

James Joyce Study Guide

James Joyce by Richard Ellmann

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Plot Summary

"James Joyce" is a biography of the author James Joyce. Originally published in 1959 (only eighteen years after Joyce's death), Richard Ellmann's book uses many original interviews, letters, and other first-hand sources to establish the author's life.

The first section, Dublin, explores Joyce's early life in Ireland and the origins of his family. Although his family is at one point distinguished (granted a coat of arms), Joyce's father, John, is a spendthrift and an alcoholic and has no fewer than eleven mortgages throughout his lifetime on various properties. Joyce's mother, May, is by all accounts a sweet and musical woman. Joyce spends his early life distinguishing himself in school, through exams and exhibitions, particularly in English composition. He spends a lot of time with his brother Stanislaus, with whom he is very close. However, there is not always money for the boys to attend school and Joyce is partially self-educated. He eventually takes up studies at University College, Dublin, though by this point he has become disillusioned with both the academic system and the church and, while he manages to pass his courses, does not do so with distinction. He spends a brief amount of time studying medicine, transferring to Paris to continue his studies, but returning home. There he meets Nora Barnacle, who fascinates him and who he eventually convinces to travel with him.

In the second section, Pola, Rome, Trieste, Joyce and Nora travel throughout Europe as he searches for employment as a language teacher and tries to publish some of his early stories, book reviews, and other writings. Though they are still unmarried, Nora gives Joyce two children: Giorgio and Lucia. The family moves around quite a bit, from Pola, where Joyce teaches English, to Rome, where he works in a bank, to Trieste, where he again teaches for Berlitz. During this time, Joyce works on many of his early publications, including the collection of short stories *The Dubliners* and his autobiographical novel, *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. At this time, he also makes a variety of literary acquaintances, from Ezra Pound (the poet) to Harriet Weaver, the editor of influential publications.

In Zurich, the third section, Joyce lives a relatively comfortable life and is extremely social. However, he begins to experience some of the health troubles, including recurrent eye trouble, which will plague him for the rest of his life. He works on many literary endeavors, including a play called *Exiles*, and helps to establish an English-speaking literary troupe, though this ensnares him in legal troubles with an actor. Many friends help support Joyce financially during this time.

The fourth section, Paris, describes the Joyce family's time living in Paris. This is a pivotal point in his life in many respects. His health fails during this time, with eye, dental and stomach problems. His son gets married and has a son of his own, while his daughter, Lucia, shows signs of the schizophrenia for which she will eventually be institutionalized. Joyce makes the acquaintance of Sylvia Beach, the renowned literary figure and bookstore owner, who will publish *Ulysses*. He also begins writing *Finnegan's Wake* during this period.

In the fifth and final section, the Joyces move from Paris as the Second World War approaches, eventually moving back to Zurich. There, Joyce's health fails for the last time, as a misdiagnosed stomach ulcer perforates. Though he makes it through the surgery, he weakens in the week that follows and eventually falls into a coma and dies.



Part I: Dublin

Part I: Dublin Summary and Analysis

Family is always an important source of inspiration for Joyce's literary works; this reality goes back several generations. In fact, Joyce's father, at one point, takes special pride in the family's coat of arms. In this chapter, Ellmann describes the family history. Joyce is a French name and there have been other Jameses in the family. His grandfather has a happy marriage, with one son: John, James's father. John is in school briefly, but has to stop because of financial problems. He then goes to work at the shipyard. He spends some time beginning medical studies at Queen's College, but, though he is athletic and a theatrical star, he has to repeat his second year and fails his third. When his father dies, John inherits the estate and brings his mother into Dublin from Cork. John buys his way into a distilling company, which goes bankrupt. John then goes into politics and eventually is named Collector of Rates for life. He marries James's mother, Mary Jane Murray ("May"), in 1880, though she is ten years younger and their families oppose the marriage. They settle in Kingston. John is a funny and witty man and gets along well with everyone; James always has a fondness for him. The first child dies and then James is born. Eventually, the Joyces have four boys and six girls, with John Joyce taking out no fewer than eleven mortgages to support his ever-growing family.

Obsessed with his birthday, James is born on February 2nd, 1882 and baptized on February 5th. At this time, his parents live in a South Dublin suburb, but quickly move to a more fashionable part of town. His great-uncle comes to stay for a time, but is very political and always evading arrest. James's governess, Mrs. Dante, has an important influence on the young man. She almost became a nun, before inheriting money eventually stolen from her by her fiancé. She speaks often of Judgment Day and is very religious.

As a child, James is well-behaved, nearsighted and self-sufficient, though he often acts as the ringleader of the neighborhood children. He goes off to kindergarten, where his pleasant voice is remarked upon, and later to school at Saint Colman's College, a Jesuit school, where he has a hard time adjusting to the older boys' hazing but eventually moves to the head of his class and becomes an altar boy. School records from this period show that he is punished for vulgar language (his literary alter-ego in his fictionalized autobiography, Stephen, has a much more innocent nature). James writes many poems and has a talent for writing, but has to withdraw from school after his father hits a period of financial trouble. Though John has a pension, he also has many properties to upkeep. James studies by himself before spending two years at the Christian Brother's School. Eventually, the former rector of Saint Colman's arranges for him and his brother Stanislaus to attend Belvedere, an excellent preparatory school. Stanislaus, several years younger, idolizes his older brother. At the age of twelve, James wins a prize of twenty pounds for his academic study. At the same time, his father's nerves begin to go and he attempts to strangle his wife.



Between 1894 and 1898, the Joyce family begins to move, which they will do often. James often takes revenge on unkind or strange neighbors in his later books. He and his brothers spend a lot of time together. Stanislaus is known as blunt, athletic, and determined; Charles is jaunty; George dies young. Joyce's sisters are subdued, and James is by far the favorite in the family. He spends time going on long walks with his father, where they have grave and dramatic conversations. Meanwhile, James excels in his studies, starting Italian and winning exhibitions in 1894 and 1895. He is named a prefect of the Sodality of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Though he has relations with a prostitute around this time, he confesses to a priest, ostensibly "reforming." He begins writing prose sketches, which he calls silhouettes. In 1897, he wins another exhibition; by this point, he is a voracious reader, and loves Ibsen and other dramatists. Around this time, he begins to separate himself from Catholicism.

