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Paralysis

1. In James Joyce's short story "Eveline," the pattern of paralysis is introduced subtly and emerges over time to be a key in understanding the story’s ending. Paralysis is introduced very early on, when the narrator states, "She sat at the window watching the evening invade the avenue" (29). Eveline is staring out the window, sitting and without action. Shortly afterward, she thinks about how she is going to be soon leaving just like the "others." At this moment, her appreciation for the familiar is mentioned "Home! She looked around the room, reviewing all its familiar objects" (29). This aspect of familiarity begins as the source of her paralysis.
2. A pivotal moment in the emerging pattern of paralysis occurs when the narrator jumps back to Eveline, who is still thinking of departure. She has spent her final moments just sitting as the narrator comments, "It was a hard life, but now she was about to leave, she did not find it a totally undesirable life" ( 31). With her departure ever closing in, she begins to think back to her earlier memories. Eveline's soon departure clouds her perception and causes her to recollect the past as being better than it was.
3. The pattern culminates when Eveline is at the point where she

must decide if she is leaving. However, right before she takes the step and removes herself from her comfort at home, she backs away. She wanted to leave, but fear gripped her and caused her to stay at home: "All the seas of the world tumbled about her heart. He was drawing her into them: he would drown her. She gripped with both hands at the iron railing" (34). With an opportunity to embrace a new life that promised a change, the fear of the unknown caused her to be "paralyzed." As a result, she missed the most prominent opportunity for change.