Dubliners

Study Guide by Course Hero

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Book Basics

AUTHOR
James Joyce

YEAR PUBLISHED
1914

GENRE
Fiction

PERSPECTIVE AND NARRATOR
The first three stories in *Dubliners* have first-person narrators. The remaining 12 stories have third-person narrators.

TENSE
All of the stories in *Dubliners* are written in the past tense.

ABOUT THE TITLE
Dubliners takes its title from the characters in the stories that make up the collection. Each story focuses on a resident of Dublin, Ireland, from a number of economic classes and social backgrounds.

In Context

The Fight for Independence

Like most Irish writers, James Joyce's work is a product of the complicated history of his country and its often hostile relationship with England. During Joyce's formative and productive years in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Irish history was dominated by the struggle for independence from centuries of British domination. English rule in Ireland was marked by oppression: the Anglo-Irish, English settlers in Ireland, tended to be wealthy and Protestant. The Irish were Catholic, and often suffered crippling poverty as a result of exploitation by English landowners.

In the 1840s a potato blight wiped out much of the food supply available to Ireland's poor, killing a million Irish citizens who died of starvation and sending another two million away as immigrants. The 1850s saw the beginning of organized efforts in Ireland to obtain independence from English rule. In 1858 the Fenian Brotherhood began plans to secure independence. The group morphed into the Irish Republican Brotherhood in the 1870s and became *Sinn Féin*, from Irish Gaelic, meaning "we ourselves," in 1905. Sinn Féin took the reins in the early 20th-century fight for independence, and remains a nationalist political party in Ireland today.

In 1870 the Irish Home Rule League, which pressed for an autonomous Irish government within the British Empire, was founded. Under the leadership of Charles Stewart Parnell, the

movement was almost successful. By 1885, even British Prime Minister Gladstone supported Irish home rule, but the British Parliament defeated the proposal. Parnell became embroiled in a scandal over an affair with a woman, all of which led to more years of conflict and failed negotiations.

Tensions erupted when Irish Nationalists seized several government buildings on Easter Monday, April 24, 1916, in what was known as the Easter Rising. By April 29 British forces put down the rising—but not the tensions. In 1919 Sinn Féin members of Parliament declared independence from England and set up a provisional government, leading to the Anglo-Irish War, which officially ended with a treaty in 1921 that divided Ireland into two parts. Twenty-six of Ireland's 32 counties became the Irish Free State, subject to the British Commonwealth until 1949 when Ireland officially became a republic. The remaining six counties remained part of the United Kingdom and form modern Northern Ireland. Disagreements over the fate of Northern Ireland and related religious conflicts caused additional violence throughout the 20th century.

The Political Becomes Literary

Against this backdrop of Irish revolution at the turn of the 20th century emerged a group of authors whose work represented an active effort to define an Irish cultural identity wholly separate from that of the English. Ireland had produced a number of notable writers, such as Jonathan Swift in the 18th century and Oscar Wilde in the 19th century. While these earlier writers may have used their work to comment on Irish issues, they remained closely affiliated with English literary traditions. The Irish Literary Renaissance was a concerted effort to build something exclusively Irish. The most high-profile of these Irish writers was the poet William Butler Yeats, who teamed with Lady Isabella Augusta Gregory to form the first Irish national theater, the Abbey Theatre. Other notable figures in this movement include playwrights John Millington Synge and Sean O'Casey. These writers drew on Irish mythology and legend to create a historical grounding for Irish nationalism and culture, comparable to the way English culture used the legends of King Arthur and Camelot to inform their own notions of heroism and national pride. The writers of the Irish Literary Renaissance also produced work that was intensely political, presenting the lives of the downtrodden peasant class and citing the virtues of political leaders.

Because he was a contemporary of these authors and because his work focuses tightly on Irish life, Joyce is often mentioned as a figure in the Irish Literary Renaissance, but he was not directly involved with this movement. Feeling constrained by the social and moral expectations of life in Dublin, Joyce had left for Europe with Nora Barnacle in 1904. He returned for a handful of visits before quitting his homeland entirely in 1912, and he appeared to feel little common ground with the other writers of the period. However, Joyce's work was instrumental in the creation of an "Irish identity." Distinct from other writers in the Irish Literary Renaissance, who often wrote about heroic exploits and Irish mythology, Joyce found keys to Irish identity in the minutiae of day-to-day life, the struggles of the working class, the middle class, the young and the old. However, Joyce's self-imposed exile from Ireland did not make him apolitical or disinterested in the events shaking his homeland. Although Joyce composed and published *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and *Dubliners* before the outbreak of full revolution in Ireland, these works provide a look at the world from which that revolution emerged.

While Joyce was not blind to the struggles in Ireland, his participation in wider European culture gave him a more open perspective. He did not believe Ireland should isolate from Europe, and he wanted to align his work with European literature as a whole. In Paris he found the common ground with other writers he had been unable to find in Dublin. He developed a friendship with poet Ezra Pound and embraced the principles of modernist literature, defined by a focus on real-life events, exploration of personal identity, and the use of nontraditional writing techniques—such as the free-flowing stream-of-consciousness form seen in *Ulysses*. In this context Joyce's construction of Irish identity in his early work such as *Dubliners* stems from his exploration of identity in a universal sense.

Author Biography

James Joyce was born in Rathgar, outside of Dublin, on February 2, 1882. He was the oldest of John and May Joyce's 10 children to survive infancy. The family was not wealthy and descended further into poverty through Joyce's childhood as his father, a professional singer, squandered his earnings and drank heavily. When he was six years old, Joyce attended Clongowes Wood College, a prestigious Jesuit boarding school in County Kildare, but he had to leave in 1891 when his parents

could no longer afford his tuition. Joyce spent two years schooling himself at home before he and his brother Stanislaus were admitted, tuition-free, to Belvedere College, a Jesuit school, in 1893. Joyce was a good student and in 1899 entered University College in Dublin, where he studied modern languages and Latin. He completed his BA in 1902. Joyce departed for Paris to attend medical school but quickly discovered he lacked the qualifications and instead worked a series of jobs, including teaching and banking. He returned to Ireland in 1903 when his mother became sick.

May Joyce died in August 1903, and Joyce refused to take part in the Catholic sacraments associated with death, having abandoned his faith some years before. In June 1904 he met Nora Barnacle, who would become his wife. Joyce continued to work on his writing after three of his short stories were published in the August, September, and December 1904 issues of *Irish Homestead* magazine. These stories would reappear in *Dubliners* as "The Sisters," "Eveline," and "After the Race." In 1905 Joyce and Barnacle moved to Trieste in northern Italy, where their two children were born. They also lived briefly in Rome, but the onset of World War I forced the family to move to Zürich, Switzerland. After the war, Joyce's friend Ezra Pound, the American expatriate poet, convinced Joyce to move to Paris, where the family lived for 20 years.

Joyce made four return trips to Ireland after 1904—partially related to prolonged negotiations surrounding the publication of *Dubliners*—but did not return after 1912. Despite his self-imposed exile, Joyce's work represents his attempt to capture the texture of Irish society and culture. His first novel, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, is a semiautobiographical account of his own beginnings, and the short stories in *Dubliners* provide a series of other portraits of the residents of the titular city that prefigure both his first novel and his second, *Ulysses*. A number of characters who appear in *Dubliners* make cameo appearances in *Ulysses*.

Initial reception for *Dubliners* was subdued in part because it was released in 1914, two weeks before the assassination of Austrian archduke Franz Ferdinand, which sparked World War I. Only 499 copies of *Dubliners* sold in 1914, and Joyce purchased 120 of these himself. In 1915 only 31 copies were sold. However, *Dubliners'* poor reception began before publication when two different publishers rejected the manuscript, fearing prosecution under English anti-obscenity laws and objecting to comments about English King Edward VII.

Joyce's success with his second novel, *Ulysses*, renewed public interest in *Dubliners*, whose stories critics and scholars consistently describe as some of the best short fiction written in English. Even today, *Ulysses* tends to overshadow Joyce's other works in terms of popularity, but *Dubliners* is far more accessible and often serves as a gateway into Joyce's world.

In 1922 Sylvia Beach, proprietor of the bookstore Shakespeare and Company—a hub for Paris's expat literary scene in the 1920s—helped Joyce publish *Ulysses*. The novel was commercially successful despite controversies and censure in the United States and the United Kingdom. For the first time, Joyce was financially secure as a writer, and he devoted himself to the massive project of writing his next novel, which would incorporate poetic stylings, allusions, and more than 40 languages. With the help of another expat in Paris named Paul Léon, Joyce published his final novel, *Finnegan's Wake*, in 1939. Leon would also help preserve Joyce's manuscripts and other personal effects when the Joyce family fled Paris in 1940 ahead of the Nazi invasion. Under political asylum, Joyce settled again in Zürich where he died of a perforated ulcer on January 13, 1941.

Characters

Child narrator ("Araby")

The child narrator in "Araby" develops his first crush on a neighbor girl known only as Mangan's sister. He obsesses about her and is consumed with love for her, so when she asks if he is going to the Araby bazaar, he promises to bring her a gift. He gets to the bazaar late and finds nothing to buy for her, which leads him to see his attempts to impress Mangan's sister as futile and hopeless.

Eveline

Eveline lives a difficult life with an abusive father and an unsatisfying job. She makes plans to leave Dublin with her boyfriend, Frank, who promises to marry her when they get to South America, but she is unable to carry through with the plan and leave everything she knows behind.

Little Chandler

Little Chandler meets with his old friend Gallaher, a London journalist, and feels jealous of Gallaher's globe-trotting success. Chandler dreams of living a similar life as a poet, which causes him to resent his wife and son briefly before coming to his senses.

Mrs. Mooney

In "The Boarding House," Mrs. Mooney is the owner of the titular establishment. She is known as a firm but fair landlady, but she has also built her reputation and her livelihood through her own intelligence and determination after leaving her alcoholic husband. When her daughter has an affair with a tenant, Mrs. Mooney reveals her tenacious nature as she convinces her daughter's lover to do the socially correct thing and marry her daughter. She is not a woman who accepts refusal and has become accustomed to having control.

Maria

Maria lives a simple but reasonably happy life, although she is unmarried and works in a laundry. She cares deeply for the boys she nursed when they were young, and remains close with them and their families. At a Hallow Eve party hosted by one of her former charges, she draws a lump of clay from the gift table in a party game, which no one tells her is an omen of death.

Tom Kernan

In "Grace," Tom Kernan is a tea merchant whose business and personal life are suffering from his descent into alcoholism. He hits rock bottom when he crashes down some stairs in a pub and injures himself. His friends and wife intervene with a plan to introduce him to religion to stop his drinking. Mr. Kernan was raised Protestant and converted to Catholicism when he married, but has never been particularly religious. His willingness to attend church shows how a spiritual awakening can happen to anyone.

Gabriel Conroy

In "The Dead," Gabriel Conroy attends his aunts' Christmas party with his wife, which is an eventful evening for him. The stress of a confrontation with another guest about his own national pride, and learning about his wife's first love who died young, sends him into a crisis that causes him to ponder the meaning of life and death.

Full Character List

Character	Description
Child narrator ("Araby")	The child narrator in "Araby" is a young boy who wants to impress a girl he likes with a special gift.
Eveline	Eveline in "Eveline" is a young woman who longs to escape her oppressive father but fears the unknown.
Little Chandler	Little Chandler in "A Little Cloud" works a desk job but wonders what else life might have to offer him.
Mrs. Mooney	Mrs. Mooney owns a boarding house where she pressures one of the tenants into marrying her daughter after they have an affair in "The Boarding House."
Maria	Maria in "Clay" works in a laundry and loves her surrogate family but fears dying alone.
Tom Kernan	Tom Kernan is a tea merchant whose drinking has become a serious problem in "Grace."
Gabriel Conroy	Gabriel Conroy is a professor who questions his beliefs and ponders his mortality after a party in "The Dead."
Mr. Alleyne	Mr. Alleyne is Farrington's demanding boss in "Counterparts."
Alphy	Alphy is one of the boys Maria nursed as a child in "Clay."
Annie	Annie is Little Chandler's overwhelmed wife and mother to their child in "A Little Cloud."
Aunt Kate	Aunt Kate is one of Gabriel Conroy's aunts who hosts an annual party in "The Dead."
Aunt Julia	Aunt Julia is one of Gabriel Conroy's aunts, known for her singing voice in "The Dead."
Gretta Conroy	Gretta Conroy is Gabriel Conroy's wife in "The Dead."
Corley	Corley is a young man who seduces a housemaid and convinces her to steal money for him in "Two Gallants."
Mr. Cotter	Mr. Cotter is a neighbor to the narrator in "The Sisters," who brings the news of Father Flynn's death and speculates as to the dead priest's peculiar behavior.
Mr. Crofton	Mr. Crofton is a political conservative working on the Tierney campaign in "Ivy Day in the Committee Room."
Mr. Cunningham	Mr. Cunningham takes charge of the plan to get Tom Kernan to stop drinking in "Grace."
Miss Delacour	Miss Delacour is a law client who becomes the object of Farrington's wrath in "Counterparts."
Leo Dillon	Leo Dillon is one of the friends slated to skip school in "An Encounter," but he does not join his friends for their day out.
Mrs. Donnelly	Mrs. Donnelly is Joe's wife who treats Maria with total kindness in "Clay."
Mr. Doran	Mr. Doran is a young man who has an affair with his landlady Mrs. Mooney's daughter in "The Boarding House."
Mr. Duffy	Mr. James Duffy in "A Painful Case" is a moral but lonely man who ends his friendship with a married woman out of fear.
Eliza	Eliza is one of Father Flynn's sisters in "The Sisters," who talks about her brother's past with the narrator and his aunt.
Eveline's father	Eveline's father is a violent and stingy man who oppresses his daughter in "Eveline."