From 1898-1900, James continues his studies at the University College, Dublin, which is an institution for Catholic students, as opposed to Trinity College, which is for Protestants. He excels at English, has a passion for Dante in Italian and goofs around in his French class. He makes many friends, the most important of whom, Byrne, will remain a friend for many years. At this time, Joyce takes a stronger anti-Church position, speaking of it with disdain. He is not academically distinguished, separating himself more and more from his studies. Due to his family's financial troubles, they have to move often and come up with a variety of strategies to avoid eviction. James continues to develop his talent and appreciation for drama, contemporary materials, myths, and the "laws of life." He eventually publishes a review of Ibsen's newest play and receives, much to his delight, a complimentary letter from the dramatist himself.

From 1900-1902, Joyce begins to focus on Europe; his father gives him money for foreign books, even as the family struggles financially. Joyce travels with his father to London, where he has dinner with Archer, an important literary figure, who reads his work and finds it impressive if "impossible." Back in Ireland, Joyce undertakes a verse play, writing a long letter to Ibsen and translating works by Hauptman while writing essays and articles. He spends a lot of time with the Sheehys, childhood friends of the family. Around this time, his brother George dies of typhoid fever. James passes his courses but does not excel in them, giving talks at the college on various topics. At the end of his studies, he registers for medical school.

In 1902, Joyce begins to engage, to a certain extent, with literary and intellectual figures in Dublin, including George Russell and Lady Gregory. However, he is dismissive of famous authors and makes people uncomfortable. Russell eventually writes a letter on his behalf to Yates, though he is divided about Joyce, finding him conceited but impressive. Simultaneously, John Joyce has even more financial trouble, cutting his pension in half to buy a house, on which he takes a mortgage and eventually has to sell. James, with no money for his expenses, decides to undertake studies in Paris. He asks Lady Gregory for help; she suggests he study at Trinity, but he refuses. Eventually, she writes letters for him. Yeats begins to help Joyce with publishing his work, though he has his reservations about the young author.



In Paris between 1902 and 1903, Joyce has some trouble getting onto his feet. Yeats helps him some, as does a man called Arthur Symons, who helps him publish. Joyce tries to sign up for classes, but has a hard time navigating the bureaucracy. Finally, he is admitted, only to find that his French is not good enough and the school wants the fees paid right away. He makes some money teaching English, but not much, and goes home for Christmas, costing his parents a second mortgage on their house. At this time, he has a falling out with his old friend Byrne and replaces him with a new friend, Oliver Gogarty. He spends one month at home in total, eventually going back to Paris. There, he has lots of rejections of his work and is often hungry, receiving some help from his mother. He makes a lot of friends, taking a number of small trips and having numerous sexual relationships. His mother's ill health eventually worsens, however, and as he hears she is dying, borrows money from a pupil to return home to her.

During 1903 and 1904, Joyce's mother's illness is initially diagnosed as cirrhosis but is actually cancer. She is ill for a time, as John mortgages the house again. James makes up with Byrne and borrows quite a bit of money from Gogarty, who he helps with his writing. Both James and John drink a lot at this time and James has some problems with his brother Stanislaus, who is his rival and who never gets credit for his originality. Joyce's mother dies and the family is distraught. James reads a lot, receiving some book reviews to write, though he eventually has a falling out with his editor. He applies for a job at the National Library, which he does not get, and is offered a job at University College, which he refuses. He has the idea for "The Goblin," a newspaper he hopes to get funded by a millionaire, but which never worked out.

In 1904, the Joyce family becomes poorer and poorer. James's sister takes over the housekeeping. James, meanwhile, begins an early version of *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, called *Stephen Hero*. Ellmann spends some time describing the development of the hero, Stephen Dedalus. James shows the manuscript to some friends and spends most of his time sleeping, partying and writing. He briefly considers a singing career, entering a contest and taking lessons. However, though he excels at the contest, he storms off-stage when asked to sight read, which he is incapable of doing. Nevertheless, Joyce wins the bronze medal. On June 16th, 1904 (the date he later gives to the events in *Ulysses*), Joyce comes up with an important theory about Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, and he also has his first date with Nora Barnacle, whom he meets about a week earlier on the street. Poor and uneducated, Nora is witty and spirited. During their courtship, James nevertheless flirts with other women and confesses his (prior) sexual escapades to Nora, shocking her. Joyce keeps writing, selling some poems and working on the stories that will eventually become *The Dubliners*. He goes to live in the Martello Tower at Sandy Cove with Gogarty and an acquaintance called Samuel Trench. Their life there is free and easy, but James leaves after Trench takes a shot at him in his sleep, during a nightmare. Joyce walks back to Dublin. Later, Byrne encourages him to travel with Nora and James looks into teaching for Berlitz, requesting help from Lady Gregory, who gives him five pounds to get to Switzerland as soon as he proves to her that he actually has a plan. The five pounds takes him and Nora as far as Paris.



Part II: Pola, Rome, Trieste

Part II: Pola, Rome, Trieste Summary and Analysis

In Paris in 1904 and 1905, Joyce and Nora have no money, but a doctor acquaintance helps them out. Through another acquaintance, Miss Gilfrod, in London, Joyce searches for vacancies at Berlitz schools throughout Europe and is assured one is waiting for him in Trieste. However, when he arrives, the school has never heard of him and has no position. He is able to take on a couple of pupils but still has no money. Later, he is offered a position at a new school in Pola, in the former Yugoslavia. A man named Francini is the boss there and helps Joyce get settled. Nora, however, had trouble adapting to the new culture and soon becomes pregnant. Joyce writes many letters to his brothers and invites Stanislaus to come join them. Unfortunately, all resident aliens are then expelled from the country and Joyce is transferred to Trieste.

Trieste in 1905 is a port city, somewhat reminiscent of Dublin. Joyce has a bohemian, rather unrespectable air, but still attracts many wealthy, noble pupils, which the manager of the school loves. In the meantime, Joyce comes up with various moneymaking schemes. He has trouble finding appropriate housing, as Nora is pregnant and the two are unmarried. Miserable, he takes to drinking heavily. He comes up with far-fetched schemes to purchase a cottage with Stanislaus in the Dublin suburbs, which never materializes. In July, his son Giorgio is born. Joyce is still working on the stories that will become *Dubliners* and *Stephen Hero*. Stanislaus reads his writings, offering him thoughtful critiques, and fact-checking for him. Joyce interviews at the school and eventually secures a teaching post for his brother, as well.

