

James Joyce

A Selection from *Dubliners*



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James Joyce

A Selection from *Dubliners*

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James Joyce and *Dubliners*

James Joyce is famous for writing some of the most important fiction of the twentieth century. He developed new styles of writing and influenced many other writers. Many readers, critics and other writers believe that his novel *Ulysses* is the best novel of the century. They

also tend to believe that his next major work, *Finnegans Wake*, is the most difficult novel that has ever been written!

He was born in Dublin on February 2nd, 1882. He was the eldest of ten children. There were problems in this middle class family; Joyce's father became an alcoholic and had serious financial problems. However, Joyce was a very good student at school and from the age of 14 enjoyed writing short stories. He went on to attend University College, Dublin. He studied Modern European Languages and after university went to Paris to study Medicine.

In 1903 he returned to Dublin because his mother was very ill. After her death, he stayed in Ireland and met Nora Barnacle, a waitress in a Dublin bar. They became partners and together they left Ireland in 1904 to live in mainland Europe. Joyce never came back to live in Ireland. His last visit was in 1912 but he visited it often in his imagination as he wrote about Ireland and Irish life extensively during his whole life. Other writers, such as the American Ezra Pound, supported and encouraged Joyce even though his writing was too modern in style and in theme to be widely popular. He wanted to write about the reality of Irish life. In 1914 his first full novel, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*,

appeared. In addition, he published a collection of fifteen short stories about men who wasted their lives, about teenagers who were trapped by their families and by religion, and about women who had no true independence. This was *Dubliners*. All the stories are set in Dublin itself, even though Joyce was now living away from the city. He said that he wanted to write about childhood, adolescence¹ and maturity; the last story is about death.

James Joyce believed that at the beginning of the twentieth century Irish society was 'paralysed', in other words that it was stuck in the past and that it was impossible for its members to develop. He wrote in a letter that the city of Dublin was 'the centre of paralysis'. The stories in *Dubliners* were a mirror of life in the city and he hoped that after seeing the truth of the situation Irish people would change their lives for the better.

In 1914 his only play, *Exiles*, was written. However, he now began to concentrate on writing *Ulysses*. Ulysses was of course an ancient Greek hero but Joyce wrote about a very different type of man, a Dubliner, Leopold Bloom, who has various encounters in the bars and streets and homes of the city. The whole story takes place on one day, 16th June 1904. The book was very unpopular at first as it shocked people with its realism



James Joyce statue in Dublin

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1. **adolescence** : the time between childhood and adulthood; approximately between 14 and 19 years of age.



People celebrating Bloomsday in Dublin

about sex and about urban life. It was also quite difficult to understand as the style was unlike anything that had been written before. The book was prosecuted in the USA, banned in Britain and was unavailable in Ireland for many years. However, it is now a famous much-loved book and there is even a special day to celebrate it – Bloomsday, on June 16th. What happens each year on Bloomsday? In Dublin, people may wear special clothes to look like characters from *Ulysses*, they may visit the places which are included in the novel or they may give public readings from the novel. They may even try to be at a place at exactly the time when Joyce's main character, Leopold Bloom, visits that place during the twenty-four hours of the story. People may eat the same breakfast as Joyce describes and they may visit 7 Eccles Street, the house where Leopold and Molly Bloom live. Fiction becomes reality! Bloomsday is celebrated in cities all over the world wherever there are fans of the novel.

Joyce and Nora and their two children lived in many European cities. He spent most time in Trieste, Zurich and Paris. His health was never

good and he had several operations on his eye. That is why in several photographs he is wearing a black eye-patch to protect his eye. This did not stop him from writing. In the Second World War he had to leave Paris for the South of France because of the Nazi invasion. He eventually was given asylum in Switzerland and he died in Zurich in 1941.