Farley	Farley is a wealthy American who hosts his friends on his yacht for drinking and cards in "After the Race."
Farrington	Farrington is a law clerk who forgets his troubles by drinking in pubs and beating his children in "Counterparts."
Mr. Fitzpatrick	Mr. Fitzpatrick is a secretary for the arts society that refuses to pay Mrs. Kearney in "A Mother."
Father Flynn	The narrator's friend, Father Flynn, is a retired (possibly disgraced) priest who has a stroke and dies in "The Sisters."
Mr. Fogarty	Mr. Fogarty is a grocer and friend of Tom Kernan in "Grace."
Frank	Frank is a young man who asks Eveline to leave Dublin and come live with him as his wife in Buenos Ayres [sic] in "Eveline."
Michael Furey	In "The Dead," Michael Furey is Gretta Conroy's first love who died at age 17.
Gallaher	Gallaher is a friend of Little Chandler who makes it big as a reporter in London in "A Little Cloud."
Mr. Henchy	Mr. Henchy believes a visit from the king might be good for Ireland in "Ivy Day in the Committee Room."
Mr. Holohan	Mr. Holohan is a secretary for the arts society whose good relationship with Mrs. Kearney deteriorates quickly in "A Mother."
Mr. Hynes	Other campaign workers suspect Mr. Hynes might be a spy for the other candidate and question his Nationalist leanings in "Ivy Day in the Committee Room."
Miss Ivors	Miss Ivors is a party guest who questions Gabriel Conroy's patriotism in "The Dead."
Jimmy	Jimmy is a student of comparatively limited means who tries to fit in with extremely wealthy friends in "After the Race."
Joe	Maria nursed Joe as a child, and he treats her as family, even as a married adult in "Clay."
Kathleen	Mrs. Kearney's daughter Kathleen performs as a piano accompanist in "A Mother."
Mrs. Kearney	Mrs. Kearney, in "A Mother," sabotages her own ambitions to have her daughter's piano talents raise her family's social standing.
Mrs. Kernan	Mrs. Kernan worries about her husband's drinking and the injuries he incurs in "Grace."
Lenehan	Lenehan is a young man who works little and womanizes a lot, but wonders if there might be more to life in "Two Gallants."
Lily	Lily is the aunts' housemaid, recently jilted by her boyfriend, in "The Dead."
Mr. Lyons	Mr. Lyons is a Conservative worker on the Tierney campaign in "Ivy Day in the Committee Room."
Mahony	Mahony accompanies the narrator on a day out in the city in "An Encounter."
Freddy Malins	Freddy Malins is a guest at the Christmas party in "The Dead," and is generally dismissed as a drunken buffoon.
Mangan's sister	Mangan's sister is the object of the narrator's crush in "Araby."
Mary Jane	Mary Jane is Gabriel Conroy's cousin, a talented musician raised by their aunts in "The Dead."
Mr. M'Coy	Mr. M'Coy joins the efforts to help Tom Kernan stop drinking in "Grace."

Polly Mooney	Polly Mooney has an affair with one of her mother's boarders and must therefore marry him in "The Boarding House."
Nannie	Nannie is one of Father Flynn's sisters in "The Sisters," who seems to have been his primary caretaker.
Child narrator ("An Encounter")	The child narrator of "An Encounter" is excited to skip school and see the city until he and his friend meet a creepy old man.
Child narrator ("The Sisters")	The child narrator in "The Sisters" struggles to understand the death of a priest who was his friend.
Narrator's aunt ("The Sisters")	In "The Sisters," the narrator's aunt sends the narrator to visit Father Flynn when he is alive and takes the narrator to pay respects after Father Flynn dies.
Narrator's uncle ("The Sisters")	In "The Sisters," the narrator's uncle believes the boy should be outside playing with other children instead of hanging around with an old priest.
Mr. O'Connor	Mr. O'Connor is a Tierney campaign worker frustrated about not being paid, which leads him to question the candidate's character in "Ivy Day in the Committee Room."
Old Jack	Old Jack is a caretaker at the committee room where Mr. Tierney's campaign staff meet in "Ivy Day in the Committee Room."
The old man	Two school boys meet an old man in a field in "An Encounter." His actions are not entirely clear, but the boys find him profoundly unsettling.
Mr. Power	Mr. Power brings Tom Kernan home after his accident in the pub and hatches the plan to help him stop drinking in "Grace."
Father Purdon	Father Purdon is the priest who delivers the sermon at the religious retreat in "Grace."
Routh	Routh is an English friend of Charles Ségouin and the others who get into an argument with Jimmy in "After the Race."
Charles Ségouin	Charles Ségouin a wealthy French student who leads a social circle in "After the Race."
Captain Sinico	Captain Sinico is a merchant ship captain who ignores his wife in "A Painful Case."
Mrs. Sinico	Mrs. Sinico is a lonely wife who is hit by a train after her friendship with a bachelor ends in "A Painful Case."
Mr. Tierney	Mr. Tierney is a candidate for city office whose position on Nationalism and the king's upcoming visit are unclear to his supporters in "Ivy Day in the Committee Room."
Tom	Tom, Farrington's son in "Counterparts," takes a severe beating when his father comes home drunk.
Villona	Villona is a Hungarian student, very poor and obsessed with music, in "After the Race."
Weathers	Weathers beats Farrington at arm wrestling in "Counterparts," which stokes Farrington's rage before he goes home.

Plot Summary

Dubliners is a collection of short stories, and while the book has no centralized plot, the stories are organized in a way that mirrors the progression through life's stages. The first three stories are about childhood. "Eveline," "After the Race," "Two Gallants," and "The Boarding House" focus on unmarried young adults, in their late teens through early thirties. "A Little Cloud" and "Counterparts" feature main characters entrenched in adulthood; both protagonists are family men with unsatisfying jobs. The remaining stories focus on characters in early to late middle-age, some with more settled lives than others.

The Sisters

In "The Sisters," a young boy learns of the death of Father Flynn, a priest he has befriended. Neighbors comment on the priest's odd behavior, but the boy is both grieved and curious in response to Father Flynn's death. He and his aunt visit Father Flynn's sisters who now wonder what they will do without the responsibility of caring for their brother.

An Encounter

In "An Encounter," an adventure-obsessed narrator and his friend Mahony skip school to explore Dublin and enjoy a day of freedom. The day goes well for them until they encounter an old man in a field near the edge of the city. Their meeting starts pleasantly enough, but the old man's repetitive talk about sweethearts and corporal punishment quickly makes the boys uneasy.

Araby

In "Araby," a boy suffers from an all-consuming crush on a neighborhood girl. He is afraid to talk to her, but thinks about her constantly. When she speaks to him, she asks if he is going to a bazaar called Araby, and the boy promises to bring back a gift. After a series of delays, he gets to the bazaar as it is closing and can find nothing to buy. He realizes that impressing the girl is a hopeless cause.

Eveline

In "Eveline," a young woman named Eveline lives alone with her abusive father after her mother dies and her brothers are gone. She works an unsatisfying job in retail, but she meets a man named Frank, with whom she becomes romantically involved. Frank wants Eveline to elope with him to Buenos Ayres [sic], but Eveline has second thoughts at the last minute.

After the Race

In "After the Race," a young man named Jimmy becomes part of a group of international acquaintances from France, the United States, Canada, and Hungary. Jimmy's family is well off, but his new friends are wealthy on a much larger scale. Only after he loses a large sum in a card game with them does Jimmy begin to realize that they may be out of his league.

Two Gallants

In "Two Gallants," two men in their early 30s, Corley and Lenehan, try to live like much younger men. Lacking steady work, they spend their days drinking and looking for easy access to women. Corley tells Lenehan about his experiences womanizing housemaids, and reveals a plan to have his current girl steal from her employer for him. Lenehan wonders if he might prefer to settle down.

The Boarding House

In "The Boarding House," a man in his thirties named Bob Doran has an affair with Polly, the much younger daughter of his landlady, Mrs. Mooney. Fearing he might lose his job and destroy Polly's reputation if word of the affair gets out, Mr. Doran reluctantly caves to Mrs. Mooney's pressure to marry Polly.

A Little Cloud

In "A Little Cloud," Little Chandler questions his life choices—including a good job, a wife, and a child—when he reunites with his old friend Gallaher, who has become a reporter in London. Gallaher describes his adventures with women and travel to Chandler, who fantasizes about living a similar life and becoming a poet. When he gets home, Chandler comes to feel remorse for resenting his family.

Counterparts

In "Counterparts," a man named Farrington works as a clerk in a law office, but his boss repeatedly scolds him for shoddy work, exacerbated by Farrington's habit of sneaking out during the work day to drink. After a particularly bad day, Farrington goes on a pub crawl with his friends, but becomes more irritable as the night wears on, culminating in his defeat in an arm-wrestling match. When Farrington goes home, he beats

his son because dinner is not waiting for him and the kitchen fire is out.

Clay

In "Clay," a laundry worker named Maria attends a Hallow Eve party at the home of a man she nursed as a child. She buys cake to give her hosts as a gift and is distraught when she finds she left it behind on the tram. Another bad omen emerges when Maria draws a lump of clay, associated with death, in a party game.

A Painful Case

In "A Painful Case," Mr. Duffy, a bachelor, forms a close friendship with a married woman, Mrs. Sinico. When Mrs. Sinico indicates she wants more from Mr. Duffy than friendship, their relationship ends. Four years later, Mr. Duffy reads a newspaper article reporting that Mrs. Sinico has been hit and killed by a train. He learns of her decline into alcoholism and feels guilty for ending their association and condemning her to a life of crushing loneliness.

Ivy Day in the Committee Room

In "Ivy Day in the Committee Room," workers on a city campaign gather at the end of the workday to share stories of canvassing and their opinions about their candidate's position on Nationalist issues. The workers are divided in their opinion about the King of England's upcoming visit to Dublin, and, to varying degrees, about Nationalism. A poem about Charles Parnell, an advocate for Irish home rule, brings them together in respect for the man's memory for a brief moment.

A Mother

In "A Mother," Mrs. Kearney makes arrangements for her daughter to perform as an accompanist in a four-concert series sponsored by a Nationalist arts society. When one of the concerts is cancelled due to poor attendance, Mrs. Kearney demands the society adhere to the contract and pay her daughter anyway. Her insistence on payment and her argument with the society's secretary ends her daughter's musical career.

Grace

In "Grace," Tom Kernan's heavy drinking causes him to fall down some stairs in a pub and hurt himself badly. A respectable businessman who has gone into decline, Mr. Kernan still has powerful and respected friends who want to help him. They arrange to go to a church service together in the hope that the power of God will help Mr. Kernan to stop drinking.

The Dead

In "The Dead," Gabriel Conroy attends his aunts' annual Christmas ball with his wife. He has an awkward conversation with the housemaid in an attempt to be friendly and a harsh disagreement with one of the guests, who questions his patriotism. These events make him nervous about a speech he is to give after dinner, but the speech goes well. Later, when he and his wife are in their hotel room, he discovers his wife had a sweetheart who died before she met Gabriel. This story and the other events of the evening lead Gabriel to question his own mortality and sense of worth.

Section Summaries

The Sisters

Summary

The child narrator, a young boy who lives with his aunt and uncle, learns his friend, a retired priest called Father Flynn, is dying after having suffered a stroke. The boy passes by Father Flynn's house each night after he hears this news, looking for the reflection of candles in the window that would indicate he is dead. He never approaches the house but stands outside and muses on the priest's paralysis.

Soon after this news, the narrator comes downstairs for dinner to find the neighbor, Mr. Cotter, sitting with his uncle. Mr. Cotter tells the narrator Father Flynn has died and speculates about the priest's odd quirks. The narrator's uncle tells Mr. Cotter that the boy considered Father Flynn a good friend, while the aunt prays for Father Flynn's soul. After a few moments of thought, Mr. Cotter says he would not want his children "to have too much to say to a man like that," and explains that he thinks boys should play with other boys. The narrator's uncle agrees. The aunt challenges Mr. Cotter's thinking but does not get a clear answer. Mr. Cotter remains vague, saying, "It is bad for children ... because their minds are so impressionable. When children see things like that, you know, it has an effect."

At this point the narrator digs into his dinner and tunes out Mr. Cotter's talk. At night the narrator has foggy dreams about Father Flynn's "grey face" trying to whisper a confession. The next morning, the narrator walks by Father Flynn's home and observes the death notice on the door. He thinks of the times his aunt would send him to Father Flynn's with a box of snuff that Father Flynn would dribble on his priestly robes, and he thinks about all the things Father Flynn taught him: Latin, European history, and church ceremonies and traditions. Then he thinks about Mr. Cotter's words from the previous evening and the dream he cannot quite remember.

In the evening the narrator goes with his aunt to pay his respects to Father Flynn and his two sisters. Nannie leads them upstairs to kneel by the body and pray. The narrator looks at the body, which is not smiling, but dressed in his priestly robes and "loosely retaining a chalice." The narrator and his aunt go downstairs to sit with Nannie and the other sister, Eliza, and have a small glass of sherry. The sisters also offer the narrator some crackers, which he declines.

Eliza and Nannie tell the aunt that Father Flynn died peacefully, and they marvel at how good his corpse looks. They talk about the work of taking care of their brother and how they will miss his presence in the house. Eliza speculates about her brother's decline, dropping his prayer book on the floor and "lying back in the chair and his mouth open." But he also talked about renting a car and taking a drive out to the house where the three of them were born. Then Eliza alludes to the end of Father Flynn's career as a priest, how he dropped a chalice during a service, which made him mopey and nervous. He would wander out alone at night, which became a problem one night when the other priests needed him to go out on a call. They found him in the chapel's confessional, "wide-awake and laughing-like softly to himself." Eliza concludes the story by saying, "So then, of course, when they saw that, that made them think that there was something gone wrong with him."

Analysis

The child narrator is both afraid of and fascinated by the priest's paralyzed condition and the concept of death in general. He lives with his aunt and uncle, so there is a chance his parents are dead, but the narrator's age also implies this is the first time in his life he has been aware of someone dying. He waits for Father Flynn to die, in a state of paralysis of his own. He does not approach the house, nor does he go directly home. He just lingers in the street outside, waiting to see candles lit inside the house, a religious sign that he believes will release him from his paralysis.