From 1905 to 1906, Stanislaus arrives at the school, but Joyce has his salary directed to himself, taking all of his brother's earnings. Nora, meanwhile, is indifferent to Stanislaus, who finds her charming. The Joyces, still having housing troubles, eventually move in with the Francinis. During the English lessons he still teaches, Joyce enjoys talking about a variety of subjects, including money, family, country, religion and literature. Finally, Grant Richard, a publisher, takes a liking to *Dubliners* and accepts it, but requests numerous changes, including the elimination of the word "bloody." He and Joyce eventually compromise, with Joyce removing six occurrences and leaving one. Somewhat stir-crazy, Joyce finds a job at a Rome bank and leaves his brother in Trieste.

However, once in Rome in 1906 and 1907, Joyce finds the city frightening, insipid, and cemetery-like. His work at the bank, translating, is dull and busy, though he is eventually transferred to a receptionist position. He is only paid once per month, which he finds hard to adjust to and he borrows heavily from his reluctant brother. Joyce keeps teaching English for extra money, but this does not stop him from being evicted. He has a lot of anger around this time and writes many stories, including his celebrated story, "The Dead." At the same time, he also works on preparing his poems, "Chamber Music," for publication. He writes to his aunt requesting books, magazines and



newspapers from home. Joyce falls into a deeper depression, drinking heavily and giving up first his teaching and then his bank job. He considers where to take his family next, thinking of Marseille but eventually settling on a return to Trieste. Nora discovers she is pregnant again. Not long after, Joyce's wallet is stolen and he loses a significant sum of money.

In the chapter, *The Backgrounds of "The Dead,"* Ellmann examines the roots of "The Dead" in Joyce's own life. He believes that the story demonstrates Joyce's shifting attitude towards Ireland. It is also a story about family, playing on a story from Nora's past, as well as a song entitled "O Ye Dead." Joyce also uses many names and characters from his past, elaborating on his feeling of jealousy at dead former lovers of his partner. With the character of Gabriel, Ellmann writes that Joyce is making a silent tribute to his country. Joyce actually borrows the ending of his story from George Moore's "Vain Fortune." Ellmann ends the chapter by concluding that the snow in the story does not actually symbolize death (a common reading of this symbol) but actually the crowding and silent pressure of Irish life at this time.

During 1907 through 1909, with no real support system in Trieste, Joyce relies heavily on his brother and stays with the Francinis again. He eventually gets a small workload teaching and writes articles on Ireland and famous people and characters there, giving lectures as well about his ties to the country. He sends his father one pound at one point, but it never reaches him, possibly intercepted by another family member. At this time, Joyce also publishes "Chamber Music," which does not bring him any money but has a positive reception. He is very discontented with Trieste and is hospitalized at one point for rheumatic fever. Nora goes into labor and gives birth to their daughter Lucia. However, his employment situation is precarious. When the management of the Berlitz school changes, he leaves without notice, deciding to give private lessons (though he does not give many of these). He is revising *Stephen Hero* and thinking about a story that will eventually become his novel *Ulysses*. He begins to have eye trouble around the same time that Nora has a miscarriage; Joyce begins to consider a musical career. One of his pupils, Ettore Schmitz, gives him a lot of moral support around this time, exchanging fiction and writings with his professor and getting critiques. Finally, with a one year's advance on his salary from a student, he leaves for Dublin at the end of the month.

In 1909, Joyce has two goals: to see *Dubliners* published and to be a professor. He is struck by melancholy and is cold to his old friends. He runs into an old friend who says that he used to date Nora, and Joyce is so upset by this admission that he goes into a rage, even going so far as to question the paternity of his children, greatly disturbing Nora. Later, she shows Stanislaus letters that prove that the old friend actually lied and that she had scorned him earlier. After they reconcile, Joyce begins to help out his family, though he can ill afford it, giving singing lessons to his sisters and bringing his sister Eva, a pious girl, to live with him in Trieste. Before returning, he goes to Galway with his son, bringing back an expensive necklace for Nora; he, Eva, and Giorgio then take a brief trip to London.



In the chapter "The Growth of Imagination," Ellmann explores the development of Joyce's creativity. He discusses his deep and conflicted bonds both to Dublin and to his mother; he considers the love between a mother and a child of the utmost importance and even puts Nora in a mother role at times. The mother plays an important role both in *Dubliners* and in *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Other family relationships are also important to Joyce: for example, Ellmann sees the theme of Ulysses as the ultimate reconciliation with his father. Overall, the author sees Joyce's writings as a way he has of reconstituting important relationships from his life.

During the period from 1909 to 1911, acting like newlyweds (though they are still, technically, unmarried), Joyce and Nora and their family return to Trieste. Joyce has come up with a scheme to set up a cinema in Dublin, as well as to distribute Irish tweeds in Trieste. At home, Joyce is troubled by sciatica and iritis, his eye trouble, even as he still gives lessons. His sister Eva is horrified to find out that the couple is not married, though Nora confesses that, while she is willing, Joyce is not. The publication of *Dubliners* is delayed even longer due to censorship and the *Volta* (the theater Joyce succeeds in establishing) falls at a loss to the investors. Joyce continues to be loose with his money, sometimes buying presents and clothing instead of food as the family goes hungry. He is bitter about his publication difficulties and at one point throws his draft of *Portrait* into the fire, though his sister Eileen saves it. Fed up with the delay, he eventually writes a letter to King George V, asking him to intervene on his behalf (he has no success). Joyce even goes so far as to publish a public letter telling the publisher he can make whatever changes he wishes, but to no effect. Nora, meanwhile, has many men falling in love with her, which Joyce takes a kind of perverse pleasure in watching, even as he ends relationships with some of them.

In 1912, Joyce gives a series of lectures, some on Defoe and Blake. He also publishes an article about Parnell and the idea of home rule. His current money-making scheme is to teach in Italian schools; he takes the teaching exam twice and eventually passes, but eventually has a problem with his Irish degree, as no system of reciprocity exists between the two countries at this time. He sends Nora and Lucia on a trip to Ireland, but forbids Nora to wear a wedding ring to appease her mother. He eventually follows them, going to see Yeats and then the city of Galway, where he enjoys the cemeteries and writes another article. Meanwhile, in Trieste, they have been evicted from their apartment and it falls to Stanislaus to move their things. *Dubliners* is still being held up, this time on the charge that it is an anti-Irish book. Joyce's friends can give him little help and Joyce looks into legal proceedings. At one point, Roberts flat-out refuses to publish the work. He later offers Joyce the proof sheets for thirty pounds and Joyce agrees.

