuing the pattern established in the Joyce's youth, the couple moved often within and between a variety of European cities, including Paris, Rome, Zurich, and Trieste.

Their financial situation was often dire, owing in some part to Joyce's astonishing recklessness with whatever money came their way; their second child, Lucia, was born

in the pauper's ward of a Trieste hospital. With the exception of two brief visits, in 1909 and 1912, Joyce never set foot in his native city again.

Joyce published his first book, a slim volume of poems, Chamber Music, in 1907, but his fiction had a long and difficult path to publication. Early drafts of his first novel, A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, were begun as early as 1904, a decade before the greatly revised book saw print. Meanwhile, Joyce began seeking a publisher for Dubliners as early as December 1905. Within a few months he had signed a contract with Grant Richards for its publication, but the book would not appear in print until after a nearly a decade of often desperately frustrating negotiations with Richards and a series of other publishers and printers made nervous by the often controversial subject matter and language in the stories. At one point in 1911, with the book still awaiting publication and the wrangling over it consuming more time and energy than he felt he could spare, an exasperated Joyce threw the manuscript of his still unfinished Portrait on the fire; fortunately, most of it was rescued by the Joyces' maid. At last, in June, 1914, Dubliners was published in both England and America. A few months earlier, in February, the Egoist magazine had begun serial publication of Portrait, which ran until September, 1915. After still further rejections and frustrations, the complete novel appeared in December, 1916.

By this time Joyce was already at work on Ulysses, arguably his greatest achievement and unquestionably the book that made his reputation. Employing a remarkable and unprecedented range of narrative styles and techniques, Ulysses continues the story of Stephen Dedalus, the young wouldbe artist of his first novel, and brings into his company a genial father-figure, an unassuming advertising canvasser named Leopold Bloom, whose wanderings through the streets of Dublin on a single day in 1904 dimly echo the journey of Ulysses (or Odysseus), the hero of the Trojan War whose difficult voyage home is the subject of Homer's Odyssey. Like Portrait, Ulysses was serialized, in this case in the American magazine the Little Review between March, 1918 and September, 1920. Some issues were seized and burnt by the United States Post Office, which deemed them obscene. A trial followed, which resulted in the magazine's editors being convicted and fined, but narrowly escaping imprisonment. No doubt recalling the years of frustration preceding the appearance of Dubliners, Joyce feared the conviction would prevent any printer from taking Ulysses on. However, friends came to his aid, and the completed book was privately printed in a limited edition in 1922, with numerous reprints following over the next decade; an unlimited American edition finally saw print in 1934, with a British edition following two years later.

The publication of Ulysses in 1922 was a literary cause celebre: it delighted many and baffled and even disgusted others, but most players on the literary scene felt compelled to read and talk about the book. Far fewer, though, were inclined to rise to the considerable challenge of Joyce's next and final work, Finnegans Wake, begun in 1923, almost immediately following the completion of Ulysses, and published in book form in 1939, just two years before the author's death. "I imagine I'll have about eleven readers," Joyce wrote to a friend, and while the estimate is certainly low, there are good reasons for his supposition. Few of the familiar landmarks readers have grown accustomed to are evident in this work. One cannot speak very easily about plot or

characters, for instance, and the book is written in such a densely allusive and polyglot style that few attempt it without the assistance of the growing number of keys, guides, and annotations that have followed in its wake. Harriet Shaw Weaver, Joyce's longtime benefactor, no doubt spoke for many later readers when she wrote, in response to an early excerpt, "But, dear sir .. . the poor hapless reader loses a great deal of your intention." Other readers were less polite. "Why can't you write sensible books that people can understand?" was his beloved Nora's characteristically blunt response; however, the book had and has its fervent admirers. Joyce's own commitment to his "book of the night," as he called it, is amply demonstrated by the fact that he persevered in the writing of it for sixteen years, despite an encroaching blindness that required him to write at times in an enormous longhand sometimes fitting only a few words on a page and to undergo a series of painful eye operations; meanwhile, it became increasingly apparent that his beloved daughter, Lucia, was suffering from schizophrenia, a condition that finally resulted in her being institutionalized in 1936.

Joyce died in Zurich on January 13,1941, and was buried there in the Fluntern cemetery, but he is remembered best in the city he fled and recreated so magnificently in his work, Dublin.

"The Sisters"

"The Sisters" Summary

The Dubliners is a collection of short stories that provides snapshots of life in Dublin in the early part of the twentieth century. The stories focus on particular problems of Irish national identity and social issues within Ireland during this period of time. Families form and friendships develop alongside religious turmoil and restrictions, with the ultimate lesson being that the actions of common people are often meaningless and prescribed by social conventions rather than individual thought.

A young boy whose family priest, Father Flynn, has just died offers his perspective on the events leading up to the priest's funeral. After listening to the adults in his life discuss the death of the priest and the funeral arrangements, the boy thinks over his own relationship with the priest. He remembers all that the priest has taught him about religion, history, and more. He also recalls how Father Flynn had become increasingly weak and careless in the months leading up to his death.

The next morning, the boy goes to Father Flynn's house and sees the death notice on the door but does not enter. That evening, his aunt takes him to view the body. The coffin is in the bedroom and the boy, his aunt, and the Father Flynn's two sisters pray over it. Then the adults sit around talking about Father Flynn's illnesses and personal habits.

One sister, Eliza, recounts her brother's unfulfilled dream of driving out to see their childhood home before he died. The two sisters also tell of when the neighborhood began to have suspicions that something was wrong with Father Flynn. He had accidentally broken a chalice in church. He was once found sitting alone in the chapel in the dark laughing to himself.

"The Sisters" Analysis

Because the story is told from the point of view of a child, many of the actual events are unclear. The boy recalls his positive memories of the priest, including the influence the priest had on his education and development. The adults, however, are much more interested in gossip surrounding his personal habits. The stories that they tell paint Father Flynn as rather eccentric and odd. These are the qualities that the boy remembers fondly about the priest. The contrast shown between what pleases the child's imagination and what informs the adults' opinion allows the reader to view Father Flynn's live from alternating perspectives that question which person best understood him.

"An Encounter"

"An Encounter" Summary

The story begins with schoolboys reading westerns and detective novels that are disapproved by their parents and teachers. The boys play role-play games based on the characters in the stories and plan out their own adventures. Three boys, Dillon, Mahoney, and the narrator, make a plot to skip school and visit the Pigeon House. The next day only two boys show up at the appointed place. They go off and spend the day playing around without ever making it to the Pigeon House. On their way home, they stop to rest for a while and meet a strange man. This man has two conversations with the narrator. One of them is about how nice little girls are and how all boys should have sweethearts. The other is about how much he likes whipping little boys who are bad, including those who have sweethearts. The second conversation scares the narrator, who makes an excuse to go home.

"An Encounter" Analysis

In contrast to the adventures in their storybooks, the boys' real life activities are extremely mundane. Their decision to skip school is the highlight of their rebellion. The two boys that actually go through with the plan to skip school do not actually do anything on their day off, making the reader wonder what the point of skipping school was.

The strange man represents the various opinions often expressed to children about what is best for them. Like many teachers and parents, the strange man presents contradictory views on what is best for children. First he advocates relationships between boys and girls in order to establish emotional well-being. Then he talks about the punishments that children should suffer for doing the same thing. His lectures model many of the Catholic Church teachings that reoccur throughout the story collection, in which a trust in humanity is countered by a need to punish sinners.

"Araby"

"Araby" Summary

A young boy develops a crush on a neighborhood girl, Miss Mangan. He thinks about her night and day and watches her secretly out of his window. One day he finally speaks to her. She expresses her wish to go to the Araby, a one-time shopping bazaar happening the following Saturday. She is not able to go. The boy says he will go and bring something back for her.

The boy gets permission from his uncle to go. On Saturday, the boy waits all day for his uncle to come home and give him the money for the Araby. Finally, the uncle comes home late in the evening, having completely forgotten his promise to the boy. It is ten o'clock at night by the time the boy finally reaches the Araby, after having ridden an almost empty train to get there. The Araby is almost closed, with only a few booths still open. The boy wanders around alone, working up the courage to buy something. He almost buys something but loses his nerve. He watches the whole market close down and go dark.

"Araby" Analysis

The little boy lives in a world of his own and finds it difficult to go out among people. His relationships with everyone, from the girl he has a crush on, his relatives, and the shopkeepers at the Araby, are strained as he tries to make his wishes known despite his overwhelming shyness. The boy is often seen alone, watching others, waiting for some opportunity. He secretly watches Miss Mangan from his window. He watches his relatives go through their normal Saturday routines, waiting for his chance to ask about the Araby. He sits on the train alone. He walks around the Araby alone waiting for someone to talk to him. He is unable to make connections to the people around him.

The people around the boy do not seem to recognize how shy he is. They often do not pay attention to him or acknowledge him in any way. His awkwardness keeps him from fulfilling his wishes and no one offers any guidance or assistance.

"Eveline"

"Eveline" Summary

Eveline is planning to run away to Buenos Aires with a man she met named Frank. The night before she leaves, she sits at home thinking about her childhood and her current life as a shop assistant and housekeeper for her widowed father. She tallies up all the complaints she has about her life and calculates how life with Frank will change everything and let her live the life she has always wanted. She recounts the problems that stem from her father's drinking. She also looks forward to abandoning her work at the shop, where her manager is demanding and rude to her.

The next day at the station, she is waiting for the train with Frank. She suddenly changes her mind and leaves Frank without any explanation.

"Eveline" Analysis

Eveline recounts the common problems and struggles of a working class girl. Her life is boring and meaningless to her and she longs to escape. She does not feel loved by her family or respected at her job. Frank appears and promises to take her out of this life and into one that is more exciting. She does not love Frank but thinks that he might be her only chance to get away from her problems. She is eager in planning out her escape and imagining the reactions of those she knows in Dublin.

