

James Joyce DUBLINERS

An ambitious mother, a boy in love, a lonely older man, a cynical intellectual and a girl who dreams of a life in another country are just a few of Joyce's *Dubliners*. In these realistic stories, we discover the hopes, fears and disappointments of Joyce's characters. He also shows us turn-of-the-century Dublin in great detail that captures the reader's attention. This collection of eight stories from *Dubliners* includes *Eveline*, *Araby* and a two-part adaptation of Joyce's novella, *The Dead*.

In this reader you will find:

- Information about James Joyce's life
- Sections focusing on background and context
- CLIL History
- Glossary of difficult words
- Comprehension activities
- B2 First style activities
- Exit test

Tags

Irish Literature

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James Joyce

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DUBLINERS

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James Joyce DUBLINERS



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Book brief

- 1 *Dubliners* by Irish writer, James Joyce, is a collection of short realistic stories. Eight are included in this book.
- 2 The stories are all set in various parts of Dublin in the early 1900s and give us a vivid picture of the realities of Joyce's native city.
- 3 In the stories, various characters struggle with the challenges of complicated relationships and life in Dublin.
- 4 The plot of each story is minimal and Joyce concentrates on describing the private lives and thoughts of his characters, who range from children to teenagers and finally adults.
- 5 Main themes include the prison of routine, the desire to escape, paralysis, life and death.

James Joyce

Dubliners

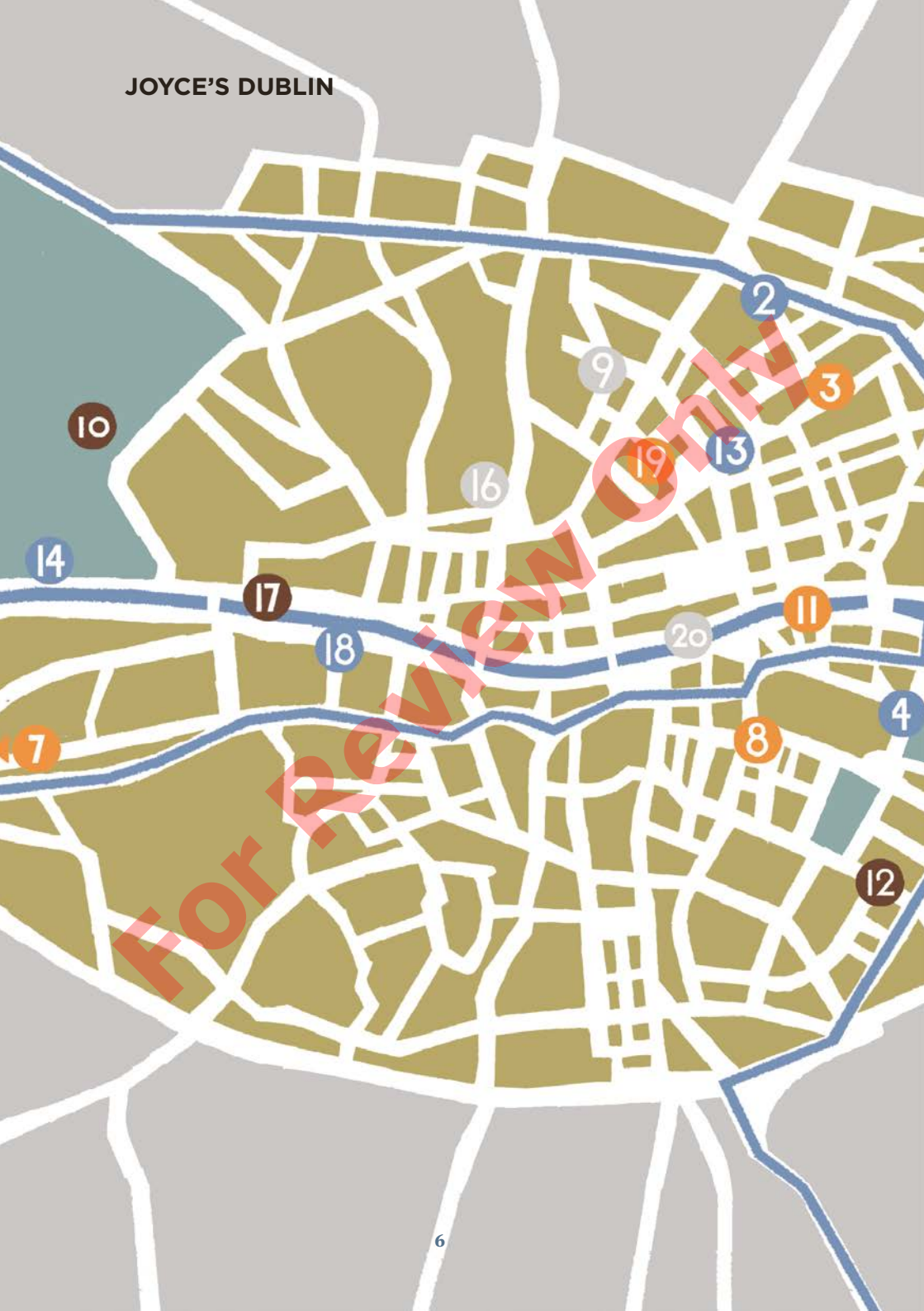
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For Review Only