Eight facts about James Joyce

- His full name was James Augustine Aloysius Joyce.
- He suffered from a phobia of dogs and thunderstorms.
- He won a bronze medal at an Irish singing festival.
- The action of his most famous novel, *Ulysses*, takes place on June 16th, the day he first went out with Nora Barnacle, his future wife.
- Nora's surname, Barnacle, is the name of a kind of sea creature which sticks to rocks and boats.
- In one summer, 1904, Joyce met Nora, began to write *Dubliners* and decided to leave Ireland.
- He invented the word 'quark' — later, physicists used it as the name of a subatomic particle.
- After his death, the Irish government refused to allow his body to be brought to Ireland from Paris because, at that time, they disapproved of his novels.

Comprehension check

1 Give brief answers to the following questions.

- 1 Which is Joyce's most famous and highly praised book?
- 2 What career did Joyce prepare for in Paris?
- 3 When did he emigrate from Ireland?
- 4 How many stories are there in *Dubliners*?
- 5 How did most people react to *Ulysses* when it was first published?
- 6 Why is Bloomsday celebrated on June 16th?
- 7 Why did he go to Switzerland?

Before you read

This is a story about a young teenage boy who becomes obsessed with an older girl. He hardly knows her but he is determined to buy her a present to please her.

Thinking about the story

- 1 In the story, 'Araby' is the name of a special market, a 'bazaar', that opens for a few days on the edge of Dublin. Choose four reasons from a-f which are likely to attract people to visit this market.
- a ☐ It has a glamorous, magical name.
 - b ☐ It is likely to sell the same things as the shops in Dublin city centre.
 - c ☐ There is only a short opportunity to buy things there.
 - d ☐ It is likely to be very expensive.
 - e ☐ It is likely to sell unusual or special things.
 - f ☐ It is a good opportunity to have fun shopping.

Thinking about the behaviour of characters

- 2 When teenage boys fall in love for the first time, do you think that A or B is more likely to be true?
- | | |
|--|--|
| 1A ☐ They tell everyone about it. | 1B ☐ They keep it a secret. |
| 2A ☐ Their mood keeps changing. | 2B ☐ They are always happy. |
| 3A ☐ They like to be alone to dream about love. | 3B ☐ They like to be in groups. |
| 4A ☐ They try to be with the other person. | 4B ☐ They are shy and avoid the other person. |

Araby





STORY 1



I lived with my uncle and aunt in North Richmond Street, a cul-de-sac.¹ It was quiet except when the boys came out of the Christian Brothers' School. An empty house stood at the end. The outsides of the other houses were brown and seemed to show that decent, respectable people lived inside them.



track 02

The previous tenant of our house had been a priest who had died in the back room. I found some old books in a room behind the kitchen. The garden was wild, with an apple tree and a few untidy bushes. The priest had left all his money to charity.

When the short days of winter came, it got dark before we finished dinner.

When the other children and I met in the street, the houses looked dark and serious.

1. **cul-de-sac** : a street that is closed at one end; also known as a 'dead-end street'.



The street lamps lifted their weak light towards the ever-changing violet sky.

The cold air stung us and we played until our bodies glowed. Our shouts echoed in the silent street. We went into dark muddy lanes where rough children lived, into wet gardens and into the stables where we watched the groom look after the horses.

If my uncle came round the corner, we hid in the shadows until he had gone in. My friend Mangan had an older sister who used to call him when it was time to stop playing and come in. We hid from her as well but if she stayed on the doorstep, Mangan went home. She waited for him, her figure outlined in the light of the door. I stood looking at her. Her brown dress swung as she moved her body and her soft hair moved from side to side.

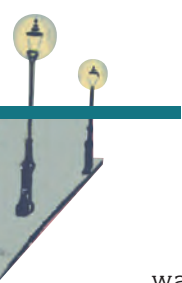
Every morning, I lay on the floor of the front room, looking through the window and watching her door. Nobody could see me. When she came out, my heart leaped. I picked up my schoolbooks and ran outside to follow her. I kept sight of her brown figure until, just before we went in different directions, I walked and passed her. This happened morning after morning. I had never spoken to her except a few words but her name was magic to me. I was stupidly in love.