Joyce eventually gets a position at the Scola Superiore in Trieste, helping him to manage his debts somewhat between 1913 and 1914. He also does private tutoring, in which he likes to talk about various subjects, including superstitions, giving his lessons absolutely no discipline. He becomes enchanted by a female student at this time, and writes much about her, though she moves away. Grant Richards asks Joyce for a copy of *Dubliners*, at the same time Ezra Pound writes to introduce himself and request manuscripts for publication from Joyce, adding that Yeats had already given him a poem



by Joyce that he would like to publish in an anthology. Joyce sends him a lot of things, including an excerpt from *Portrait*, which will be published in a magazine called *The Egoist*, of which Harriet Shaw Weaver is the editor. Richards eventually gets back to Joyce, wanting to publish *Dubliners*, and Joyce concedes. Inspired by his recent successes, Joyce works on a play called *Exiles*, as well as on *Ulysses*.

In the chapter "The Backgrounds of *Ulysses*," Ellmann discusses his findings on Joyce's inspirations for his novel *Ulysses*. He believes that the idea is traceable back as far as 1907, to ideas that Joyce first used in *Portrait*. He sees a counterpoint in the book between myth and fact. Joyce does not plan everything in the eighteen episodes of the book, but instead relies on the "good mind" of his character, Leopold Bloom. He finds it to be a personal book, to which he becomes attached, seeing it as "history fabled." The names are often lifted from people he has known. Ellmann also sees a kinship between Stephen, from *Portrait*, and Bloom. Some themes that emerge throughout *Ulysses* are degradation, family love (particularly paternity) and the kindness of animals. Leopold Bloom, the main character, is a Jew, a convert and a drifter; Ellmann suggests that his prototype is Joyce's pupil, Ettore Schmitz. Molly Bloom has a mind like Nora's, though Nora is not as promiscuous (Molly has two lovers since her marriage). The date of the story, as Ellmann has already remarked, is June 16th, 1904, the date of Joyce's first walk with Nora. The theme, Ellmann writes, is that "casual kindness overcomes unconscionable power."

As the First World War develops in 1914 and 1915, Stanislaus gets into trouble for his politics and is arrested, spending the war in work camps. Joyce is still teaching, talking with his friends about the national sins and his disgust with wars and the troubled times. He looks for an American publisher for *Dubliners*, but cannot find one right away. Meanwhile, he has stories published in *Smart Set*. Eileen gets engaged and moves to Prague. As the political situation worsens, the Joyces leave Trieste for Switzerland.



Part Three: Zurich

Part Three: Zurich Summary and Analysis

In 1915, the Joyces have spent eleven years in Trieste and continue to speak Italian amongst themselves. Joyce is ambivalent about Zurich and still has money issues; Nora's uncle sends them some money before Joyce is awarded a Royal Literature Fund grant, which helps his family survive for a while. He becomes friends with a man named Weiss, with whom he takes long walks. During this period, he devotes himself to Ulysses and has many pupils who pay him but never take lessons, just wanting to give him financial support. He tries to publish Portrait as a book, rather than just in excerpts, but cannot find an English publisher. Meanwhile, he shows Exiles to Pound, who thinks it is acceptable but not great. The publisher of the Egoist offers to print Portrait, but seven printers refuse to publish it, as they will get in trouble with the censors. To further offset his financial troubles, Joyce is awarded a Civil List grant at this time, with Pound's help.

Joyce spends a lot of the period from 1916 to 1918 in cafes and clubs with his friends. The family is sharing an apartment with a composer, Philipp Janach, who is disturbed by Joyce's singing, though it is pleasant. During this time, Joyce is also deeply troubled by his eyes; he has both glaucoma and synecchia and later tonsillitis. He receives a gift of two hundred pounds from an anonymous donor through a New York lawyer. While Nora is on vacation, Joyce's health fails again, as his eyes give out and he has to have surgery outside of Zurich, permanently reducing his vision. He tries to seduce his female doctor with no success. At this time, he completes the first three episodes of Ulysses and by January is back in Zurich. There, he meets a soprano, Charlotte Saueremann, who likes his voice. Shortly after making her acquaintance, he has a notice that 12,000 francs has been deposited into his bank account; he traces this back to a woman named Mrs. Harold McCormick. With his friend Sykes, Joyce constructs a troupe of English players to perform The Importance of Being Earnest. However, he has problems with the lead, Henry Carr, who is angry about the play and confronts him angrily afterwards, eventually bringing a lawsuit against him.

Still going to many parties, drinking, and eating at restaurants in 1918, Joyce has to deal with Nora's disapproval, though she babies him. Giorgio, who is getting older, is becoming good-looking and excels at singing and swimming. Joyce, meanwhile, plunders his family for inspiration for his writing, even going so far as to read Nora's dream journal. He is constantly looking for inspiration, noting her fidelity to fact. He is still working with the English players, making plans for plays, when he is attacked again by his iritis, almost incapacitated by it. Henry Carr's lawsuit continues, as Nora appears in a play by Joyce's troupe. Joyce keeps writing Ulysses, though both T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound find early excerpts crude. Harriet Weaver, meanwhile, searches for a serial and decides to publish Exiles, as well as Ulysses in book form.



A neighboring woman, Martha Fleischmann, catches Joyce's eye in 1918, and the two begin an affair. She is a bit of a snob, and reads "Chamber Music," engaging in a romantic and physical affair until her lover puts an end to it. Meanwhile, Carr's lawsuit goes to court and he withdraws the damages except for a few small fees, which Joyce is supposed to pay but never does. He is still having eye trouble and gives up drinking absinthe, one of his favorite things. In his writing life, he sends episodes from *Ulysses* to his friends, but they are disapproving, even Weaver, who normally adores his work. This reception disheartens Joyce, but he is excited that his play, *Exiles*, is to be performed in Munich (though he ends up not being able to get a visa). Later, he decides to return to Trieste, though, after an argument with a friend, he finds that Mrs. McCormick has cut off his grant money. Joyce goes to Trieste.

