

Eveline by Jame Joyce (1914)

Summary

Eveline is a girl that lives in Ireland. She meets a sailor who has offered to take her to Buenos Ayres to start a life together. She agrees, but as she is preparing to leave, she thinks about her town and family. Her domestic life is all that she knows, and she made a promise to her mother to care for her family, but her father was abusive and a new life could be thrilling. Eventually at the port, they are boarding the boat, but Eveline cannot get on.

Theme

- death in life- Eveline is paralyzed with a decision

Characters

Eveline:

- 19 years old
- shop worker and nanny
- lives in the past
- indecisive
- wants to see the best in people
- loyal to her family
- doesn't want to live uneventful, domestic life like her mother did
- enjoys new things (movies, adventures with Frank, Frank)
- would rather stay in a mediocre life that she knows than go to an uncertain life
- she doesn't choose to stay, but rather chooses not to make a decision

Frank

- sailor
- loves to travel
- kind
- could be a symbol for the future
- willing to jump into the unknown

Father

- abusive
- getting old
- becoming nicer to Eveline

Voice

- Eveline's thoughts
- third person
- reminiscent of the past
- not very detailed
- does not justify actions

Relationships

- Eveline's mother and one brother is dead
- has one brother who is still alive
- grew up with an abusive father
- father is becoming nicer, so she wants to stay to care for him
- promised dead mother would care for father
- relationship with Frank started for fun, but she grew to like him
- fear Frank will "drown" her in their new life

Formal Elements

- dust symbolizes her reminiscing about the past

Implications

- demonstrates the effect holding on to the past can have on someone's life
- shows the lack of options available to a woman in Ireland at that time