When the narrator finally visits the house with his aunt, he discovers Father Flynn's sisters are experiencing a paralysis of their own, enduring grief and retelling old stories about their brother. They are unsure what they will do with their days now that he is gone, as his care has taken up much of their time. Nannie appears to have been his primary caregiver, but Eliza is trapped in memories about her brother's decline. She recalls the incidents that led to him leaving the church, starting with a dropped chalice—the large cup used to serve wine during holy communion at Mass—which made Father Flynn nervous and ashamed. She makes a point of saying the chalice was empty,

clarifying that the communion wine treated as the blood of Christ in the ritual was not desecrated by touching the ground. The chalice is not supposed to touch the ground, either, but this is a lesser offense that everyone knows was accidental. The incident signals the beginning of Father Flynn's deterioration, perhaps indicating that a loss of motor skills might have been a precursor to his first stroke (he has three before he dies).

The image of Holy Communion emerges again when the narrator is offered crackers and sherry during his visit to the grieving household. Sherry is a wine-based product, and cream crackers are of a similar texture to communion wafers. The narrator accepts the sherry but refuses the crackers, fearing he will make too much noise by eating them. His refusal of the crackers echoes Father Flynn's fear of desecrating the communion ceremony by dropping the chalice, just as the narrator fears he will desecrate the peace of the household by crunching on crackers.

The incident from which Father Flynn cannot recover is having been found in the confessional laughing to himself. Eliza's last line, where she says "they" thought something was wrong with Father Flynn after this discovery reveals a level of denial on her part. A priest sitting in a confessional giggling in the middle of the night is not objectively normal behavior, but she seems to shift blame to the other church officials rather than acknowledge her brother may have had problems in his mind, either psychological or physical, before his first stroke. Furthermore, even though the pressures of his job clearly affected Father Flynn, he may not have accepted that he is no longer a practicing priest before he dies. He continues to wear his vestments, formal dress robes for the clergy, after he is debilitated enough to remain at home by the fire and dependent on others for his care—although it is possible the choice of dress is another expression of his sisters' denial of his disgrace.

Other members of the community are more open about Father Flynn's shortcomings. Mr. Cotter makes multiple references to Father Flynn's odd behavior. He may be alluding only to the incidents Eliza explains later in the story, which would certainly be common knowledge in the community, when he says he does not think it is healthy for the narrator to be around Father Flynn. He could also be referencing Father Flynn's sickly appearance after his stroke and a desire to limit the child's exposure to death and the dying. Either of these conditions would be sufficient to limit a child's exposure, but there is also an implication in the way Mr. Cotter speaks in fragments and indirect implications that Father Flynn represented a more sinister danger to a child.

An Encounter

Summary

The child narrator is a young boy obsessed with adventure. He learns about American Wild West stories from his school friend Joe Dillon, and he plays "Indian battles" with Joe, Joe's brother Leo Dillon, and other neighborhood kids. The narrator enjoys these games and the wild behavior they allow, but he prefers detective stories because they sometimes include "unkempt fierce and beautiful girls."

A teacher at school scolds Leo harshly in front of the class for having a Wild West story, which causes the Wild West to lose appeal for the narrator. At the same time, the narrator yearns to go on an adventure of his own, so he arranges with Leo and another classmate named Mahony to skip school for an excursion to the Pigeon House. He collects sixpence from each boy so they can take the ferry across the river the next day.

Mahony meets the narrator the next morning, but Leo does not show up. The narrator and Mahony make their way toward the wharf, happy to have the extra money from Leo's share. They get into a minor fight with some other children who call them "Swaddlers" thinking they are Protestant because Mahony has a cricket badge on his cap. When they reach the riverfront, the boys eat lunch next to the water and take a ferry across the River Liffey. The day is too hot for the boys to go all the way to the Pigeon House, so they decide to take a train home. Mahony then chases a stray cat into a field.

The two boys are alone in the field for a while, but then an old man approaches them and sits. He reminisces about his own time as a schoolboy and asks them if they have ever read books by Sir Walter Scott or Lord Lytton. He asks the boys if either of them has "a sweetheart." Mahony claims to have three, but the narrator says he has none. The man says he had many sweethearts as a boy and adds, "every boy has a little sweetheart." These words make the narrator uncomfortable.

The old man goes on about girls: "what nice soft hair they had

and how soft their hands were and how all girls were not so good as they seemed to be if one only knew." His words take on a repetitive rhythm as he talks for a long while. Then he excuses himself and walks away into the field. The boys then see the old man doing something that makes Mahony say, "I say ... He's a queer old josser!" The narrator suggests if the old man returns, they should give him fake names.

The old man returns to sit by the boys, but Mahony runs after the stray cat again. The man declares Mahony a wild boy who should be whipped. He launches into another repetitive monologue about the kinds of boys who deserve whippings, how they should be whipped, and for what offenses. When the man pauses, the narrator calls out to Mahony, using the name "Murphy." Mahony runs across the field to the narrator, as if to rescue him, and the narrator feels a little guilt because he has never especially liked Mahony.

Analysis

The child narrator and his friend are inspired by the adventure stories they read, and choose the Pigeon House as their destination for a day of skipping school. It is a location with a notable history associated with a history of hosting adventures. The Pigeon House was built around 1760 on the south bank of Dublin's port by a man named John Pigeon. It served as an inn for travelers arriving from sea travel, particularly those coming from Wales, the traditional departure point for travelers from the United Kingdom to Ireland. A fort was later built near the site of the hotel, shortly after an uprising in 1798, to provide an exit point for British troops if an Irish uprising drove them out of the city. This structure was known as the Pigeon House Fort and was decommissioned in 1897, when the buildings were sold to the city and became part of a power station on the site. Given Mahony's desire to shoot things—presumably birds—with his catapult (slingshot), the fort area is the boys' most likely destination.

Even without making it to the Pigeon House, the boys have plenty of adventure in their day. They encounter a group of children who call them "Swaddlers"—a slang term for Protestants. The children think the boys are Protestant because Mahony wears a cricket badge, a game associated with wealthier classes and Protestants. Then, of course, they encounter the old man. At first he seems genial, asking the boys about the kinds of books they read. He cites two of his favorite writers, Sir Walter Scott and Lord Lytton. Scott wrote adventures such as *Ivanhoe*, while Lytton's books tended to be more lurid, a sign of things to come. The old man's rambling reflections on school girls are similarly lurid as he focuses on the details of their hair and skin. The monologue sends him off into the field where he does something unspecified in the story. The fact that the narrator does not say what the man does implies it is a lewd act of some kind, possibly masturbation. Mahony's use of the word "josser" rhymes with "tosser," an English and Irish slang term for someone who masturbates. However, the boys do not run away from whatever it is they witness, so it is possible the old man's action was something milder.

When the old man returns to the boys and begins speaking about how disobedient boys should be punished with whippings, the narrator says the old man's voice "grew almost affectionate and seemed to plead with me that I should understand him." The tone the man uses carries another implication that he may be a pedophile trying to gain sympathy from the boy. It could also indicate the man knows he has done something shameful and is saying shameful things but is unable to help himself and wants pity or forgiveness. These words do little to assuage the narrator who calls out to Mahony, whom he confesses he does not like very much. Certainly, the reasoning for this makes sense: Mahony is far wilder than the narrator, carrying a catapult, picking fights with street children, pestering a stray cat. Yet the revelation comes as a bit of a surprise because the narrator has voluntarily spent the day with Mahony and said nothing ill about him. At any rate, he feels a bond with Mahony now that he needs Mahony's assistance and protection from this strange old man, which illustrates how adversity brings people together in unusual ways.

Araby

Summary

The child narrator lives with his aunt and uncle on North Richmond Street, a respectable neighborhood with an empty two-story house at the one end. When school is out, the neighborhood children run free in the street and the lanes behind the houses, playing their games until they are called in for dinner.

One of the neighborhood boys, Mangan, has a sister who usually calls him in for dinner. When she waits for him at the door, the neighborhood boys follow Mangan. The narrator is mesmerized by Mangan's sister and obsesses about her. The narrator watches for Mangan's sister in the mornings as well, lying on his parlor floor and peering under the crack of the window sash so he won't be seen, waiting for her to leave for school so he can follow her. He thinks of her when he runs errands with his aunt in streets crowded with drunken men and singers belting patriotic songs. He wants to tell her about his feelings, but he has no idea what to say or how to say it. One night, he goes to hide in the back room of the house, where the former tenant, a priest, died. It is dark, and he can hear rain falling outside. He feels grateful for this solitude as he "pressed the palms of [his] hands together until they trembled, murmuring: '*Oh love! Oh love!*' many times."

Soon after, Mangan's sister speaks to the narrator for the first time, asking him if he is going to Araby, a bazaar with a Middle Eastern theme. She cannot go because she has a religious retreat at school. The narrator promises to go to Araby and bring back a gift for her. He asks his aunt and uncle for permission to go and waits eagerly for Saturday night.

On the night of the bazaar, the narrator waits for his uncle to come home and give him money to go to Araby. His uncle finally arrives at nine o'clock. Even though it is late, the narrator takes a florin and rides a train to the bazaar. When he arrives, most of the stalls are closed and some of the lights are off. He sees men counting money outside the closed French-style café stall. The narrator looks into the remaining stalls, seeing "porcelain vases and flowered tea-sets." He hears a vendor and some other customers speaking with English accents. The vendor asks the narrator if he wants to buy anything, and the boy declines. He drops his change into his pocket and leaves the market as the last lights are switched off. He scolds himself for his folly: "Gazing up into the darkness I saw myself as a creature driven and derided by vanity; and my eyes burned with anguish and anger."

Analysis

Like the child narrator in "The Sisters," the child narrator of "Araby" lives with his aunt and uncle, implying absent or deceased parents, which are common in the world of *Dubliners*. However, the reference to the priest who died in the back room of the narrator's house both provides an allusion to the death of Father Flynn in "The Sisters," and serves to clarify that this narrator is a different boy. This narrator spends his time as all children do, playing outside with his friends, but he is also reaching a more mature stage of his life. He is starting to notice girls, one in particular.

Mangan's sister seems to be an object of fascination for all the neighborhood boys, as they accompany Mangan to his house when she calls him in for dinner. The narrator's references to her figure imply she is older than the boys, but she is also close enough to their age to draw their attention. The narrator's crush on Mangan's sister is suffused with the familiar torture of a first crush on someone unattainable, but in a repressive Catholic society from the turn of the 18th to 19th centuries, it also carries some elements of guilt and shame. The narrator hides behind the blinds to watch her, lying on the floor in a humiliating position. He follows her to school, watching from a distance but never speaking. His breakdown in the back room of the house where he chants "*Oh, love*!" draws numerous parallels to the confessional in church. The room was formerly home to a priest. It is dark and quiet, as a confessional is supposed to be. The falling rain is cleansing outside, as confession is meant to cleanse the soul. The narrator even places his palms together as if in prayer while he chants "*Oh, love*!" like an incantation.

As happens in many other stories in *Dubliners*, the narrator's plans to go to the Araby bazaar and bring a gift for Mangan's sister are thwarted by drink, a common problem in working-class Irish communities at the time. The uncle returns home late, and the narrator hears him "talking to himself," as well as seeing his unsteady gate as he tries to hang his coat on the hall stand. The narrator says, "I could interpret these signs." Even though it is late, the narrator heads off to the bazaar, which reveals his hope and persistence in his quest to please Mangan's sister.

Like the rites of the church and like the mysteries of first love, "Araby" contains hints of the lure of the exotic, a glimpse of a grown-up world that is as yet unattainable to characters such as the several narrators in "The Sisters," "An Encounter," and "Araby," and which may ultimately be unattainable to all of the characters in the spiritually paralyzed world of the *Dubliners*. Yet the half-closed bazaar is not exotic at all when the narrator arrives. The items on offer are ordinary vases and tea sets, and the merchants have English accents. The narrator scolds himself for being drawn into this adventure that is, ultimately, an illusion.

Eveline

Summary

Eveline is a young woman, just over 19 years old, who works as a clerk in a department store in Dublin. Her supervisor tends to nag and scold her in front of customers. At home, Eveline lives alone with a father who used to beat Eveline's mother before she died. Eveline also has two brothers who took a number of beatings, but one of them has died and the other has a job decorating churches that takes him all over the country. Eveline has no one left to protect her and lives in fear of her father's violence. Her father also controls the purse strings, taking Eveline's salary and whatever money his son sends home. Often on Saturday nights he will send Eveline out to buy food for Sunday dinner at the last minute, causing her to rush and scramble to get to the markets before they close. In addition, she has two young children "left to her charge," so she is responsible for feeding them and sending them to school.

Eveline has a boyfriend named Frank, whom she meets in secret because her father disapproves. Frank has asked Eveline to marry him and move to Buenos Ayres [sic]. Eveline accepted the proposal and has made preparations to leave her difficult life behind. Her bags are packed, and she has written letters to her brother and her father. Yet Eveline hesitates by the window of the only home she has ever known. She looks out at the houses on her street, new houses built by a man from Belfast that have covered the field where she used to play with the neighbor children as a girl. She wonders what people will say about her after she has left. She feels the comfort of the familiar rooms and the people she has known all her life. Then she hears a street organ, which reminds her of her mother's final illness, her last words "Derevaun Seraun," and her father's ire. She decides to meet Frank at the station.

The station mills with people, but Frank is there and takes her hand. Their passage is booked, and she thinks about being on a ship bound for Buenos Ayres when she wakes in the morning. She prays for direction, but feels panic and nausea. Frank tries to pull her along, but Eveline grips the rail of the barrier, terrified to follow as Frank moves along. He calls to her repeatedly, but she only looks at him blankly.

Analysis

Eveline's predicament reveals how few options are available to a working-class woman in Dublin. Eveline's family is not abjectly poor, but she and her father are not wealthy, either. She works as a clerk in a store, a job she finds unsatisfying and frustrating, especially when her supervisor chides her in front of customers. She seems to have few other choices, though, and cannot afford to quit her job. Likewise, she cannot afford to move away from her father despite his abusive behavior, nor would it be socially acceptable to do so. Her only option is to marry, but her father attempts to control who she sees socially, forbidding her relationship with Frank and thus forcing her to meet him in secret. Even if she marries Frank, though, her life will be similar to what it is now: taking care of a man and looking after children.

