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## Literature Teaching Unit

Chapter-by-Chapter Study Guide



### A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man

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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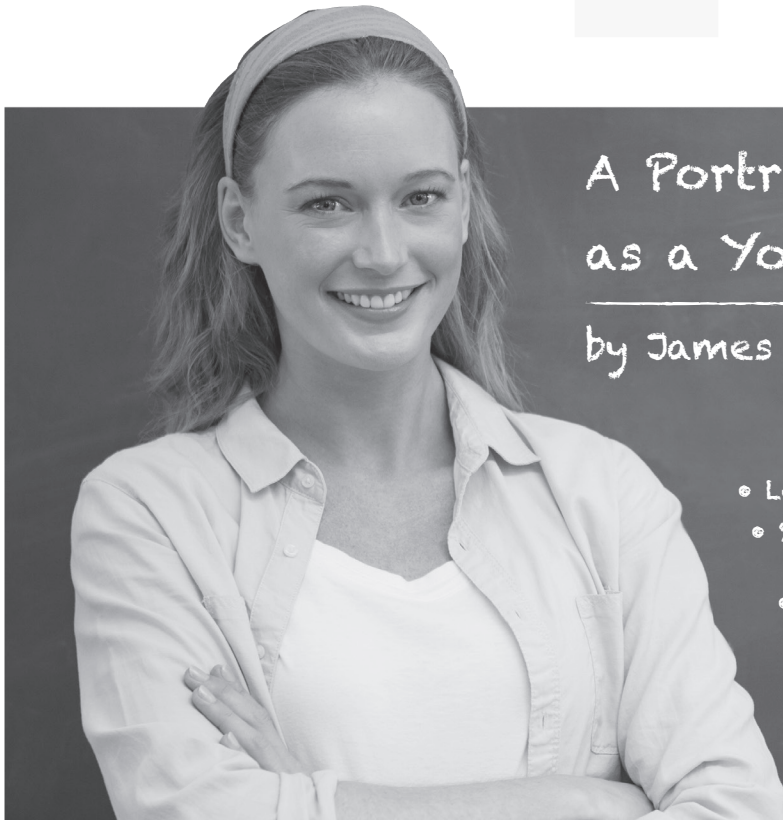
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*Chapter-by-Chapter Study Guide*



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## Objectives

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

1. discuss the author's writing style, including the following:
  - vocabulary consistent with the age of the protagonist
  - use of opposites
  - stream of consciousness.
2. recognize the following symbols and comment on their significance in the story: the colors red and green, a skull, water, bridges, kisses, birds.
3. illustrate with details from the text the characteristics the protagonist possesses from childhood which contribute to his decision to become an artist: poor eyesight, superior intelligence, imagination, courage, introspective analysis, arrogance, individuality.
4. relate Stephen's reason for leaving Ireland to the priest's treatment of Parnell and society's treatment of artists.
5. cite incidents from the story to trace Stephen's growing separation from the church beginning with his childhood superstitions, through adolescent experimentation with sin and repentance, to young adulthood when he is capable of deciding for himself about the church's place in his life.
6. track Stephen's changing relationship with his family from a young child to a young adult.
7. point out the relationship between Stephen's decision to break with the church and the rift in his relationship with his mother.
8. relate incidents from the story to support the theme that authority figures do not live up to the standards they set for others.
9. define important vocabulary words in the story.
10. discuss how Stephen handles his increasing sexual desires, as he matures, commenting on why he feels guilt over these impulses.
11. explain young Stephen's perception of the Catholic church's position on the nature of physical and spiritual punishment in hell.
12. point out the irony in Stephen's decision to go into the streets to find a remote church for his confession.
13. define parody and point out in what ways Stephen's religious devotions are a parody that makes fun of his efforts to repent his sins.