However, at the last minute, she is unable to go through with the plan. The prospect of change overwhelms her and she runs back to the life she hates. She does not give any explanation or reasoning for why she chooses to return to the life she hates so much. The reader is left to assume that she does not have the strength to shed her connections to Dublin and has given up hope of escaping from them. Her brief flirtation to change has ended quickly and come to nothing. She goes back to her old life as though nothing had happened and as though her life in Dublin in inevitable and inescapable.

"After the Race"

"After the Race" Summary

The story begins at an auto race where the French team has made a good showing. A group of four young men do a victory lap as they prepare to launch an automobile establishment in France. Two Frenchmen, Charles Seqouin and Andre Riviere, are the mechanical ones, with the knowledge and experience to establish the shop. Villanova, a poor Hungarian musician, and Jimmy Doyle, the son of a wealthy Irish merchant and an investor in the automobile shop, accompany them.

Although he has come from humble stock, Jimmy has been living a life of leisure on his father's money. Spending a semester at a time at various universities in Ireland and England, Jimmy has developed a taste for the life of the gentleman of leisure. Despite his lifestyle, Jimmy has been raised with a high respect for hard work and the value of money. This often makes him feel like an outside among his free-spending friends.

As an investor in the automobile shop, Jimmy goes around with the other men to various drinking activities, drinking parties, and so on. The group meets an American named Farley, who takes them all out on his yacht. The group plays cards and continues to get drunk. Jimmy loses a significant amount of money at cards but does not mind because he is very drunk. The party goes on until dawn.

"After the Race" Analysis

Jimmy typifies the innocent Irishman abroad. His own background is working class, although he personally has been able to benefit from his father's profitable business. He is out of his league among the other men, particularly when it comes to living a lavish lifestyle. His own innocence is reflected in Farley, the innocent American abroad. The two of them are eager to be accepted by the Europeans and generally attempt to gain entry into society by providing cash and luxuries to those they are seeking to impress.

The two Frenchmen and the Hungarian represent decadent European personalities. They use their stylishness and sense of fashion to take advantage of the social climbing new rich like Jimmy and Farley. The card game is entirely to their advantage, and they manage to win a significant amount of money from Jimmy and Farley during the game. This money is in addition to the money that Jimmy and Farley have already invested in the automobile shop. They have used the shop as another means to take advantage of Jimmy. They make him feel as if he was given a great opportunity to give them money.

The contrast between the decadent Continentals and the innocent Irish and American is the contrast between old and new money. The old money, represented by the Frenchmen, is accompanied by social status and family reputation. The new money is represented by the fortunate businessmen who have managed to make enough wealth to participate in luxury activities, but who lack the social credentials to truly be included.

The desire by the new money to befriend the old leads the old to take advantage and use it for financial purposes without really letting it into the inner circle.

"Two Gallants"

"Two Gallants" Summary

Two men, Corley and Lenehan, are walking down the street discussing Corley's success with girls. Corley explains how he tricks girls into sexual relationships or into paying his way on their dates. He expresses no sympathy for the girls and prides himself in taking advantage of them.

In particular, they talk about one girl, who Corley has a date with tonight. She pays for everything on their dates. Corley and Lenehan have some plan for the girl that they do not define. It is up to Corley to execute the plan. Corley goes to meet the girl and plans to meet up with Lenehan if he is successful.

Lenehan hangs around town, waiting for Corley to come back. He stops into a restaurant and has a cheap dinner, lamenting that he has no home or family to go to. Finally, he sees Corley and goes up to him to see if the plan was successful. Corley smiles and shows him some money.

"Two Gallants" Analysis

The title is ironic because the two men are planning to get money from the woman one of them is dating. There is nothing gallant about their behavior. Corley's discussions about his ability to take advantage of women are particularly disturbing. Neither of the men sees anything wrong with their behavior.

Lenehan's character has many different sides that conflict with each other. One the one hand, he is described as a leech who is always trying to get something from his friends, particularly free drinks and dinners. This behavior extends to the plan he makes with Corley to split whatever Corley can get his date to give him. Lenehan does not do any of the work. He just accepts a cut from the profit. When he is eating at the restaurant, he thinks about how sad his life is and how much better it would be if he had a family to go home to and a wife to take care of him. This attitude is perplexing given his actual relationships with women and his habit of leaning on other people to provide for him. He does not see a connection between his lifestyle and his lack of a family or home.

There is a great contrast in the effort put forth by the men and that put forth by the woman. While Corley does not even pay for his own fare, the woman dresses nicely and tries to please Corley, eventually giving him money to spend without her. Corley is clear that he has no job and does not expect to get one. Nor does he propose marriage or any other exclusive relationship with the girl. He prides himself on being able to take advantage of her.

"The Boarding House"

"The Boarding House" Summary

Mrs. Mooney, after separating from her abusive husband, opens a boarding house. She lives there with her two children, Jack and Polly. For some time, there have been rumors that Polly has formed a relationship with one of the boarders, Bob Doran. While Mrs. Mooney suspects it, she does nothing until the relationship has gone too far. Mother and daughter have an unspoken understanding about the relationship. Allowing it to progress to this point is in order to trap Bob Doran into marriage with Polly.

Mr. Doran realizes what has happened when he is called down to meet with Mrs. Mooney. He does not want to marry Polly and views their relationship as a mistake. He worries that if he does not agree to marry Polly, Mrs. Mooney will spread the story around town and he will be fired from his job. He does not see what he can do other than marry Polly. When Mrs. Mooney confronts him about ruining her daughter's reputation, he agrees to marry Polly to avoid gossip.

"The Boarding House" Analysis

Mr. Doran is trapped by social convention. He does not want to marry Polly but feels that he has no choice. The irony to the situation is that Mrs. Mooney and Polly are not innocent and have not been taken advantage of. Instead, they have used social convention to take advantage of Mr. Doran. While Mrs. Mooney pretends to be very upset about Mr. Doran's relationship with her daughter, she did nothing to stop it. Polly felt encouraged by her mother's lack of interference and interpreted it to mean that Mrs. Mooney wanted the relationship to go too far to be taken back in order to trap Mr. Doran in marriage.

Mr. Doran is afraid of disgrace in the town if Mrs. Mooney spreads the story of her daughter's supposed disgrace. He is the one in the vulnerable position, while Polly and her mother have the position of strength. Mrs. Mooney's attitude is very telling. She pities those women who cannot figure out how to get their daughters married. She, herself, has found it very easy by preying on an honest person.

"A Little Cloud"

"A Little Cloud" Summary

Little Chandler, a settled, married man in Dublin, is meeting his friend, Ignatius Gallaher, newly returned from London. While Gallaher has had many adventures in cities such as London and Paris, as a journalist, Chandler has married and established a respectable life. In his heart, Chandler cherishes the idea of being a poet and is jealous that his friend's life is so free.

The two men meet at a fancy bar. The conversation is mostly on Gallaher's side as he recounts his various adventures abroad. He shares his insights into the more scandalous features of London and Paris, comparing them to Dublin. Chandler is eager to hear these stories, but tries to impress Gallaher with the advantages of getting married and settling down. Gallaher laughs at these ideas and stresses that he enjoys his freedom.

After the meeting, Chandler goes back to his house and examines the problems of his domestic life. He questions his decision to marry his wife and settle into their life together. He feels bound to the domestic possessions around him and longs for the artistic life that he feels has passed him by.

"A Little Cloud" Analysis

Gallaher's visit is the "Little Cloud" that mars Chandler's life. Chandler had been very pleased with his decisions, including his marriage and domestic arrangements, before he sees Gallaher. Gallaher's stories and disregard for settled life make Chandler rethink his choices. Chandler is impressed by Gallaher's lifestyle, equally for his journalism as for his choice of the particular fancy bar where they meet. Gallaher opens a whole new world to Chandler, who suddenly feels burdened by his wife and family instead of proud of them.

The city of Dublin is presented as a very traditional and provincial capital. The comparisons with London and Paris highlight the decadence and moral ambiguity of those cities as opposed to the steady pace and quiet life in Dublin. This contrast continues in Gallaher and Chandler. Gallaher has several drinks while Chandler can hardly handle one. Gallaher makes wild references to women and entertainment while Chandler discusses his very quiet life with his wife and child.

"Counterparts"

"Counterparts" Summary

Mr. Farrington hates his office job and can think of nothing but getting drunk after work. He bungles his work and insults his boss in front of an important client. Leaving work, he pawns his watch to go out drinking with his friends.

The group goes out to several bars. Everyone is interested in drinking but only a few of them have any money to buy. Farrington pays for the majority of the rounds of alcohol. As he drinks, he recounts the story of how he insulted his boss. He leaves out the part where he is forced to apologize. Farrington's group shifts as some people leave because they have no more money, and new people join. Farrington picks up a man named Weathers, a traveling stage performer. Weathers always orders expensive drinks when someone else is buying. Weathers challenges Farrington to arm wrestle. Farrington loses twice.

Finally Farrington makes his way home. He is disappointed that the evening has ended and he has not gotten drunk enough to forget his problems. When he arrives home, he gets angry with his son for letting the kitchen fire go out. He beats his son while his son prays.

"Counterparts" Analysis

The story shows parallels of people in power and people in submission. At work, Farrington must submit to his boss. When he is out drinking, he feels powerful again. However, on this occasion, Weathers has made him feel powerless and he has not had enough to drink to make him feel good again. At home, his son must submit to his father's temper because Farrington is in power here.

Farrington's life is defined by drinking. All his relationships, including his work and his family life, are affected by it, and many of them exist only because of it. All of Farrington's energy goes into drinking or figuring out how to get the money to drink.

