

James Joyce • *Counterparts from Dubliners*

THE AUTHOR

JAMES JOYCE

James Joyce was born on 2nd February 1882 in Dublin into a large Catholic family: he was the oldest of ten children. His father had been a supporter of the movement for Home Rule for Ireland •, but when its leader Charles Parnell died, his interest in politics died away and he retired from social life. For the writer James Joyce, his father's behaviour became the symbol of the failures of his own country.

James Joyce had a strict Catholic education: he attended two Jesuit schools before going on to study modern languages at University College Dublin where he graduated. Throughout his life Joyce **struggled** with Ireland's religion: he felt it was imposed on him and he thought it prevented him from expressing his own ideas and personality and this is possibly the reason why he decided to leave Dublin for Paris after he graduated from university. After a short while, however, Joyce had to return home because his mother was very ill. While Joyce was in Dublin, on 16th June 1904 ••, he met the woman who would become his wife, Nora Barnacle and with her he went to Paris, Zurich, Pula and Trieste, where he met Italo Svevo. In Trieste Joyce finished writing his first two important works: *Dubliners* (1914) and *A Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man* (1916), in which he experimented with a new way of writing. In 1920, Joyce moved to Paris where *Ulysses* (1922), his masterpiece, was finally published. Joyce's last novel, *Finnegans Wake*, was published at the **outbreak** of World War II in 1939. After the Nazi occupation of France, James Joyce left the country and returned to Zurich where he died in 1941.

At the beginning of the 19th century, Ireland became part of the newly-established United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. From the beginning of this period until 1922, when Ireland finally achieved independence from the UK, the Irish were constantly fighting for their Home Rule. These fights are referred to as "the Irish Question".

THE WORK

DUBLINERS

James Joyce's first work is a collection of fifteen short stories in which Joyce portrays the everyday lives of the inhabitants of his home town, who come from a variety of social positions: music teachers, clerks, students, and hotel owners, to give just a few examples.



As the author himself stated: "My intention was to write a chapter of the moral history of my country and I chose Dublin for the scene because that city seemed to me the centre of paralysis". **Paralysis** is one of the main themes of Joyce's stories: it is the condition experienced by most of the characters who fail to fulfil their hopes and desires because they are unable to change. The sense of frustration derived from this inability to act is shown in all the four phases of human life from **childhood** through **adolescence** to **maturity** and **public life**.

Another recurrent theme is **epiphany**, a sudden revelation that enables the characters to better understand their life or the situation they are experiencing, even though this does not imply any further development in their lives.

Joyce's masterpiece, *Ulysses*, describes the actions of its protagonist Leopold Bloom on that single day, which is still celebrated today under the name of "Bloomsday".

outbreak: *scoppio*
to struggle: *combattere*

THE TEXT

COUNTERPARTS

The man entered Mr. Alleyne's room. Simultaneously Mr. Alleyne, a little man wearing gold-rimmed glasses on a clean-shaven face, shot his head up over a pile of documents. The head itself was so pink and hairless it seemed like a large egg reposing on the papers. Mr. Alleyne did not lose a moment:

5 “Farrington? What is the meaning of this? Why have I always to complain of you? May I ask you why you haven't made a copy of that contract between Bodley and Kirwan? I told you it must be ready by four o'clock.”

“But Mr. Shelley said, sir----”

“Mr. Shelley said, sir.... Kindly attend to what I say and not to what Mr. Shelley says, sir.

10 You have always some excuse or another for shirking work. Let me tell you that if the contract is not copied before this evening I'll lay the matter before Mr. Crosbie.... Do you hear me now?” “Yes, sir.” “Do you hear me now?...”

Ay and another little matter! I might as well be talking to the wall as talking to you. Understand once for all that you get half an hour for your lunch and not an hour and a half. How many

15 courses do you want, I'd like to know.... Do you mind me now?”

“Yes, sir.” (.....)

Mr. Alleyne bent his head again upon his pile of papers. The man stared fixedly at the polished skull which directed the affairs of Crosbie & Alleyne, gauging its fragility. A spasm of rage gripped his throat for a few moments and then passed, leaving after it a sharp sensation of

20 thirst. The man recognised the sensation and felt that he must have a good night's drinking.

