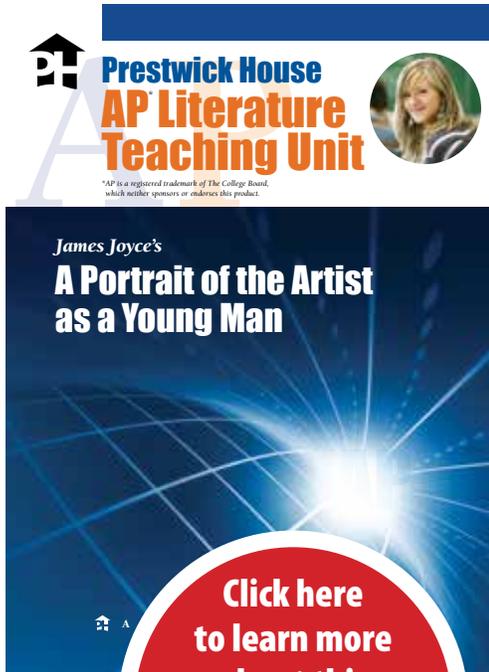




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Teaching Unit

A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man

by James Joyce

written by Kay Hampson



Prestwick House

Item No. 309008

A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man

Objectives

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

1. analyze *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* as an example of modernist literature.
2. analyze Joyce's use of stream of consciousness and its impact on the text.
3. define *Künstlerroman* and analyze *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* as an example of one.
4. analyze historical, social, and cultural allusions to infer the political and cultural background of the novel.
5. offer a close reading of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and support all assertions and interpretations with direct evidence from the text, from authoritative critical knowledge of the genre, or from authoritative criticism of the novel.
6. respond to multiple choice questions similar to those that will appear on the Advanced Placement in English Literature and Composition exam.
7. respond to writing prompts similar to those that will appear on the Advanced Placement in English Literature and Composition exam.

Introductory Lecture

MODERNIST LITERATURE

Modernist literature has its origins in the first decade of the twentieth century. Part of the larger modernist movement in art, music, architecture and other fine and performing arts, it strove to achieve a complete break with then-traditional literary values, which had largely been Victorian reactions to Enlightenment and Romantic thought. Modernist writers strove to find the best forms and language with which to explore the potentially dehumanizing consequences of the post-World-War-I trend toward industrialization and globalization.

In their rejection of convention, modernist writers preferred vivid images to long, descriptive passages and conciseness and precision to the excessively saccharine wordiness that characterized much of Victorian literature. Their desire for precision, however, often created an idiosyncratic language that tended to challenge the conventions of written communication itself.

Reacting to the late Victorians' pessimism and dark view of humanity, early modernists tended to be optimistic, expressing the view that recent advances in the medical and social sciences were certain to usher in a new era—a social and political Utopia. That optimism ended with the Great War, which was still optimistically hailed as the War to End All Wars.

Because World War I revealed the horrors of the abuses of technology, post-war literature reflected a renewal of Victorian disillusionment. The same technologies that could have created Utopia had, instead, been used to unleash an unprecedented level of death and destruction. As a result of the War, the politics that had made it almost inevitable, and the forces that had prolonged it, many modernist writers began to express a mistrust of institutions like governments and the Church. They rejected notions of Absolute Truth, embracing instead the Existential idea that each individual must create his or her own meaning. As a result, post-war Modernist works tend to be highly self-reflective, often expressing the Modernists' emerging fear that humanity was more animal and less perfectible than either the Victorians, Romantics, or Enlightenment thinkers had conceived. Late modernist writers by and large seemed to be seeking a way to make sense of a broken world.

Just as modernism breaks the conventional forms of the art and literature of the past, its themes also reflect a challenge to social convention, a rejection of conventional social values, a hostility toward religion, and a denial of what had previously been accepted as “truth.”

A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man

Chapter I—Baby Tuckoo

1. What impression is Joyce attempting to re-create with the novel's opening paragraphs about the "moocow" and "baby tuckoo"?

2. What is the main character's name? How is this revealed in this Chapter?

Chapter I—Return to Clongowes

10. What aspect of Stephen’s growth is instigated by Father Dolan’s punishment? How have his home and family prepared him for it?

11. How does Joyce balance the allusions to Irish political history from early episodes in this chapter with references to Irish Church history?

12. What is the mood at the end of the chapter? What status among his school fellows has Stephen achieved?

13. How does the final event provide structural closure to this chapter?

11. What character type does Joyce emphasize in Stephen's almost melodramatic overreaction to his guilt?

12. Who is Emma? What plagues Stephen about the thought of her as he walks home after Father Arnall's second sermon?

13. Why does Stephen decide not to confess to the priests available at the retreat at Belvedere?

14. How much time passes in the brief paragraph that reads only, "Time passed"?