Farrington's son, who offers to pray for his father to avoid a beating, introduces the religious element. Religion is the only thing the son has to exchange for his father's fair treatment.

"Clay"

"Clay" Summary

Maria works as an assistant at a laundry business. She enjoys her work very much. She prepares to take the night off in order to attend a Halloween party. A man who she nursed as a child is giving the party. On the way there, she stops to buy some cakes for the children who will be at the party. She also purchases some plum cake for the adults.

On the ride there, Maria is pleased when a polite older man gives her a seat after the younger men on the tram have ignored her. However, because of her conversation with the man, she forgets the plum cake when she gets off the tram.

At the party, all the children have a good time singing songs and playing games. Maria is disappointed when she discovers the plum cake is missing. She enjoys spending time with the family and tries very hard to make everything go smoothly. The adults at the party drink and reminisce with old songs. Maria performs an old song that they all greatly admire.

"Clay" Analysis

Maria is presented as the "Clay" or foundation for the society she lives in. She is poor and has no family for her own, but she goes out of her way to please those she has adopted for her family. Maria's financial situation is clear in the amount of time she spends calculating how much things cost and her disappointment at the loss of small purchases.

Maria's social position is on the fringe. Her most emotional connection is the man who she once nursed long ago. Her job at the laundry brings up her religious isolation. She is Catholic and the laundry is run by Protestants. She has a very distant relationship with the women who work at the laundry, but is always pleasant and polite.

"A Painful Case"

"A Painful Case" Summary

Mr. Duffy leads a very orderly and solitary life. One night he meets a woman at the theater and strikes up a conversation with her. He meets this woman, Mrs. Sinico, several other times and they establish a pattern. Mrs. Sinico's husband is a sea captain who is often away. He views Mr. Duffy as a possible suitor for his daughter rather than as a companion to his wife.

Mr. Duffy and Mrs. Sinico develop a very personal relationship, sharing their thoughts and feelings with each other. One day, Mrs. Sinico interprets their relationship as a romantic one. She reaches out and takes Mr. Duffy's hand. Mr. Duffy is disgusted by this action and breaks off their friendship.

Mr. Duffy returns to his solitary lifestyle. Four years later, he reads a newspaper article describing Mrs. Sinico's death. She had been hit by a streetcar and killed. In a newspaper interview with Mrs. Sinico's daughter, it is revealed that Mrs. Sinico had developed a drinking problem shortly after Mr. Duffy stopped seeing her.

At first Mr. Duffy is disgusted with the manner in which Mrs. Sinico died. He is glad that he ended their friendship. Over time, however, he begins to reconsider the life that Mrs. Sinico had led and wonder how he might have contributed to her lonely and unhappy life. He begins to feel sorry for her and comes to regret that he ended their friendship instead of trying to help her. In the end, though, he comes to terms with his involvement and resumes his very orderly life.

"A Painful Case" Analysis

Mr. Duffy is primarily described through his room and his habits. His room is shown in detail in order to give an insight into his personality. This is necessary because he rarely speaks or interacts with anyone. At the various stages in the story, the room in described again to show how little his life has changed.

The relationship between Mr. Duffy and Mrs. Sinico happens by chance. It becomes very meaningful to Mrs. Sinico, who assumes that it is possible to develop the relationship into a romantic one. Mr. Duffy also enjoys his conversations with Mrs. Sinico, but he does so on a more abstract plain. Because Mr. Duffy does not have relationships with many people, and lives such an orderly and solitary life, he equates his relationship to a platonic friendship and does not see the same romantic overtones that Mrs. Sinico sees. His rejection of Mrs. Sinico shows how quickly and easily he can cut a connection to another person. He does not think about her again for years. Mrs. Sinico, on the other hand, has clearly been emotionally affected by the relationship and his rejection.

This equally applies to Mr. Duffy's emotional reaction to Mrs. Sinico's death. At first he avoids having any emotional connection to the event by rejecting Mrs. Sinico as a person. His short emotional perspective on her life is more analytical than anything else, as is shown by his examination of evidence from the newspaper articles and his impressions of her. Finally, the matter is resolved in his mind in a way similar to his resolution to end their friendship. Once he makes this decision, the matter is closed and he goes back to his routine.

"Ivy Day in the Committee Room"

"Ivy Day in the Committee Room" Summary

Several men sit out a rainstorm in the political office of a Nationalist candidate, Mr. Tierney. It is election season and they are working on a political campaign. The men all come from various class backgrounds. Jack, the caretaker, is of the working class. Several of the men working on the campaign are of a higher social class, including Mr. O'Conner and Mr. Henchy. Mr. Crofton also works for the candidate, but he is of a higher social status than the others, and only supports the Nationalist candidate because the Conservative candidate withdrew from the election. Mr. Hynes works for the Socialist candidate. Mr. Tierney, the actual candidate, is never there, and his staff is waiting around to be paid for the week.

The day also happens to be Ivy Day, the anniversary of the death of Parnell, one of the historical liberators of Ireland from England. The crowd in the office includes people from other political parties, including a Socialist. They all comment on the difference between modern politicians and Parnell.

One of the issues that they discuss is the proposed visit of King Edward of England, who has just been crowned. Many feel that it is wrong to invite a British monarch to tour their country. They see the royal family of England as the personal oppressors of the Irish people, though they have little personally against the current King. The other side feels that the visit from the King of England would bring much needed commerce and economic value to Ireland. They discuss the policies of the various candidates regarding this issue.

The one point on which they all agree is that Parnell was a wonderful man and a hero for Ireland. One man, Mr. Hynes, happens to be carrying a poem written about the death of Parnell. He reads the poem aloud to the group of men, who all applaud.

"Ivy Day in the Committee Room" Analysis

This story is an interesting commentary on Irish politics. All the characters idealized the fight for liberation from England, particularly its figurehead, Parnell. The current problems of running their own democracy do not see so clear-cut. They lament the change from a united front for Ireland into the splintering of political parties and career politicians. Aside from Hynes' occasional comments about Socialism, there is very little debate on what separates one party from another. Crofton, for example, has switched parties simply because his own favored candidate decided not to run for office this election.

The members of all the parties get along together just fine and the debate over the King of England's visit is not very heated. Generally everyone is just as interested in drinking

as they are in discussing politics. No one seems to expect great changes in this election or to have any strong feelings about any of the candidates, including their own.

The great irony of the story is that all of the political workers have been driven inside because of the rain. None of them thinks it is worth it to seek out voters in the rain, and they all gather together to drink and talk instead of doing any campaigning. The poem that they all love about Parnell catalogs his tireless crusade to liberate Ireland. This is clearly in contrast to the political establishment of the modern Ireland of the story in which all the political workers have given up the fight because of the weather.

"A Mother"

"A Mother" Summary

Mrs. Kearny has a daughter Kathleen who plays the piano. The family is Irish Nationalist and supports the idea that the Irish should relearn the Gaelic language of their ancestors. Mrs. Kearny goes the extra step by hiring an Irish tutor to help her children learn the language. News of Kathleen's patriotism spreads and she is asked to play the piano accompaniments at a musical concert for a local patriotic organization, the Eire Abu Society. Kathleen signs a contract for four concerts.

Mrs. Kearny is instrumental in the planning of the concert. She does all the paperwork and manages most of the initial arrangements. She is happy to do these things because they benefit Kathleen. Her work is not matched by the work performed by the members of the organization itself. The leader, Mr. Holohan, particularly does everything in a haphazard manner.

When the concert series begins, it is badly mismanaged and unsuccessful. Mrs. Kearny is very worried about this outcome, but has no control over the organization, which seems to change its mind about the concert series on very short notice. Instead of four concerts, the organization has decided to do one large concert showcasing the biggest talents.

On the night of this final concert, Mrs. Kearney arrives and tries to find out when her daughter will be paid for her work. The various members of the organization and the stage managers try to talk their way out of paying Kathleen, promising that it will be taken care of later. Mrs. Kearny is upset at this answer and insists that Kathleen will not play unless she is paid now. This angers the organization members, who are forced to pay her half of the promised payment in order to start the show and promise to pay the second half at intermission.

Intermission comes and the management again delays payment. They tell Mrs. Kearny that they will pay Kathleen next week. They also caution her that if Kathleen does not play the second half of the show, then they will consider her contract forfeited. Mrs. Kearny is astonished at the treatment she has received and pulls Kathleen out of the show. The members of the organization all express their opinion that Mrs. Kearny acted unprofessionally and that Kathleen will not be welcome in any musical performance again.

"A Mother" Analysis

Mrs. Kearny's character is presented as honest and straightforward. Her relationships with the world are orderly and directed. When she gets involved with the Eire Abu Society, she loses control. Her organizational talents are taken advantage of and then tossed aside when she asks for what is rightfully hers. The members of the

organization, on the other hand, seem to decide things very arbitrarily without a clear structure or strategy. They change their minds at the last minute and expect others to adapt. They try to get out of their responsibilities to those that help them, as is the case when they avoid discussing Kathleen's payment. In general, they go against the orderly framework in which Mrs. Kearny lives.

Mrs. Kearny's family seems willing to go along with the chaos and is made uncomfortable by Mrs. Kearny's insistence. In this way, they act on a particular kind of class consciousness, trying to go along with the crowd, especially when it comes to matters of money. Those who demand money, even for good reason such as Mrs. Kearny, are seen as being of a lesser social class. The reactions of the members of the organization to Mrs. Kearny's demands show how they dismiss her claim on them. Instead of recognizing their own fault in mismanaging the production and payment, the members blame her for the impoliteness of mentioning financial matters.

