

Short Lecture on “Araby” by James Joyce

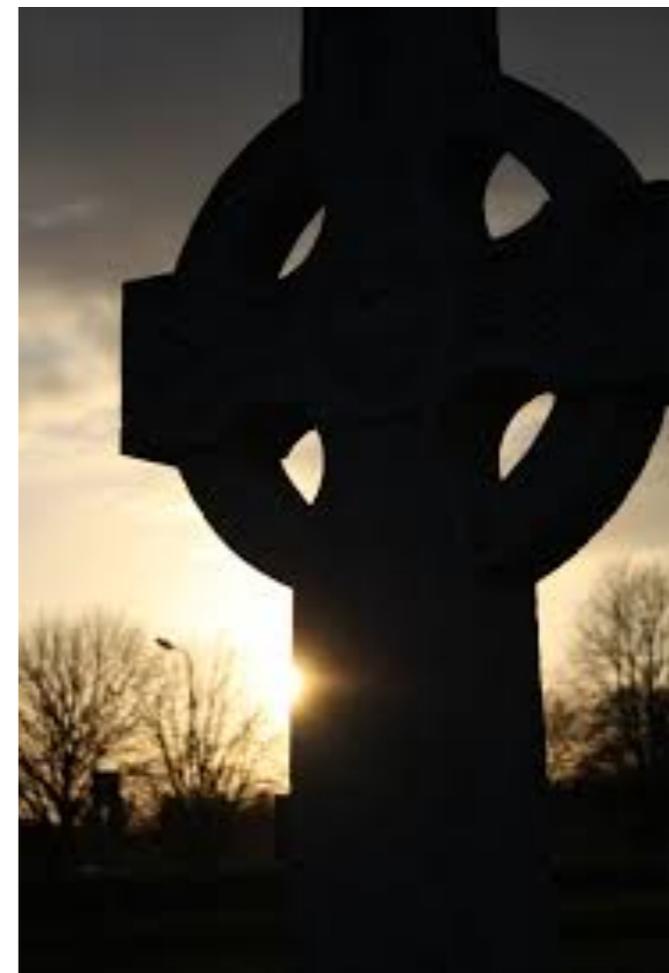
The Lights Go Out

ARABY

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“Araby” by James Joyce

"Araby" by James Joyce is a somber coming-of-age story. Much of this gloom comes from the dark and dreary setting of early 20th Century Dublin, Ireland, a poverty stricken place made even bleaker by the overarching shadow of the Catholic Church.



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As you read . . .

notice the voice of this narrator. Does he sound like a young boy as he tells this story, or is "Araby" being told from the distance of adulthood?

Notice details about the neighborhood and the house in which the nameless narrator lives.

Keep a sharp eye for the many references to light and dark that pervade the story.



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Notice how the only light seems to be associated with appearances of the girl with whom the boy is infatuated. In all his descriptions of her, she is edged in an almost holy light.

Is there any other brightness for the boy in this story? What is his home life like? With whom does he live? Do we see any joy in his days except for the radiant fantasies about the girl?

Think also about his knight-like offer to bring her something from the mysteriously named bazaar Araby. Does the bazaar live up to his extravagant fantasies of "eastern enchantment?" Keep a sharp eye for the many references to light and dark that pervade the story.

When do things start to dim for the narrator? And what happens when he arrives at the half-darkened bazaar that seemed to hold such possibility for him?

What happens when the last lights begin to go off?

What does he realize about the other "light" in his life—the girl?

What is the significance of the extinguished light at the end of the story that leaves him burning with anguish?

What do you think this narrator's life is going to be like after this event?

What do you feel his choices are as he goes forward?



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