### Questions for Essay and Discussion

1. Of all the places Stephen lives in this story, where do you think he is the happiest? Why?
2. Why do Dante and Mr. Casey fight at Christmas dinner? How does Stephen feel about Dante?
3. What advice does Mr. Dedalus give his son before sending him to boarding school? How well does Stephen follow his father's instructions?
4. Write three character descriptions of Stephen: one when he is at Clongowes, one when he travels to Cork with his father, and one when he is a University student. Be sure to include the characteristics of an artist that are present in his character at all three stages in his life.
5. Define "stream of consciousness" as it applies to literature. In what ways do you think it enhances or detracts from the reader's understanding of Stephen's development in this novel?
6. Explain the significance of the following symbols in the story: bridges, red and green, water, skull, kiss, birds. Be sure to describe the incidents from the story where the symbols occur.
7. How do the priests in the story help shape Stephen's negative attitude toward the church? In what ways do priests fail to live up to the standards they set for their students?
8. Who is Mercedes? In what way is Stephen's relationship with Mercedes similar to his relationship to Emma and the prostitutes?
9. Why does Stephen squander the money he wins from writing an essay?
10. What are the three reasons Father Arnall is having a retreat? List the four topics he plans to discuss. Which topic does he spend the least amount of time on? Why?
11. Define the spiritual punishment of loss. What are the three forms of punishment a man in hell experiences because of his conscience?
12. Why are Stephen's devotional activities following Father Arnall's sermon and Stephen's confession examples of parody? Why is Stephen's choice of a church for his confession an example of irony?
13. For what reasons, even after devoting himself to prayer, does Stephen believe he has still failed to be worthy of God's grace?
14. How do Stephen and Cranly differ in their views of Stephen's mother, the church, and Ireland?

## VOCABULARY (CONT.)

surplice – a choir robe  
 tepid – lukewarm  
 tramhorse – a horse that pulls a streetcar (tram)  
 trussed – tied up  
 whet – to stimulate

**Pages 11-12 - Stephen as a small child at home**

1. What do the following quotations or phrases from this first part of the chapter have in common? What do they reveal about the author's style of writing?

“Once upon a time and a very good time it was...” “The moocow came down the road where Betty Byrne lived...” “His mother had a nicer smell than his father.” (Pgs. 11 & 12)

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2. Parnell is a member of the Irish Party working for the cause of Home Rule for Ireland. He is discredited when his relationship with a married woman, Kitty O'Shea, is made public. What do the colors in the following passage symbolize?

“Dante had two brushes in her press. The brush with the maroon velvet back was for Michael Davitt and the brush with the green velvet back was for Parnell.” (Pg. 2)

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3. What is Stephen's punishment for wetting the bed? Why does Dante tell him the eagles will pull his eyes out?

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6. How does Stephen demonstrate great courage in this section?

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7. What theme for this story is illustrated by the following passage from Stephen’s meeting with the rector?

- O, well, it was a mistake, I am sure Father Dolan did not know.
- But I told him I broke them, sir, and he pandied me.
- Did you tell him that you had written home for a new pair? the rector asked.
- No, sir. (Pg. 49)

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8. Some critics believe the image of a skull symbolizes something that is bad for Stephen, something he must reject. Assuming this analysis is true, what do you think the skull on the rector’s desk symbolizes?

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9. Why does Stephen feel “happy and free” after talking to the rector? For what reasons do you think he vows to himself not to be “proud with Father Dolan”?

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10. What elements of the author’s childhood are also present in Stephen’s life at the end of this first chapter? Do you think this novel is or is not autobiographical?

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## VOCABULARY (CONT.)

**transfixing** – making unable to move  
**tremulous** – trembling  
**unseemly** – improper  
**unutterable** – unable to be spoken of  
**upbraid** – to scold  
**vaporous** – giving off fragrance  
**ventricles** – parts of the heart  
**verge** – the outermost edge  
**vindicated** – cleared of blame  
**viscid** – thick  
**vitals** – human organs  
**vouchsafed** – granted  
**waistcoat** – a vest  
**wallowed** – waded  
**wan** – pale  
**waterproofs** – raincoats  
**withered** – dried up  
**wretched** – miserable  
**zealous** – full of vigor; eager

**Pages 83 - 88 The retreat**

1. Why does Stephen believe that the “sentence of saint James which says that he who offends against one commandment becomes guilty of all, had seemed to him first a swollen phrase until he had begun to grope in the darkness of his own state” (Pg. 86) applies to his life?

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2. How does Stephen feel when the rector announces all of the boys must go to confession because there is going to be a retreat from Wednesday to Friday and mass on Saturday morning where the whole school will take communion? (NOTE: Catholics can not accept communion without first cleansing themselves of their sins through confession.)

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