In 1919, Trieste has changed since the Joyces last lived there. Eileen is living there now, as is Stanislaus, though unhappily. Joyce begins to teach again, though grudgingly. He finishes an excerpt of *Ulysses* that Pound and Weaver both enjoy; Pound, meanwhile, is sending Joyce second-hand clothes when Joyce complains of looking homeless and having nothing to wear. Meanwhile, Harriet Weaver sends him money. Joyce goes to Paris for a short visit, but ends up moving the family there.



Part Four: Paris

Part Four: Paris Summary and Analysis

In 1920, Joyce becomes quieter and more restrained. He is always a little lost with his children and this period of his life is no exception. He works to translate *Portrait* into French, while having trouble finding an appropriate apartment. He eventually has help from a friend. Around this time, he meets Sylvia Beach, legendary owner of the Shakespeare & Co. bookstore, and still has help from Pound and Weaver, who send him 2,000 pounds. Still working on *Circe* (a section of *Ulysses*), Joyce is distraught to learn that the post office censors have burned the *Little Review* magazine featuring his *Ulysses* excerpts, claiming they are obscene. For the moment, *Exiles* too is blocked from performance. The Joyces change apartments yet again.

During the period between 1921 and 1922, Sylvia Beach unites Joyce with Larbaud, a French writer who greatly admires Joyce's work. Joyce is in correspondence with people in Trieste, asking his friend Schmitz to deliver notes from there. There are, as always, small crises, including another volume of the *Little Review*, which was confiscated. However, good news comes when Beach offers to publish *Ulysses* and offers Joyce an extremely generous royalty package; he agrees and Weaver collaborates. They take subscriptions in advance, but George Bernard Shaw comically refuses to subscribe. In the meantime, Joyce writes to Weaver, defending himself from rumors that he is drinking. He also moves to a new flat, keeping on with his revisions, adding to the proofs of *Ulysses* and working with his French translator (who is responsible for the last "yes" of the book). In anticipation of *Ulysses*, 250 people show up for a reading, most of them taking subscriptions. Finally, the copies arrive. Nora refuses to read it.

Ulysses becomes quite popular between 1922 and 1923, and Joyce refuses to challenge anybody's interpretation of the book. His family in Ireland do not care for it; Stanislaus admires it on the whole. Joyce is very frustrated by the slow arrival of reviews. Meanwhile, Harriet Weaver sends more money. Nora goes to visit Ireland and Joyce has another attack of iritis, as well as teeth problems. He goes to visit London, where he is conspicuously loose with Weaver's money. He continues to correspond with his father and aunt, talking about his money troubles, and writes a letter to his friend Budgen, eventually stealing it back. He is struck by an attack of pinkeye, also losing some of his teeth. However, aside from his health problems, it is a very creative period: he comes up with the idea for *Finnegan's Wake*, playing with dream forms and universal histories in what he imagines to be a "night book" with no present and no past.

The Joyces all travel to London in 1923, except for Giorgio. Nora is resigned to Joyce's writing by this point and happy that he has some money as he works on *Finnegan's Wake*. On their return to Paris, Giorgio continues work as a banker. Joyce's friend Schmitz works on a book, which Joyce encourages, at the same time as the translation of *Portrait* appears. Joyce wonders if it would be possible to translate *Ulysses*, but is



convinced that only sections of it would be translatable. He has further eye trouble around this time, needing another operation, which he puts off. Finally, he has it, but his sight is worse, as are his teeth. During his recovery, he has many visitors, but eventually requires another surgery, though he insists on traveling first. His sight ends up very bad but slowly gets better.

During the period from 1926 to 1929, *Exiles* is performed in London and Stanislaus visits the Joyces in Paris. He does not understand or appreciate *Finnegan's Wake* and is critical. Eileen also visits and Joyce later travels with Nora to Ostend. In the United States, *Ulysses* is pirated by a man named Samuel Roth. Joyce has many friends sign a statement against him, to no avail; finally, he takes legal action and Roth stops. Back in Paris, Weaver and Ezra Pound convince Joyce that *Finnegan's Wake* needs more gloss and Stanislaus announces that he is getting married. While she is away, Eileen's husband commits suicide, which she refuses to believe until they disinter his body to prove it to her. A man named Jolas sees *Finnegan's Wake* and wants to publish it in serial form; around the same time, Wyndham Lewis is offended by Joyce and tries and fails to make up. *Ulysses* is translated into German, though Joyce is unhappy with the translations, and Eileen comes for another visit with her children. Joyce is in very bad physical shape around this time, almost blind and down to 112 pounds, while Nora has to have a hysterectomy.

Joyce has many issues with his family from 1939-1932. His father requests that he visit before he die and Joyce is meanwhile very *laissez-faire* with his own children. Giorgio enjoys singing, while Lucia has an odd squint and a scar that makes her self-conscious, though she enjoys singing and dancing and various other creative pursuits. Meanwhile, Joyce contributes to the artistic community, to a collection of stories, having his portrait done by Brancusi, and serving on a magazine's editorial committee. His work, *Anna Livia Plurabelle*, is published as well. Physically, his eye trouble continues and his doctors suggest more operations. Joyce takes advantage of this trouble to publicize a theatre, standing up at the end of the play and claiming that his sight has been miraculously restored. He keeps working on *Finnegan's Wake*, but finds the work hard going. Noted psychiatrist Carl Jung writes a disparaging letter to Joyce around this time. Joyce becomes more and more mysterious, deciding eventually that he would like his biography written by a man named Herbert Gorman. He still has money problems, but is as reckless as ever. Eventually, he gets frustrated by the idea of possible publicity that he and Nora are not married, so they go to England and finally get married (though he claims they had been married before, with technical difficulties). Lucia begins to act more and more strangely while John Joyce becomes ill and dies. Joyce is filled with grief and is named the sole heir to his father's small estate. Finally, when Lucia throws a chair at her mother, the Joyces send her to an asylum for help. Giorgio (now going by the name of George) marries an American girl named Helen and has a son, named Stephen.

Though he is delighted at his grandson's birth in 1932, Joyce has to be kept in the dark that Stephen has been baptized. Lucia is still in the institution. She is almost catatonic and diagnosed as a schizophrenic. Joyce feels very guilty and brings her back home, bringing in a psychiatrist to see her there. Joyce becomes friends with Samuel Beckett,



whose work he is obsessed with. There is a lot of tension at this time between Joyce and Weaver and Joyce and Beach about rights.

