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Prestwick House
Literature
Teaching Unit
Chapter-by-Chapter Study Guide



Dubliners

by James Joyce

- Learning objectives
- Study Guide with short-answer questions
- Background information
- Vocabulary in context
- Multiple-choice test
- Essay questions
- Literary terms



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 **Prestwick House**

P.O. Box 658, Clayton, DE 19938
www.prestwickhouse.com
800.932.4593

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Dubliners

Objectives

By the end of this Unit, the student will be able to:

1. define vocabulary words from the stories.
2. discuss the author's writing style; point out examples in the story of how his tone, diction, subtle comments, and objectivity support the themes in the story.
3. point out the extent to which the following overall themes are present in each of the stories:
 - Many of the characters experience a form of paralysis that results in an inability to change their lives
 - The Dubliners of this era succumb to temptations which contribute to a morally decaying society.
 - The lives of the older and younger generations in Dublin are intertwined, with each influencing the other.
4. discuss the author's opinions on the following political and social issues:
 - the importance of Parnell and the politics of the time on the Dubliners
 - the role of Nationalism in Ireland
 - the impact alcoholism has on Irish families
 - the emergence of materialism in Dublin
5. discuss the ways these stories, broken down into the four groups below, tell the coming of age story for the inhabitants of Dublin:
 - childhood
 - adolescence
 - maturity
 - public life
6. recognize that in many of the stories, the protagonist experiences an epiphany; identify when it occurs and what each character learns from his or her epiphany.

Dubliners

Questions for Essay and Discussion

1. Joyce refers to the stories *The Sisters*, *An Encounter*, and *Araby* as representing Childhood. Briefly summarize each of these stories. What aspects of Childhood does each story explore? How do the protagonists of each story get along with the adults in their life?
2. Which stories in the collection does Joyce consider to be representative of Adolescence? Why?
3. What does the reader learn about the lives of young women in Dublin from the story *Eveline*? In your opinion, is Eveline trapped in her life?
4. Do you feel any sympathy for the character Jimmy in *After the Race*? What subtle comment on businessmen in Dublin is Joyce making in this story?
5. Why is it ironic that Corley is swindling the young woman out of her hard-earned money in the story *Two Gallants*? What subtle political comment might Joyce be making about the police in this story? What is the overall theme of this story?
6. How would you describe Polly in the story *The Boarding House*? Is she a moral young woman? What are her goals and dreams? Does she achieve them by the end of the story?
7. Why is Chandler from the story *The Little Cloud* referred to as Little Chandler? At the beginning of the story, Little Chandler is excited about his reunion with Gallaher. What dream does Little Chandler hope Gallaher will help him to achieve? In your opinion, to what extent is Little Chandler trapped or paralyzed by the circumstances of his life, so that he is unable to break away from his dull or unsatisfying life?
8. What is the significance of the title of the story *Counterparts*? Why might the ending of this story be called ironic?
9. In what sense might Maria's life in the story *Clay* be described as sad? Why does Joe cry after Maria's song?
10. Why does Mr. Duffy, in the story *A Painful Case*, break off his relationship with Mrs. Sinico? What is implied, but not stated, about the real cause of her death? What insight does Mr. Duffy discover about himself when he reflects on his relationship with Mrs. Sinico? In your opinion, is Mr. Duffy trapped by his life or can he still make some changes?
11. The stories *A Painful Case*, *Clay*, *The Little Cloud*, and *Counterparts* comprise what Joyce refers to as Maturity because in each story the protagonist is a fully developed adult. What decision does the protagonist in each story make early in his or her life that has far-reaching consequences in that person's adulthood?

toil – difficultly proceed
truculent – fierce, cruel
venial – a minor or forgivable sin
vested – dressed
vestments – clothes worn by priests or other ecclesiastical figures
worms – coils used in stills (implements used to distill alcohol); distillery

1. Why is the boy looking for two candles in Father Flynn's window? What is the cause of Father Flynn's death?

2. Briefly describe Old Cotter. How does the boy feel about him?

3. Why do you suppose the boy has a nightmare about Father Flynn's face?

4. In these stories, critics praise Joyce for his ability, in a very few words, to convey to the reader a clear portrait of a character. Find a sentence in this story describing Father Flynn, which illustrates this technique.

Section II: Adolescence

Eveline

Vocabulary

blackthorne – a cane or stick
cretonne – a cloth used for curtains
fervent – passionate, enthusiastic
harmonium – a small musical instrument
illumined – lit
nix – [slang] quiet, silent
palpitations – the rapid beating or fluttering of one's heart
squander – to waste

1. Describe the circumstances in Eveline's life which contributes to her desire to escape her responsibilities at home by running away with a sailor to Buenos Ayres.

2. Some critics believe that the protagonists in these stories usually experience an epiphany. What sentences in this story tell of a moment of insight Eveline has into the value of her life?

3. What is revealed to the reader about the lives of women living in Dublin during this era?

1. Find the simile on the first page of this story. How is it unusual?

2. What do the following descriptions of Corley reveal to the reader about his character? In what way is this description an example of irony? What subtle political statement might Joyce be making in this description?

“Corley was the son of an inspector of police and he had inherited his father’s frame and gait. He walked with his hands by his sides, holding himself erect and swaying his head from side to side. His head was large, globular and oily; it sweated in all weathers; and his large round hat, set upon it sideways, looked like a bulb which had grown out of another.”

3. Find a passage in this story that might be interpreted as a moment of epiphany for Lenehan.

4. At the end of the story, it seems as if Corley is going to walk away from Lenehan without answering Lenehan’s calls for him to stop. Finally,

“Corley halted at the first lamp and stared grimly before him. Then with a grave gesture he extended a hand towards the light and, smiling opened it slowly to the gaze of his disciple. A small gold coin shone in the palm.”

How do you think Corley feels at this moment? Why do you think he seems to be walking away from Lenehan?

5. Many of the stories in this collection have references to religion and/or the Catholic Church. Find a passage in this chapter that subtly alludes to the church. What statement about religion do you think Joyce is making in each passage you select?