"Grace"

"Grace" Summary

Mr. Kernan has an accident at a pub that leaves him unconscious. When he comes to and is taken home, his friend, Mr. Powers, and his wife plot to try to reform his drinking habit. Later than week, while he is still in bed recovering from his accident, a group of friends come over to convince him to attend a religious retreat. In doing so, each member of the group tries to best the others in his knowledge of Church history, though it is clear that none of them is a religious scholar to any degree.

Finally, Kernan agrees to attend the retreat. The men all go together. The preacher is quite famous and delivers a sermon on how to interpret the Bible from a businessman's point of view. He asks them all to be spiritual accountants presenting their account books to God, who judges them on the balance.

"Grace" Analysis

Mr. Kernan's drinking problem is the focus of this story, particularly the ways in which those around him try to help him stop drinking. One of the funnier ironies is that the group requires alcohol during the meeting where they urge Mr. Kernan to seek religious help for his drinking problem.

The sermon that they attend is also very ironic. It brings church teaching down to the level of business, rather than raising business to church teaching. The men are told to see their spiritual life as a business proposition. This connection between religion and business is very interesting considering the redemptive influence that the characters feel will best solve their friend's drinking problem.

"The Dead"

"The Dead" Summary

Misses Julia and Kate Morkan are holding their annual Christmas dance. Their nephew, Gabriel, has returned from the Continent and feels out of place at the party. He feels that his own education and experience is far beyond theirs, and worries about being able to communicate with them because of this. Gabriel teaches at the University and writes literary reviews for a controversial newspaper. Another relative, Freddie, is drunk as usual, despite his family's constant attempts to reform him.

Miss Ivors, a colleague at the University, argues with Gabriel about his involvement with the controversial newspaper. She also states that he should spend his time learning about his own native land, Ireland, instead of going to France or Germany. Gabriel is embarrassed by her comments and tries to avoid her for the evening. Fortunately for him, she leaves before dinner is served.

The dinner has a set formula, following the traditions of previous years. Gabriel serves as a host for his aunts, carving the goose and giving a speech. Everyone enjoys his speech and has a good time at the party. Soon the party comes to an end and everyone prepares to go home.

As they are leaving, Gabriel is struck by how beautiful his wife, Greta, looks. He wants to make some romantic gesture to her and is clearly motivated by lust. When they reach their bedroom, however, she tells him a story about a dead boy who once tried to date her before she met her husband. The story angers Gabriel, especially because it spoils his romantic plans. After his wife goes to sleep, he stays awake, thinking about all the people in his life who will soon die and how his romantic dreams for his life have not come true.

"The Dead" Analysis

Gabriel represents a conflict in Irish identity. He identifies himself with English and Continental fashions and sees most of the customs of his native land to be backward and old fashioned. He prefers to take vacations outside of Ireland and takes the position of academic neutrality in writing literary articles for a newspaper that is against Irish nationalism. Miss Ivors challenges him on these points and makes him embarrassed and uncomfortable because he does not want to admit that he dislikes Ireland and has a low opinion of Irish people. He prefers to escape into intellectual work, considering how to word his speech and what literary references will be best understood by his audience.

Gabriel's personal life is also conflicted. He resents his wife's provincial origins and her love of traditional Irish music. His reaction to the story from her youth shows his anger at the thought that she could be content with an Irish country boy. He feels attacked by

her innocent memory. He is highly aroused when he sees his wife but is unable to act on his sexual desires and which conflicts with his romantic ideals.

After his wife falls asleep, Gabriel begins to think about life and death. His concerns here go beyond his actual actions with his wife and his relatives. His romantic nature takes over in his observations that all life is mortal.

Characters

The Narrator of "The Sisters"

This young boy gives his perspective to the events surrounding Father Flynn's death. His childhood mind remembers the priest differently than the adults in his life do. In particular, he remembers the lessons that the priest taught him that made subjects like history and religion come alive. He listens to the stories of his aunt and the priest's sisters without really understanding them, though he recognizes that his friend, Father Flynn, had been slipping for a long time.

Father Flynn of "The Sisters"

Father Flynn is a neighborhood priest who has slowly been declining in health and mental reasoning. His relationship with the narrator of the story has subtly changed from the time when he told stories to the boy to the time when the boy took care of him and brought things for him. His sisters remember him as an eccentric man, who dreamed of seeing his childhood home. They also recount his strange behavior leading up to his death, including incidents when he was found laughing to himself in the dark in the chapel.

The Narrator of "An Encounter"

This boy enjoys the freedom of skipping school, though none of his activities live up to the adventures that he reads about in storybooks. During his outing with his friend, he meets a strange man who lectures him on various subjects, making him extremely uncomfortable.

The Stranger of "An Encounter"

This man approaches the two schoolboys and gives one of them two lectures about childhood topics. The first is on how nice it is for young boys to develop crushes on little girls. His manner changes when he launches on to a long lecture about how much he loves whipping little boys, especially when they develop crushes on little girls. These lectures represent the often contradictory messages that children hear from adults that combine the love of childhood innocence with the need to punish sinful people.

The Narrator of "Araby"

This boy is isolated and extremely shy. He carefully watches everyone around him, especially a neighborhood girl, Miss Mangan. He finds it very difficult to go directly for what he wants and often loses his courage to accomplish his goals. After waiting

patiently for his uncle to remember to let him go to the Araby, the boy is left alone, wandering around the closing booths. When he steps up to try to purchase something, he loses his nerve and ends up alone in the dark building.

Eveline of "Eveline"

Eveline longs to escape from her drunken father and her boring work as a shop assistant. She sees a chance to do this when she meets Frank, who promises to take her away to Argentina. Although she hates her life, she changes her mind at the last minute and leaves Frank at the station. She is unable to go through with her decision to leave her empty life and goes back to her former roles after a brief flirtation with escape.

Frank of "Eveline"

Frank appears as an innocent in Eveline's life. They go out on dates for a while before having to meet secretly because of Eveline's father's disapproval. Frank proposes to take Eveline with him to Argentina, where he has a house. Eveline agrees to go with him, though she does not love him, in order to escape her life. However, when they get to the train station to begin their journey, she deserts him without any explanation.

Jimmy Doyle of "After the Race"

Jimmy Doyle comes from a successful Irish businessman who wants his son to have the best in life. Jimmy is educated at various universities and is given great freedom to do whatever he wants. He invests some money in a French automobile establishment in order to spend time with the exciting and interesting owners of the shop. These two French gentlemen, along with their Hungarian friend, take Jimmy out on the town, exposing him to a lavish lifestyle, getting him drunk, and taking all of his money at cards. Jimmy represents new money trying to buy into old world society.

Farley of "After the Race"

Farley is an American who meets the French automobile group in Dublin. He is eager to make friends with them and takes them out on his yacht. On the yacht, they all get drunk and Farley ends up losing a lot of money to the young Frenchman. He, like Jimmy Doyle, is an innocent successful businessman trying to enter old European society by providing luxuries to people like the young Frenchmen and the Hungarian, who take advantage of his and Jimmy's generosity.

Corley of "Two Gallants"

Corley is a self-proclaimed ladies man. He brags about his conquests among the local girls, who give him sexual favors and financial support in return for nothing. He and his

friend Lenehan plan to ask one of Corley's girlfriends to give them some money. His plan is successful.

Lenehan of "Two Gallants"

Lenehan is described as a leech, someone who is always there to take part of the profits of something he has not contributed anything to. He plans to split the money that Corley gets from his girlfriend, though he has done none of the work in asking for the money. Lenehan laments his single life despite his callous attitude toward women. He wants someone to take care of him without any effort on his part.

Mrs. Mooney of "The Boarding House"

Mrs. Mooney has managed to put a bad marriage behind her and has opened a boarding house to support herself and her children. Her daughter, Polly, begins a relationship with one of the boarders, Bob Doran. Mrs. Mooney allows the relationship to go too far and then demands that Doran marry her daughter or risk social disgrace. Her plot to trap Doran into marriage takes advantage of social conventions, though her own choice to allow Polly to continue the relationship makes her partially responsible for what happened.

Polly Mooney of "The Boarding House"

Polly Mooney lives with her mother at a boarding house for single men. She initiates a relationship with Bob Doran, one of the boarders. When she sees that her mother does not attempt to break up the relationship, she assumes that her mother wants her to continue and then assist her in trapping Doran in marriage. This plan works, and Doran agrees to marry Polly.

Bob Doran of "The Boarding House"

Bob Doran is a boarder at Mrs. Mooney's boarding house. He gets involved with Polly Mooney, his landlady's daughter. He realizes that his relationship with Polly was a mistake and does not want to marry her. However, he is afraid that Mrs. Mooney will spread the story around town and that his boss will fire him for being immoral. Therefore, he feels that he has to agree to marry Polly.

Little Chandler of "Little Cloud"

Little Chandler is happy with his domestic life until he has a reunion with an old friend, Gallaher. Chandler has dreams of being a poet; dreams he feels are pointless because of his financial obligations to his wife and child. He sees Gallaher, who leads a wild life abroad, as having more freedom than he does, and because of this comes to regret his

choices in life. On returning home, he feels burdened by his wife and the life that they have made together.

Gallaher of "Little Cloud"

Gallaher returns after spending a long time abroad. He meets up with his old friend, Chandler, who has settled into a domestic life in Dublin. His stories of his exploits in London and Paris make his friend feel boring and disappointed with his life. Gallaher shows no interest in settling down to a serious life like Chandler's and insists that he intends to remain free as long as possible.

Farrington of "Counterparts"

Farrington's life is focused on drinking. Everything he does involves at least thoughts about drinking or how to find money to buy alcohol. His work at an office is compromised by his drinking problem, where he must submit to his boss and yet is unable to finish his work because of his constant need to drink. When he leaves the office to go to the bar, he puts a different spin on his work problem, bragging about insulting his boss without mentioning the apology he was forced to give. He stays out all night with his friends and pays for the majority of the alcohol. He is humiliated when one friend beats him at arm wrestling. He goes home that evening without having drunk enough to forget his problems. When he arrives home, he beats his son to reestablish his power.