I thought about her all the time, even in unromantic places. My aunt went to the market on Saturday evenings and I carried some of her parcels. There were drunk men and shouting women, shop-boys and street singers. But the noise made me feel special like a romantic hero. I did not understand my emotions.

I whispered Mangan's sister's name and I often started to cry. I didn't know if I would ever speak to her or tell her about my love. But my body was like a harp² that reacted to her words and gestures.

2. **a harp** : a typical Irish musical instrument.





STORY 1

One evening I went into the room where the priest had died. It was dark and rainy outside and silent in the house. I heard the rain falling persistently on the wet earth and a weak light gleamed from the lamps. I wanted to lose myself in the darkness and the silence. I pressed my trembling hands together like someone praying and I murmured, 'O love! O love!' many times.

At last she spoke to me. I was so confused I couldn't answer.

'Are you going to Araby?' she asked.

Araby was a big bazaar³ on the outskirts of Dublin. You could buy all sorts of things there just before Christmas.

'It will be splendid. I'd love to go,' she said.

'Why can't you?' I asked.

She turned a silver bracelet round and round her wrist. 'I have to go on a retreat⁴ with the nuns', she explained.

I was standing alone with her as her brother and two other boys were busy fighting. The light from the street lamp lit up the curve of her neck and her hair and her hand. It lit one side of her dress and the edge of her petticoat⁵ which was just visible.

'You're lucky, you can go,' she said.

'If I go,' I said, 'I'll bring you something.'

For the next few days, I only thought about Mangan's sister and the bazaar. The exotic word 'Araby' called to me. I asked my aunt for permission to go there on Saturday night.

She was surprised but she agreed. I didn't concentrate in school and my teacher became angry with me. I had no patience⁶ with

-
3. **a bazaar** : a collection of shops or stalls which sell a variety of goods; in this case, it is temporary, open for only a few days. There are famous bazaars in places like Istanbul and Morocco but 'Araby' is a local Irish market.
 4. **a retreat** : a religious event where you go away to pray and meditate.
 5. **a petticoat** : a light skirt which women might wear under their dress.
 6. **patience** : the ability to wait for things without complaining.



serious things and life seemed monotonous and stupid. Only Araby mattered to me.

On Saturday morning, I reminded my uncle that I wanted to go there. I needed to get some money from him so that I could buy something at Araby. He was too busy to pay me attention.

‘Yes, boy, I know,’ he said.

I walked slowly to school in a bad mood. The weather was very cold. I had a bad feeling about the day.

When I came home for dinner, my uncle had not come home yet. It was still early. I stared at the clock. It ticked loudly. I escaped from the sound and went upstairs. I went from room to room singing. My friends were playing in the street outside the window. I looked out and saw the dark house where she lived. I stood there for an hour, imagining her figure with the lamplight on her neck. I remembered her hand and the edge of her petticoat.

When I came downstairs again, a neighbour was sitting with my aunt. It was Mrs Mercer, a very talkative old lady. I had to listen to all their gossip. An hour passed and my uncle still didn’t come home. Mrs Mercer left after eight o’clock. I began to walk up and down the room. My uncle didn’t appear. My aunt said:

‘I’m afraid you won’t be able to go to the bazaar tonight.’

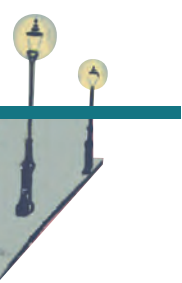
At nine o’clock, I heard my uncle’s key in the door. He was talking to himself; I think he was late because he had been drinking with his friends. I asked him for the money while he was eating dinner.

‘I forgot about it,’ he said. ‘The bazaar will be closed and everyone will be asleep.’