Twice Eveline leans in to smell the "odour of dusty cretonne," emitting from the curtains lining the windows. Although her memories are not pleasant—she can summon only two positive memories of her father during an entire lifetime with him, compared with half a dozen of Frank—she obviously loves her home and is having a hard time leaving. She is haunted by her mother's final words, the nonsensical Gaelic phrase "Derevaun Seraun!" The phrase is open to interpretation, meaning either "the end of pleasure is pain" or "the end of the song is raving madness."

The story's end, like the phrase, is ambiguous. It is possible that Eveline hesitates to go with Frank because none of her options are appealing or good. She has known Frank only a short time, and his life does not seem to be especially stable. If things go badly between them, she will be too far away to have any help and she may not be able to afford to return home. It is also possible that, like the other characters in *Dubliners*, she is paralyzed by choice. The latter choice is more intriguing, because it makes the story the first, and possibly the only, tragedy in the collection.

After the Race

Summary

A road race that ends in Dublin provides a chance to show off the "wealth and industry" of continental Europe in the form of

automobiles. The crowds cheer for the French cars that place second and third in the race. One of the cars contains a Frenchman named Charles Ségouin, a Canadian named André Rivière, a Hungarian named Villona, and an Irishman named Jimmy Doyle. They are all in good spirits for a variety of reasons; Jimmy, because he is excited to be seen among such company.

Jimmy's father is a butcher who has amassed some wealth by opening shops all over the city. He sent Jimmy to a Catholic college in England, then to law school at Dublin University. Looking for a change of scene, Jimmy took a term at Cambridge in England where he met Ségouin and Villona. Ségouin is reported to be the owner of some of the largest hotels in France, but Villona is very poor. Jimmy's father is especially happy about his son's association with Ségouin and has encouraged Jimmy to invest in the car business.

After the race, Jimmy and Villona return to Jimmy's house to dress for dinner with Ségouin and the others at Ségouin's hotel. At dinner, an Englishman named Routh joins the party. The group talks about music and art, then Ségouin directs the conversation toward politics. The influence of Jimmy's father, an Irish Nationalist, comes into play as Jimmy and Routh argue. Ségouin averts disaster by proposing a toast "to Humanity," and the group ends dinner on a high note. They proceed to Stephen's Green, singing and talking. They encounter an American friend named Farley. The talk continues as they take a train to the harbor and a rowboat to Farley's yacht.

On the yacht, Villona plays piano and sings while the others eat, drink toasts to their respective countries, and play cards. Jimmy does not precisely track the game's progress, but he knows he is losing and the others are writing I.O.U.'s for him. Villona leaves the piano and goes on deck while the game continues between Routh and Ségouin. Jimmy wonders how much money he has lost as Routh wins the game. Afterward, Jimmy begins to feel pounding in his temples as Villona opens the door to let in the morning sunlight.

Analysis

Jimmy's experience with his friends after the race serves as both a cautionary tale against overreach and a history lesson for the Irish. Because Jimmy's family is wealthy and well known by Dublin standards, Jimmy believes he can operate as an equal with a man who own hotels and another who owns a yacht. Jimmy is not wealthy on this kind of scale and it costs him dearly as he plays cards with them. He is not in a position to lose on a large scale because he is not drawing from the same reserves these men have at their disposal. Yet Jimmy is led into this situation, driven by social-climbing instincts encouraged by his father who appreciates the possible connections relationships with these men can provide. Jimmy likes being seen with these men. He likes the status he gets from being associated with them, and he wants to impress them.

Even though Jimmy has infiltrated this social circle, there is little evidence of true friendship among any of these men. They all seem to be driven by a desire to compete—hence the card game—and to see and be seen with the right company. Their eating and drinking together should provide or reflect some kind of bond and connection between them, but the relationships remain superficial. This context is particularly evident in the dinner, during which the discuss everything from the English madrigal to French mechanics, from romantic painters to politics. Yet they each spout their opinions without listening to one another, resulting in speechifying rather than true conversation.

Only the Hungarian Villona stands outside of all this madness. In contrast with Jimmy, Villona does not engage in any seemingly desperate measures to ingratiate himself with the group. He is very poor, and everyone knows this to be true. He dresses for dinner because it is expected, but there is no evidence he is trying to impress anyone. He does not participate in the card game later that night because he cannot afford to. He plays the piano for as long as he wants to, then he goes onto the deck of the boat to watch the sun rise. Yet he is accepted into this social circle, which indicates he is someone the group likes on his own merits, not because of his money or his connections. At the end of the evening, his is the voice of reason announcing the coming of the new day.

Two Gallants

Summary

On a Sunday evening in August two friends, Corley and Lenehan, walk together while Corley tells a story about his most recent conquest of a woman, a "slavey" or low-ranking

housemaid, and alludes to his plans for her. Lenehan does not think Corley can get away with his plan, but neither of the men talks about the plan directly. Instead, Corley praises the virtues, or lack thereof, of slaveys. He met this maid on the street and discovered she worked for a wealthy family. The two of them see each other regularly now, and she brings him cigarettes and cigars and pays tram fares for their excursions. He had some fears she might get pregnant at first, but he has since learned she knows how to avoid pregnancy. Lenehan speculates the maid might want to marry Corley, but Corley has told her he has no job and has not given her his real name.

Corley talks about going out with girls in the past, spending lots of money on them, and never getting anywhere with them physically—with one exception whom he wistfully describes as "a bit of all right." He recently saw this woman out with two men, saying she is "on the turf" now. Lenehan suggests Corley might be responsible for ruining this girl's reputation, but Corley assures Lenehan he was not the first man to be with her. Lenehan does not believe him and kids him about it.

When the time comes for Corley to go meet his girl, Lenehan wants to see what she looks like. He watches from afar as the two meet, and he follows them at a distance before going his own way into the shopping district on Grafton Street and beyond. Lenehan finds a café and orders a plate of peas and a ginger beer for dinner. As he dines alone he contemplates his age—soon to be 31—and considers how it might be nice to have a good job, a home, and someone cooking for him. He feels bitter about the women he has known and about his friends.

After Lenehan pays for his dinner, he wanders out and meets some of those friends. They ask about Corley and talk about some other people they know, then Lenehan wanders back through the shopping district. He observes Corley at the end of his date, wondering if he managed to pull off his scheme. He thinks Corley will fail as he sees the couple approach, and follows them to the house where Corley's girl works. She goes inside and leaves Corley on the sidewalk. After a few minutes, she briefly returns before going inside again. Lenehan greets Corley and asks if he was successful. Corley does not answer right away, building suspense. Then he opens his hand to show Lenehan a gold coin.

Analysis

Corley and Lenehan might be comical figures if they were not so sleazy and pathetic. Each man behaves in a totally different fashion from the way society expects them to behave at their age. They are in their early thirties, but they behave like much younger men, still sowing wild oats, working sporadically, and trying to manipulate women into doing their bidding. Lenehan dimly recognizes his lifestyle is not sustainable as he considers the benefits of settling down. However, even as he imagines what a settled life might be like, the focus is on how such an arrangement might benefit him and his comfort. He does not think about human connection and companionship but the prospect of a warm fire and a warm meal provided for him by a faceless individual. Still, he recognizes that the women he knows are not the sort that can provide him with such a life, and he sees his friends are not really friends at all, but just a bunch of guys who tolerate him and buy him drinks from time to time. He might read as sad and sympathetic in his loneliness if he were not friends with a man scheming to convince a maid to steal from her employers.

Unlike Lenehan, Corley has no self-awareness. He has a glimmer of regret about a girl he once slept with who has fallen into extremely ill-repute, but he denies any responsibility for what has become of her. Lenehan presses him on the matter, and Corley resolves to deny that he was the one who ruined her reputation. Likewise, he feels no shame about sponging off his current girl and calls her a slavey, a derogatory term for a low-ranking, low-paid house worker. He does not seem to care if she spends what little money she has on him, and he has no concern that she risks her job—as well as future employment and possible arrest—by stealing a gold coin for him. In the meantime, he does not even give her his real name to protect himself against any possible future demands she might make of him. Corley's sole concern is what he can get for himself, and he is defined by the schemes he can get away with and the women he can sleep with.

Dublin may offer few opportunities for men like Corley and Lenehan to better their situation. They have little education, and most of the jobs available to them offer meager pay and difficult working conditions. While men in other stories in *Dubliners* marry, have children, and continue to booze and carouse at the expense of their families, at least Corley and Lenehan have chosen a means of escaping their boredom, while not inflicting as much collateral damage on others. The

women Lenehan meets and the one Corley seduces must have some idea what kind of people these two men really are, but they are looking for ways to escape from their limited opportunities as well.

The Boarding House

Summary

Mrs. Mooney sets up a boarding house after separating from her alcoholic husband, a former butcher who once worked for her father. Mrs. Mooney's house hosts tourists as well as music hall performers. She has a number of permanent tenants, most of whom work as clerks. The men in the house get along well with one another, sharing stories and gossip and gathering on Sunday nights in the drawing room to stage musical performances. Sometimes Mrs. Mooney's daughter Polly sings.

Mrs. Mooney tried to settle Polly into a job as a typist in an office, but Mr. Mooney came by the office too often for comfort, so now Polly works as a housekeeper in the boarding house. Mrs. Mooney encourages her to be friendly with the men, but then Mrs. Mooney notices Polly paying more attention to one particular man. Mrs. Mooney does not say anything, even as the other tenants start talking. Instead, she chooses her moment carefully, after breakfast on a Sunday morning in early summer.

After a conversation with Polly about the man in question, Mr. Doran, Mrs. Mooney has determined where things stand between her daughter and her tenant. Knowing she occupies the moral high ground, she demands "reparation." Polly's reputation will be ruined, and Mr. Doran could lose his job working for a Catholic wine merchant if word of the affair spreads. If he agrees to marry Polly, they can control the damage.

As he waits to meet with Mrs. Mooney, Mr. Doran is nervous. He has been to confession, but he knows he must either marry Polly or run away. He knows he will lose his job once the affair becomes public, but he also believes his family and friends will look down on Polly with her poor grammar, drunken father, and mother's boarding house. Polly comes to Mr. Doran's room, crying and threatening suicide. As he comforts her, he remembers their time together but is interrupted when Mrs. Mooney calls him downstairs. While Mr. Doran and Mrs. Mooney meet, Polly remains in his room and calms herself. She hears her mother call her downstairs, telling her Mr. Doran wants to speak with her and remembers "what she had been waiting for."

Analysis

Mr. Doran and Polly Mooney's situation are another indication of the way social rules in Irish society place restrictions on individual choices. While marriage might be mandated in other societies if the woman gets pregnant, there is no evidence in the story to indicate Polly is with child. She might be, but that is not stated or even alluded to in a clear sense. The question for Mr. Doran and Polly is one of reputation and religion. Does Polly want to be known as a fallen woman? Does Mr. Doran want to be known as a scoundrel who seduced a young woman and left her? The answer to these questions, based on the end of the story, is an emphatic "no." Mr. Doran chooses to save his and Polly's reputation as well as his job by making their relationship church-sanctioned and legal.

Oddly, Mrs. Mooney takes less care with her own reputation. In leaving her husband because of his drinking, she takes a big risk. She has the church's sanction, but her decision is still a break with social norms and expectations. Her decision to open a boarding house is not entirely disreputable, but it is not entirely respectable, either. The Sunday evening parties and encouraging her daughter to flirt with tenants show a certain disregard for propriety. When Mr. Doran considers what his family will think of a match with Polly, he thinks the boarding house "was beginning to get a certain fame." This statement shows the boarding house itself has a reputation that is less than stellar in the public eye, one his parents might know about. While Mrs. Mooney may not occupy the *highest* moral ground, what Mr. Doran faces is a much more concrete transgression that could ruin him. His fear of his family's reaction shows he comes from a higher class than the Mooneys, which means he has more to lose if his reputation is damaged. His only alternative is to leave his job and move away into an uncertain future that might leave him less prosperous than he is now.

The story is an interesting contrast to Eveline, who feels she cannot risk everything on Frank despite their courtship; whereas, Mr. Doran feels he risks everything by not marrying Polly. Both Eveline and Mr. Doran are faced with a choice, but both feel bound by religion, by family, or by social convention

to choose a certainly unhappy future.

A Little Cloud

Summary

After an eight-year absence, Ignatius Gallaher returns to Dublin and has lunch with his old friend Little Chandler. Chandler works in a law office, but Gallaher has made a name for himself as a reporter in London. Gallaher invites Chandler to London during the lunch, and Chandler spends the rest of his day fantasizing about what life might be like for him there as a poet moving in literary circles. He meets Gallaher for drinks in the evening, although Chandler does not usually drink.

As the two men catch up, they talk about their old friends. Gallaher tells Chandler about London, Paris, Berlin, and other cities he has visited. Chandler has only been to the Isle of Man, but he is especially interested in Paris and wonders if it is as "immoral" as he has heard. Gallaher tells Chandler about the Moulin Rouge and the charms of Parisian women, then he shares other stories from other cities, culminating in a scandalous tale about an English duchess.

Chandler tells Gallaher about his wife and little boy and invites him back to meet the family. Gallaher blows off the invitation, citing other plans and his return to London the next day. He makes a vague statement that perhaps he will visit them when he returns to Dublin next year. Chandler already feels jealous of Gallaher's success, even though Chandler comes from a better family and has a better education. When Gallaher rejects his invitation, Chandler feels Gallaher is patronizing him and Ireland with his visit. Eager to assert himself and validate his own choices, Chandler suggests Gallaher might be married the next time he visits Dublin. Gallaher dismisses the idea, saying he wants to see and do too much to be tied down. Chandler presses the matter, saying Gallaher will marry if he meets "the girl." Gallaher assures Chandler he plans to marry for money and could have a wife tomorrow if he said the word. When they part ways, Chandler speculates that Gallaher's life "must get a bit stale."

When Chandler returns home, his wife Annie is in a bad mood, made worse by Chandler being late and forgetting to bring her a package of coffee. She hands Chandler their child, cautions Chandler not to wake the boy, and goes out to get some tea.