Maria of "Clay"

Maria has no family of her own. She works for a Protestant laundry even though she is Catholic. Her only emotional ties are the two men who she nursed as children. She goes to attend the Halloween party of one of these men and puts a lot of effort into pleasing his family. She is a very poor woman who counts every cent that she has and estimates the cost of everything that she buys, staying within a strict budget. At the same time, she is eager to spare no expense to please her adopted family.

James Duffy of "A Painful Case"

Duffy lives a very orderly and solitary life largely because he dislikes everyone and everything. He avoids forming relationships with people. By chance he begins a relationship with Mrs. Sinico. He enjoys their time together but is offended when she tries to make the relationship romantic. He breaks off their relationship and never thinks of her again until four years later when he learns of her death. His reaction to her death is the same as it was to her romantic attempts. He completely seals off the emotional side of the matter and resumes his orderly life like nothing had happened.

Mrs. Sinico of "A Painful Case"

Mrs. Sinico is the lonely wife of a sea captain who is often away from home. She delights in her unexpected friendship with Mr. Duffy. When she takes the relationship one step too far, he rejects her and refuses to ever see her again. She takes his rejection very deeply and eventually turns to drink to numb her loneliness. She dies in a streetcar accident, possibly as a result of her drinking.

Mr. O'Connor of "Ivy Day in the Committee Room"

Mr. O'Connor works on Mr. Tierney's political campaign but spends a lot of his time sitting in the Committee Room because of the bad weather, talking about politics. His disregard for his candidate is shown in his use of the political cards as matches to light his cigarette. He is not sure what his candidate stands for, other than that he is running on the Nationalist ticket. Most of his commentary on Tierney relates to speculation about whether Tierney is going to pay him or not.

Mr. Hynes of "Ivy Day in the Committee Room"

Mr. Hynes works for the local Socialist candidate, but spends a lot of his time in the committee room of the Nationalist candidate, Mr. Tierney. He does make some political statements about the workers of the country, but for the most part does not promote his candidate. He shows strong support for Parnell, one of the historical liberators of Ireland and reads a poem to commemorate the anniversary of Parnell's death.

Mrs. Kearny of "A Mother"

Mrs. Kearny is a very determined woman who tries hard to promote her daughter, Kathleen, in Dublin society. One of her methods is to educate Kathleen in the Irish language so that Kathleen will be seen as patriotic. This patriotism is recognized when Kathleen is chosen to play piano accompaniment for a series of concerts. Mrs. Kearny throws herself wholeheartedly into the planning of the concerts but is disappointed by the mismanagement of the funding organization. When she demands that her daughter be paid for her work, the organization ignores and ridicules her. She takes her daughter out of the concert, feeling humiliated and disgusted by their dishonesty.

Mr. Kernan of "Grace"

Mr. Kernan has a drinking problem that causes him to have a serious accident at a bar. As he is sitting home recovering, his wife and friends decide to try to reform his drinking by convincing him to attend a religious retreat. After a long group session that includes plenty of drinking, his friends convince him to attend the religious meeting. At the meeting, he is impressed by how many people show up.

Father Purdon of "Grace"

Father Purdon conducts a religious retreat for businessmen in Dublin. The theme of his sermon is that the relationship between God and the individual person is a business arrangement similar to that of an accountant. He stresses that the men should consider their lives to be an accounting book for God and make sure that the balance at the end is in their favor.

Gabriel of "The Dead"

Gabriel is ashamed of his Irish heritage and follows the fashions of England and the Continent. He wants to claim academic neutrality by writing literary reviews for a newspaper that goes against Irish nationalism. He thinks that he is better educated than his Irish peers and looks down on them. His sexual feelings for his wife are mixed up in romantic ideals, and he feels disappointed that neither the sexual feelings nor his romantic ideals are fulfilled by their relationship.

Miss Ivors of "The Dead"

Miss Ivors challenges Gabriel's prejudices against Ireland and insists that he should study his own country instead of traveling to others. She only attends the party for a short time, but she makes Gabriel extremely uncomfortable and embarrasses him by bringing up the literary reviews he writes for the anti-Irish nationalism newspaper.

Gretta of "The Dead"

Gabriel's wife, Gretta, is set in contrast to him. She comes from the countryside and feels closely connected to her Irish identity. She laughs at Gabriel's pretensions to English and European customs and manners and enjoys simple Irish songs and entertainments while her husband quotes Browning. She tells a story about a dead suitor that she remembers from her youth. This story upsets her husband, which she does not understand. She goes to bed without being able to make him understand what she meant by her story.

Objects/Places

Gaelic

Gaelic is the traditional language of Ireland. While under British rule, the language was persecuted and the Irish were forced to only speak English. As Ireland worked toward gaining independence, interest in Gaelic flourished, causing many people to learn or relearn the language as a sign of national pride. Even when speaking English, many of the Irish characters use Gaelic phrases now and then to emphasize what they are saying.

The Pledge

In an effort to combat alcoholism, many people took a Pledge to abstain from drinking. This public promise, usually with religious overtones, was supposed to help people to control their drinking habits. Characters like Freddie in "The Dead" take the Pledge often under the pressure of their relatives, but the commitment does not last long.

The League

Leagues were formed as another effort to combat alcoholism. The groups wanted to promote abstinence from alcohol as a means of social improvement. Leagues are mentioned in several stories as a possible solution to a character's drinking problem.

Parnell

Parnell was a leading nineteenth century Irish politician who advocated Home Rule, meaning that Ireland would rule itself while still remaining part of the United Kingdom. He was seen by many as one of the few legitimate representatives of Irish nationalism. His death is commemorated in "Ivy Day in the Committee Room" where the characters show the difference between Parnell's style of politics with the style of the modern day in the story.

Separation

Because Ireland is a predominantly Catholic country, divorce is rare. Instead, Catholics can appeal to their priest to issue them a legal separation from their spouse. In "The Boarding House," Mrs. Mooney gets a separation from her abusive husband, a separation that included custody of their children.

The Pigeon House

The Pigeon House is a place where the local schoolboys plot to visit. They never actually get there in "An Encounter."

North Richmond Street

North Richmond Street is described as a street that has a dead end. Children play there after school. The narrator of "The Araby" lives here and watches life in the neighborhood from his window.

The Araby

The Araby is a traveling shopping bazaar set up on the edge of towns. It is a combination of carnival and market, with booths selling various items. The narrator of "The Araby" goes to one in search of a gift for the girl he has a crush on.

Stephen's Green

A square in Dublin where many of the characters walk, particularly Lenehan in "Two Gallants."

The Dublin by Lamplight Laundry

The laundry where Maria works in "Clay."

The Tram

Many of the characters use the public transportation system of Dublin, which includes the network of streetcars, or trams. Maria calculates the cost of taking the tram to visit her adopted family in "Clay." Corley brags that his girl friend pays his tram fare in "Two Gallants." A streetcar in the story "A Painful Case" hits and kills Mrs. Sinico.

Mr. Duffy's Room

Mr. Duffy's room is described in detail to give insights into his personality in "A Painful Case." It is located as far outside of Dublin while still being connected to the streetcar line.

The Committee Room

The various campaign workers meet up here to get out of the rain and discuss politics while drinking together. The actual candidate for office, Mr. Tierney, never shows up during "Ivy Day in the Committee Room."

The Academy

Several female characters attend this finishing school, usually connected with music education. Mrs. Kearny's daughter attends the Academy in "A Mother." Mary Jane attends the Academy and gives music lessons afterwards in "The Dead."

The Irish Revival

During the Independence Movement in Ireland, interest in Irish history and language defined those people who supported Irish nationalism. Mrs. Kearny encourages her daughter to learn Irish in "A Mother."

Ancient Concert Rooms

These rooms are often reserved or rented by musical groups that give concerts for the public. The Eire Abu Society uses them for their ill-fated concert series in "A Mother." Mary Jane presents student recitals there in "The Dead."

The Jesuit Church in Gardiner Street

Mr. Kernan attends a religious retreat for businessmen here in "Grace."

A West Briton

Miss Ivors refers to Gabriel as a West Briton, meaning that he wants to remain part of the United Kingdom and sides with the British against nationalist ideas in Ireland.

Setting

The title of the volume immediately draws our attention to the importance of the setting —both place and time unites these diverse stories. Joyce creates a panorama of Dublin by presenting a series of portraits of Dubliners in the grip of a moral paralysis he believed to be the city's overwhelming attribute. As he indicates in a 1906 letter to the publisher Grant Richards, "My intention was to write a chapter of the moral history of my country and I chose Dublin for the scene because that city seemed to me the centre of paralysis. . . . I have written it for the most part in a style of scrupulous meanness and with the conviction that he is a very bold man who dares to alter in the presentment, still more to deform whatever he has seen and heard." Dubliners, then, emerged from the author's dissatisfaction with the city of his birth, and his hope for the book was that it might show the indifferent public a necessarily unflattering portrait of itself.

Joyce's early years in Dublin, the years during which he wrote much of Dubliners, coincided with a pregnant pause in the political movement toward the Home Rule of which Irish nationalists dreamed. The downfall in 1889-90 of the Irish Party leader Charles Stewart Parnell in the wake of a public scandal (he was named as corespondent in a successful divorce suit and subsequently married the divorced woman, Parnell's long-time mistress, Katherine O Shea) appeared to have foiled once again the cause of Home Rule. A series of bills had been introduced beginning in the mid 1880s, culminating in the one that was passed finally, but not implemented, in 1914. At the time of the scandal, there appeared at least some possibility that a bill would be passed.

