

James Joyce

Dubliners

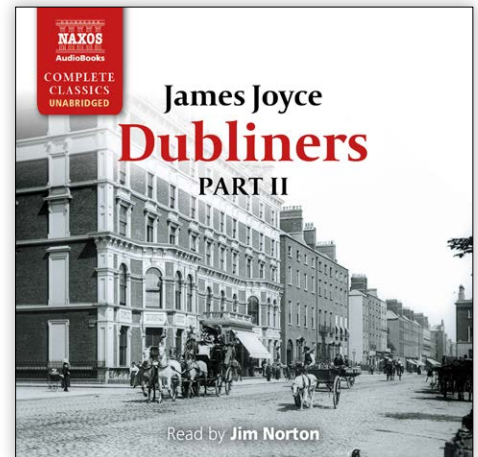
PART II

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Read by
Jim Norton

A Painful Case • Ivy Day in the Committee Room A Mother • Grace • The Dead

In the second half of Joyce's collection of stories about the citizens of Dublin at the turn of the century, the young author deals with themes of adulthood – of loss, parenthood, politics, religion and – as in the earlier stories – of disappointment. Rich in humour and musical allusion, they contain (in *A Painful Case*, for example, and *The Dead*), some of Joyce's most powerful and moving prose. Holding none of the difficulties of Joyce's later novels, such as *Ulysses*, *Dubliners* is, in its way, just as radical. These stories introduce us to the city which fed Joyce's entire creative output, and to many of the characters who made it such a well of literary inspiration.



Total running time: 3:39:19

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Jim Norton, one of Ireland's leading actors, is a Dubliner, and has worked regularly on Joycean topics. He worked extensively in Irish Theatre (Abbey, Gate), TV and Radio before coming to London to work at the Royal Court and the Royal National Theatre. His many West End credits include *Comedians*, *The Changing Room*, *The Contractor*, *Bedroom Farce*, *Chorus of Disapproval* and *The Weir*. For Naxos AudioBooks he has also recorded *The Third Policeman*, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and *Ulysses*.

A Painful Case

1	Mr James Duffy lived in Chapelizod...	7:10
2	Meeting her a third time by accident...	7:06
3	This was the paragraph...	3:27
4	Mr Duffy raised his eyes from the paper...	6:34

Ivy Day in the Committee Room

5	Old Jack raked the cinders together with a piece of...	7:21
6	The room was silent again.	4:55
7	A person resembling a poor clergyman or a poor...	8:46
8	In a few minutes an apologetic 'Pok!' was heard...	4:33
9	Mr Hynes hesitated a little longer.	3:32

A Mother

10	Mr Holohan, assistant secretary of the Eire Abu...	8:06
11	The concert on Thursday night was better attended...	7:39
12	When she came back to the dressing-room...	10:29

Grace

13	Two gentlemen who were in the lavatory at the time...	5:23
14	The three men left the bar...	5:31
15	Mrs Kernan's puzzled eyes watched the car...	4:40

16	The gentlemen began to talk of the accident.	9:21
17	'I haven't such a bad opinion of the Jesuits,'...	4:25
18	Mrs Kernan came to the door of the bedroom...	9:57
19	The transept of the Jesuit Church in Gardiner Street...	6:53

The Dead

20	Lily, the caretaker's daughter, was literally run off her...	6:53
21	He waited outside the drawing-room door...	5:43
22	Gabriel went to the stairs and listened over the...	6:46
23	Gabriel could not listen...	7:52
24	When the lancers were over Gabriel went away...	4:49
25	A murmur in the room attracted his attention.	7:52
26	Gabriel took his seat boldly at the head of the table...	8:50
27	The patting at once grew louder...	:15
28	The piercing morning air came into the hall...	11:15
29	The morning was still dark.	6:58
30	A ghostly light from the street lamp lay in a long shaft...	7:32
31	A vague terror seized Gabriel at this answer...	2:44
32	She was fast asleep.	4:51
33	BALFE Then You'll Remember Me from <i>The Bohemian Girl</i> sung by John McCormack	2:51

James Joyce

Dubliners

PART II

The Dubliners: Introduction

James Joyce's *Dubliners* is a collection of short stories about the lives of the people of Dublin around the turn of the century. Each story describes a small but significant moment of crisis or revelation in the life of a particular Dubliner, sympathetically but always with stark honesty. Many of the characters are desperate to escape the confines of their humdrum lives, though those that have the opportunity to do so seem unable to take it. This book holds none of the difficulties of Joyce's later novels, such as *Ulysses*, yet in its way it is just as radical. These stories introduce us to the city which fed Joyce's entire creative output, and to many of the characters who made it such a well of literary inspiration.

Writing to his publisher, Grant Richards, in 1905, Joyce proclaimed 'I do not think that any writer has yet presented Dublin to the world. It has been a capital city of Europe for thousands of years, it is supposed to be the second city of the British Empire and it is nearly three times the size of Venice. Moreover... the expression Dubliner seems to me to bear some meaning and I doubt whether the same can be said for such words as "Londoner" and "Parisian", both of which have been used by writers as titles.'

