



## Study of Summary of the Novel “ A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man”

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**Abstract :** This covers the childhood and adolescence of Stephen Dedalus. We see him, over the course of the novel, grow from a little boy to a young man of eighteen who has decided to leave his country for Europe, in order to be an artist. At the start of the novel, Stephen is a young boy, probably about five-years-old. He is one of the younger students at Clongowes Wood College for boys (a Jesuit elementary school, not a “college” in the American sense). He had been pushed into an outhouse drainage ditch by a student named Wells a few days earlier, and he wakes up ill. While in the infirmary, Stephen dreams of going home for the Christmas holidays. We then see the Dedalus family at Christmas dinner, and a heated argument erupts between Stephen’s father and Dante, Stephen’s governess, about Parnell and the Catholic church. Back at school, Stephen has broken his glasses and has been excused from classwork by his teacher, Father Arnall. The prefect of studies, Father Dolan, comes into class to discipline the students, and singles out Stephen as a “lazy idle little loafer.” Stephen is pandied (his knuckles beaten with a bat) in front of the class, and feels the injustice of his punishment deeply. The other students urge him to speak to the rector of the college. He gets up the courage to do so, and the rector promises to speak to Father Dolan. Stephen is cheered by the other students.

In the second chapter, Stephen is a few years older. He is no longer at Clongowes but at Belvedere College. He has started to become interested in literature, and tends to romanticize his life based on what he reads. He tries to write a poem to the girl he loves, but cannot. He is in a play at Belvedere, and outside of the theater he sees two other students, Heron and Wallis, who tease him about the play, and jokingly make him recite the Confiteor. Stephen, while doing so, remembers a recent incident when his English teacher suspected him of heresy. Stephen takes a trip to Cork with his father, and his father shows him the town where he was born and raised, and the school he attended when he was Stephen’s age. Back in Dublin, Stephen wins a sum of money for an essay competition, and, for a brief time, treats himself and his family to a “season of pleasure.” When the money runs out, we can see him wandering the red light districts of Dublin, fantasizing about the prostitutes. As the chapter ends, Stephen has his first experience with a prostitute.

In Chapter Three, it is apparent that Stephen has made a habit of soliciting prostitutes. He goes through the motions in school and at church, and is not bothered by the duplicity of his life. He goes on a religious retreat with his class, and the priest’s sermon about sin and damnation affects Stephen deeply. He repents, goes to confession at the chapel across town, and takes communion.

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Stephen has now dedicated his life to God. He prays constantly, and goes about mortifying his senses. He has completely renounced his sinful relations with the prostitutes, and the director at Belvedere speaks to him about becoming a priest. The idea first seems to appeal to Stephen, but he ultimately decides that he could not become a priest.

His father is making plans for Stephen, now 16, to enter the university. Walking along the seashore one afternoon, thinking about poetry, Stephen sees a young woman bathing. They stare at each other, but do not speak. Stephen takes this as a spiritual sign, and he excitedly decides to dedicate his life to art.

In the final chapter, Stephen is at the university. He is lazy about his classes but vehement about his developing theory of aesthetics. He refuses to sign a political petition, trying to set himself apart from the concerns of his country's politics or religion. Talking to his close friend, Cranly, Stephen announces that he has decided to leave Ireland for Europe to pursue his artistic vocation. The novel closes with a few pages out of Stephen's diary, as he makes plans to leave for the continent.

#### The Life and Work of James Joyce

James Joyce was born in Dublin, Ireland, on February 2, 1882. He was the oldest of ten children, and was born into a comfortable and, by some standards, wealthy home. However, while Joyce was growing up, his family's economic situation became progressively worse.

He was able to attend Clongowes Wood College, an exclusive Jesuit boarding school, from age six to nine, but was forced to leave in 1891 when his father, John Stanislaus Joyce, lost his position as collector of rates in Dublin and could no longer afford to send James to school. After a brief stint at the Christian Brothers' School, James was allowed to attend the Jesuit Belvedere College, thanks to a special arrangement by a former rector at Clongowes, Father John Conmee. Father Conmee had become prefect of studies at Belvedere and, remembering James' ability as a student, arranged for him and his brothers to attend Belvedere without fees.

Joyce was a distinguished student at Belvedere, winning several exhibitions (cash prizes for scholarship in national competitions), and being elected, two years in a row, to the office of prefect of the Sodality of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the highest honor at Belvedere. He became interested in poetry, drama, philosophy and languages, and upon graduation in 1898, entered University College, Dublin at age 16.

Joyce gained a reputation as a radical thinker by reading a paper entitled "Drama and Life" before the Literary and Historical Society. He published an essay in the Fortnightly Review entitled



“Ibsen’s New Drama,” defending the controversial playwright. In these and other essays and reviews he wrote during this period, Joyce defended a realistic representation of life on stage, as opposed to what he took to be a sentimental and moralistic nationalism. The trouble he faced getting permission from the president of the university to read “Drama and Life” was the first of many struggles with censorship in Joyce’s career. He graduated in 1902, with a degree in modern languages, having studied Italian, French, German, and literary Norwegian as well as Latin.

The Joyce family during this time had been getting both larger and poorer—they had to move around frequently, setting up temporary residences, and were forced to sell many of their possessions to keep creditors at bay. Anxious to escape what he saw as a confining and restrictive environment in Dublin, Joyce left in 1902 to live in self-imposed “exile” in Paris. He had to return, however, in April 1903, as his mother was dying. Mary Jane Joyce died in August of that year, and James Joyce remained in Dublin for over a year, during which time he wrote and published poetry, worked on short stories (some of which were eventually published in the *Dubliners* collection), and began the initial draft of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, then entitled *Stephen Hero*.

He left Dublin again in October 1904, with Nora Barnacle. Joyce never returned to Dublin, except for a few brief visits (the last of which was in 1912), though his home city and country continued to dominate his imagination. He lived and taught in Trieste and Rome until World War I, then moved with Nora, their son Giorgio and daughter Lucia to neutral Zurich, where they stayed until 1920. The Joyces then moved to Paris, where they lived until 1940. James and Nora then returned to Zurich, where James Joyce died on January 13, 1941.

*A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* was published in 1916, but the story of its composition covers a ten-year span in Joyce’s life. At the end of the novel, we see the words “Dublin 1904—Trieste 1914.” This does not mean, as we might expect, that Joyce spent these ten years working on the text as we have it. In 1904, he wrote a combination short story and autobiographical essay entitled “*A Portrait of the Artist*.” When he could not get it published, he began to rewrite it as a novel with the working title *Stephen Hero*. Joyce worked on *Stephen Hero* intermittently for four years, but became ultimately dissatisfied with his lengthy and cumbersome method. He decided to rewrite the unfinished *Stephen Hero* in five long chapters, selecting and condensing only the most significant episodes in *Stephen Dedalus*’ development. This novel, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, was finished in 1914, published serially in *The Egoist* during 1914 and 1915, and finally published by B. W. Huebsch in New York in 1916. As with his other work, Joyce had considerable trouble getting *Portrait* published, both because of the obscenity laws and because of his unconventional literary form.



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