For many nationalists, the political vacuum would be filled in part by a rediscovery and celebration of Irish culture; the Irish Literary Renaissance associated with such figures as W. B. Yeats, Lady Augusta Gregory and J. M. Synge gathered momentum at this point. There remained, however, much bitterness and frustration in the wake of the apparent failure of the nationalist cause.

That cause would be powerfully and violently re-ignited by the Dublin rising of Easter, 1916, but prior to that date, a sense of futility regarding nationalist aspirations is often in evidence in Irish writing. W. B. Yeats's "September 1913" (addressed, like Joyce's stories, to the public of Dublin, it was printed in The Irish Times) contemptuously compares Dublin's middle-classes with the great nationalist heroes of a Romantic Ireland that is dead and gone. Another poem, "To a Shade," addresses one of those heroes, the ghost of Parnell, bidding him not to walk the streets of the city that is unworthy of his presence. Joyce's disparaging portrait of Dublin as a city gripped by paralysis may also be viewed in light of the volume's broader historical moment. The paralyzed capital, and the nation that Stephen Dedalus, the central character in Joyce's Portrait, perceived as a series of entrapping nets would be, in Yeats's famous words, changed utterly by the political events of the coming years.

Social Sensitivity

In a 1905 letter to Grant Richards, Joyce related his surprise that "no artist has given Dublin to the world," despite its antiquity, its size, and its status as the second city of the British Empire. Dubliners, an attempt to fill this void, certainly casts a critical eye over its subject, but that Joyce wanted so badly to "give Dublin to the world" indicates that his aim goes well beyond merely excoriating the city of his youth. That Joyce's attitude toward the city is a complex one is hardly surprising. He did, after all, feel compelled to leave the city for good, only to devote a life-long self-imposed exile to writing about the place in the most painstaking detail. Dubliners, then, is a powerfully ambivalent volume, characterized at least as much by Joyce's frustration with the shortcomings of the city and its inhabitants as his sympathy for and powerful attachment to them both. The volume is not uniformly generous toward all of the Dubliners contained therein: he certainly does ridicule the pretensions of Mrs. Kearney in "A Mother," for instance, and the vain politicians of "Ivy Day in the Committee Room," among others; however, the sympathetic notes struck in stories such as "Araby," "Clay," and "The Dead" overwhelm the satirical ones heard elsewhere in the volume and are more indicative of the direction Joyce's work will take in the future, particularly in his great human comedy, Ulysses. Dubliners suggests how profoundly individuals can be shaped and influenced, both for good and ill, by the places they inhabit. The stories themselves are full of characters who are in various ways stifled within Dublin's social, political and religious institutions. However, those same institutions left an equally deep mark on the author, a Dubliner who left, but carried the city always in his imagination.

Literary Qualities

Discussions of Joyce's earlier fiction, Dubliners and A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, frequently center on those moments in which characters achieve an "epiphany" or sudden revelation. The term, which Joyce used to describe some of his earliest prose fragments, means, literally, a showing forth. In the Christian calendar, the feast of the Epiphany commemorates the arrival of the Magi in Bethlehem to worship the new-born Christ. For Joyce, the word has a broader meaning, standing for a moment of insight, when a truth is suddenly revealed. Most of the stories in Dubliners do feature discernible epiphanies: the young boy in "Araby" clearly has a poignant moment of insight about his world as the bazaar lights dim, for instance, and Gabriel Conroy undergoes a terrible self-examination in the final moments of "The Dead." In other cases, such as that of Maria in "Clay," the insight eludes the character and falls instead to the reader. Either way, another instance of Dublin's paralysis stands revealed.

Joyce told Grant Richards that he had written Dubliners, in a famous phrase, in a style of "scrupulous meanness," his intent being to hold up to Dublin a relentlessly true image of itself. While the stories are remarkably pared down in style, their "scrupulous meanness" should not blind us to one of their most distinctive features: the manner in which they bring a distinctly Irish English to the page. One cannot read a line such as this one of Lily's in "The Dead," "The men that is now is only all palaver and what they can get out of you," without hearing its Irish lilt. Joyce's influence on Irish writing in English during the twentieth century has been considerable, and it is not without reason that there have been so many recordings of these stories.

Themes

The Effects of Alcohol on Irish Society

The negative effects of alcohol occur again and again through the collection of stories. For the most part, men are brought down by their addiction to alcohol or their inability to control themselves when they are drunk. The effect on family members, particularly wives who suffer physical abuse at the hands of their drunken husbands, is a common element to many stories.

The clearest example of this theme is in "Counterparts," where the main character, Farrington, can think of nothing other than how to get drunk. He jeopardizes his career and spends all his money on alcohol, briefly feeling like an important man while telling stories to his friends in the bar. However, the effects of heavy drinking catch up with him later in the evening, when he is out of money but is not drunk enough to forget his problems. He goes home and takes his disappointment by beating his son.

The drunken relative, particularly the drunker father, appears in other stories as well. The title character of Eveline wishes to escape from a father who drinks away all the money she earns in the shop. Freddie, the drunken relative of "The Dead," is a constant source of embarrassment and anxiety for his aunts. Mrs. Mooney leaves her drunken husband after he steals from their business and abuses her in "The Boarding House." In "Grace," Mr. Kernan's drinking has caused him to have a serious accident, leaving his wife to seek help from his friends. Women are not immune to the problem. In "A Painful Case," Mrs. Sinico develops a drinking problem after Mr. Duffy rejects her.

Irish Nationalism

Irish Nationalism occurs in many of the stories as the characters sort out how they want to be perceived by their peers. Some characters take strongly to the Irish nationalist movement, and adopt Gaelic expressions. Others reject their Irish identity and favor English or Continental customs.

Mrs. Kearny in "A Mother" makes a firm stand for Irish Nationalism when she hires a Gaelic teacher for her daughters. She does so in the belief that others will admire her daughter's patriotism and will want to include her in fashionable Dublin society. Similarly, Miss Ivors in "The Dead" also makes a passionate case for respecting Irish heritage when she tells Gabriel that he should travel through Ireland instead of France or Germany, and that he should study Gaelic instead of a Continental language. She calls Gabriel a "West Briton," a derogatory term for a person who does not support Irish independence from the United Kingdom.

On the other side, Gabriel in "The Dead" makes the strongest refusal to follow Irish Nationalist movements and, in fact, holds his Irish heritage in very low regard. Instead, he prefers the customs of England and the Continent and seeks to downplay his

connections to Ireland. He is ashamed of his wife's connections to the Irish countryside and tries to avoid discussing issues of Irish identity. To a lesser extent, Gallaher from "Little Cloud" feels very little affection for his home country, which he sees as old fashioned and boring when compared to London or Paris. He does not intend to stay in Ireland very long, though he does not express any particular political opinions.

The most ironic use of this theme is in "Ivy Day in the Committee Room." This story centers directly on politicians and the various national issues affecting Ireland. The Nationalist candidate, Mr. Tierney, never appears in the story, and very little is said about the actual policies promoted by any of the candidates. They cannot even agree if the visit by the British monarch should be supported or not. In general, there is very little faith in these politicians or in their interest in working for the Irish Nationalist movement, despite their political party affiliation. They all pay token respect to Parnell, as a symbol of Irish Nationalist politics.

The Role of the Church in Irish Life

The Catholic Church is always present throughout the collection, sometimes playing a center part and at other times filling in the details about the characters. It is often the way that characters resolve conflicts that might otherwise have legal or governmental solutions.

The story that depicts the characters' relationship with the church the most directly is "Grace." The conversation that the group of men has in convincing Mr. Kernan to attend a religious retreat is based on religious ideas stemming from the Catholic Church. The men have a very sketchy understanding of church history and doctrine, but use the little that they do know to draw broad generalizations about the healing that the church can provide. The retreat that the men attend shows clearly how the church has shifted to meet the needs of Irish businessman, using accounting metaphors instead of defining real policies or actions.

The church presence is felt in many of the stories by the inclusion of a priest, though these priests rarely exert any real influence, such as Father Flynn in "The Sisters" and Father Burke in "Ivy Day in the Committee Room."

The lives of many characters are affected by religion in many ways. In "Counterparts," Farrington's son begs his father not to beat him by promising to pray for him. In "An Encounter," confused church teachings about innocence and punishment are expressed by the strange man's lectures to the two schoolboys. In "The Boarding House," the church appears at different points. In one instance it grants Mrs. Mooney a separation from her abusive husband. In another the social conventions of the church allow Polly and her mother to trap Mr. Doran into a hasty marriage.

Themes/Characters

While there are no recurring characters in Dubliners, Joyce does appear to have envisioned the collection as a single work that would expose the city's crippling moral paralysis. His examination of Dublin's condition was carried out according to a plan he laid out for the publisher Grant Richards.

Each stage of life, from childhood to maturity and public life was to be represented by one of four groups of stories in the collection. The first group, which Joyce described as "stories of my childhood," would comprise "The Sisters," "An Encounter," and "Araby"; the second group, stories of adolescence, would contain "The Boarding House," "After the Race," and "Eveline"; the third group, stories of mature life, would be "Clay," "Counterparts," and "A Painful Case"; the final group, stories of public life in Dublin, would contain "Ivy Day in the Committee Room," "A Mother," and "Grace."

Three stories were not yet included in this plan, but their placement in the volume and their subject matter would lead us to place "Two Gallants" among the stories of adolescence and "A Little Cloud" among the stories of mature life. "The Dead," while having a strong thematic link with the preceding stories, is still so different from them in terms of its structure and its tone that it is probably best not forced into a scheme devised before its completion.