Chandler looks at a photo of Annie and remembers buying the blouse she wears in the picture. He feels irritated by the photo and fantasizes about the women Gallaher talked about earlier. He resumes his dreams about poetry, then the child wakes up crying. Chandler is unable to comfort his son and yells at him to stop crying, which only makes it worse. Annie returns and takes the child, asking what Chandler did to the boy. They exchange hateful looks, then Annie soothes the toddler. Chandler steps back and feels guilty, tears welling in his eyes.

Analysis

Gallaher provides an example of the kinds of opportunities that await a man brave enough to leave Dublin. His confidence and gregarious nature have taken him to London where he works as a journalist. Based on the expensive restaurant he chooses for his visit with Little Chandler and the stories of his extensive travels, he is doing quite well in his chosen profession. Gallaher's example shows how an Irish man can engage with the rest of Europe in a way that is neither servile nor self-destructive, which makes his example a sharp contrast to the social-climbing Jimmy, who gets in over his head with wealthy European friends in "After the Race." Unlike Jimmy, Gallaher goes to London with the same self-confidence that enabled him to build his social popularity in Dublin; he does not feel the need to prove anything to anyone or impress anyone. He has little to lose, so he gains everything. Jimmy has a great deal to lose, and his need for approval causes him to lose it.

Little Chandler is far more reserved than Gallaher, and although he entertains fantasies about joining Gallaher in London and earning modest fame as a poet, the life he has in Dublin is more suited to his temperament. Until this meeting with Gallaher, Chandler seems to have been perfectly content with his life. It is only in comparing himself with someone else, someone totally unlike him, that he begins to feel resentment toward his family and toward Gallaher. When Gallaher turns down an invitation to meet Chandler's family, Chandler feels Gallaher is simply brushing him off because he has better things to do. Gallaher's endless stories about his travels and the adventures and scandals he has heard lend some credence to Chandler's belief. Gallaher takes only the briefest interest in talking about Chandler's life and dismisses any thought of settling down with another self-aggrandizing remark that he can get a rich wife any time he chooses. This dismissal and the dismissal of Chandler's invitation show that Gallaher's focus on himself causes him to minimize the choices other

people have made.

Chandler's resentment follows him home and finds another target in Annie. He looks at her photo and remembers how much trouble he went through to buy the blouse she is wearing, and he remembers how happy she was that he thought of her, but these memories bring him no joy at the moment. He decides she looks mean in the photo and feels only irritation, but it is as if he is looking for reasons to be irritated with her. In the meantime, he accidentally wakes the child he is holding. He expresses his frustration when he yells at the baby, but that only scares the child. Most tellingly, Chandler does not feel a human connection to his son in this moment, referring to the child as "it." It is only in the next moment, when Annie comes home and takes the child, that the spell of bitterness over Gallaher and his own life seems to break. As Chandler watches his wife comfort his son, something he was unable to do, he feels remorse for his thoughts and behavior during the day, and seems to recognize the value of his small family.

Counterparts

Summary

Farrington works in a law office. His boss, Mr. Alleyne, reprimands him for failing to complete a copy of a contract by the deadline. This is not the first of Mr. Alleyne's reprimands, nor will it be the last. Farrington is angry and resolves to spend the evening drinking. He returns to his desk and finds he cannot wait until evening, so he leaves the office, goes to the pub, and downs a pint of porter "at a gulp."

When Farrington returns to the office, the lead clerk tells him Mr. Alleyne is looking for him and realizes where Farrington has been, making an observation that Farrington has been out five times today. Mr. Alleyne wants the correspondence on a case for a client named Miss Delacour. Farrington finds the file and delivers it to Mr. Alleyne, hoping he will not notice two letters are missing at the end of it. Farrington returns to his desk again, but the porter and the rushing around have made his thinking fuzzy. He is so wrapped up in thoughts of where he will drink in the evening he almost misses Mr. Alleyne and Miss Delacour when they come to confront him about the missing letters, which Farrington denies any knowledge about. When Mr. Alleyne asks Farrington if he takes him for a fool, Farrington replies, "I do not think, sir, ... that that's a fair question to put to me." Furious, Mr. Alleyne demands an apology or a resignation. Farrington apologizes but knows he will be unable to get an advance on his salary for the evening's drinks, and Mr. Alleyne will continue to hound him.

When Farrington realizes he can sell his watch, he leaves the office and goes straight to the pawn shop. He joins his buddies for drinks at a pub where he recounts the story of standing up to Mr. Alleyne to everyone's amusement. Farrington and his friends make their way through several bars during the evening, working their way through the watch money. Farrington notices a pretty woman with an English accent, but she pays him no mind. At the end of the evening, Farrington and a friend named Weathers have an arm wrestling contest. Farrington is embarrassed and angry when Weathers beats him, twice.

Farrington comes home to find the kitchen empty and the fire almost extinguished. He calls out to his wife, but one of his five children, Tom, comes downstairs instead. He tells his father that his mother has gone to church. Farrington demands his dinner, and Tom offers to cook for him. Farrington points to the dead fire and proceeds to beat Tom with a stick for letting the fire go out, while Tom offers to pray for his father.

Analysis

Farrington is easily the least sympathetic character in all of *Dubliners*. He is disrespectful to his boss who rightly calls him out for being a terrible employee. He is resentful of his friends who expect him to buy them drinks. He is a sore loser when he is bested at arm wrestling. He is neglectful and abusive to his young child. He appears to have no redeeming features as a worker, a friend, or a parent.

And yet, some of Farrington's frustration at his life is understandable. He is the product of an environment that has afforded him few opportunities and has kept him in a semi-impoverished state. His job in a law office is making copies. It is simple work, but it is also a tedious and mind-numbing task ill-suited to a strong, able-bodied man. Mr. Alleyne, again, rightfully frustrated with Farrington, expresses almost as much rage as Farrington does. It is not clear why he keeps Farrington on his payroll if Farrington is so bad at his job, so it may be that Mr. Alleyne enjoys having an outlet for his own

frustrations. Like many Irish at the time of James Joyce's writing, Farrington finds escape from the drudgery of his work by drinking. This is not a productive answer to his problem, but he has few other means of escape available to him.

Farrington also lacks the ability to form any meaningful human connections that might allow him to find more satisfaction in his life. Little Chandler in "A Little Cloud" feels stifled and wishes for the bohemian life of a poet, but he also comes to recognize the value of his wife and child. Farrington does not see the value in his family. His wife is not home when he comes in, so it is possible she actively avoids him. He sees his five children as nonentities. His drinking buddies exist only to provide an audience for his stories and to buy their rounds of drinks. There is no strong companionship or support here. Even though Farrington spends his entire day surrounded by people, he is isolated by his anger and his obsession with drinking.

Obviously, Farrington's worst moment occurs at the end of the story when he beats his son. He accuses the child of letting the kitchen fire go out, but it is unreasonable and dangerous to hold a small child accountable for tending a fire. Farrington is only looking for an excuse to be angry and beat the child. Farrington feels powerless in his job—made even worse by being forced to apologize to Mr. Alleyne—and losing the arm wrestling match has made him feel powerless as a man, but Tom is someone Farrington can exert power over, so he does.

Clay

Summary

When she was young, Maria worked as a wet nurse for a well-off family with two sons, Joe and Alphy. When Joe and Alphy grow up, they help her get a job at the Protestant-run *Dublin by Lamplight* laundry, where she serves as a kind of supervisor. The women at the laundry like Maria, and the laundry's Board respects her ability to keep the peace among all the laundry workers.

On Hallow Eve, Maria is eager to finish her work because she is to attend a party hosted by Joe and his wife, Mrs. Donnelly. The laundry women tease Maria, saying they hope she "get[s] the ring," then they toast to her good health. After dinner, Maria changes into her best clothing and takes the tram into town, thinking "how much better it was to be independent and to have your own money in your pocket." She visits a bakery and buys a bag of small cakes for the children at the party, then she decides to buy a special treat for Joe and his wife. She goes to a second bakery where the woman behind the counter sarcastically asks if Maria wants to buy a wedding cake. Maria buys a large slice of plum cake and returns to the tram.

On the tram, an older gentleman makes room for Maria to sit and chats with her about the rainy weather and Hallow Eve. She thanks him for his kindness as she leaves the tram to walk to Joe's house. When Maria arrives, everyone makes a fuss about greeting her, and the children thank her for their cakes. Maria is unable to locate the plum cake, and Mrs. Donnelly concludes Maria probably left it on the tram. Maria is so disappointed she almost cries. Then Joe invites her to sit by the fire with him. He tells her about work and offers her a bottle of stout, while Mrs. Donnelly entertains the children at the piano. Maria does not want a drink but she accepts it because Joe insists. Then Maria accidentally piques Joe's temper when she mentions Alphy, as the brothers are not on speaking terms, but the moment passes. Joe has another drink.

The children play a party game in which a blindfolded person chooses a gift from a table. One of the neighbor girls gets the ring, and Mrs. Donnelly teases her about it. They include Maria in the game and blindfold her. Maria puts her hand on "a soft wet substance." The room becomes silent, and nobody removes Maria's blindfold. Mrs. Donnelly scolds the neighbor girl for putting the lump of clay into the game and makes her throw it out. Maria picks again and gets a prayer book. Then they play more music, and Joe gives Maria a glass of wine. Mrs. Donnelly predicts the prayer book is a sign Maria will go to a convent within the year. As the party winds down, Joe asks Maria to sing a song from his childhood. Maria sings, and Joe is moved to tears.

Analysis

Maria represents the fate Eveline and Polly fear: spinsterhood. Past their mid-twenties, unmarried women in the 18th and 19th centuries were considered unmarriageable burdens on their families, destined to a life of financial dependence on some relative. Such women, having never married and thus being unwise to the ways of the world, were also considered unfit for many of the heavier matronly duties of the household. Maria is unusual in both respects. She was able to nurse two boys,

meaning she was pregnant at some point in her life and able to give milk. And although she does not work in the laundry, she is very serviceable in the kitchen, doing the hard work of scrubbing the pots and resolving quarrels between the ladies. Maria is almost certainly in the worst of all spinsterhood conditions: a fallen woman, someone who has given birth out of wedlock and who has therefore been abandoned by her family and ostracized by the Catholic church.

This fact seems at odds with other things we know about Maria, such as the fact that she finds the matron of the laundry house to be "such a nice person to deal with, so genteel," or the fact that she despises alcohol. Several times, the narrator points out an odd facial feature when she laughs, that "the tip of her nose nearly met the tip of her chin," and mentions her small stature, or "diminutive body." She is confused by the older gentleman on the tram as well as by the rude behavior of the shop girls, and her brother and sister-in-law appear overly solicitous of her. All of this suggests that Maria may be mentally retarded, she may suffer from a form of dwarfism, or both. The references to the "dummy who had charge of the irons" and "the cook and the dummy" suggest she is not the only such disabled person in the Protestant laundry, a charitable house for the disabled and the fallen.

When one of the laundry workers tells Maria she will "get the ring" at the Hallow Eve party, she is referencing a traditional game in which participants are blindfolded and draw gifts from a bag or a table. One of the typical gifts is a ring, which is supposed to indicate an upcoming marriage for the person who draws it. The comment is good-natured, and like other similar comments, serves to reinforce the impossibility of marriage for Maria.

In general Maria appears content with her lot in life. She lives simply, but she is well liked by everyone who knows her. The women in the laundry are friendly with her, and Maria has a family in Joe's wife and children. Maria has little in the way of material wealth, but her kindness has earned her human connections that sustain her socially and emotionally. Unlike so many others in *Dubliners*, Maria shows no sign of wanting to escape from her life. She is eager to get out of the laundry for the party, but she sets her alarm clock for church the next morning, planning to return in the evening and feeling no bitterness about it. She does not like to drink, a common escape for characters in other stories. Her internal thoughts indicate contentment with her independence rather than a yearning for another lifestyle.

Despite Maria's kindness and calm, when she does play the Hallow Eve party game, the results are gloomy. She draws a lump of clay, considered an omen of death in the game. Mrs. Donnelly is angry with the girl who put the clay into the game for this reason; it is supposed to be a happy occasion. Maria draws again and gets a prayer book, but Joe and Mrs. Donnelly are already affected by the clay incident. Joe becomes tearful when Maria sings, because she accidentally sings the first verse twice, but the verse tells of happiness in family, friends, riches, and love. Maria in her imbecilic state is quite possibly the happiest character in the collection, a telling fact in itself.

A Painful Case

Summary

Mr. Duffy lives alone in a simple room in a village just outside Dublin. His furnishings are modest but functional, and his reading material is substantive. The space is orderly and clean, as is his nature. While his appearance is described as harsh, his eyes give "the impression of a man ever alert to greet a redeeming instinct in others but often disappointed." He sometimes narrates his life inside his own head, using third-person and past tense. He does not give money to beggars, and carries a hazel walking stick. He works at a bank in Dublin, and his days follow a routine. He eats the same lunch in the same café every day, and he takes his evening meals at the same restaurant in George's Street every night. He enjoys music, though, and often attends operas or concerts if Mozart is on the bill.

He meets Mrs. Sinico at one of these concerts, which she is attending with her daughter. She strikes up a conversation about the low attendance, while Mr. Duffy studies her face, trying to "fix her permanently in his memory." Mr. Duffy and Mrs. Sinico meet by chance at two more concerts before they make plans to meet for a walk. After a few more meetings, Mr. Duffy does not want to feel secretive about their acquaintance, so Mrs. Sinico invites him to her home. Mrs. Sinico's husband is captain of a boat that transports goods between Ireland and Holland, so he is away most of the time. Her daughter, likewise, has school and other activities outside the home, so Mr. Duffy and Mrs. Sinico are often left alone. Captain Sinico does not mind. He thinks Mr. Duffy might want to marry his daughter; his attraction to his wife is so diminished he does not think anyone

else might want her, either.