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JOYCE'S DUBLIN





CITY OF DUBLIN

- 2 NORTH RICHMOND ST
- 3 BUCKINGHAM ST
- 4 WESTLAND ROW STATION
- 5 HILL OF HOWTH
- 6 THE PORT
- 7 NAAS ROAD
- 8 GRAFTON ST
- 9 HARDEWICKE ST
- 10 CHAPELIZOD
- 11 RIVER LIFFEY
- 12 BAGGOT ST
- 13 THE ROTUNDA
- 14 PHOENIX PARK
- 15 SYDNEY PARADE STATION
- 16 CITY OF DUBLIN HOSPITAL
- 17 ORMOND QUAY
- 18 USHER'S ISLAND
- 19 GENERAL POST OFFICE
- 20 BACHELOR'S WALK

Before you Read

Grammar B2 First

- 1 Read the text and decide which answer – A, B, C or D best fits each space.

Introducing *Dubliners*

Dubliners is a collection of short stories, although all the stories are interconnected and the book is intended to be read from beginning to end. They were first (1) as a collection in 1914. The stories are all (2) in and around Dublin and most of the characters in the stories are from the middle classes, (3) Joyce himself. The reader can find other connections, too. For example, characters experience 'epiphanies' – moments when they (4) the truth about themselves. Joyce uses irony and humour when describing his characters and the details of their ordinary, everyday lives. This (5) of description makes his characters and settings extremely realistic. Joyce uses a wide (6) of techniques to bring his stories to life and many critics think he used *Dubliners* to (7) with different writing skills.

- | | | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1 A ☐ shown | B ☐ published | C ☐ made | D ☐ given |
| 2 A ☐ set | B ☐ made | C ☐ happened | D ☐ done |
| 3 A ☐ near | B ☐ as | C ☐ like | D ☐ so |
| 4 A ☐ recognise | B ☐ make | C ☐ believe | D ☐ ask |
| 5 A ☐ incident | B ☐ type | C ☐ reason | D ☐ target |
| 6 A ☐ number | B ☐ amount | C ☐ level | D ☐ range |
| 7 A ☐ test | B ☐ experiment | C ☐ practise | D ☐ attempt |



Vocabulary

- 2 The main themes in *Dubliners* are paralysis, corruption, death, growth and life. Use your dictionary to complete the table.

Noun	Verb	Adjective(s)
Paralysis		
Corruption		
Death		
Growth		
Life		

- 3 A Match the adjectives in Box A with the possible opposites in Box B.

BOX A	BOX B
1 ☐ dead	a asleep
2 ☐ unusual	b dry
3 ☐ moist	c bearable
4 ☐ discoloured	d bright
5 ☐ dull	e alive
6 ☐ awake	f interesting
7 ☐ intolerable	g normal

- 3 B Now work in pairs to discuss things that you find *unusual* and *intolerable*.

Speaking

21st Century Skills

- 4 Dublin is, of course, the capital of Ireland. Talk in pairs about capital cities, thinking about:

- famous sights and landmarks
- bridges
- rivers
- buildings



- streets
- shops
- parks
- theatres

The Sisters

- ▶ 2 There was no hope for him this time: it was his third stroke*. Night after night I'd passed the house (it was vacation time) and studied the lighted square of the window: and night after night I'd found it lighted in the same way, evenly. If he was dead, I thought, I'd see the reflection of the candles in the window, as I knew that two candles must be set at the head of a corpse*. Every night as I gazed up at the window I said softly to myself the word *paralysis**. It'd always sounded strange to my ears, like the word *gnomon* in the *Euclid* and the word *simony** in the *Catechism*. But now *paralysis* sounded evil. It filled me with fear, and yet I wanted to be nearer to it and to look at its deadly work.

The 'Sisters' don't actually appear in the story until quite late on, which is typical of Joyce. This is unlike most writers who usually choose a title which is more obvious and which helps the reader understand what the story will be about.