The first three stories in the volume, the stories of childhood, depict a series of initiations, as a result of which innocent youths come to a recognition of the grayness and decadence of their world. The first story, "The Sisters," is particularly grim in tone, focusing as it does on the death of Father Flynn, an elderly Catholic priest to whom the story's young narrator had been devoted. Despite the priest's advanced age and virtual incapacity, the boy was clearly very fond of him; the priest instructed the boy as to the rituals and mysteries of the Catholic Church, showing him the various vestments to be worn for different ceremonies, drilling him on questions of canon law and impressing upon him the significance of the rites surrounding the Eucharist and the confessional. Enchanted with the power and responsibility he believes Father Flynn possesses, the narrator is only barely aware of the frail man behind the vestments. With the priest's death, though, comes further knowledge, which dawns upon the boy as he listens to the exchange between his aunt and the priest's sisters. What we hear is a gradual but only partial unveiling of some dark secret of the priest's, as platitudes give way to more suggestive remarks. He was a disappointed man who had once broken one of the chalices he had taught the boy to regard as sacred, an incident that seems to have affected his mind. Before the story fades out inconclusively (the final ellipses underscoring its lack of closure), the boy has heard of an incident in which Father Flynn disappeared and was discovered sitting up by himself in the dark in his confession-box, wide awake and laughing softly to himself. What exactly this means, no one in the story ventures to say, beyond Eliza Flynn's vague conclusion that there was something gone wrong with him; however, we know the impact upon the boy is a profound one. This is a Father Flynn he has never seen before: not the awesome practitioner of sacred rites, but a tormented, perhaps even insane man whose priestly dignity has been shattered,

whose laughter in the darkened confession-box hints at some other, grimmer secret the boy had never even known existed.

"An Encounter" and "Araby" similarly portray young boys who fall from innocence: the eponymous encounter between the child narrator and a pedophile brings an abrupt end to what had been a youthful adventure, a day's escape from school. The young narrator of "Araby" experiences his first love in the most high-flown romantic terms, imagining himself a questing knight in the service of his lady until he reaches the end of his quest, the splendid bazaar from which he will retrieve a gift for her, only to have its tawdriness pierce his romantic illusions.

The characters we see in the stories of adolescence are more in the grip of the general paralysis, but not completely so.

What these stories tend to portray are the ways in which that paralysis advances, as the Dubliners they describe resign themselves to their disappointing adult lives. An emotional paralysis becomes literal in "Eveline," as that story's central figure finds herself unable, even at the very moment of her escape, to board the ship that would have taken her away to Buenos Aires with her fiance, choosing instead to return to a miserable life as daughter-cum-servant to an abusive father she fears. The well-traveled and experienced fiance, Frank, an Irish sailor, represents for Eveline the romantic possibilities that dreams of Araby held for the young boy in the earlier story, but this trapped Dubliner finds herself unable to move toward the promised freedom. "The Boarding House" is another tale of entrapment, in this case the entrapment of Bob Doran into an almost certainly unhappy marriage by his landlady, Mrs. Mooney and her quietly colluding daughter, Polly.

Striking similar notes, both "After the Race" and "Two Gallants" feature characters (Jimmy and Lenehan) whose thoughts are disquieted by the recognition that their lives are not and will never be as they would have wanted.

The stories of mature life all focus on characters trying to contend with the failures of their lives. Perhaps the most moving of these is "Clay," in which the central character, Maria, copes by simply failing to see her life as it is, a pitiable strategy mimicked in the story's style, which resembles that of a children's story ("Maria was a very, very small person indeed but she had a very long nose and a very long chin.").

The bright tone stands sharply at odds with the gloomy content of the story itself: Maria is an aging, lonely woman, separated from her feuding brothers and working, as a result, in a seedy Dublin laundry. As jolly as the narrator tries to make her life appear, it is not the life Maria wants. Her eyes sparkle with disappointed shyness when Lizzie Fleming jokes that she will choose the ring (signifying marriage) in the divination game to be played that night, All Hallows Eve. And when she sings her song, "I dreamt that I dwelt," she significantly omits this second verse, which begins, "I dreamt that suitors besought my hand."

What the story's strangely bright tone and children's-story style suggest is the aging Maria's own attempt to imagine herself in an idyllic girlhood awaiting a romantic release into a happy adulthood: the sad realities of her life are veiled by a barely-sustained fantasy (so that her eyes sparkle, but with a disappointed shyness rather than joy). She knows, but does not quite admit to herself, that she will not choose the ring; her true fate is signaled by the token she actually chooses and of which no one in the story will speak: clay, the token of death.

Fragile though they may be, Maria's sustaining beliefs are left intact at the end of that story. In "A Painful Case" we witness the devastating effect upon Mrs. Sinico when her love for the selfish and emotionally stunted Mr. Duffy is spurned. Her suicide four years after, which Mr. Duffy recognizes as the outcome of the break-up, shatters his illusions about himself as a great or even a good man. The egotist who had once believed that in Mrs. Sinico's eyes he would ascend to an angelical stature comes to recognize himself, too late, as an outcast from life's feast. The remaining stories in this group, "A Little Cloud" and "Counterparts," portray trapped and frustrated men who finally take out their frustrations on their own sons, brutally so in the case of Farrington in the latter story, implying in both cases a continuance of the debilitating legacy among the next generation.

The final group of stories, dealing with public life, expands the focus to a community in the grip of the general paresis, with the stories exploring, in turn, political life ("Ivy Day in the Committee Room"), cultural life ("A Mother") and religious life ("Grace"). The corrupt politicians who gather on October 6, the anniversary of Parnell's death ("Ivy Day"), are the nationalist leader's sorry successors. Hynes's hackneyed poem, "The Death of Parnell," alludes to a fell gang of modern hypocrites who laid their leader low, but Joyce makes it plain that one would not have to look beyond this committee room to find a gang of hypocrites in the story's present. "A Mother" paints an unpleasant picture of Dublin's cultural life, contrasting the middleclass pretensions of Mrs. Kearney with the second-rate concert series in which she has involved her daughter. The Irish Revival too appears a sham here, less a cultural renaissance than a shallow fad, with the daughters of the wealthier families hiring Irish teachers so their daughters can send Irish picture postcards back and forth to each other. Grace depicts a city whose spiritual life is hopelessly corrupted by parochial and material concerns, culminating in Father Burdon's description of himself during the retreat as a "spiritual accountant."

Mr. Kernan's path toward redemption has tellingly little of the spiritual about it.

The final story in the volume, "The Dead," is once again an exploration of Dublin's woeful moral state, but Joyce is far more generous and sympathetic in his portrait of the Dubliner at the center of this long short story. Like Mr. Duffy in "A Painful Case," Gabriel Conroy is shocked into a recognition of himself as an unhappy exile from life. However, Gabriel is a far more complex character than Duffy, and his pretensions are balanced by his good heart and sincere (if inadequate) love for his Gretta.

Throughout the night of the party we see evidence not only of Gabriel's sense of intellectual superiority, but also of his awkwardness and self-doubt, despite all of which he does his best to contribute to the success of the Misses Morkans annual gathering.

Where Duffy's self-recognition may appear merely pathetic, Gabriel's is likely to strike us as tragic.

Style

Points of View

The stories are told in two points of view. When the story centers on a child, the narrative is first person, told from the child's point of view. This limits the reader to the narrow world of the child, who knows very little about why others do what they do. It also shows the innocence of the child by concentrating on the things that are important to the child and how small these things look to an adult perspective.

The stories about adults are told in the third person omniscient point of view. The reader is able to view all the characters and record all of their actions. However, most of the stories limit the reader to learning the thoughts of only one of the characters, usually used to judge the actions of the other characters.

Setting

The stories take part in Dublin or the suburbs of Dublin during the beginning of the twentieth century. Many of the stories take place in the Northern half of the city and center on the working class residents. Other stories take place in the Southern half of the city and involve educated people.

One of the most common settings is the bar, or pub. Many characters spend a significant amount of time there. The other most common setting is in the home of one of the characters. Usually gatherings among characters take place in the home, with the exception of the committee room in "Ivy Day in the Committee Room."

Language and Meaning

The language used in most of the stories is fairly simple and easy to understand. Some Gaelic expressions are used from time to time but none of them cloud the meaning of what people are saying. Many of the stories use terminology from Irish politics or religious customs, but most of these terms can be figured out from their context.

Structure

The fifteen stories in the collection are laid out in chronological order. All the stories are independent from each other, although many follow the same themes. Often songs and poetry are included in the stories, but these are always set apart with indents.