The friendship between Mr. Duffy and Mrs. Sinico grows, with shared conversations, books, music, ideas. They pass many hours together at her house. The companionship is emotionally intimate, but when Mrs. Sinico takes Mrs. Duffy's hand and presses it to her cheek, he is shocked. He avoids her for a week, then asks her to meet him. They walk and talk for several hours and agree to end their relationship. She returns his books and music by post, and he resumes his solitary life, reading books by the philosopher Nietzsche.

Four years later, as he is reading the newspaper over dinner, Mr. Duffy reads a startling item about Mrs. Sinico being hit by a train at Sydney Parade Station while attempting to cross the tracks. The story describes her injuries and quotes her husband and daughter commenting about erratic behavior and heavy drinking in the past two years. Mr. Duffy is at first "revolted" by the news and feels degraded by his acquaintance with a woman who would engage in such vice. Still reeling, he goes into a pub and orders a hot punch, then a second one. He feels "ill at ease" about Mrs. Sinico's death and second guesses his prior decision to end their relationship. He wonders how lonely she must have been and feels guilt for taking away her chance at happiness. As he walks home and sees couples together in the park, he becomes more aware of his own loneliness and solitude.

Analysis

Like so many other characters in *Dubliners*, Mr. Duffy suffers from loneliness stemming from an inability or unwillingness to form connections with other people. Perhaps this pattern of missing connection stems from the anonymity of the urban environment. Perhaps it stems from the unique situation of the Irish. Perhaps it is a global condition afflicting everyone in the modern era. Also, like many of the other characters who remain disconnected from other people, Mr. Duffy does not know he is suffering from his isolation until he learns the one person he truly connected with is dead, and her loneliness killed her. Before he meets Mrs. Sinico, Mr. Duffy goes through his daily routine, eating in the same restaurants, spending his evenings reading or enjoying classical music. After he parts ways with Mrs. Sinico, he resumes his routine as if nothing happened, and four years pass before he is forced to confront the fact that he has lost something important when he loses her.

While Mr. Duffy appears to be content with his isolated life on the surface, small hints appear that indicate he may crave a connection. When he first meets Mrs. Sinico, he studies her face in an attempt to commit it to memory. He is clearly interested in her, perhaps even attracted to her, from their first meeting. After they meet a few more times, he could easily content himself with the knowledge that she is someone he will see when he attends musical performances and leave it at that, but he initiates the meetings outside the concert scene. After he and Mrs. Sinico stop seeing one another, Mr. Duffy reads books by Nietzsche, whose nihilist philosophy advocates a focus on the self and total self-reliance, because dependence on other people creates weakness and keeps a person from reaching their full potential. It is as if Mr. Duffy is trying to reassure himself he has made the right choices.

Mrs. Sinico, by contrast, has no such illusions about her own loneliness and wishes to escape from it however she can. She initiates the conversation with Mr. Duffy that sparks their friendship, and happily invites him to her home. Her daughter is of the age when she has her own commitments and is not at home very often. Captain Sinico is frequently absent and has long since forgotten to look at his wife as a companion or as a source of desire. The abandonment from her family sends Mrs. Sinico seeking connection elsewhere, and her starvation for affection in particular drives her to make a pass at Mr. Duffy. Her decline after she and Mr. Duffy part ways shows she is even less able to cope with isolation after her relationship ends and she continues to seek an escape. This time, her escape is more typical. Her daughter tells the newspaper that her mother has been drinking heavily in recent months, and Captain Sinico describes his wife's behavior as "intemperate" in the last two years. The mystery of whether Mrs. Sinico ended up in front of the train through a conscious choice or through a drunken mistake is rendered immaterial; the loneliness caused both.

When Mr. Duffy rejects Mrs. Sinico's advance, it provides another indicator that he is less independent than he thinks he is. Mr. Duffy adheres to a strict moral code he believes is his own—he attends no church and tends to his spiritual life at home—but this morality falls under clear influences from church doctrine and societal expectations. He refuses to commit adultery and make physical and official the emotional affair he has been having for months, which seems hypocritical despite his efforts to keep the relationship out of the shadows. His visits to Mrs. Sinico are well known, and in a strict sense their intellectual intimacy is already a betrayal of her marriage. Yet Mr. Duffy's concern with appearances and with traditional

morals prevents both of them from finding happiness.

Ivy Day in the Committee Room

Summary

A city campaign worker named Mr. O'Connor and a caretaker named Old Jack chat with each other while Mr. O'Connor waits for his candidate, Mr. Tierney, to arrive. Mr. O'Connor is supposed to be out canvassing for the candidate, but bleak weather has kept him indoors by the fire. Old Jack tells Mr. O'Connor of his worries for his son who has left school, has no job, and drinks heavily despite Old Jack's efforts to educate and civilize him.

Mr. Hynes, another campaign worker stops by to see if Mr. O'Connor has been paid yet. He has not, but he hopes Mr. Tierney will show up soon. Mr. Hynes asks Old Jack's opinion of the candidate, and Jack declares Mr. Tierney is better than his opponent, Colgan. Mr. Hynes defends Colgan as a working man with as much right to be in city government as the wealthy Mr. Tierney. He says Colgan is not corrupt and will not sell them out to the English. There is a possibility King Edward VII will visit in the coming year, and the city's decision to deliver a welcome address to him is a controversial topic. Mr. O'Connor argues that Mr. Tierney will not sell them out, either, but Mr. Hynes remains skeptical. To make amends, Mr. Hynes gestures to the ivy leaf pin on his jacket—a symbol of the fallen Irish Home Rule movement leader Charles Parnell—and says if Parnell were still alive there would be no question of a welcome address for the king. All the men agree on this point.

Mr. Henchy, another worker, arrives to announce there is no money tonight for them and checks in on Mr. O'Connor's work for the day. When Old Jack leaves the room to get coal for the fire, Mr. Henchy expresses his anger and disappointment at Mr. Tierney for not paying them, and Mr. O'Connor is also irritated. Mr. Hynes treats the news as confirmation of his worst suspicions about Mr. Tierney, whom he calls "Tricky Dicky." The men speculate how Mr. Tierney learned to be tricky in his father's second-hand clothing shop as a child. Mr. Hynes bids them a good night and leaves.

Mr. Henchy and Mr. O'Connor talk about Mr. Hynes because Mr. Henchy does not understand why Mr. Hynes is working for a campaign he does not believe in. Mr. O'Connor thinks Mr. Hynes just needs a job, but Mr. Henchy and Old Jack think Mr. Hynes may be a spy for Colgan. The men discuss this point and agree to disagree, while Mr. Henchy speculates about other groups and individuals in government who may also be untrustworthy.

A delivery boy brings several bottles of stout, sent by Mr. Tierney, and the mood in the room settles a bit. Other campaign workers, Mr. Lyons and Mr. Crofton, arrive from canvassing and talk about the votes they have secured. The conversation turns back to the king's visit, which Mr. Henchy thinks will be good for Ireland's economy. Mr. O'Connor objects in principle, again referencing Parnell, which Mr. Henchy dismisses by saying, "Parnell ... is dead." Mr. Lyons declares neither the king nor Parnell have or had the moral fiber to lead them. O'Connor defends Parnell's memory on his anniversary, and that he deserves respect. The Conservative Mr. Crofton says Parnell was a gentleman, and Mr. Henchy praises Parnell's leadership. They open another bottle of stout, and Mr. Hynes returns. The men convince Mr. Hynes to read a poem he wrote about Parnell, and all the men applaud when he is finished, including Mr. Lyons and Mr. Crofton.

Analysis

"Ivy Day in the Committee Room" stands out among the stories in *Dubliners* because of its focus on the political rather than the personal. Ivy Day is an Irish holiday commemorating the death of home rule leader Charles Stewart Parnell. The other stories in the collection make passing references to Irish Nationalism and allusions to political figures and causes, but in this installment the focus is less about a personal struggle to discover identity and more about larger issues of national direction and identity. Individual identity only comes into play as an expression of personal political beliefs and leanings, as disparate opinions clash, more or less amiably, in the committee room.

Certainly, Mr. O'Connor and the other campaign workers worry about whether or not they will be paid, and Old Jack has worries about his family, but the primary conflict revolves around an upcoming visit from King Edward VII of England. Mr. Hynes, a strident Nationalist based on his ivy lapel pin and his poetry commemorating Charles Parnell, fears Mr. Tierney will bow down to the king and offer him a welcome address, a move he considers tantamount to acceptance of English rule over the Irish people. Mr. O'Connor and some of the others

would prefer the king not visit, but none of them share Mr. Hynes's passion for the cause. Mr. Hynes's opinions about the rights of working men and the resistance of English rule even arouse suspicion that he is a spy for the competing candidate, because his views are so far out of line with Mr. Tierney's. Other campaign workers, such as Mr. Henchy, fall on the other side of the issue. Mr. Henchy does not necessarily support English rule, but he supports the king's visit because it will bring much-needed capital into his impoverished city. For Mr. Henchy, Ireland's practical need for money outweighs his sense of nationalism. Mr. Lyons and Mr. Crofton are quiet about the issue, but their characterization as Conservative and their criticism of Parnell hint toward their sharing Mr. Henchy's view. The conflict in the room reflects a larger conflict surrounding the move for independence in general: the ideal of a free and independent Ireland versus the possible financial suffering that could come from cutting ties with the English government.

Parnell's legacy is another point of contention for the campaign workers. Charles Stewart Parnell was nearly successful in his bid for Ireland to attain home rule, which would have granted Ireland an independent government within the British Empire. As a solution to the dilemma between freedom and financial stability, the move would have been beneficial. However, Parnell became embroiled in a scandal when his affair with a married women came to light. His political allies abandoned him, home rule failed to pass in Parliament, and Parnell died soon after. Like many of Parnell's own peers, Mr. Lyons remains critical of Parnell's moral choices; in fairness, he has a low opinion of the king's morals as well, but most of the other men agree to respect Parnell.

Mr. Hynes reads a poem about the death of Parnell, elevating Parnell to heroic status. The poem itself is reminiscent of one a nine-year-old James Joyce wrote about Parnell's death, though this is likely not the same text. Mr. Hynes's poem reminds all the men in the room that while their opinions may differ, they all love their country and want what is best for Ireland. The ending of the story advocates for civility and mutual respect in political discourse, recognizing that everyone is working for a common cause.

A Mother

Summary

Mrs. Kearney wants to raise her family's social stature, so she embraces the Irish Revival and immerses her daughter Kathleen in Irish language lessons and music. She teams with Mr. Holohan, a secretary for the *Eire Abu* (Victory for Ireland) Society as he plans a series of concerts where Kathleen will serve as a piano accompanist for the performers. He agrees to pay Kathleen eight guineas for four concerts, and Mrs. Kearney helps with publicity and distributing tickets. The two of them develop a friendly relationship.

On Wednesday, the night of the first concert, Mrs. Kearney does not like how empty the concert hall appears, and Mr. Holohan tells her the Society made a mistake in arranging four concerts—too many to expect a full audience at each one. Mrs. Kearney also remarks that the performers are not very good. Mr. Holohan agrees and explains the Society has decided to reserve all the best talent for Saturday night's concert. Thursday's concert draws a larger crowd, but Mrs. Kearney thinks the audience is too informal. She learns Friday's concert has been cancelled to ensure full attendance on Saturday, and she insists her daughter be paid the full contracted amount, concert or no concert. Mr. Holohan refers her to another secretary, Mr. Fitzpatrick, whose manner has already made a poor impression on Mrs. Kearney. She is unable to get a straight answer from either man.

At the Saturday night concert, the audience is still thin because of the rainy evening. As the performers arrive, Mrs. Kearney insists on speaking with Mr. Holohan about the contract again. He says it is not his business and sends her to speak with Mr. Fitzpatrick again. The performers, including Kathleen, chat backstage while Mrs. Kearney becomes more agitated. She tells Mr. Holohan her daughter will not perform without being paid in full. He leaves the room, and the performers, having witnessed the exchange, make awkward conversation.

Mr. Holohan returns with Mr. Fitzpatrick and half of Kathleen's pay, saying she will get the other half at the interval. Mrs. Kearney complains the payment is still four shillings short, but Kathleen steps onto the stage with the first singer. During the first half of the performance, the Society's secretaries and others debate what will be done at the interval. Some of them believe Kathleen should be paid nothing, but Mrs. Kearney prepares for battle in her own corner of the room.

At the interval, Mr. Fitzpatrick tells Mrs. Kearney she will be

paid the balance of the contract on Tuesday, but if Kathleen does not perform the rest of the concert she will have broken the contract and get nothing. Mrs. Kearney stands firm, and another performer is called upon to play a few accompaniments. As they take the stage, Mrs. Kearney ushers her husband and daughter out of the hall.

Analysis

Social-climbing rarely goes well for the characters in *Dubliners*; "A Mother" is another example of how the rigid rules of society's expectations limit the opportunities for people to grow and change their lot in life. In "After the Race," Jimmy's attempts to fit in with an extremely wealthy crowd end with him losing a large sum of his father's money. In "A Mother," Mrs. Kearney's attempts to better her family's reputation in the community end with her destroying that reputation along with her daughter's carefully cultivated musical career.

The title "A Mother" places the emphasis on Mrs. Kearney's actions and mistakes in her dealings with the *Eire Abu* Society, an arts and culture group with Nationalist leanings. Mrs. Kearney's interest in Nationalism seems to stem more from an interest in making connections with the right sort of people than an interest in ideology. In the end she is far more interested in her daughter being paid for her performances—eight guineas—than in the cause the society represents. Eight guineas in 1904 would have been equivalent to roughly five hundred dollars if adjusted for exchange rates and inflation. The sum is not insubstantial, but it is also not worth the social repercussions Mrs. Kearney will face as a result of her backstage tantrum. Her reasons for said tantrum, then, are unclear, but she would be neither the first nor the last stage mother to dash her child's prospects in service of her own sense of fairness or her own sense of ego.

