

James Joyce's

Dubliners

20th Century Experimentation

- All of the arts are into rich experimentation in this period.
- All experiments are related to massive dislocations—including World Wars, the Holocaust, etc.
- However, these experiments may have happened even if the world hadn't been in turmoil.
- Joyce is considered to be one of the greatest experimenters of the 20th century
- Joyce was a big fan of Ibsen. He learned Norwegian to study Ibsen in native language. He wrote Ibsen explaining how much his work meant to him. Ibsen later sent him a letter of thanks.

James Joyce: *Dubliners*, 1914

- ◉ Dubliners, a collection of short stories containing “The Dead.”
- ◉ Joyce shifted literature into the internal world of the character and into what mental adjustments he/she makes.
- ◉ Used epiphany—a showing forth or revelation.
- ◉ Early in his career, Joyce kept an epiphany notebook, to record moments in which revelations seemed to have occurred.

Dubliners

- All stories are set in Dublin.
- Joyce had a love-hate relationship with Ireland. While he wrote about Ireland, he found it to be oppressive.
- Wrote most of the stories in this collection while living in Italy.
- He preferred more liberal climate of Europe.
- He chose Dublin because it was “the center of paralysis” from narrowness and isolation and from too strict moral guidelines.

Four stages of *Dubliners*

- The 15 stories in *Dubliners* are divided into four sections: childhood, adolescence, adult life, and public life.
- “The Dead” is a summary of the themes of the first 14 stories.
- Put in chronological order, there are 3 childhood stories, 4 about adolescence, 4 about mature life, 3 about public life, and then, “The Dead.”

Rich Textures—Dublin

- While Joyce doesn't much rely on plot, the textures and richness of each sentence carries the story along.
- He captures clearly the feeling and richness of Dublin, including streets, pubs, landmarks, etc. However, these details also function symbolically. This makes his use of realism go a step further.
- Therefore the story is about individual protagonists AND about Dublin itself.

Rich Textures—The Epiphany

- Every detail in the text supports the final epiphany.
- We also see a lot of religious symbolism. This makes it an ultimate quest for a holy grail. This makes the let down at the end even greater.

“The Dead”—the most popular of the selections in *Dubliners*

- As in all of the stories in the book, we need to read each detail carefully.
- As the story progresses, we shift to Gabriel's point of view. At the end we are seeing things through his eyes.
- Usually, this night is a good night for Gabriel. However, this night three disconcerting things happen to Gabriel:
 - 1.) He upsets Lily and she criticizes men.
 - 2.) Gretta teases him about how he worries about galoshes.
 - 3.) Miss Ivors makes Gabriel overreact.

The ending of “The Dead”

- Gabriel loves seeing his wife listening to Bartell D’Arcy sing and feels desire for her. He recalls their tender moments.
- Gretta is unresponsive and is egged on until she talks about Michael Furey.
- Gabriel is overcome with shame and sadness and realizes he is probably pathetic in her eyes.
- This scene is reminiscent of end of *A Doll’s House*. Two paragraphs at end are famous.

Details to look for in “The Dead”

- The balcony scene picture at the aunts' house is foreshadowing for the end of the story with Michael Furey.
- Aunt Julia's song is sung about a woman about to go mad.
- Dinner talk is all about the past.
- Bartell D'Arcy's song is about death due to longing.
- Gabriel hears tapping at window like ghost trying to get in. This image occurs often in literature.
- Michael and Gabriel are the names of archangels, as seen in *Paradise Lost*. Principal command is given to Michael, second command to Gabriel.

More details

- The Morkan party is after New Year's—probably on the date of Epiphany. This is the final epiphany of the story.
- Snow at outset of party seems like freedom—Gabriel yearns for a walk in snow. At end snow is depressing.
- Ending is somewhat Gabriel's reconciliation with Ireland, when he thinks of Western Ireland. Gabriel lets go of his ego and *perhaps* wakes up the next day “A Sadder and a Wiser Man.”