I did not smile. My aunt spoke to him.

‘Can’t you give him the money and let him go? He has waited a long time.’

‘I’m very sorry,’ said my uncle. ‘Where are you going?’



STORY 1

‘To Araby,’ I told him for the second time.

He gave me the money and continued joking, beginning to sing an old song about an Arab prince and his horse.

I ran out of the house and went to the station. There was a special train to the bazaar but it was empty because it was so late. I sat down and waited while the train was delayed in the station. Finally, it moved slowly among the houses and over the twinkling river. At the next station, crowds of people wanted to get on but the porter said this was a train only for the bazaar. At last it arrived. It was ten minutes to ten. In front of me was a large building. Above the door ‘ARABY’ was written!

I had twenty-four pence from my uncle. I looked for the cheap entrance but when I couldn’t find it, I paid twelve pence to go inside. I entered a big hall. Nearly all the stalls were closed because it was so late and most of the hall was dark. A few people were at the open stalls. In front of a sign ‘Café Chantant’, some men were counting money. I listened to the coins falling.

I went to one of the stalls. There were two tall jars at the entrance painted in an Arabic style. I passed inside and looked at porcelain vases and tea-sets decorated with flowers.

At the door, a young lady was laughing with two young gentlemen. I listened to them talking.

‘O, I never said that!’

‘O, but you did!’

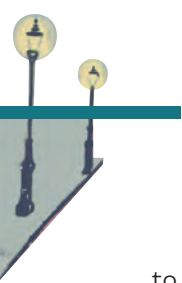
‘O, but I didn’t!’

‘That’s a lie!’

The young lady saw me, came over and asked: ‘Do you want to buy anything?’

She didn’t seem really interested. I looked at the great jars like two eastern guards at the entrance. I murmured: ‘No, thank you.’





STORY 1

She changed the position of one of the vases and went back to her companions. They began talking again. Once or twice she glanced at me over her shoulder.

I waited by the counter for a little longer. I pretended that I really wanted to examine the vases. Then I turned away slowly and walked down the middle of the bazaar. I heard a voice call from above that the light was out. The upper part of the hall was now completely dark.

Gazing up into the darkness, I saw myself as a creature that was driven by empty dreams. I was mocked for my vanity.⁷ My eyes burned with anguish⁸ and anger.

-
7. **vanity** : thinking about yourself, being proud of your own appearance or personality or achievements.
 8. **anguish** : deep emotional pain.

The text and *beyond*

Comprehension check

1 For each question, choose the correct answer – a, b, c or d.

- 1 The description of the children playing in the street
 - a ☐ uses light and sound to make it vivid.
 - b ☐ is negative about the children's behaviour.
 - c ☐ emphasises the children's fear in the darkness.
 - d ☐ is written from the point of view of Mangan's sister.
- 2 The boy
 - a ☐ knows Mangan's sister well.
 - b ☐ likes her brown dress.
 - c ☐ watches her and follows her.
 - d ☐ calls out to her through the window of the priest's old room.
- 3 Mangan's sister is sad because
 - a ☐ she cannot go to the bazaar.
 - b ☐ she has no money to buy things at the bazaar.
 - c ☐ she doesn't like the nuns.
 - d ☐ she doesn't think the boy will buy her anything.
- 4 When the boy arrives at Araby, he finds
 - a ☐ it is full of laughter and conversation.
 - b ☐ it is not as glamorous as its name.
 - c ☐ it has no shops which are open.
 - d ☐ the cheap entrance is closed.
- 5 At the end of the story, the boy
 - a ☐ feels that his dreams of love are ridiculous.
 - b ☐ wishes he had bought the vases.
 - c ☐ is angry that he has wasted his entrance money.
 - d ☐ realises that the goods at Araby are too expensive for him.

Key word transformation

2 Complete the second sentence so that it has a similar meaning to the first sentence. In each case use *might* OR *must* OR *should* as one of the words. You must use between two and five words, including *might* or *must* or *should*. There is an example at the beginning (0).