The middle of the month was passed and, if he could get the copy done in time, Mr. Alleyne might give him an order on the cashier. He stood still, gazing fixedly at the head upon the pile of papers. Suddenly Mr. Alleyne began to upset all the papers, searching for something.

Then, as if he had been unaware of the man's presence till that moment, he shot up his head again, saying:

25 “Eh? Are you going to stand there all day? Upon my word, Farrington, you take things easy!”

“I was waiting to see...”

“Very good, you needn't wait to see. Go downstairs and do your work.”

The man walked heavily towards the door and, as he went out of the room, he heard Mr.

30 Alleyne cry after him that if the contract was not copied by evening Mr. Crosbie would hear of the matter. He returned to his desk in the lower office and counted the sheets which remained to be copied. He took up his pen and dipped it in the ink but he continued to stare stupidly at the last words he had written: In no case shall the said Bernard Bodley be... The evening was falling and in a few minutes they would be lighting the gas: then he could write. He felt that he must

35 slake the thirst in his throat. He stood up from his desk and, lifting the counter as before, passed out of the office.


clean-shaven: *sbarbata*
to complain: *lamentarsi*
counter: *banco, ripiano*
course: *portata (di un pasto)*
to dip: *intingere*
to gauge: *misurare*

to gaze: *fissare*
to grip: *stringere*
gold-rimmed: *con la montatura dorata*
to shirk: *evitare, sottrarsi a*
to slake: *spegnere*
skull: *cranio*

COMPREHENSION

1  Use the reference to the lines to find the following information.

1. Lines 1-3: What Mr. Alleyne looks like:
2. Lines 5-11: What made Mr. Alleyne angry at Farrington:
3. Lines 18-20: What Farrington feels like doing after Mr. Alleyne's words:
4. Lines 21-22: What Farrington hopes:
5. Lines 26-28: What Mr. Alleyne wants Farrington to do:
6. Lines 29-31: What Mr. Alleyne threatens to do:
7. Lines 32-34: What Farrington does when he goes back to his office:

2  Fill in the summary of the whole story using the given words.

gets • boss • drink • son • contract • copyist • duty • flirt

In this short story Joyce introduces us to Farrington, a **1.**, at the end of his workday. He can't wait to leave work and go to the pub with his friends, but his **2.**, Alleyne, urges him to finish copying a long **3.** before leaving. After trying in vain to do his **4.**, he decides to leave unseen and have a quick drink before trying to finish his work. When he goes back to work, he is still unable to concentrate on it and he finally **hands it in** to Mr. Alleyne incomplete. Having no money left he decides to **pawn** his watch and have another **5.** With his friends, he moves from pub to pub: he also tries to **6.** with a woman, but he fails. When he finally **7.** home, he finds out that his dinner is not ready: he gets angry and **grabs** his little **8.** to beat him. The boy **begs** him not to do it and promises to say a prayer for him.

to beg: implorare
to grab: afferrare
to hand in: consegnare
to pawn: dare in pegno

ANALYSIS

3  What sort of boss is Mr. Alleyne? Choose from the following (more than one is possible).

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sympathetic | <input type="checkbox"/> Supportive |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Despotic | <input type="checkbox"/> Intolerant |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Arrogant | <input type="checkbox"/> Strict |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Easy-going | <input type="checkbox"/> Indulgent |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Kind | <input type="checkbox"/> Overcritical |


4  What sort of employee is Farrington? Choose from the following (more than one is possible).

- | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Trustworthy | <input type="checkbox"/> Reliable |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Immoral | <input type="checkbox"/> Easy-going |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Responsible | <input type="checkbox"/> Unreliable |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dishonest | <input type="checkbox"/> Obedient |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Inconsiderate | <input type="checkbox"/> Diligent |

DISCUSSION

5  **PAIR WORK** Talk to a partner and discuss which of the soft skills listed below Farrington neglects.

- Work ethic
- Respecting deadlines
- Creativity
- Open-mindedness
- Problem solving
- Concentration

6  Answer the questions. Justify your answers by explaining your choice.

1. Do you think Farrington is a model employee?
2. If you were a manager, would you hire Farrington?
3. If you were one of Farrington's colleagues, would you like to work with him?
4. Do you think Mr Alleyne is a good boss?
5. If Alleyne had treated Farrington in a different way, do you think Farrington would have done a better job?



Sackville Street, Dublin (1905)