Old Cotter was sitting in front of the fire, smoking, when I came downstairs for my supper. While my aunt was filling my bowl he said, as if returning to something he'd said earlier:

'No, I wouldn't say he was exactly ... but there was something strange ... there was something unusual about him. I'll tell you my opinion.'

He began to smoke his pipe, probably arranging his opinion in his mind. Old fool! When we first knew him he used to be rather interesting, talking about unusual things; but I soon grew tired of him and his boring stories about where he used to work.

stroke a medical condition which often stops movement and speech

corpse a dead body

paralysis inability to move

simony buying or selling church benefits

Dubliners

‘I have my own idea about it,’ he said. ‘I think it was one of those ... strange situations ... but it’s hard to say...’

He began to puff at his pipe* again without telling us his idea. My uncle saw me staring and said to me:

‘Well, so your old friend has gone, you’ll be sorry to hear.’

‘Who?’ said I.

‘Father Flynn.’

‘Is he dead?’

‘Mr. Cotter here has just told us. He was passing by the house.’

I knew that I was being watched, so I continued eating as if the news hadn’t interested me. My aunt explained to old Cotter:

‘The boy and he were great friends. The old man taught him a great deal* and he had hopes for the boy’s future.’

Old Cotter looked at me for a while. I felt that his little black eyes were examining me, but I wouldn’t satisfy him by looking up from my plate. He went back to smoking his pipe:

‘I wouldn’t like children of mine,’ he said, ‘to spend time with a man like that. It’s bad for children. A young boy should run about and play with boys his own age and not be ... Am I right, Jack?’

‘Yes,’ said my uncle, ‘I always tell him to spend more time taking exercise and less time dreaming. When I was a child, every morning of my life I had a cold bath, winter and summer. That’s what they need today. Education is all very well, but ...’

My aunt brought a dish of lamb from the kitchen and put it on the table.

‘But why do you think it’s not good for children, Mr. Cotter?’ she asked.

‘It’s bad for children,’ said old Cotter, ‘because their minds are so

puff at a pipe smoke a pipe

a great deal a lot



impressionable*. When children see things like that, you know, it has an effect ...'

I filled my mouth with food to stop myself from shouting in anger. Silly red-nosed old fool!

It was late when I fell asleep. Though I was angry with old Cotter for calling me a child, I was finding it difficult to find a meaning in all his unfinished sentences. In the dark of my room I imagined that I saw again the heavy grey face of the paralysed priest. I pulled the covers over my head and tried to think of Christmas. But the grey face still followed me. It murmured*; and I understood that it wanted to confess something. It began to confess to me in a murmur and I wondered why it smiled continually and why the lips were so moist*. But then I remembered that it'd died of paralysis and I felt that I too was smiling, as if to absolve* him from simony.

The next morning I went down to look at the little house in Great Britain Street. It was a little shop under the sign *Drapery*. The drapery consisted mainly of children's boots and umbrellas; and on ordinary days a notice used to hang in the window, saying: *Umbrellas. Re-covered*. No notice was visible now. There were some flowers with black silk around them on the door. Two poor women and a boy were reading a card attached to the flowers. I also went up and read:

July 1st, 1895

The Rev. James Flynn (formerly of S. Catherine's Church, Meath Street), aged sixty-five years.

*R. I. P.**

I was now sure that he was dead but unsure what to do next. Had he not been dead, I'd have gone into the little dark room behind the shop

impressionable easily influenced by other people

murmur speak quietly

moist wet, damp

absolve say someone isn't guilty of something

R.I.P. (Latin: *requiescat in pace*) rest in peace

DEATH
NOTICE



to find him sitting in his armchair by the fire, wearing his coat. Perhaps my aunt would have given me a packet of snuff* for him, and this present would have woken him up. I always emptied the packet into his black snuff-box, as his hands trembled too much to do it. When he tried to raise his large hand to his nose, little clouds of smoke fell through his fingers onto the front of his coat. These constant showers of snuff gave his ancient priestly clothing their green faded* look.

I wanted to go in and look at him, but I wasn't brave enough to knock. I walked away slowly along the sunny side of the street, reading all the theatre advertisements in the shop windows as I went. I found it strange that neither I nor the world were in mourning* and I even felt annoyed at discovering in myself a sense of freedom as if I'd been freed from something by his death. I was surprised because, as my uncle had said the night before, he'd taught me a great deal. He'd studied in the Latin College in Rome and he'd taught me to pronounce Latin correctly. He'd told me stories about Napoleon Bonaparte, and he'd explained to me the meaning of the different ceremonies of the Mass*. Sometimes he'd smile when asking me difficult questions about what a person should do in certain situations. His questions showed me how difficult and mysterious certain institutions* of the Church were. The tasks* of the priest were so important that I was surprised anyone wanted to be a priest. Often I found his questions difficult to answer, but he'd smile and push large pieces of snuff into his nostrils*. When he smiled, he used to uncover his big discoloured teeth. I often felt uncomfortable before I came to know him well.

