

A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man (Portrait)

by James Joyce

(Published in 1916)

Approved for use in

Summary of the Work:

A largely autobiographical novel, *Portrait* portrays the childhood, school days, adolescence, and early manhood of Dubliner Stephen Dedalus. Stephen's growing self-awareness as an artist forces him to reject the narrow world in which he has been brought up, including family ties, nationalism, and the Catholic religion. The novel ends when, having decided to become a writer, Stephen is about to leave Dublin for Paris.

Rationale:

Portrait is an excellent novel for senior AP Literature, especially for college-bound students due to its challenging narrative and technical craft. This period (1900-1935) of British, Irish, and American literature is flooded with innovative literary techniques. Specifically, Joyce experiments heavily with *stream of consciousness* and the novel acts as a literary bellwether both to his own future works (*Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*) and to his modernist contemporaries who follow (notably, Fitzgerald, Woolf, and Faulkner).

Rather than following a clear narrative progression, the novel revolves around experiences that are crucial to Stephen's development as an artist, and, at the end of each chapter, Stephen makes some assertion of identity (in the form of *epiphany*).

For these reasons, the novel serves as an excellent introductory challenge for AP Lit students in the sense that they likely have never been exposed to such creative technique in their prior reading.

Professional Reviews and/or Critical Essays:

Joyce is regarded as one of the greatest literary talents of the 20th century and is known for his revolutionary innovations in the art of the novel. Another strength was Joyce's ability to convey rich rendering of Dublin life. As well, he's famous for his objective presentation of organic functions, his extraordinary psychological penetration, his robust humor, and his sensitivity to auditory impressions.

Noted Distinction:

Readability

- Lexile Score: 1120
- Readability Level:

Learning Resources Guidelines

- The novel meets the Learning Resources Guidelines.

Standard Alignment: [\(link\)](#)

Approval:

Submitted to Committee: 2021

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* Print resources are available from the library media center and libraries in the district. Contact any library media specialist to view the scholarly sources.

* Scholarly reviews are also available online through Books in Print and Gale. Contact the library media specialist to obtain username and password information to access the subscription database of full-text reviews.

Notes on the Text:

Portrait narration opens through the voice of a 4-5 year old and proceeds to relate experiences directly through the narrator's voice at different points/ages in his development as an artist (in this case, a writer). The challenge is that there's no frame narrator to put everything into perspective. Reading and study of the novel provokes discussion on virtually every major literary technique in the AP catalogue: stream of consciousness; style, dialect, figurative language, allusion, point of view, conflict and so forth.

Connection to the Curriculum:

Portrait is generally taught in AP Literature and regularly appears on the AP Novel List as viable work to undertake on the AP Lit exam, Q3.

Additional Connections:

(AP, Honors, Essential/Applied, Dramas, Films, etc.)