



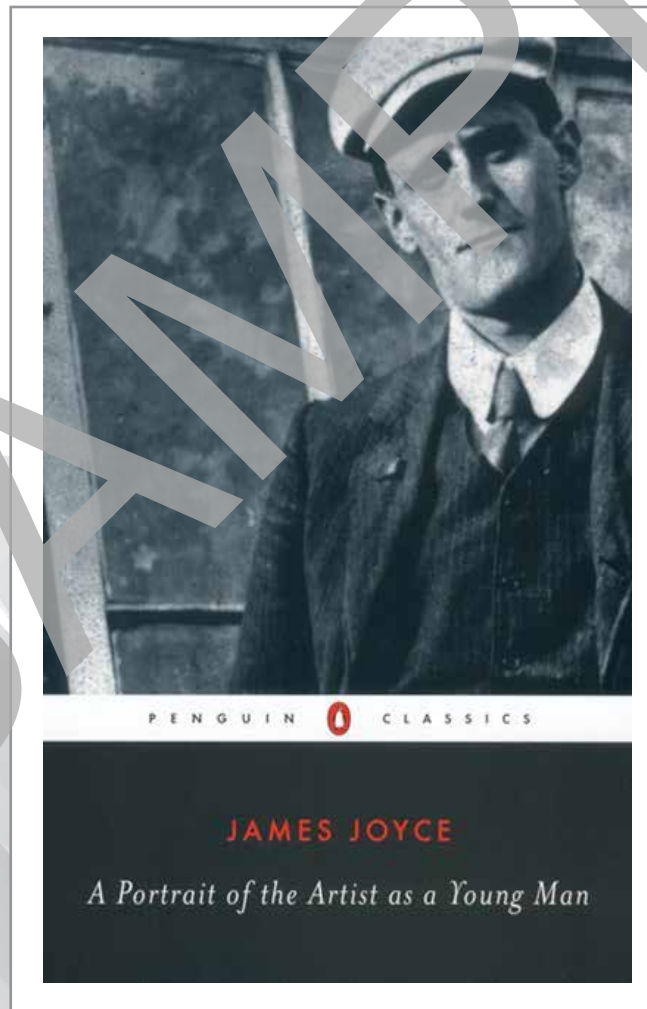
TEACHER GUIDE

GRADES 9-12

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man

James Joyce



READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT

A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man

James Joyce

TEACHER GUIDE

NOTE:

The trade book edition of the novel used to prepare this guide is found in the Novel Units catalog and on the Novel Units website. Using other editions may have varied page references.

Please note: We have assigned Interest Levels based on our knowledge of the themes and ideas of the books included in the Novel Units sets, however, please assess the appropriateness of this novel or trade book for the age level and maturity of your students prior to reading with them. You know your students best!

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Genre: fiction

Setting: Ireland, in and outside of Dublin

Point of View: third-person omniscient (first person in diary entries)

Themes: coming-of-age, religion, politics, morality

Conflict: self vs. self, self vs. other, other vs. other

Style: stream of consciousness, non-chronological narrative, interior monologue

Tone: mostly dark, yet often hopeful

Date of First Publication: 1916

Summary

A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, Joyce's first novel, is an account of the early years of Stephen Dedalus, its protagonist. It opens with Stephen's earliest memories as a toddler—his father telling him a story, a little song he likes to sing, his governess (Dante Riordan) demanding an apology for some misdeed.

We then look in on Stephen as a six-year-old at Clongowes Wood College, where he suffers the bullying of the boys who fit in socially, which the weak and bespectacled Stephen does not. The Christmas holiday, much anticipated by homesick Stephen, is marred by a heated political argument at the dinner table. Ireland's hope for freedom, Parnell, is attacked by Dante for his adulterous affair with Kitty O'Shea. Stephen's father and the family's dinner guest, John Casey, attack the Catholic church for denouncing Parnell and, in their opinion, driving him to his death from pneumonia and the death of any hope for Ireland to escape British rule. As the quarrel escalates and the language becomes more inflammatory, Stephen is confused and terrified: the adults he respects, the hero he has worshiped, and the church he obeys are all under attack.