- 0 It seems certain that the children enjoyed themselves when they were playing.
The children must have enjoyed themselves when they were playing.
- 1 It was wrong for the boy to follow the girl.
The boy the girl.
- 2 It was possible for the boy to find a nice present.
The boy a nice present.
- 3 It seems certain that his uncle forgot about the money.
His uncle about the money.
- 4 There is no doubt that the girl knew that he was in love with her.
The girl that he was in love with her.
- 5 Catching the earlier train to Araby was the best thing for the boy to do.
The boy the earlier train to Araby.
- 6 Perhaps it was dangerous sometimes to play in the street.
It dangerous sometimes to play in the street.

Vocabulary

3 The adjectives 1-5 come from the story 'Araby'. Match each one with an item from a to e which has a similar meaning.

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1 ☐ exotic | a continuing without stopping |
| 2 ☐ monotonous | b with a good character or reputation |
| 3 ☐ patient | c different and exciting, foreign and glamorous |
| 4 ☐ persistent | d boring, all of one kind |
| 5 ☐ respectable | e willing to wait |

Writing

- 4 Imagine that you have promised to buy a present for a friend from a one-day bazaar. Write a note to your friend. In the note:

apologise for not buying a present
 explain why you were unable to buy it
 promise to buy her/him a present at the next bazaar
 hope that she/he enjoyed the weekend
 hope that you will meet her/him again soon

Write 50 to 100 words.

Gapped text

- 5 **FIRST** Read the text below about 'Araby' and think of a word which best fits each gap. Use only one word in each gap. There is an example at the beginning (0).

Joyce's story shows us how a failed attempt (0)^{to}..... impress a girl leads a young boy to realise the falseness of (1) own dreams of love and glamour. The bazaar is a symbol of the gap (2) dreams and reality. In his imagination, it was an exotic place where he was going to find a special gift (3) the girl. In reality there is nothing on sale which matches his image of a romantic Arabic bazaar. Perhaps, he wanted to escape the monotonous routine of his everyday life. Just as the old priest who had died in the house celebrated religion, the boy celebrated love. He spent all his time thinking (4) Mangan's sister. However, (5) fact, he hardly knew her. Joyce does not even allow us to know the name of the girl; she is an anonymous person whom the boy imagines he loves. As readers, we can see that she has (6) interest in the boy except perhaps as a way of getting something from the bazaar.

Joyce was very interested (7) the idea of an 'epiphany'. He meant by this a moment of intense emotion and realisation when someone realises the truth about his or her existence. The boy has an epiphany in the darkness of the bazaar as (8) closes and his dreams disappear. He sees his situation truthfully. Although it is a negative 'epiphany', it means that he has developed his understanding of himself and his life.

Before you read

This is a story about a young woman who has the opportunity to leave her dull, restricted life in Dublin for a new, romantic life in Argentina. Does she choose freedom or her old life?

Vocabulary

1 Match the verbs on the left (1-5) with their definitions on the right (a-e).

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 ☐ argue | a ☐ behave towards someone in a particular way |
| 2 ☐ isolate | b ☐ tell someone they are acting incorrectly |
| 3 ☐ look forward | c ☐ separate from others |
| 4 ☐ reprimand | d ☐ express different opinions, perhaps angrily |
| 5 ☐ treat | e ☐ be happy and confident about the future |

Context

2 Complete the sentences about Eveline with verbs from exercise 1 in the correct form.

- Eveline lives with her father, who doesn't her well.
- She often with him about money.
- She works in a shop where the manager often her.
- Her friends have died or left the area; this has her.
- She is to marrying and living in a new country.

Thinking about the story

3 Think of some reasons why it might be difficult to go to live in a different country. Write them down and put them in order of importance. Then compare your ideas with another student's.

Eveline