Meanwhile, Lucia is showing overt hostility toward Nora and Joyce takes her to Feldkirch with a nurse, eventually sending her to an institution. She is preoccupied with creative work at this time, doing a lot of painting. Still, he is having bad problems with his eye. Yeats suggests nominating him for the Irish Academy, but Joyce refuses. He suffers from some sickness, which is alternately diagnosed as nerves and colitis. Lucia, who has been in a sanatorium, is withdrawn from it and becomes Nora's responsibility.

At the same time, *Ulysses* is published uncensored in the United States. Lucia, sadly, runs away, has to be sedated, hits Nora, and has to go to the sanatorium again. George and his wife Helen move to the States for a year, where George sings professionally, as the Joyces move into a new apartment and Lucia worsens, setting a fire in her room at the asylum. Eventually, she is transferred to Zurich. Joyce goes to visit her and she is very upset when he leaves; eventually, he takes her back home and Eileen comes to look after her, but Lucia escapes. Joyce is optimistic about her possibility for recovery as she has a new treatment in London and is eventually moved to a clinic in France.

By 1936, Lucia's care accounts for three-quarters of the Joyce's expenses, as Nora threatens to leave Joyce because of his drinking. The rest of the Joyces are not doing very well either, as George has a throat condition and has to stop singing, and Stanislaus is expelled from Trieste. Stanislaus is eventually restored to his position at the university. Joyce goes on a vacation to Copenhagen but is widely recognized there, though he finds the city charming. Overall, the Joyces' social life is quieter. A man named Paul Léon begins to work for Joyce as an unpaid secretary, as Joyce requests a lot of professional help from friends, though he is very loyal himself. He visits Lucia weekly.

The Joyces briefly consider a trip to Ireland, but James and Nora go to Switzerland instead, as Joyce works hard on *Finnegan's Wake*. He does a lot of proofreading, desperately wanting the book to be done by his birthday. When Samuel Beckett, a friend, is stabbed, Joyce helps him a lot. George and Helen have to return to the United States at this time for a brief period. Helen is also in a fragile mental state.

The book is finished by his birthday and the family celebrates.

Part Five: Return to Zurich

Part Five: Return to Zurich Summary and Analysis

Tired and impatient, Joyce watches the war coming with dread. Nora still has not read any of his books. Joyce's biography is in its final stages; Léon helps to "clarify" a few things, allowing Joyce to work in his own version of events and settle some scores with old enemies. Lucia is supposed to be moved from Paris to the countryside for the war, but this does not happen when the institution tells Joyce it will. She is finally settled outside Paris at the same time that Helen, George's wife, begins to have more breakdowns.

Many people are leaving Paris at this time and the Joyces go to Saint-Gérard. Joyce is having bad stomach pains, at times crippling, which are diagnosed as "nerves" but which are actually a duodenal ulcer. He goes to stay at Vichy for a time, but comes back when Paris falls and many friends come to visit him. He spends his time correcting misprints in *Finnegan's Wake* and thinks about moving to Zurich, especially for Lucia's sake. He applies for visas, but is refused on the grounds that he is Jewish (which he is not). He reapplies and the authorities relent, though they want a financial guarantee. By the time he gets it, he needs permission from unoccupied France to leave, which he gets for everyone except for George. Nora's mother dies at this time. George accompanies them to the border and finally, though James and Nora's passports have expired, everyone gets through and finally settles in Zurich.

There, Joyce spends time playing with his grandson Stephen. However, on January 7th, he is diagnosed with a perforated ulcer and is operated on at once. He has a huge fear of being unconscious, but George convinces him to have the surgery. He signs over his bank accounts to his family and makes it through the surgery well, though later weakens. He falls into a coma and dies on January 13th, 1941. He is buried in Switzerland. Lucia is notified, but refuses to believe that her father has died. Nora lives in Zurich for the rest of her life, dying in 1951. Stanislaus dies in 1955, as do many others related to the Joyces. Stephen Joyce marries and moves to Paris.



Characters

James Joyce

James Joyce, as the subject of the biography, is the most important focus of the book. A constant and unchanging man, Joyce is cerebral, imaginative, intense and devoted to his family. He always has trouble with money and has no problems borrowing from friends. The sums of money he borrows, and the frequency with which he borrows it, are staggering. Even during times when money is less scarce—when he has sold a book, received a grant, or had help from a friend—he often buys frivolous presents rather than the necessities that his family needs. Still, he is extremely loyal and helps his friends to the best of his abilities, particularly where their writing is concerned. A particularly touching example of this is the help and comfort he provides Samuel Beckett after his stabbing. Joyce is devoted to his family. In his early life, he is very close to his father, who does not care for his other children and disinherits all but James when he dies. James and his father keep up a correspondence until his father's death. Joyce is similarly upset when his mother dies, coming back to Ireland from France (at the time, an expensive journey) to stay with her during her final illness. Later, though he is not married to Nora until later in their lives, he is devoted to her for years without the official bond of marriage. He has a good relationship with his son, Giorgio (also called George) and is absolutely distraught when his daughter, Lucia, begins to show early signs of the schizophrenia that will eventually overtake her. Joyce's later years are spent putting enormous time and money into the care of his daughter.

Nora Joyce (Nora Barnacle)

Nora Joyce, born Nora Barnacle and not officially a Joyce until her wedding in 1931, is presented in this biography as an exceptional woman. Uneducated, she is a hotel maid when she meets Joyce in 1904. However, she is very witty and has a blunt way of approaching the world that entices him and the two travel together for many years, eventually settling down. Joyce does not propose to her for several decades, and, though she confesses to Joyce's sister that she had wanted to get married, she never pushes the issue. It is not clear if she ever reveals the nature of their relationship to her own parents, but it is unlikely. Nora apparently never reads any of Joyce's work, though she works hard to keep a good home for him and their two children, Giorgio and Lucia, and celebrates the publication of his books, often throwing him parties and entertaining his friends. She is extremely patient with Joyce, who, by most accounts, is not easy to live with, though she does threaten to leave him on several occasions because of his heavy drinking (which waxes and wanes throughout his life). Though many other men express admiration and even love for her—including Joyce's brother Stanislaus, in his diary—she was loyal to Joyce and distraught whenever he jealously accuses her of infidelity. After Joyce's death, Nora stays in Zurich, where he is buried, dying more than a decade later, in 1955.



