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To The Student

Although we may read a novel, play, or work of non-fiction for enjoyment, each time we read one, we are building and practicing important basic reading skills. In our ever-more complex society, in which reading has become more and more crucial for success, this, in itself, is an important reason to spend time reading for enjoyment.

Some readers, however, are able to go beyond basic reading techniques and are able to practice higher thinking skills by reflecting on what they have read and how what they read affects them. It is this act of reflection—that is, stopping to think about what you are reading—that this journal is attempting to encourage.

To aid you, we have included writing prompts for each section; however, if you find something that you wish to respond to in the book more compelling than our prompts, you should write about that. We hope you enjoy reading this book and that the act of responding to what you have read increases this enjoyment.

After you read the indicated sections, choose the questions to which you will respond. Keep in mind that there are no right or wrong answers to these prompts, and there is no one direction in which you must go.

Pre-Reading

1. James Joyce wrote the short story collection *Dubliners*, in which all of the stories are set in Dublin, Ireland, in the early part of the 20th century. At the time, Ireland was not sovereign; it was still under the political control of England. Many Irish writers, such as Joyce, used their writing to help Ireland form its own image, an image not controlled by English interests.

Research a few other early 20th century Irish writers. In a brief essay, explain whether these authors had much influence regarding their country's liberation. Use what you have learned from your research to support your answer.

2. In the fifteen short stories in *Dubliners*, Joyce aims to portray what the city was like during his lifetime. His characters range from young to old and from lower to upper class. In addition, the settings of the stories are the actual streets, neighborhoods, and landmarks of Dublin that existed when he wrote the book. Using characters and settings that represent real people and locations makes the stories seem more authentic.

If you were to write a story in which the characters and setting represent people and locations you've encountered in your life, what characters would you create, and what locations would you use in the setting? Make two columns. In the first column, provide detailed descriptions of at least three characters. In the second column, do the same for at least three places that you would include in the setting. List as many details as possible to create realistic images of the characters and locations in your story.

3. A literary element that Joyce frequently employs in his books, including *Dubliners*, is the epiphany. The epiphany, as Joyce uses it, is the moment when his characters come to a sudden realization that changes how the characters perceive themselves or an aspect of society.

Think of a moment when you came to a sudden realization, a moment when you perceived yourself, your life, a situation, or a belief in a new way. In a journal entry, write what event or experience prompted you to see things differently and what it felt like to gain this insight.

7. The boy and his aunt go to pay their respects at Father Flynn's house where they are greeted by the priest's sisters. The sisters talk of their brother and how his behavior had become increasingly odd after he broke a chalice. They explain that he became depressed and withdrawn. Once, when people were looking for him, he was found alone in a confessional, laughing to himself. The boy remains silent during the conversation, and his thoughts are not revealed.

What do you think the boy might have been thinking as he listened to the conversation? Imagine that he and his aunt are walking home after visiting with Father Flynn's sisters. Write a dialogue about what the two would talk about. Use the following prompt to begin their conversation.

Aunt: You were quiet the whole evening. What were you thinking about?

Boy:

"The Boarding House"

23. Mrs. Mooney runs a boarding house. She keeps an eye on all that occurs within the establishment and is fully in charge. The residents, almost entirely working class men, call her The Madam. Her nineteen-year-old daughter, Polly, lives in the boarding house. Polly used to work as a typist, but Mrs. Mooney became nervous that the wrong type of man was flirting with her daughter, so she insisted Polly come back to live with her. "As Polly was very lively the intention was to give her the run of the young men. Besides young men like to feel that there is a young woman not very far away."

Imagine you are a boarder in this house, and you keep a journal in which you record your thoughts. You have observed Mrs. Mooney and Polly and their interaction with each other. Based on information from the story, do you believe they respect each other? Distrust each other? Have a loving relationship? Manipulate each other? In a journal entry, describe their relationship.

24. Polly and Mr. Doran, an employee of a Catholic wine merchant, have begun a physical relationship. Mrs. Mooney waits for the right moment, when she has the most leverage against Mr. Doran, to confront him about the affair. Her intention is to force him to marry Polly. By the end of the story, the reader is lead to believe that Mrs. Mooney has accomplished her goal.

As the story unfolds, the main characters are shown to have their own motives regarding the affair. In the end, which of the three main characters, Mrs. Mooney, Polly, or Mr. Doran, do you believe gains the most? Who do believe loses the most? Why? For each of these questions, write an answer in a paragraph or two.

39. Four years later, Mr. Duffy is reading the newspaper in a restaurant he frequents, when he comes upon an article entitled, "A Painful Case." The article details Mrs. Sinico's recent death at a railroad crossing. It also includes a statement made by Mr. Sinico that his wife had developed a drinking problem within the last two years. Upon investigation, the train conductor and railroad company are cleared of any wrongdoing. The article concludes, "No blame attached to anyone."

Initially, Mr. Duffy is ashamed to have been associated with Mrs. Sinico. He believes that he had misjudged her character. However, the more Mr. Duffy thinks about how their relationship ended and how he pushed her away, he comes to believe that his actions played a part in her death. He also realizes that he rejected the one person who gave him companionship and love.

Imagine that you are Mr. Duffy, and write a eulogy that expresses how you feel about Mrs. Sinico and what she meant to you.