Joyce's mission to 'present Dublin to the world' remained central to his work throughout his life. The city is somewhat aggrandized in *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*, where it takes on a mythic quality (suitable for a modern day Odyssey and a World History), but here, in *Dubliners*, it is painted in the plain and often drab colours of reality. The fifteen stories, written at different times during the period 1904-1907 when Joyce was no longer living in Ireland, are meticulous in detail. We are given pub and street names, tram and train routes at every opportunity. The subject of these stories is not the city itself, however, but rather the lives of its citizens. Most of the characters and incidents described are based on characters and incidents remembered from Joyce's early years in Dublin. The stories are arranged in a sequence roughly charting a development from childhood, through adolescence, to adulthood and public life, with death as a principal theme of the first and last stories.

So simple are these stories, both in their content and style, that it is easy to forget how innovative they were at the time of their publication. Joyce set his face firmly against what he saw as the romance and sentimentality of contemporary Irish writers, and produced something rather shocking. Here is a city full of small people with real failings – no high tragedy, little passion, no dramatic revelation. Their speech is not poetically engineered, but the everyday speech familiar to all Dubliners – warts and all. Indeed the warts were so shocking to the printer and publisher, that it took eight years of legal wrangling before the book saw full publication.

What was so shocking? The frank inclusion of thoughts and actions considered too vulgar for literary purpose: a woman crossing and uncrossing her legs suggestively, a man discussing his sexual conquests with a chum, a peculiar old vagrant performing an unspecified act alone in the bushes – and several uses of the

word 'bloody'. Despite the protests of his publisher, Joyce refused point-blank to alter, for example, the line: 'if any fellow tried that sort of a game on with his sister he'd bloody well put his teeth down his throat: so he would.'

In a letter to Grant Richards he wrote: 'The word, the exact expression I have used, is in my opinion the one expression in the English language which can create on the reader the effect I wish to create. Surely you can see this for yourself?'

Furthermore, he objected: 'I seriously believe that you will retard the course of civilisation in Ireland by preventing the Irish people from having one good look at themselves in my nicely polished looking glass.'

The Dubliners Part II

The theme of death returns in *A Painful Case*, the story of another 'self-imprisoned Dubliner,' James Duffy, and his strange relationship with the lonely Mrs Sinico. Repressed emotion is nowhere more powerfully expressed than in this depressing tale of unfulfilled desire, with its tragic climax so coldly reported in the evening newspaper; and, in the closing lines, its poignant description of utter loneliness: 'He could not feel her near him in the darkness, nor her voice touch his ear. He waited for some minutes listening. He could hear nothing: the night was perfectly silent. He listened again: perfectly silent. He felt that he was alone.'

By contrast, *Ivy Day in the Committee Room* appears very much to concern the living – the cut and thrust of local politics – until the powerful ghost of Parnell is revealed lurking behind the idle banter.

Music, particularly song – which plays such an important part in all Joyce's writing – is central to many of these stories, and in *A Mother* it is the backstage at a concert in 'The Antient Concert Rooms' which provides the setting for Mrs Kearney's painful humiliation. Many of the details in this story came from Joyce's personal experience as a promising tenor appearing in many concerts of this kind.

Originally, the longer story *Grace* was intended to close the collection with its wry examination of religious conviction – or in Tom Kernan's case, lack of conviction. Who but Joyce would begin a final story, dealing with such an important theme, with a bloody mouth in a pub lavatory?

Finally, in *The Dead*, it is another ghost, that of 'poor Michael Furey', which exerts power over the central characters – Gabriel and Gretta Conroy. Here, in the longest and best known of the *Dubliners* stories, Joyce skillfully manages to lead the superficial events of a formal family Christmas reunion towards an unexpectedly personal and deeply moving conclusion. Indeed, the ghost of Gretta Conroy's dead admirer evidently loomed as large in Joyce's own life as in that of Gabriel, since the scenario described by Gretta actually occurred in Nora Barnacle's (Joyce's wife's) own courtship in Galway.

Notes by Roger Marsh



A Painful Case: the Rotunda Hospital, Dublin.



Grace: St Xavier Chapel, Dublin.

The music on this recording was kindly provided by Symposium Records

MOORE Believe Me If All Those Endearing Young Charms sung by John O'Sullivan

WALLACE Scenes That Are Brightest from Maritana, sung by Leonora Sparkes

MASCAGNI Easter Hymn from *Cavalleria Rusticana*, sung by John McCormack

BALFE Then You'll Remember Me from *The Bohemian Girl*, sung by John McCormack

Music selected and programmed by Roger Marsh.

78rpm transfers by Eliot Levin, Symposium Records.

Produced by Roger Marsh

Post-production: Beth Hammond, Classical Recording Company

Engineer (speech): Alan Smyth, Bucks Audio Recordings

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