In the evening, my aunt took me with her to visit the house of mourning. It was after sunset; but the windows reflected the gold of

snuff tobacco that you put in your nose
faded where the colour or light has become less clear
mourning expressing sadness because someone has died

Mass a religious service
institutions (here) traditions, ways
task duty, job
nostrils the holes in your nose

Dubliners

the heavy clouds. Nannie welcomed us in the hall. The old woman pointed upwards and then walked slowly, with difficulty, up the narrow staircase in front of us. Upstairs, she stopped, pointing at the open door of the dead-room. My aunt went in and the old woman, seeing that I was unsure, waved her hand repeatedly.

I went silently in. The room was filled with dusky* golden light through which the candles looked pale and thin. He was in his coffin*, ready to be buried. I pretended to pray but couldn't gather my thoughts because the old woman's murmurings distracted* me. I noticed the heels of her old boots. I had the idea that the old priest was smiling as he lay there in his coffin.

But no. I saw that he wasn't smiling. There he lay, dressed in his priestly clothes, his large hands holding a chalice*. His face was defiant*, grey and massive*, with black enormous nostrils. There was a strong smell in the room – the flowers.

We came away. In the little room downstairs we found Eliza sitting in his armchair. I walked towards my usual chair in the corner while Nannie brought some wine and some glasses. She offered me some crackers also, but I refused because I thought I'd make too much noise eating them. No one spoke: we all gazed at the empty fireplace.

Eliza and Nannie are the dead priest's sisters, referred to in the title of this short story.

My aunt waited until Eliza sighed then said:

'Ah, well, he's gone to a better world.'

Eliza sighed again. My aunt drank from her glass.

'Did he ... peacefully?' she asked.

'Oh, quite peacefully,' said Eliza. 'He had a beautiful death. He makes such a beautiful corpse.'

'Yes, indeed,' said my aunt.

dusky quite dark

coffin a box where we put a dead body

distract take your attention away from something

chalice a cup used in religious services

defiant not wanting to lose a fight

massive huge

She took another drink from her glass and said:

‘Well, Miss Flynn, you were both very kind to him, I must say.’

‘Ah, poor James!’ she said, ‘We did everything we could, as poor as we are – we gave him everything he needed. And Father O’Rourke brought the flowers and the candles, and wrote out the notice and dealt with the papers for the churchyard* and poor James’s insurance*.’

‘Wasn’t that good of him’, said my aunt.

Eliza closed her eyes:

‘Ah, there’s no friends like the old friends.’

‘Indeed that’s true,’ said my aunt, ‘And I’m sure that he won’t forget you and all your kindness to him.’

‘Ah, poor James!’ said Eliza, ‘He was no great trouble to us. You could never hear him in the house. Still, I know he’s gone ...’

‘It’s when it’s all over that you’ll miss him,’ said my aunt.

‘I know that,’ said Eliza, ‘I won’t be bringing him his tea anymore, nor will you be sending him his snuff. Ah, poor James.’

She paused* and then said:

‘But I’d noticed something strange happening lately. I’d find him lying back in the chair with his mouth open and his book on the floor. But still he kept saying that before the end of the summer he’d go out for a drive one day to see the house where we were all born down in Irishtown, and take me and Nannie with him, poor James!’

Eliza took out her handkerchief and dried her eyes. Then she put it back in her pocket and gazed into the empty fireplace for some time without speaking:

‘The duties of a priest were too much for him.’

‘Yes,’ said my aunt, ‘He was a disappointed man. You could see that.’

churchyard the area around a church
insurance when a company promises to give you money for example if something is damaged, or due to an illness or death in return for payments made by you

pause stop speaking for a moment

Dubliners

A silence took possession of the little room and, under its cover, I approached the table and tasted my wine and then returned quietly to my chair in the corner. Eliza seemed to have fallen into a deep reverie*. We waited respectfully for her to break the silence: and after a long pause, she said slowly:

‘It was that chalice he broke ... that was the beginning of it. Of course, they say it was alright, that it was empty I mean. But still ... they say it was the boy’s fault. But poor James was so nervous.’