As a social mistake, Mrs. Kearney's focus on money also violates a more deeply ingrained social expectation. In Western culture people tend to be uncomfortable talking directly about money, and in some social circles—especially in higher classes of society—such conversations are viewed as vulgar. This attitude is visible in Mr. Holohan's and Mr. Fitzpatrick's obvious discomfort in negotiating about the contract with Mrs. Kearney, and their attempts to dodge the conversation altogether. In contrast, Mr. Holohan is polite during early conversations in which Mrs. Kearney criticizes the quality of the performers. He may or may not really agree with her, but the topic is one with which he is comfortable. That Mrs. Kearney behaves so aggressively is bad enough, but the focus of her aggression exacerbates the embarrassment.

Another factor exacerbating Mrs. Kearney's social position is her status as a woman. She argues, perhaps correctly, that the Society would treat her better if she were a man. Social expectations for women tend to censure aggressive behavior *now*, and this standard was certainly true 100 years ago as well. Furthermore, if it is uncomfortable for men to talk about money, it is downright vulgar for a woman to do so. Mr. Holohan scolds her for treating the Society rudely and for having no sense of decency, but his true judgment comes out in his last words to her: "I thought you were a lady." This remark tends to confirm Mrs. Kearney's suspicion that she would be treated differently if she were a man. The story thus contrasts strongly with the previous one, "Ivy Day in the Committee Room," in its personal view of a family, in its focus on a strong female character, and in its use of political agendas for personal gain.

Grace

Summary

During a night of drinking, Tom Kernan falls down the stairs in the pub and is found unconscious and bleeding on the bathroom floor. No one knows who he is or where the two friends who were with him have gone. A constable comes to check on the situation, and he and a young patron clean up Mr. Kernan and give him a bit of brandy to revive him. Mr. Kernan says he had an accident and asks for a cab. Another customer, Mr. Power, spots the commotion and intervenes. He recognizes Tom Kernan and promises to escort him home. The constable, recognizing Mr. Power as a fixture from the Royal Irish Constabulary Office, agrees.

Mr. Kernan introduces himself to Mr. Power as they walk to a cab, even though the two are old friends. Mr. Power knows Mr. Kernan from his more respectable days as a tea merchant. He also knows about Tom Kernan's recent decline into alcoholism, but he still likes him, as do many of Mr. Kernan's friends. Mr. Power delivers him home. Mrs. Kernan thanks Mr. Power for his help now and in the past with domestic disputes and, occasionally, money. Mr. Power assures her he will talk to

mutual friends and help Mr. Kernan "turn over a new leaf."

Two nights later, Mr. Power returns with two other men, Mr. Cunningham and Mr. M'Coy, and a plan to take Tom Kernan to church to cure his drinking. They do not tell Mr. Kernan why they are there, instead rehashing the details of the accident and the exchange with the constable, whom Mr. Kernan resents for interfering. The three visitors make plans to meet at a place called M'Auley's on Thursday, leaving Mr. Kernan out of the conversation. Mr. Kernan is curious, and the men confess they are planning a religious retreat to clean themselves up, and Mr. Kernan offers to come with them. They talk about the Jesuit Order's place in the church and reassure Mr. Kernan the priest will deliver a good sermon.

Another friend, Mr. Fogarty, stops by for a visit and brings a bottle of whiskey. The five men share a small drink and talk about past popes and church history, although most of their knowledge is partially incorrect or incomplete. As the men leave, they tell Mrs. Kernan her husband has agreed to the retreat, but Tom Kernan refuses to participate in lighting candles at the church.

When the group arrives at the church, the chapel is crowded and the men end up sitting in a five-point pattern called a "quincunx." Tom Kernan relaxes as he recognizes other men in the congregation. Father Purdon opens with a verse about friends, then continues with a sermon aimed at business and professional men, people who must live in the material world but desire a spiritual life. He emphasizes how temptations and failures are common, even normal, but the important thing is to take stock of those failings and set them right through God's grace.

Analysis

"Grace," like other stories in *Dubliners*, highlights the importance of human connection and the dangers of social isolation. Tom Kernan is alone when he falls down the stairs in a drunken stupor and injures himself, abandoned by his drinking companions. His connection to Mr. Power saves him from arrest, and his connection to his wife, although frayed by his drinking, saves him from his injuries. The loyalty and goodwill of his old friends ultimately has the potential to save Mr. Kernan from his own bad habits.

When Father Purdon, whose very name evokes the concept of forgiveness in its resemblance to the word "pardon," gives his sermon, he chooses a Bible verse confirming the value of friendship and meaningful social bonds, saying that friends made in times of "iniquity" will receive us into heaven. The sermon is sincere and appears tailored especially to Mr. Kernan's situation. It is all about learning from past mistakes, making amends for them, and moving forward. Although the men's understanding of church doctrine is incomplete, the story is not cynical about religion. The trip to church is designed to help Tom Kernan, and it has the potential to do so. In keeping with the title "Grace," however, Mr. Kernan's salvation is not a matter of understanding church doctrine or even following customs like the lighting of candles. Rather, it is a matter of belief and faith: in God, in himself, and in the people who want to help and support him. The references to Catholic customs and Mr. Kernan's upbringing as a Protestant also speak to the common ground of religious faith that often gets lost in tense religious conflicts, such as those that divide Irish political life during this time period.

The plot to get Tom Kernan to church looks very much like a modern-day intervention strategy. In a modern intervention, friends come together to talk with an addict about his behavior, how it has affected them, and urge him to get help. Tom Kernan's friends come together to talk about his destructive behavior, but they do so in a very neutral way. The conversation plants the seed in Mr. Kernan's mind that he has a problem and is in need of help, but there is no judgment involved. Likewise, the friends do not pressure Mr. Kernan into going to church; instead, using an ingenious bit of reverse psychology in which they talk about their own plans in front of him but they seem to invite him along as an afterthought. They play on a natural human fear of being left out of a social event to draw Mr. Kernan into coming of his own free will, inviting himself along to the church. These elements avoid shaming him for his past behavior, while giving him agency in his own recovery from drinking. Ironically, they seal their plans with a drink of whiskey, an unexpected choice for a meeting designed to get a man to stop drinking.

The Dead

Summary

Gabriel Conroy arrives late to his aunts' annual Christmas party and blames his wife Gretta for taking too long to get ready. When Lily, the housemaid, takes his coat, he asks her about school and speculates she will marry her "young man" soon. Lily says men are all talk and only interested in what they can get, which embarrasses Gabriel for bringing up the subject. He gives her a coin, which she resists, but he insists because it is Christmas.

He waits to enter the party, nervous about a speech he is to give, thinking he will embarrass himself again with references to poetry people will not understand. Aunt Julia and Aunt Kate greet him and Gretta warmly along with their other guests. They worry that Freddy Malins will be drunk when he arrives and send Gabriel to meet him, insisting Gabriel not let Freddy in if he is drunk. The party continues with song and dance. Gabriel returns with Freddy, who appears a little tipsy.

Mary Jane, Gabriel's cousin raised by their aunts, presents a complicated musical piece not to Gabriel's taste. He busies himself looking at his aunts' embroidery on the walls and a photo of his dead mother reading to his brother. He then dances with Miss Ivors who claims she is ashamed of him secretly writing book reviews for a Unionist newspaper and teases him about being a West Briton. She invites him to visit her family in the west of Ireland in the summer, but Gabriel says he and Gretta have plans to go to Europe. Miss Ivors does not understand why Gabriel would want to go to Europe and learn other languages instead of seeing his own country and learning his own language. He says he is sick of his country, and when she calls him a West Briton again, she is not teasing.

After the exchange with Miss Ivors, Gabriel is even more nervous about his speech, but everyone settles in for dinner after Aunt Julia sings. Gabriel sees Gretta and Mary Jane trying to convince Miss Ivors to stay for dinner, but Miss Ivors is adamant about going home. She refuses Gabriel's offer to escort her. Dinner is plentiful, but Gabriel hangs back from conversation as the guests talk about great singers, and a monastery where monks sleep in coffins to remind themselves of their "last end."

At the end of the dinner, Gabriel delivers his speech. He talks about Irish hospitality as their culture's defining trait and advocates for the preservation and honoring of past artists as new generations progress. He praises his aunts' and Mary Jane's musical talents. The speech draws applause and a chorus of "For They Are Jolly Gay Fellows." The party comes to a slow close as Aunt Julia and Aunt Kate see off their guests, and one of the guests sings a song called "The Lass of Aughrim."

Gabriel and Gretta get a cab to their hotel, and he thinks about the early days of their marriage and their life together. He looks forward to possibly rekindling their passion in the hotel, but Gretta is distant and quiet. She is tired when they reach their room, but she kisses him briefly. He asks what she is thinking about, and she tells him how the last song of the night reminded her of a young man named Michael Furey whom she loved as a young woman in Galway. He died at age 17, just before she came to Dublin. He came to say goodbye to her in the rain and got sick. She tried to send him home, but he told her he did not want to live. Gretta is overcome with grief and sadness.

After Gretta falls asleep, Gabriel thinks about Michael Furey. He compares his role in Gretta's life with Michael's and finds himself lacking. He realizes he has never felt about a woman the way Michael felt about Gretta. He thinks about Michael's death and how they are all slowly dying, turning to shades. He watches snowfall obscure the world, and thinks about how the world itself is constantly dissolving, turning the living into the dead.

Analysis

"The Dead" ties together a number of the themes and ideas presented throughout the other stories from *Dubliners*. When Lily the housemaid talks about her breakup with her "young man," she says men are only interested in what they can get from a woman, echoing the activities from "Two Gallants." Mary Jane's accomplishments as a pianist echo the talents of Kathleen in "A Mother." Freddy Malins's unpredictable drunken antics reference the ill-effects of alcohol seen in "Grace," and the aunts' fear of Freddy's misbehavior at their party is reminiscent of Maria's concern about Joe's party behavior in "Clay." Gabriel's desire to travel to Europe and his reasoning for it—being sick of his home country—recalls Gallaher's departure and travels in "A Little Cloud," just as Gabriel's literary reviews echo Little Chandler's poetic aspirations in the same story. His argument with Miss Ivors about his level of patriotism and loyalty to his country recalls the political debates of "Ivy Day in the Committee Room." From a structural

standpoint, then, "The Dead" ties the collection of stories together, showing how these struggles with social expectations, personal relationships, the yearning for adventure and escape, the love of country, and the meaning of life and death are defining characteristics not just of the Dublin experience or the Irish experience, but of the human experience.

In the most notable connection within the book, *Dubliners* begins with a child learning to cope with death in "The Sisters" and ends with a grown man still learning to cope with death. Neither has come to grips with the concept of mortality, which is another common thread of the human experience. Memories of the dead fill Gabriel's experience at his aunts' party from the moment he sees the photo of his mother on their wall. He thinks about her intelligence and how her encouragement helped him and his brother become educated, successful men. At dinner he listens to a conversation about monks who sleep in coffins to remind them of their own mortality. In his speech he talks specifically about the importance of honoring those who have made a difference in previous generations, saying "we shall ... cherish in our hearts the memory of those dead and gone great ones whose fame the world will not willingly let die." It should come as no surprise to him, then, to discover his wife has done this exact thing, preserving the memory of Michael Furey and the sacrifice he made in dying so he could see her one last time. Gabriel's speech refers to preserving the memory of people who have achieved fame, primarily in the arts, and done great things, but Gretta's story of Michael reveals the importance of remembering ordinary people whose great acts have occurred on a smaller scale.

Gabriel's crisis about his own mortality, then, arises partially from the act of taking his abstract appreciation for the memory of the dead and bringing it into the personal realm. Gabriel's thoughts turn to the idea of doing something great, instead of quietly passing into obscurity. His mother did a great thing before she died by preparing her sons for a successful life. Michael Furey did a great thing before he died, making a sacrifice to see the woman he loved desperately. Gabriel dreads the loss of his aunts, but he knows they have been great patrons of the arts in Dublin, and Aunt Julia has been a talented performer in her own right. Part of Gabriel's problem as he comes to terms with the realities of life and death is his realization that he has not done anything great or memorable. While he is personally successful, he feels he will fade away without making any great contribution. He has never even loved a woman with passion as great as Michael Furey's. In fact, he suddenly feels he does not truly know his wife at all, having never learned of this important influence from her youth. This realization also affects Gabriel's sense of mortality. His marriage is a defining aspect of his life, but the terms of his relationship with his wife are suddenly different. Although Gabriel's mind is in turmoil, the snow falling in the last image of the story provides a peaceful reassurance. Snow erases everything beneath it and leaves only vague shapes behind. Death erases the actions of life and leaves only a memory behind, but the shapes and the memories are still visible, a core of truth in an uncertain world.

“” Quotes

> *"The word paralysis ... It filled me with fear, and yet I longed to be nearer to it and to look upon its deadly work."*

— Child narrator ("The Sisters"), The Sisters

The child narrator learns his friend Father Flynn is dying after having a third stroke, and he has heard the priest is paralyzed. He is fascinated and repelled by this condition. In his own way, the narrator is also paralyzed, standing outside Father Flynn's house with no desire to leave (in fear) or to go see the priest (look upon its deadly work). Spiritual and emotional paralysis are major issues in the collection.

> *"But real adventures, I reflected, do not happen to people who remain at home: they must be sought abroad."*

— Child narrator ("An Encounter"), An Encounter

The child narrator immerses himself in adventure stories, usually of American origin, but he finds the stories are not sufficient for him. He wants to escape from the rules of school

and home, which limit opportunities for adventure, and begin to explore the world around him. His plan in the story is to see more of Dublin, but this statement reflects an ambition to go beyond the city at some point in his life. The quotation also informs decisions made by other characters, such as Eveline or Little Chandler, to remain in Ireland.

"The light from the lamp opposite our door caught the white curve of her neck, lit up her hair that rested there and, falling, lit up the hand upon the railing."

— Child narrator ("Araby"), Araby

The child narrator's interest in Mangan's sister represents his first romantic awakening. His detailed descriptions of her appearance reflect his awareness of her physical form; his awareness is not sexual yet, but hints at that direction. The description of light falling on her gives her an ethereal quality, as if she is beyond his world and his grasp.

"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."

— Narrator, Eveline

As Eveline makes her final decision to stay in Dublin or go with Frank, she is overcome by fear and anxiety. Her thought that Frank will metaphorically drown her reflects a fear that his life and world will overbalance her own, believing she will be unable to survive outside the familiar world—however flawed—that is her own.

