



Joyce to the World

Guidebook



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BIOGRAPHY

James Joyce was born on 2 February 1882, the eldest of ten surviving children. He was educated by Jesuits at Clogowes Wood College and at Belvedere College (just up the road from the Centre) before going on to University College, then located on St Stephen's Green, where he studied modern languages.

After he graduated from university, Joyce went to Paris, ostensibly to study medicine, and was recalled to Dublin in April 1903 because of the illness and subsequent death of his mother. He stayed in Ireland until 1904, and in June that year he met Nora Barnacle, the Galway woman who was to become his partner and later his wife.

In August 1904 the first of Joyce's short stories was published in the Irish Homestead magazine, followed by two others, but in October Joyce and Nora left Ireland going first to Pola (now Pula, Croatia) where Joyce got a job teaching English at a Berlitz school. After he left Ireland in 1904, Joyce only made four return visits, the last of those in 1912, after which he never returned to Ireland.

Six months after their arrival in Pola, they went to Trieste where they spent most of the next ten years. Joyce and Nora learned the local Triestino dialect of Italian, and Italian remained the family's home language for many years. Joyce wrote and published articles in Italian in the *Piccolo della Sera* newspaper and even gave lectures on English literature. This portrait of Nora was painted by the Italian artist Tullio Silvestri in Trieste just before World War One.

1914 proved a crucial year for Joyce. With Ezra Pound's assistance, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Joyce's first novel, began to appear in serial form in Harriet Weaver's *Egoist* magazine in London. His collection of short stories, *Dubliners*, on which he had been working since 1904, was finally published, and he also wrote his only play, *Exiles*. Having cleared his desk, Joyce could then start in earnest on the novel he had been thinking about since 1907: *Ulysses*.

With the start of World War One, Joyce and Nora, along with their two children, Georgio and Lucia, were forced to leave Trieste and arrived in Zurich where they lived for the duration of the war. The family had little money, relying on subventions from friends and family, people like Harriet Weaver in London and Nora's uncle in Galway. They often ended up living in cramped, squalid accommodation as Joyce persisted in writing *Ulysses*. In fact, Joyce never really had a room or an office of his own in which to do his writing, and far from trying to block out the world around him while he wrote, Joyce included things going on around him as part of the book. So characteristics of friends of his in Trieste, Zurich and Paris are given to characters in the book, and, most notably, Nora's characteristic language and writing becomes the voice of Molly Bloom in the novel.

Biography (Cont.)

Though Joyce wanted to settle in Trieste again after the War, the poet Ezra Pound persuaded him to come to Paris for a while, and Joyce stayed for the next twenty years.

The publication of *Ulysses* in serial form in the American journal *The Little Review* was brought to a halt in 1921 when a court banned it as obscene. Shortly after, Harriet Weaver ran out of printers willing to set the text in England, and for a while it looked as though *Ulysses* would never be published.

In July 1920, Joyce met Sylvia Beach, an American expatriate living in Paris who owned and ran the bookshop *Shakespeare & Co.* In 1921, after the American ban, Beach offered to publish *Ulysses* and finally, on 2nd February 1922, Joyce's fortieth birthday, the first edition of *Ulysses* was published. Beach continued to publish *Ulysses* through 1930.

After Beach gave up the rights to *Ulysses* in 1930, much of Joyce's business was taken over by Paul Léon, a Russian Jewish émigré living in Paris. As a close friend of Joyce and Joyce's family, Léon also became Joyce's business advisor, looking after his correspondence and dealing with his literary and legal affairs. The Léons' apartment became a centre for Joyce studies, and Léon and others met Joyce there to discuss translations of *Ulysses* and the early serial publications of what became *Finnegans Wake*.

For the next ten years Joyce and Léon were in almost daily contact and Léon came to assume a role as necessary and important to Joyce and his work as Sylvia Beach had played in the 1920s. Not only did he manage Joyce's legal, financial and daily existence, much as Beach had during the years she published *Ulysses*, Léon played an essential part in the composition and proofreading of Joyce's last work.

Joyce's last and perhaps most challenging work, *Finnegans Wake* was published on 4 May 1939. It was immediately listed as "the book of the week" in the UK and the USA.

In 1940, when Joyce fled to the south of France ahead of the Nazi invasion, Léon returned to the Joyces' apartment in Paris to salvage their belongings and put them into safekeeping for the duration of the war, and it's thanks to Léon's efforts that much of Joyce's personal possessions and manuscripts survived. Joyce died at the age of fifty-nine, on 13 January 1941, at 2 a.m., in *Schwesterhaus vom Roten Kreuz* in Zurich where he and his family had been given asylum. He is buried in *Fluntern* cemetery, Zurich.

Source – James Joyce Centre

LESSON PLAN

Importance of Setting/Place in Creative Writing

Materials Needed:

Joyce to the World DVD

Pen/Paper

Time to complete lesson: 60 minutes to watch DVD. 1-3 days to complete assignment.

Step One: Have students watch the *Joyce to the World* DVD.

Step Two: Discuss with your students the importance of place/setting for the novel *Ulysses* in that all the events occur on the streets of Dublin.

Step Three: Ask your students to write a short story using your town as a backdrop. Stress the importance of having actual locations appear in the story.

Step Four: After the stories are completed, have students share them with the class.

Step Five: Discuss the following with your students.

- How important is setting/place for a short story? Did they find it easier or harder to write using real locations?
- Can location/setting be considered a “character” in a story? Why or why not?
- How does Joyce portray the city of Dublin in his novel? Positive or negative?
- Joyce stated that he wished that anyone who ever read *Ulysses* would come to know Dublin very well even if Dublin ceased to exist. Did Joyce succeed? Why or why not?

National Standards: NL-ENG.K-12.12 (Applying Language Skills)

Discussion Questions for *Joyce to the World*

1. The central question asked by the film is what compels so many people to study and celebrate *Ulysses* as compared to other highly regarded novels? Is it because of the book's themes, the fact that locations used in the novel are still accessible in Dublin or other factors? Discuss the different reasons given in the film.
2. *Ulysses* has been called the greatest book in the English language. Why? Is it because of the structure, the different forms/styles of writing employed or the characters? Discuss the pros and cons of each and explain why they do or don't support the argument for the book's stature.
3. One of the key acts of celebrating Bloomsday is reading aloud various selections of the book. Discuss which chapters in the novel lend themselves to being read aloud and why doing so adds to their impact.
4. Many people who study *Ulysses* are concerned that the growing popularity of Bloomsday may be due to new people celebrating it like St. Patrick's Day instead of as a celebration of the book. What are some ways that the celebration could attract more people to learning about Joyce and his work?
5. Ireland has many celebrated writers and artists in addition to Joyce. Have students research another celebrated Irish writer of either the 20th or 21st century and prepare a brief report on them. How does the artists' work compare/contrast to Joyce's?
6. Should a work of literature be "popular" or "accessible" in order to make it easier for a wide group of people to read it? Many critics disagree with the claim that "*Ulysses*" is the best book of the 20th century based on the argument that its complex structure makes it too hard for readers to engage it. Discuss the pros and cons for this argument. Should other factors aside from structure be weighed in assessing the book's merit?