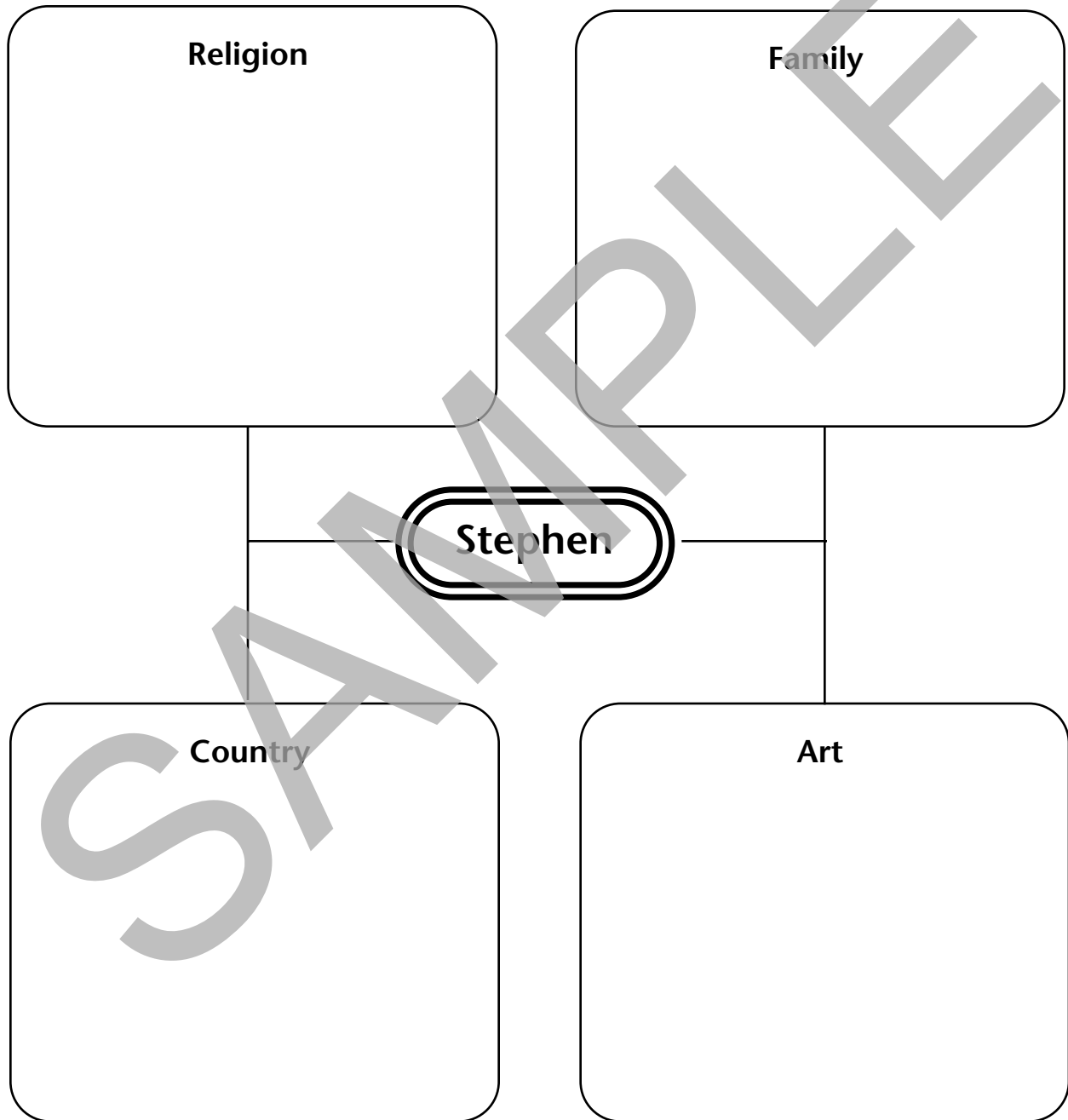
Back at school, Stephen, who has broken his glasses and cannot read, is unjustly punished by Father Dolan for not doing his lessons. Urged on by the other boys and by his own feelings of outraged anger, Stephen complains to the school's director. Father Conmee assures Stephen that he will speak to Father Dolan, and as the chapter ends, Stephen is carried on the arms of the other boys, who are cheering him wildly.

Mr. Dedalus falls out of political favor and loses his highly-paid government job. The Dedalus family begins a long and painful financial decline, beginning with Stephen's transfer to Belvedere College, another Jesuit school, as a scholarship student. Although he distinguishes himself as a student and even wins prize money on the national exams, Stephen is still a social misfit.

Stephen's relationship with his father, Simon, is deteriorating as well. On a nostalgic trip back to Cork, Simon's childhood home, Stephen is embarrassed by his father's excessive drinking and bragging. As the trip draws to an end, Stephen realizes the painful truth about his father: he is a failure, and he is leading the family steadily into poverty.

Themes

A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man



Chapter One, pp. 19–50

Vocabulary

nicens (19)	lemon platt (19)	oilsheet (19)	prefects (20)
feigning (20)	greaves (20)	refectory (20)	magistrate (21)
peach (21)	soutane (21)	rector (21)	fender (22)
scullion (24)	cod (27)	foxing (33)	collywobbles (34)
catafalque (35)	beeftea (36)	pierglass (39)	ozone (39)
pandybat (41)	flouted (43)	bestiality (44)	quid (47)
esplanade (48)	fenian (49)	blasphemer (50)	

A Note About Vocabulary

Joyce considered it essential to find the *mot juste*—exactly the right word, perhaps one reason why this novel was ten years in the making. Since you may not want students to invest too much time finding out the exact meanings of words that cannot be found in a standard classroom dictionary, a *Glossary* is found on page 36.