"Daybreak, gentlemen!"

— Villona, After the Race

After a night of drinking, talking, and gambling, Jimmy knows he will regret his losses at cards—and other follies of the night—in the morning. When Villona opens the door to the cabin of the yacht where they have been playing and announces daybreak, it signals that Jimmy will have no time for regrets. His mistakes from the night before have already seen the light of day and reality must, by necessity, set in.

"I know that game ... and it's a mug's game."

— Lenehan, Two Gallants

Corley tells Lenehan about his attempts at "respectable" dating, taking girls out, buying them gifts and dinners, without getting anything—specifically, sex—in return. Lenehan agrees with Corley that the respectable route is for suckers, but this comment contradicts his private thoughts. On his own, Lenehan wonders if he might prefer a wife, a home, and a respectable job to his constant scamming of friends and women.

"Then she remembered what she had been waiting for."

— Narrator, The Boarding House

While Mrs. Mooney speaks with Mr. Doran, Polly Mooney wipes away her tears and lovingly caresses the scene of her love-making with the young man, both physically and in her reminiscences. She has no conscious sense of wrongdoing, as Mr. Doran had, or of her reputation's ruin—only a vague sense of future happiness.

"Every place is immoral."

— Gallaher, A Little Cloud

When Little Chandler asks Gallaher if Paris is an immoral city, this statement is Gallaher's response. Gallaher has been to enough places to learn that every location has its vices and its flaws. The implication here is that Dublin is also immoral, though Chandler's question implies some kind of moral high ground for his home.

"I'll say a Hail Mary for you, pa, if you don't beat me."

— Tom, Counterparts

While Farrington beats his son for the kitchen fire being out, his son begs for mercy and offers a prayer for his father. It is an unusual moment of pathos in an otherwise relentlessly cold and oftentimes cruel collection of stories.

"Mamma is mamma but Maria is my proper mother."

— Joe, Clay

Joe's description of his childhood relationship with Maria indicates his affection for her, but also some situational irony. If he truly felt this way about her, he might have given her a home himself rather than put her in an institution. He also might listen more respectfully when she asks him to reconcile with his brother. It is clear that Joe, like many others in the story, does not respect Maria because of her diminutive stature and status as a fallen woman.

"No one wanted him; he was outcast from life's feast."

— Narrator, A Painful Case

Early in "A Painful Case," Mr. Duffy seems to be satisfied with his solitary life. Only after he copes with the loss and death of Mrs. Sinico does he begin to understand how disconnected he is from other people. He sees couples in the park and understands he will never be like them and his chance to have that connection—with Mrs. Sinico—has been lost forever.

"This is Parnell's anniversary ... and don't let us stir up any bad blood. We all respect him now that he's dead and gone—even the Conservatives."

— Mr. O'Connor, Ivy Day in the Committee Room

The campaign workers in the committee room argue over a number of points, even Parnell's fall from political life. O'Connor reminds them that Ivy Day is meant to unite all who love Ireland in commemorating Parnell, even if the details of their political views are different.

"Anyway, if it's not your business it's my business and I mean to see to it."

— Mrs. Kearney, A Mother

In one sentence, Mrs. Kearney shows how both sides of the argument over her daughter Kathleen's contract are wrong. Mr. Holohan engages in a cowardly attempt to dodge the awkward conversation by saying a contract he created is not his business. Mrs. Kearney responds with aggression and anger, which is equally unproductive to negotiations.

"Wherefore make unto yourselves friends out of the mammon of iniquity so that when you die they may receive you into everlasting dwellings."

— Father Purdon, Grace

In the verse Father Purdon has chosen for his sermon, he succinctly describes the group of friends that have brought Tom Kernan to the service. They have come to Kernan based on his own iniquity, his drinking, but they are the friends who are guiding him toward salvation.

> *"One by one they were all becoming shades. Better pass boldly into that other world, in the full glory of some passion, than fade and wither dismally with age."*

— Narrator, The Dead

In Gabriel Conroy's thoughts he compares himself to Michael Furey, who risked death for love and died young, but he died with passion and glory rather than fade away. Gabriel, aging and feeling unsteady in his identity on this night, feels he is fading away along with everyone he loves.

Symbols

Food

Food is a typical symbol in literature that reinforces bonds between people. Simply sharing meals is a way of strengthening social bonds in real life. In "An Encounter," on their day out in the city, the narrator and Mahony share a variety of foodstuffs: currant buns, chocolate, biscuits (cookies), and lemonade. Even though, as the story reveals, they do not actually like one another very much, by the end of their journey the two boys feel protective of one another. A dinner scene in "After the Race" provides an opportunity (that they ultimately fail to seize) for a group of young men to converse and form closer relationships with one another. Much of the social connection in "The Dead" centers around a dinner party that could, but often fails, to bring friends and family together.

Food and meals also inspire longing. In "Two Gallants" the dissolute Lenehan contemplates the value of a more stable and genuine connection with other people as he eats a solitary and sad meal, a plate of peas in a lonely café. In "A Painful Case" Mr. Duffy is eating a similarly lonely, if more substantial, meal—corned beef and cabbage—as he learns of the death of his estranged friend Mrs. Sinico while reading a newspaper, and is racked with longing for their lost relationship.

For Maria in "Clay," food is both a means of showing affection to the people she cares about and a source of longing for connection. She takes great care to purchase cakes to take to a Hallow Eve party hosted by the grown-up boy she nursed as a child. She goes to one bakery to get penny cakes, but decides to bring something "really nice" and goes to a second bakery to get a slice of plum cake that meets her standards. She wants to make her friends happy with her gifts, but she also wants to bring them something of value, so she will be valued in return.

Alcohol

Drinking can represent an occasion for forming social bonds. In "The Sisters" Nannie and Eliza Flynn offer sherry to the narrator and his aunt, providing a physical means for them to share their grief about Father Flynn's passing. Alcohol lubricates the relationships formed between Jimmy and his European and American acquaintances in "After the Race." As amoral and opportunistic as Corley and Lenehan are in "Two Gallants," their drinking together solidifies their relationship with one another. In "Grace" the world of the pub has provided Tom Kernan with a group of loyal friends who are willing to quit drinking themselves in order to help their friend abandon the bottle as well. In "The Dead" a pivotal moment in Gabriel Conroy's evening occurs when he provides a toast at a party.

In contrast, drinking can also be deeply destructive. In "Araby" the young narrator misses the better part of the bazaar because he is waiting for his uncle to come home from the pub. From the uncle's point of view, his evening out is nothing extraordinary, but it crushes the narrator's dreams by causing him to miss the bazaar. Even as drinking inspires camaraderie

among the young men in "After the Race," Jimmy loses an enormous sum of money when he is too drunk to follow the card game they're playing. Farrington's heavy drinking in "Counterparts" leads him to beat his children, and Tom Kernan's drunkenness in "Grace" causes him to injure himself on repeated occasions.

Weather

Weather conditions reflect the mood of events in each story or the mindsets of the characters. For example, the narrator in "The Sisters" finds himself feeling incongruously free and happy on a sunny morning, even though he has learned his friend Father Flynn has just died. While Father Flynn was a teacher and friend to the boy, the visits to the dying priest also represent something of a burden for the child, and the sunlight reflects this release for him. A hot sunny day awaits the two boys who escape school to explore the city in "An Encounter," reflecting the joyous freedom they feel at the start of their day. As the day grows hotter, this freedom begins to feel like a burden to them. "Two Gallants" takes place on an overcast evening in August, mixing the "mild warm air" that grants freedom to Corley and Lenehan with "grey," reflecting the clouds in Lenehan's thinking about his life's course. The final story, "The Dead," ends with a snowstorm, reflecting the chill Gabriel Conroy feels as he contemplates mortality, but snow also covers the world and obscures detail, which represents how Gabriel's own sense of self is obscured by his thoughts.

Themes

Religion

The Catholic Church looms over the lives of the Dubliners. In some stories, religious faith is an explicit element of the story, as is the case in "The Sisters," which centers around a young boy's friendship with a dying priest. In "Grace," a group of men take their alcoholic friend to church in an effort to get him to quit drinking, and it seems to have some benefit for them, even though their understanding of formal doctrine is somewhat lacking. In other stories, religious elements appear in more subtle ways, such as the back room of the narrator's home in "Araby," formerly occupied by another dying priest. In "Eveline" the title character resorts to prayer as she struggles with the decision to stay in Dublin or leave Ireland with her lover.

Even more subtle are the ways religious beliefs inform the morality that dictates daily life. Attitudes about sexual behavior are particularly rigid, based on the church's prohibition of premarital sex. In "The Boarding House" a young man is pressured into marrying a girl he had an affair with. People have found out about the affair, so the marriage is necessary to save the girl's reputation. In "Two Gallants" a young woman who was once involved with one of the main characters later hits bottom, and is seen about town with multiple men. Her reputation is ruined by the affair. In "A Painful Case" no one has a physical affair at all, but Mr. Duffy believes his friendship with a married woman is veering toward dangerous territory, and concern for propriety leads Mr. Duffy to break off the friendship.

Identity

The search for identity troubles every main character in *Dubliners*, as each of them struggles to navigate between personal desires, society's expectations, and relationships with others. The children of the first three stories struggle to find a place in a world that is absent parents, confusing, and often threatening or hostile. Young people, such as Eveline in "Eveline" or Jimmy in "After the Race," struggle to decide what their futures will be as they make decisions in the present. Little Chandler in "A Little Cloud" struggles against being defined as a clerk and family man, wishing he could live a bohemian life as a poet. Maria in "Clay" struggles with being defined by her marital status, or lack thereof.

The struggle with identity peaks in the final story with Gabriel Conroy of "The Dead." He appears comfortable with his place in the world. He has gained stature and respect as a professor and writer, but a conversation with his wife after the party calls Gabriel's concept of his identity into question. He learns his wife was deeply in love with a man who died before she met Gabriel. He realizes he and everyone he knows will one day become a "shade," a memory for someone else. He thinks

about how useless the trappings of his life really are in the face of the inevitability of death, and feels the world as he knows it dissolve around him. While other characters come through their narratives with some new glimmer of knowledge about who they really are, Gabriel learns that the trappings of identity are largely an illusion.

Class

Economic class in *Dubliners* is relatively static. For the most part, those who are born poor remain poor throughout their lives, and those who are born wealthy remain wealthy. Class differences also bring conflict. For example, the narrator and Mahony stretch their shillings through their day's adventure in "An Encounter," but when they meet a group of children who are even less well off, there is some hostility between them. The other children throw stones because Mahony has a cricket badge on his hat, a game generally reserved for wealthier Anglo-Irish Protestants, even though the boys' Catholic school has a team. The hostility in this exchange (it could be argued that much of the hostility is between Catholics and Protestants in Ireland in general) stems from the disparity of wealth between the two groups of boys.

A few incidents of class mobility are present in *Dubliners*, but neither of them works out very well. In "After the Race," Jimmy is the son of a local entrepreneur who has made a fortune by Dublin standards. Jimmy's father encourages Jimmy's friendship with a wealthy Frenchman, but the Frenchman and his other acquaintances are wealthy on a scale well beyond whatever fortune Jimmy's family has recently amassed. Jimmy loses a large amount of money in an attempt to keep up with his much richer friends in a card game. In "A Mother," Mrs. Kearney, whose family is comfortably middle class, attempts to raise the family's reputation and social standing by getting involved in an arts society and having her daughter play piano. Her attempts at climbing the social ladder fail. She embarrasses herself by demanding payment for her daughter's performances. The society committee is put off by Mrs. Kearney's demanding attitude, and her concern about money is vulgar to the upper classes.

Escape

Compared to other European capitals, Dublin is not an especially large city. Many of the same locations, such as Stephen's Green, the city's largest park, and the shopping district of Grafton Street, appear repeatedly in the stories. The rigid morality of Dublin's society, which applies to the poor as well as to the wealthy, places further constraints on everyone's behavior. The economy is similarly rigid, with few opportunities for anyone to advance out of the class into which they were born (incidentally, these were factors that led Joyce himself to abandon Dublin for the European continent). In this stifling atmosphere, plenty of other characters dream of escape. The young narrator of "An Encounter" finds escape in playtime with his friends and in American pulp stories before plotting a literal escape from his strict school routine for a day of fun in the city. Eveline makes plans to go to South America with her lover, and Little Chandler in "A Little Cloud" ponders escaping to be a writer in London like his old acquaintance.

Unable to physically escape from the city, other characters turn to different means of escape. Corley and Lenehan in "Two Gallants" escape from society's strict expectations by drinking and womanizing, yet Lenehan thinks about an escape into conventional married life. Alcohol provides an easy and readily available escape for many Dubliners. Farrington in "Counterparts" spends his workday dreaming of the moment he can escape to the pub. In "Grace" Tom Kernan's drinking has become so dangerous for him that his friends stage a kind of intervention for him, taking him off to church for a different kind of escape.

Conformity

Many of the social expectations and rules in Dublin stem from the moral codes espoused by the church. Premarital or extramarital sex, for example, is frowned upon to the extent that it can be life-ruining if affairs are discovered, as evidenced in "The Boarding House." Even the possible appearance of impropriety is enough to deter some relationships, as seen in Mr. Duffy's decision to end a friendship with a married woman in "A Painful Case." But not all conformity is church-mandated.

In "The Sisters" Father Flynn is part of the church, but his odd behavior casts him onto the fringes of the neighborhood. The narrator's uncle and their neighbor Mr. Cotter are suspicious of Father Flynn and his relationship with the narrator as a result, though they provide no proof that Father Flynn has actually done anything untoward.

Other characters resign themselves to lives they find tedious or exhausting because that is what they are supposed to do. As she contemplates leaving the city with her lover, Eveline considers what her coworkers and family will think of her decision to run away. Little Chandler in "A Little Cloud" sticks with his job and family because he is expected to do so. Maria in "Clay" steadfastly sticks to her daily routine because it is what is expected of an unmarried woman her age, even as she feels self-conscious for not conforming to the social convention of being married.

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