Quotes

"I found it strange that neither I nor the day seemed in the mourning mood and I felt even annoyed at discovering in myself a sensation of freedom as if I had been freed from something by his death." ("The Sisters," p. 11)

"But I disliked the words in his mouth, and I wondered why he shivered once or twice as if he feared something or felt a sudden chill." ("An Encounter," p. 25)

"Gazing up into the darkness I saw myself as a creature driven and derided by vanity; and my eyes burned with anguish and anger." ("Araby," p. 36)

"She had consented to go away, to leave her home. Was that wise? She tried to weigh each side of the question." ("Eveline," p. 38)

"A certain pride mingled with his parents' trepidation, a certain eagerness, also, to play fast and loose, for the names of great foreign cities have at least this virtue." ("After the Race," p. 49)

"Most people considered Lenehan a leech, but in spite of this reputation, his adroitness and eloquence had always prevented his friends from forming any general policy against him. He had a brave manner of coming up to a party of them in a bar and of holding himself nimbly at the borders of the company until he was included in a round." ("Two Gallants," p. 53)

"She had been made awkward by her not wishing to receive the news in too cavalier a fashion or to seem to have connived, and Polly has been made awkward not merely because allusions of that kind always made her awkward, but also because she did not wish it to be thought that in her wise innocence she had divined the intention behind her mother's tolerance." ("The Boarding House," p. 69)

"He looked coldly in the eyes of the photograph and they answered coldly. Certainly they were pretty and the face itself was pretty. But he found something mean in it." ("Little Cloud," p. 91)

"His wife was a little sharp-faced woman who bullied her husband when he was sober and was bullied by him when he was drunk." ("Counterparts," p. 108)

"She arranged in her mind all she was going to do, and thought how much better it was to be independent and to have your own money in your pocket." ("Clay," p. 113)

"The threadbare phrases, the inane expressions of sympathy, the cautious words of a reporter won over to conceal the details of a commonplace vulgar death attacked his stomach. Not merely had she degraded herself; she had degraded him." ("A Painful Case," p. 128)

"Mr. O'Connor has been engaged by Tierney's agent to canvass one part of the ward but, a the weather was inclement and his boots let in the wet, he spent a great part of the day sitting by the fire in the Committee Room in Wicklow Street with Jack, the old caretaker." ("Ivy Day in the Committee Room," p. 133)

"Mr. Holohan pointed desperately towards the hall where the audience was clapping and stamping. He appealed to Mr. Kearny and to Kathleen. But Mr. Kearny continued to stroke his beard and Kathleen looked down, moving the point of her new shoe: it was not her fault." ("A Mother," p. 164)

"He assumed such a comical face and voice that the distribution of the bottles of stout took place amid general merriment." ("Grace," p. 183)

"His soul swooned slowly as he heard the snow falling faintly through the universe and faintly falling, like the descent of their last end, upon all the living and the dead." ("The Dead," p. 256)

Adaptations

One well-known American work that bears comparison with Dubliners is Sherwood Anderson's Winesburg, Ohio (1919), a collection of short stories based on the author's experiences in his home-town of Clyde, Ohio. Like many of his contemporaries, Joyce is indebted to the work of the Russian short-story writer (and playwright) Anton Chekhov (1860 -1904). Virtually all of Chekhov's short fiction is available in translation. Two good recent collections are Early Short Stories 1883-1888 and Later Short Stories 1888-1903 (both edited by Shelby Foote, Modern Library, 1999). Finally, Katherine Mansfield, a contemporary of Joyce's from New Zealand, also owes much to Chekhov. Readers who enjoy Dubliners will very likely want to look at some of her work, especially Bliss and Other Stories (1920) and The Garden Party and Other Stories (1922).

"The Dead" was adapted for the screen by director John Huston in 1987 with Donal McCann in the role of Gabriel and Anjelica Huston as Gretta. It received two Oscar nominations, including one for Tony Huston's screenplay. More recently, this same story was adapted for the musical stage by Richard Nelson and Shaun Davey. The 1999 Broadway production, starring Christopher Walken in the role of Gabriel Conroy, earned five Tony nominations and one award (for Best Book).

There are many audio recordings of the Dubliners stories. The most recent (Harper Collins, 2000) is a recording of all fifteen stories by various readers, including Stephen Rea ("The Dead"), Fionulla Flanagan ("A Mother") and Colm Meany ("Araby"); this recording has received very positive reviews. Other complete recordings are those by Jim Norton (two volumes; Naxos, 1999, 2000) and Frederick Davidson (Blackstone Audiobooks, 1992). Two collections read by Gerald McSorley, Dubliners and The Dead and Other Stories (Penguin, 1993), include eleven of the stories. The Dead and Other Stories from Dubliners (Audio Partners, 1989) contains a dramatized recording of "The Dead" by Danny Huston and Kate Mulgrew along with readings of "The Sisters," "Eveline" and The "Boarding House". The James Joyce Collection (Dove Audiobooks, 1996) features a handful of stories from Dubliners along with excerpts from A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man read by Gabriel Byrne.

Topics for Discussion

1. Only the first three stories in the collection, the ones dealing with childhood, have first-person narrators; the remainder are told in the third-person. Why do you think this might be the case?

2. The manner in which the narrator of "Araby" imagines himself, Mangan's sister, and the "Araby" bazaar tells us much about his youthful perceptions of his world. How would you describe those perceptions? How does the imaginary picture he paints differ from the world in which he lives.

3. How does Joyce establish the characters of Mr. Doran, Mrs. Mooney, and Polly in "The Boarding House"? Why will Mr. Doran marry Polly? How aware is Polly of her mother's scheme?

4. Look carefully at Eveline's thoughts regarding the sailor, Frank, in "Eveline."

Do you think she would have found happiness if she had gone to Buenos Aires with him? What evidence suggests that this might not have been the case?

5. The title of "A Little Cloud" alludes to a Biblical passage, I Kings 18:44: "And it came to pass at the seventh time, that he said, Behold, there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea, like a man's hand" 140 Dubliners The little cloud is the harbinger of a great rain, which the prophet Elijah summons to end a drought. What might be the significance of this allusion in Joyce's story?

6. In "The Dead," we get our first close look at Gabriel Conroy during his exchange with Lily, the caretaker's daughter. What does it reveal about him?

7. Describe the path followed by Gabriel Conroy's thoughts from the moment he sees Gretta on the stairs listening to Bartell D'Arcy singing "The Lass of Aughrim" to the end of the story. What has he learned by the story's end?

8. In the closing moments of "The Dead," Gabriel thinks, "the time had come for him to set out on his journey westward." Is this a literal journey (such as the one Miss Ivors is planning to the Aran Isles) or a figurative one, or both? Consider how journeys (and thwarted journeys) figure in other stories in the collection.

9. The term "closure" refers to our sense that a story is finished, that its various threads have been tied up at the end. Which of the stories achieve closure? Which ones do not? Why do you think Joyce left some of the stories open-ended?

10. In retrospect, Joyce felt he had painted an unduly harsh portrait of Dublin in this collection, slighting the city's more vital and generous side. Was he correct? What evidence is there in the book of the city's more positive qualities?

Essay Topics

How does alcoholism affect the lives of the characters? Can you find a social occasion where drinking is not involved?

What evidence is there for conflict or harmony between the Protestant and Catholic members of Dublin?

Compare the way the men manipulate women in "Two Gallants" with the way women manipulate men in "The Boarding House."

Why do you think the story about Maria is entitled "Clay"?

Why do you think the stories of children are told in the first person but the stories about the adults are told in third person?

Compare and contrast Jimmy Doyle from "After the Race" and either Gallaher or Chandler from "Little Cloud." How do they view their homeland, particularly Dublin?

What is your opinion about Mrs. Kearny's behavior in "A Mother"? Was she right to demand that her daughter be paid or should she have gone along with the others?

In "The Dead," Gabriel tries to remove himself from the Irish Nationalist debate and escape into intellectualism. Is it possible for him to be neutral about his Irish heritage? Why or why not?

Ideas for Reports and Papers

1. The titles of the stories are not always straightforward descriptions of their contents, but they are often suggestive and worthy of careful consideration. Consider how one or more of the less obvious titles (such as "The Sisters," "A Little Cloud," "Counterparts," Clay, or "The Dead") influences your sense of the story's meaning.

2. Priests play some role in each of the three stories dealing with childhood: "The Sisters" tells of the death of Father Flynn; the narrator of "Araby" reads books discarded by the priest who was the former occupant of the boy's house; Joe Dillon, the supplier of the cherished boys' adventure magazines in "An Encounter" later has a vocation for the priesthood. How, in these early stories, is the church related to the "paralysis" that Joyce sets out to reveal?

3. Joyce often takes care to tell us precisely what his characters read. To give a few examples, the young boy in "Araby" reads Walter Scott's The Abbot, The Devout Communicant and The Memoirs of Vidocq; the boys in "An Encounter" read stories of the American West in the magazines The Union Jack, Pluck, and The Halfpenny Marvel; Mr. Duffy in "A Painful Case" has a volume of Wordsworth and a copy of the Maynooth Catechism on his carefully arranged shelves. Choose one story and find out something about the books to which Joyce alludes. What do they suggest about their reader? How do they contribute to your understanding of the story?

4. Discuss the kinds of family relationships depicted in Dubliners. How are these relationships reflective of the book's larger themes?

5. Compare Joyce's "The Dead" with John Huston's film version. What sorts of changes have the filmmakers made? What are the effects of these changes?

6. As both "A Mother" and "The Dead" remind us, Joyce wrote these stories in the time of the Irish Revival, a cultural Dubliners 141 movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that aimed to revive the Irish language and disseminate traditional Irish stories in an attempt to counter the pervasive influence of British culture. Investigate the Irish Revival and consider the place of Dubliners within it.

7. Joyce gives careful attention to the visual imagery of his stories. Choose one or two stories and examine its visual imagery. Consider, for instance, descriptions of light (and darkness and shadow) or color. What sorts of images predominate, and how are they related to other elements such as theme and atmosphere.

8. The downfall and death of Charles Stewart Parnell forms an important backdrop to "Ivy Day in the Committee Room." Research Parnell's life, cause, and downfall and discuss this story in light of your research.

Further Study

Ellmann, Richard. James Joyce. 1959. Revised edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982. This standard biography of Joyce draws upon a staggering amount of research and delivers a wonderfully detailed account of Joyce's life.

142 Dubliners Gifford, Don. Joyce Annotated: Notes for Dubliners & A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982. An invaluable companion to both of these works, Gifford's notes clarify many of Joyce's local references and allusions.

Joyce, James. Dubliners: Text, Criticism, and Notes. Edited by Robert Scholes and A. Walton Litz. New York: Penguin, 1996.

This edition includes extensive and often very helpful notes and commentary.

Tindall, William York. A Reader's Guide to James Joyce. New York: Noonday, 1959.

This is an older but still useful study of all of Joyce's fiction that includes brief discussions of each of the Dubliners stories.

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