The challenging language in *Portrait* creates an opportunity for students to take responsibility for making their own personal word lists. Like other lists found in this guide, the list above is only a start. Students will be readily able to determine many word meanings from context, and can omit those from their own lists. Other words, not included as vocabulary in this guide, can be added to the lists.

Vocabulary Activity

In class, discuss how Joyce used the words “nicens” (as baby talk for “nice”), and the slang words “peach,” “cod,” “foxing,” and “collywobbles.” Have them provide American slang words with similar meanings, for example: peach=rat on; cod=lark; foxing=putting on.

Motivator

Bring in some lemon-flavored hard candy to share. Ask the students to guess what James Joyce called candy similar to this. (*lemon platt*)

Allusions

In order to understand the conversation at the Christmas dinner table, students need to know about Charles Stewart Parnell, the Irish nationalist, and his denouncement after his affair with Kitty O’Shea was discovered. This information can be found on page 8 of this guide.

Discussion Questions

1. For the first page and a half of the novel, about how old is Stephen? (*He is a probably no more than three or four.*) What scenarios do you picture happening in his very early childhood when you read these pages? What can you tell about his family? (*His father reads to him; his mother plays the piano; he likes to sing and dance while Uncle Charles and Dante clap; he sometimes wets the bed; he’s fond of a little neighbor girl, Eileen.*)
2. How is the image of the eagle carried into the description of the boys playing football (soccer) on page 20? (*Stephen wants little to do with the football, which “flew like a heavy*

bird.") What do you think "greaves in his number and a hamper in the refectory" means? (*Greaves are shinguards; Rody apparently also has a hamper of his favorite foods which is kept in the dining hall for him. This was common practice, especially among those who were well-to-do. Stephen may have been a bit envious of him.*)

3. How can you tell that Stephen is interested in words? (*He thinks about the several meanings of the word "belt," wonders about his last name, and is interested in Nasty Roche's name for the Friday pudding. He likes the "nice sentences in Dr. Cornwell's Spelling Book," and thinks "suck" is an odd word. He remembers seeing the words "cold" and "hot" printed on the water faucets at the hotel.*)
4. Do you think Stephen prefers to be inside or out? What does the badge fluttering on his breast (page 24) tell you? (*Answers will vary; Stephen is trying very hard to win for his team. He is not competitive at sports, but at intellectual things.*)
5. Have you ever written your "extended address" as Stephen did in his geography book? Why do you think many children do? Does knowing "his name and who he was" offer Stephen any comfort? (*Answers will vary; He begins to think about infinity, and this makes him very tired.*)
6. What feelings does Stephen dislike? (*his own feelings of weakness, cold and damp things, wet and slimy things, the dark after the light goes out in the dormitory*) What gives him comfort at school? (*being warm and in bed and knowing he is getting closer to going home for Christmas*) How does he seem to feel about his religion? (*He goes through the motions and seems to believe wholeheartedly in God and in the possibility of being sent to Hell.*)
7. What is represented by the description of the homeward-bound train on pages 31-32? (*Stephen is dreaming about how wonderful it will be to go home, and to feel loved and wanted and welcomed.*) When he wakes up, what is wrong? (*He is ill.*) What are some of the positive aspects of being sick? (*Wells apologizes for pushing him into the ditch; the prefect jokes with him; he enjoys thinking of the sadness everyone will feel if he dies.*)
8. Have you ever witnessed or participated in an argument about politics? Do you think it's possible for people with very different opinions to discuss things calmly—or do such attempts always lead to quarrels? (*Answers will vary.*)

Supplementary Activities

1. Creative Thinking/Writing: Reread the first page and a half of this novel. Reach back into your memories and jot down some images which come to your mind. You might look at a scrapbook of old pictures or talk to a parent or older sibling about your toddler years. Then string your images together to create a picture of your life.
2. Persuasive Writing: Do you agree with Dante Riordan or with Simon Dedalus and Mr. Casey? Should clergymen preach about politics, or should there be a strict separation of church and state? State and defend your opinion in a five-paragraph essay.
3. Internet Research: What do the arithmetic teams "white rose" and "red rose" represent (page 24)? (*white—the House of York; red—the House of Lancaster.*) How can you tell that Stephen is loyal to Ireland? (*Ireland has sided with the House of York, and Stephen is the head of the white rose team.*)