

JAMES JOYCE

LIFE (1882 - 1941)

James Joyce was born in Dublin in 188. In 1902, dissatisfied with the narrowness of life in Dublin, he left to live in Paris, but returned to Ireland when his mother died. During his stay he met Nora Barnacle. They moved to Zurich and then to Trieste, where he became a teacher in the Berlitz Language School in 1905.

Joyce's first published work was *Chamber Music*, a poetry collection. This was followed by the short story collection *Dubliners*. During the First World War Joyce left Trieste and moved back Zurich. Here he began working on his second novel, *Ulysses*. This work was first published in serial form, in the New York literary magazine, *The Little Review*, which was prosecuted for publishing obscene material. *Ulysses* was finally published in Paris. At the outbreak of the Second World War Joyce died after an operation on a stomach ulcer.

ACHIEVEMENT

James Joyce is the colossus of **modernist fiction** thanks to his volume of short stories and his three novels. Each of these works is marked by an attempt to organize reality into a perfect form. This aim can be seen in *Dubliners*, where Joyce unifies the various stories around the theme of **paralysis**, showing this condition in youth, adolescence, maturity and public life. His next work is the autobiographical novel *A portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. The hero is named Stephen Dedalus and Joyce surrounds in him a dense web of classical and Christian symbolism. The work is also significant for its use of time-shift: the events of the story aren't arranged in chronological order but follow the pattern of Stephen Dedalus's memory. This was also the work in which Joyce developed his theory of **epiphany**, described as moments when the soul of an object stands with clarity or as moments of intense personal revelation.

In his next novel, *Ulysses*, Joyce confined himself to the events of a single day in Dublin. The work revolves around the separate journey of Leopold Bloom and Stephen Dedalus, the young student who is known from Joyce's previous novel.

In *Finnegan's Wake*, his final prose work, all traces of realism have by this time disappeared.

DUBLINERS

The stories in the collection *Dubliners* feature characters who are trapped by life in their city. Joyce himself declared that Dublin represented paralysis and he organized the stories to show the effects of the city and paralysis in childhood, adolescence, maturity and public life. The style of the collection is essentially realistic with moments of sudden insight called **epiphanies**. There is an epiphany when details, or "moments" buried for years for years in one's memory, suddenly surface in one's mind and start a long, often painful mental labour. One of the best examples of epiphany can be found in *The Dead*, which is the picture of paralysis in maturity.

PLOT. It's New Year's Eve. Gretta and Gabriel Conroy go to the annual party given by Gabriel's aunt. Their house is some way out of Dublin, so the couple book a hotel for the night. They have a pleasant evening, but as they return to the hotel Gabriel sees his wife distracted. As they were leaving the party, she had heard a guest singing a song about an abandoned woman. A boy she knew used to sing the same song. His name was Michael Furey. He died young because he stood outside Gretta's house in the rain the night before she left her home to go to a convent school. She thinks this probably killed him.