‘And why was that?’ said my aunt. ‘I heard something.’

‘It affected his mind,’ Eliza said. ‘After that he began to spend time alone, talking to no-one and wandering about by himself. So one night he was wanted to go on a call and they couldn’t find him anywhere. They looked high and low*; and then someone suggested the church. So they got the keys and opened the church and Father O’Rourke and another priest brought a light to look for him ... and where do you think he was? He was there, sitting by himself in the dark in the confession box, wide-awake* and laughing softly to himself.’

She stopped suddenly as if to listen. I too listened; but there was no sound in the house: and I knew that the old priest was lying still in his coffin, ready for his grave*, as we’d seen him, solemn* and defiant in death, an idle* chalice on his breast*.

Eliza resumed*:

‘Wide-awake and laughing to himself ... so then, of course, when they saw that, that made them think that something had gone wrong with him ...’



reverie dream-like state

look high and low look everywhere

wide-awake completely awake

grave the place where a dead body is put under ground

solemn very serious and sad

idle (here) not active

breast chest

resume sum up

Reading Comprehension

1 Choose the best answer – A, B, C or D.

1 The boy in *The Sisters*

- ☐ **A** had been friendly with the priest.
- ☐ **B** was there when the priest died.
- ☐ **C** disliked the priest.
- ☐ **D** went to church every day.

2 According to the boy, Mr. Cotter is

- ☐ **A** an interesting old man.
- ☐ **B** a silly old man.
- ☐ **C** a kind old man.
- ☐ **D** a greedy old man.

3 When the boy went to the priest's house the first time,

- ☐ **A** he felt very sad that the old man had died.
- ☐ **B** he was surprised to see so many people there.
- ☐ **C** he felt a sense of freedom.
- ☐ **D** he was annoyed that his aunt hadn't come with him.

4 The boy thought that the dead priest looked

- ☐ **A** peaceful.
- ☐ **B** calm.
- ☐ **C** angry.
- ☐ **D** defiant.

5 Nannie and Eliza, the priest's sisters, were

- ☐ **A** elderly and poor.
- ☐ **B** quite wealthy.
- ☐ **C** happy that he'd died.
- ☐ **D** worried about appearances.

6 At the end, we learn that the priest had

- ☐ **A** had some type of breakdown.
- ☐ **B** been loved by everyone locally.
- ☐ **C** been a teacher in the past.
- ☐ **D** done his job badly.

Vocabulary and Writing

2 A Idioms with *look*. Choose the correct meaning for these expressions. Check your answers in a dictionary.

- 1 "They looked high and low for him."
a ☐ They looked everywhere for him.
b ☐ They thought he was hiding from them.
- 2 "Old Cotter looked straight through the boy."
a ☐ Old Cotter pretended not to see the boy, ignoring him.
b ☐ Old Cotter was angry with the boy.
- 3 "Nannie and Eliza were sisters and they looked just like each other."
a ☐ They were sisters and they loved each other.
b ☐ They were sisters and they were very similar in appearance.
- 4 "My aunt looked him up and down."
a ☐ My aunt looked at him from head to foot as if in disapproval.
b ☐ My aunt had a good opinion of him.

2 B Write your own example for each of the four expressions with *look*.

3 Complete this summary of *The Sisters* with time expressions from the box.

When • Later • next • During • in the past
one evening • That evening

(1) a young boy comes to eat his supper (2) he hears an old man telling the boy's uncle and aunt that an old priest, a friend of the boy's, has died. Cotter and the boy's uncle think that the boy spent too much time with the priest, as young boys need to spend time with other young people. (3) that evening, the boy has a dream that the old priest was trying to talk to him about something. The (4) morning, the boy is surprised that he isn't sad, he actually feels as if he has been freed. (5), the boy's aunt takes him to visit the dead priest and his sisters. (6) the visit, the boy learns that the priest was possibly unstable and that there had been some sort of scandal about him (7)

Writing B2 First

- 4 Write an article (140-190 words) for the local newspaper about the death of Father James Flynn. Use information about his life, career and family from the story. Give your article a headline.



Grammar

- 5 **Should.** Rewrite these expressions with the correct form of *should*. Keep the same meaning.

- 1 It wasn't right for him to spend so much time with the old priest.
He spent so much time with the old priest.
- 2 Why don't you visit the priest's sisters?
You visit the priest's sisters.
- 3 It was a mistake not to go to your lesson.
You gone to your lesson.
- 4 It's important not to be late.
You be late.
- 5 It was wrong to say that to the teacher.
You said that to the teacher.
- 6 The problem was that you didn't ask permission.
You asked permission.