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“Araby” by James Joyce

James Joyce, an Irish author, writes about what life was like in Dublin, Ireland, in the early 20th century in his book *Dubliners*. James Joyce uses imagery and figurative language. His stories bring life and color into the colorless pages of the book. In the story "Araby," the author displays the sadness and isolation in a young boy's life, clearly distinguishing sorrow and joy. Throughout the story, the author repeatedly mentions the light and dark in the boy's life. In his monotonous life, the young boy is fortunate enough to find the "light" through his friend's sister, only to be left disappointed when he is forced back into the reality of his dark, dull world. Using light and dark as imagery devices, James Joyce brings the reader into the minds of a young child, and his reactions to growing up and facing the harsh truth.

In the story "Araby", the author uses light and dark to portray the young boy's loneliness. When the sun goes down, lights from the kitchen windows shine into North Richmond Street and the children know that it is time to return home for dinner (Joyce 3). The light of a person is lit within themselves, within their families and homes. However, instead of returning home, the little boy hides among the shadows when he spots his uncle coming along and remains there until he is sure that his uncle has entered the house (Joyce 3). Unlike the boy, Mangan has "light" in his life. His sister comes out into the street to call upon them when it is time. The sister is loving and caring, never failing to give enough attention to her brother. It is visible that the boy craves this affection

in his life. He doesn't want to go home to his "dark" and lonely house. He wants a family that is full of brightness, love, and care. Therefore, Mangan's sister, the closest form of brightness he knows, becomes the light in the boy's dull life.

Furthermore, the author illustrates the girl as an angelic being who lights up the boy's miserable life. The boy is hopeful and excited to have discovered this new source of light that has entered his life. Even as night falls, the girl keeps on shining with a light that illuminates her. For a young boy with too much emptiness in his life, he longs to be closer to the splendor. He sees the light in her house. He sees the light that shines upon her. To him, this is all that he desires. The author writes, "It was a dark rainy evening, and there was no sound in the house ... Some distant lamp or lighted window gleamed below me" (Joyce 6). The little boy wonders about his dark and gloomy house, which is empty and quiet except for the sound of the rain outside. There is some light—not a lot—coming from some faraway place, yet the boy is in the darkness of his own home. In this quote, the writer mentions several factors the boy faces—the light, the dark, the quiet, and the loneliness. Then suddenly, amid darkness comes along an angel sent from above, turning the boy's world around. "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. It fell over one side of her dress and caught the white border of a petticoat, just visible as she stood at ease" (Joyce 9). And just like that, once again, there is light in his life. Just a few seconds ago having to look at some distant, faint light, and now she is so close to him. The light that has reached him is incomparable to any other that he has observed from afar. It is closer, brighter, and visible enough to see all the details that it brings.

As the story comes closer to the ending, the writer switches his attention to the constant darkness that surrounds the boy. With the girl gone on a retreat in her convent, more days are filled with gloom rather than the beam of light. Even her house is now dark and lonely with the girl gone. The boy's journey to Araby is no better. The moon is high when he leaves his home. The train ride is long. The carriage is desolated. Even the scenery is not much to desire as the only things the boy can see are the houses in ruins by the river. Once again, the station is abandoned when he finally arrives. "Nearly all the stalls were closing, and the greater part of the hall was in darkness. I recognized a silence like that which pervades a church after a service" (Joyce 25). The author uses darkness to describe the atmosphere around the boy, accompanied by the deafening silence. This terrible feeling is not what he had expected. He had expected more lights and music and fun. But the place is dark and lonely, and he doesn't feel welcome. As he walks down the middle of the bazaar, all the lights go out, and he is left in the dark—alone. What is happening here is that not only has the lights gone dark in the bazaar, but also in the boy's life. The only beam of hope—the girl—is robbed away from him when he realizes that his feelings are nothing but fantasy. In the end, he is left alone in the dark without anything to look forward to.

In conclusion, light and dark plays a vital role in describing the boy's life as it demonstrates the missing pieces in his life and the joy that a particular person can bring. The writer shows his readers that although it is something temporary and insignificant, this sudden brightness that has reached the boy is everything he needs to escape his lonely world. However, once the lights in Araby go out, a realization hits him that there is no real brightness in the world—only darkness and gloom. Thus, making "Araby" a coming-of-age story.

Works Cited

Joyce, James. "Araby." Commonlit.org. CommonLit.

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