Stanislaus Joyce

James Joyce's younger brother and close friend, Stanislaus always feels that he is living in his older brother's shadow, though he has many talents of his own. He comes to join his brother and Nora in Trieste, where he teaches. James takes advantage of him in many ways, taking his wages, borrowing money that is never repaid and otherwise using his brother for his own ends. Stanislaus spends most of World War I in work camps due to his political beliefs and eventually marries.

John Joyce

James Joyce's father. John Joyce is a "bon vivant," drinking heavily and having a hard time holding down a job. He somehow manages to provide for his family of ten children, though he has to take out eleven mortgages to do so. Despite his problems, he is very close to his oldest son and the two keep up a long correspondence.

May Joyce

Joyce's mother. A musical and sensitive woman who dies relatively young and makes many financial sacrifices to satisfy James Joyce's whims. Ellmann writes that the Joyce family is extremely devastated at her death.

Harriet Weaver

The editor of an American magazine, who provides James Joyce with much financial and publication support throughout the years.

Ezra Pound

The ex-patriot American poet who works hard on Joyce's behalf to secure his publication in numerous periodicals. He provides Joyce with financial and material support as well, often searching out grants for the writer.

Sylvia Beach

The owner of the Shakespeare & Co. bookstore in Paris and eventual publisher of *Ulysses*.

Giorgio/George Joyce

Joyce's son, who marries an American and works for a time as a professional singer in the United States.



Helen Joyce

The wife of George and Joyce's daughter-in-law. Mentally unstable, Helen Joyce has several mental breakdowns.

Lucia Joyce

Joyce's daughter. Schizophrenic, Lucia Joyce nevertheless has quite a bit of creative talent and enjoys painting, dancing and singing. She is in and out of institutions for most of her life. She refuses to believe that her father has died.



Objects/Places

Dublin

The city around which most of Joyce's young life centers. He lives in and around Dublin until his move to Paris.

Ireland

Joyce's native country, with which he has a conflicted, love/hate relationship.

Paris

The city where Joyce moves to pursue his medical studies and later to expand his literary career.

Trieste

The city Joyce first travels to searching for a job teaching for Berlitz; later, he receives a teaching position here.

Pola

A city in the former Yugoslavia where Joyce has his first job teaching English.

Marseille

A city in France where Joyce briefly considers moving.

Zurich

The city that Joyce and Nora pass through during their first European trip and later move to; both Joyce and his wife die here.

Exiles

A play written by Joyce.



Chamber Music

A collection of poems by Joyce.

Stephen Hero

An early version of Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man.

Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man

An autobiographical novel by Joyce.

Ulysses

A novel by Joyce, a modern retelling of the Ulysses myth.

Finnegan's Wake

Joyce's last novel.



Themes

Country and Nationality

For someone of his era and economic situation, James Joyce spends an extraordinary amount of time abroad, most of the time without any financial resources to fall back on. One of the main reasons for this is his preoccupation with Ireland, his native country. In his early life, Joyce writes articles and gives lectures on men who fought for Ireland's independence and on the subject of home rule. However, he is convinced that his destiny lies elsewhere and travels the globe searching for the best place to live, living in Yugoslavia, Italy, Switzerland and France. Though he claims to often feel disconnected from his native country, his writings depend on his identity as an Irishman, though they are often critical of the contemporary Irish situation. *Dubliners*, for example, paints a vivid portrait of the good and the bad in the Irish capital, while *Ulysses* shows a Jew wandering through Dublin over the course of one day and *Finnegan's Wake* brings in old Irish myths (among those of many other nationalities and languages) at the wake of an Irish man. Despite the prevalence of Irish themes in his writings, Joyce disconnects himself as much as possible from Ireland, traveling there as little as possible in his later years. In fact, when Yeats nominates him to the newly-founded Irish Academy, Joyce refuses this honor because of his feelings towards his motherland.

Family

James Joyce's family is one of the defining aspects of his life. Early on, he is his father's favorite son (and the oldest); the two go on long walks together and have long, deep talks as the other sons, particularly Stanislaus, look on. Despite Stanislaus's feelings that he is taken advantage of and overlooked in the Joyce family, he is also extremely close to his older brother, who adores him, though he borrows extreme amounts of money and cheats his brother in numerous ways. Later on, Joyce wants to serve as a benefactor to his remaining family members, though he does not have much money of his own and even offers to pay for singing lessons for one of his sisters. Two other sisters, Eva and Eileen, move to mainland Europe with him. Once Joyce begins to travel with Nora, eventually taking her as his de facto wife, he is extremely loyal to her (outside of several brief infatuations with other women) and the two live together until their deaths, marrying in 1931. At the same time that he adores his wife, whom he sees almost as a mother figure, he also allows her to take on heavy burdens—for example, the care of Lucia, who is a violent schizophrenic and convinced that her mother is out to get her. When World War II begins, Joyce protects his family, working hard to secure them all visas (including George and his son—Joyce's grandson—Stephen) to get over the Swiss border. He is devoted to his daughter after her illness begins and is convinced—despite all evidence to the contrary—that she can be cured.

Genius

"James Joyce," as a book, is an extraordinary portrait of genius and the sacrifices it demands, both for the bearer and for those around him or her. From a young age, Joyce appears to have been convinced that he was exceptional and a genius and that he would do something that would change the world. As a result of this, he has no trouble making demands on his family—for example, begging money from his mother, who has to pawn the family furniture to support his studies in Paris. Later, Nora makes similar sacrifices to support her husband, though she never reads his books and relies on the critical reception for her impressions of what he has written. She keeps his house and raises their children, rarely questioning him (though she will fly into rages at his extravagances when there is no food on the table, or when he drinks too much). Stanislaus is perhaps the person who bears the burden the hardest. An intelligent man in his own right, he works hard only to have his money taken from him by his brother, who wheedles it out of him or even straightforwardly has his brother's paycheck transferred into his own accounts. Throughout their lives, James has Stanislaus fact check and critique his manuscripts, take care of household matters when he is out of the country and other such chores. However, James is also a family man and appears to have loved all of these people dearly.

Style

Perspective

Richard Ellmann, the author of "James Joyce," is one of the foremost literary biographers of the twentieth century and his books win many awards and much praise. In fact, "James Joyce," originally published in 1959, wins the National Book Award in 1960. Although he is American, he works extensively on biographies of Irish authors, including Joyce, but also W.B. Yeats and Oscar Wilde. The influence of his work on Yeats is evident in "James Joyce," as he has tracked down extensive correspondence between the two authors, discussing the influence the older Yeats has on Joyce's career, especially at the beginning stages. In fact, the book itself is dedicated to George Yeats, the wife of the poet, who ostensibly helps Ellmann in gathering this information and who certainly aids him with writing works on Yeats (published in 1948 and 1954).

