

“Counterparts”

After an infuriating day at work, Farrington embarks on an evening of drinking with his friends. Even though Farrington pawns his watch to replenish his empty wallet, he finds himself spending all of his money on drinks for himself and his companions. Growing more and more frustrated, Farrington almost explodes when he loses an arm-wrestling match. At home later that night, Farrington vents his anger by beating his son.

“Clay”

On Halloween night, Maria oversees festivities at the charity where she works. Afterward, she travels to the home of Joe Donnelly, whom she nursed when he was a boy. Along the way Maria purchases sweets and cakes for Joe’s family. When she arrives at the house, she realizes she has somehow lost the special plum cake she’d bought. After talking, eating, and playing Halloween games, Maria sings a song for the Donnellys.

“A Painful Case”

Mr. Duffy develops a relationship with Mrs. Sinico at a concert in Dublin. The two meet often for long chats and become close, but Mr. Duffy cuts off the relationship when Mrs. Sinico makes the intimate but chaste gesture of taking Mr. Duffy’s hand and putting it against her cheek. Four years later, Mr. Duffy reads in a newspaper that Mrs. Sinico has died in a train accident. He feels angry, sad, and uneasy as he remembers her, and he finally realizes he lost perhaps his only chance for love.

“Ivy Day in the Committee Room”

A group of men working as street promoters for a mayoral candidate meet to discuss their jobs and escape from the rainy weather on Ivy Day, which commemorates the death of Charles Stuart Parnell, the influential Irish politician. The men complain about their late paychecks and debate politics. Conversation eventually turns to Parnell and his political endeavors, and one of the men, Hynes, recites a poem he wrote in memory of him.

“A Mother”

An Irish cultural society organizes a concert series with the help of Mrs. Kearney, the mother of one of the performers. Mrs. Kearney secures a contract with the society’s secretary, Mr. Holohan, so that her daughter is ensured payment for her piano accompaniment. A series of logistical changes and failed expectations infuriate Mrs. Kearney, and she hounds the officers of the society for the money, making a spectacle of herself and her daughter.

Windows

Windows in *Dubliners* consistently evoke the anticipation of events or encounters that are about to happen. For example, the narrator in “The Sisters” looks into a window each night, waiting for signs of Father Flynn’s death, and the narrator in “Araby” watches from his parlor window for the appearance of Mangan’s sister. The suspense for these young boys centers in that space separating the interior life from the exterior life. Windows also mark the threshold between domestic space and the outside world, and through them the characters in *Dubliners* observe their own lives as well as the lives of others. Both Eveline and Gabriel turn to windows when they reflect on their own situations, both of which center on the relationship between the individual and the individual’s place in a larger context.

Dusk and Nighttime

Joyce’s Dublin is perpetually dark. No streams of sunlight or cheery landscapes illuminate these stories. Instead, a spectrum of grey and black underscores their somber tone. Characters walk through Dublin at dusk, an in-between time that hovers between the activity of day and the stillness of night, and live their most profound moments in the darkness of late hours. These dark backdrops evoke the half-life or in-between state the characters in *Dubliners* occupy, both physically and emotionally, suggesting the intermingling of life and death that marks every story. In this state, life can exist and proceed, but the darkness renders *Dubliners*’ experiences dire and doomed.

Food

Nearly all of the characters in *Dubliners* eat or drink, and in most cases food serves as a reminder of both the threatening dullness of routine and the joys and difficulties of togetherness. In “A Painful Case,” Mr. Duffy’s solitary, duplicated meals are finally interrupted by the shocking newspaper article that reports Mrs. Sinico’s death. This interruption makes him realize that his habits isolate him from the love and happiness of “life’s feast.” The party meal in “The Dead” might evoke conviviality, but the rigid order of the rich table instead suggests military battle. In “Two Gallants,” Lenehan’s quiet meal of peas and ginger beer allows him to dwell on his self-absorbed life, so lacking in meaningful relationships and security, while the constant imbibing in “After the Race” fuels Jimmy’s attempts to convince himself he belongs with his upper-class companions. Food in *Dubliners* allows Joyce to portray his characters and their experiences through a substance that both sustains life yet also symbolizes its restraints