The second important note on perspective in "James Joyce" is that contemporary editions (those available today) are almost without exception the 1982 revision of Ellmann's 1959 work. In this book, he is able to add details that are not initially available, situate Joyce within the canon of the later twentieth century and have a broader perspective on the author's works which is perhaps not possible for the first edition. Biographers must be sensitive to the feelings and wishes of the family while members still survive (and particularly the Joyce estate, which is notoriously litigious); thus, readers can see that the revised edition has given the author slightly more leeway to discuss Joyce's failings, as well as his genius.

Tone

In "James Joyce," Ellmann takes a complex and nuanced tone towards his subject. This tone is perhaps one of the reasons the biography is so celebrated, as it presents an overall unbiased view of the author while showing both his good and bad qualities. Ellmann obviously has a great deal of respect and even affection for Joyce, as shown by the anecdotes that he chooses to include. While writing about his early life, for instance, Ellmann tells not only of Joyce's early success in school in great detail, giving dates and amounts of exhibitions he won, but also about his later detachment from academics and his flip attitude towards his studies. He tells endearing anecdotes about the writer, including his fear of thunder, while also making it clear that Joyce could be a detached and difficult man (for example, requesting money from his family when they could ill afford it, or taking his brother's wages without even asking).

Ellmann's ability to provide such a balanced picture of Joyce owes a lot to his extensive research, reading of Joyce's correspondence and the interviews he conducted with those close to him. In his preface to the 1959 edition, he writes that the book is born from conversations with Mrs. W. B. Yeats (George Yeats, to whom "James Joyce" is dedicated); he has extensive conversations with Joyce's family members, publishers,



family friends, and members of his literary circles as well. Since Joyce has a complex relationship with Yeats, by turns asking for favors and dismissing the older poet's works, the reader might imagine that the balanced tone of this book originates in the double-sided relationship between the two Irish authors.

Structure

The structure of "James Joyce" appears deceptively straightforward. Ellmann divides the book into five sections, each corresponding to particular geographic locations where Joyce lives throughout his life. The first section, Dublin, describes Joyce's early years. The second, Pola, Rome, Trieste, describes Joyce's early career and his travels with Nora. The third section, Zurich, shows the writer nearing the height of his creative talents, which continues into the fourth section, Paris. The fifth and final section, Return to Zurich, is briefer than the others and describes the Joyce family's travels to Zurich during the war, where they settle and live until Joyce's death in 1941.

However, although the chronological layout of the book seems relatively straightforward and normal for a biography (chapters are divided by year, for the most part, or by groups of years), the biography has several interesting diversions. Ellmann is an excellent literary critic in his own right and in the second section (which describes the period during which Joyce comes up with ideas for many of his most celebrated works), he takes chapters to describe the origins of these books. There is a chapter on the background of "The Dead," one of the short stories in *The Dubliners*, and one on the background of *Ulysses*. Interestingly, Ellmann also includes a chapter on "The Growth of Imagination," describing Joyce's creative development. In these chapters, Ellmann not only explores literal inspirations for Joyce's writings—the names of characters who correspond to neighbors of the Joyces, or lines from the work that originate in popular songs—but also sheds light on their interpretation (for example, his reading of the symbol of snow in "The Dead.")

Finally, the biography is notable in that Ellmann gives a quote from Joyce's work at the beginning of each chapter. Most of these quotes correspond chronologically with the time period Ellmann discusses, but they all have thematic or symbolic connections to the activities and events of each chapter.

Quotes

"John Joyce was one of the most gifted reprobates in Ireland, and genius was part of his multifarious spawn." (p. 22)

"The sense of home life as a continual crisis, averted from disaster by pawn-broker, obliging friend, or sudden job, became fixed in James Joyce's mind." (p. 41)

"Before Ibsen's letter Joyce was an Irishman; after it he was a European." (p. 75)

"How the human spirit might subsist while engaged in its affirmations was his next problem." (p. 97)

"Paris was Dublin's antithesis." (p. 111)

"To his Aunt Josephine Murray he confided, 'I want to be famous while I am alive.'" (p. 142)

"It was this beginning [with Nora] that gave June 16 its talismanic importance for Joyce. The experience of love was almost new to him in fact, though he had often considered it in imagination." (p. 155)

"Trieste resembled Dublin, too, in its Irredentist movement; the similarity here was so striking that Joyce found he could interest his Italian friends in Irish political parallels, though no doubt he would have compelled them to listen in any case." (p. 196)

"Here, in Chaplinesque caricature, are most of Joyce's central preoccupations: his financial need, his family, his country, his irreligion, his love of literature." (p. 218)

"The first stage of Joyce's exile, the most bitter, had ended in Rome, when he succumbed to a mood of tenderness in planning 'The Dead.'" (p. 338)

"Joyce's difficulties were not over; his temperament, as much as his circumstances, prevented their ever being so. But for several years to come they were largely of his own making." (p. 406)

"In all his books up to Finnegans Wake, Joyce sought to reveal the coincidence of the present with the past." (p. 551)

"In his earlier books Joyce forced modern literature to accept new styles, new subject matter, new kinds of plot and characterization. In his last book he forced it to accept a new area of being and a new language." (p. 717)

Topics for Discussion

Joyce moves constantly throughout his life. How do the cities he lives in inspire his works?

Discuss Joyce's relationship to Ireland. How does this relationship shift, or change, throughout his life?

Compare and contrast Joyce's relationships with his mother and with Nora. How do the two women resemble each other and how are they different?

What is the influence of John Joyce on his son's life? Give details and examples.

How does Lucia Joyce's mental decline affect Joyce in his later years? How are her afflictions present in *Finnegan's Wake*, if at all?

While he writes extremely innovative books, Joyce receives a typical education for a middle-class Irishman of his time. How does this early education affect his later writings?

Joyce, like his father, briefly undertakes medical training. Is this training evident in any of his novels? On a linguistic level, how might it have affected his writing?

Discuss Joyce's relationship with his wife, Nora. How would you characterize this relationship and why was it so successful for so many years?