

# Character analysis of "eveline" by james joyce

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"Eveline" by James Joyce is a short story about a young woman who illustrates the pitfalls of holding onto the past when facing the future. The short story is set in the early twentieth century in Dublin, Ireland. Eveline takes care of two children and her abusive father, which is a difficult life. This is what she promised her dead mother, to take care of the home. On the other hand, she has the chance to escape and elope with her fiancé, Frank, a sailor, in Buenos Ayres.

Eveline is a young woman who reflects the pull felt between domestic life rooted in the past and the possibility of a married life abroad. "The white of two letters in her lap grew indistinct" (Joyce, 2). This quote shows Eveline's inability to let go of family relationships with her father and brother. Her reluctance to do so, despite her father's cruelty and abuse and her brother's absence, is the result of clinging to older, more agreeable memories. She envisions what other people want her to do or will do for her.

She knows in her heart that she is all her father has, and would be dismayed at her decision to go abroad with her lover, who he thoroughly disapproves of. Eveline suspends herself between the call of home and the past and the call of fresh experiences and the future, unable to decide between them. Eveline sees Frank as a liberator from her grueling domestic situation. She is constantly reminded that he is the key to escaping the threat of repeating her mother's life. "She had a right to happiness.

Frank would take her in his arms, fold her in his arms. He would save her" (Joyce, 3). Eveline has a spur of desire to leave with Frank and embark on a new phase in her life. This spur, however, is short lived as she hears a street

organist and remembers the night before her mother's passing. Eveline decides not to repeat her mother's life of hardships ending in final craziness, but she does exactly that.

Eveline desires escape, but her dependence on routine and reiteration overrides such impulses. Eveline is fixed in a circle of indecision between leaving with Frank and staying in her domestic situation. "All the seas of the world tumbled about her heart. He was drowning her into them, he would drown her" (Joyce, 3). Though Eveline fears that Franks will drown her in their new life, her belief in everyday rituals is what causes Eveline to halt and not follow Frank onto the ship.

Eveline's paralysis within the world of repetition brands her a "helpless animal". She is stripped of human will and emotion. This indicates her transformation into an automaton that is expressionless. This story suggests that Eveline will hover in mindless rumination regarding the possibility of living a fully realized life; an opportunity that she let go. Eveline, though she made the right choice for her father's sake and her mother's has let herself fall into a monotonous repetition of hope lost.

She is a character who is initially indecisive and having made a decision shuts off all emotion regarding either option. James Joyce created her to illustrate the plight of a female in the early twentieth century. Eveline, like many such young women, struggles with the contradictory pull of family life versus the freedom to be an individual. Works Cited Joyce, James. "Eveline," *Dubliners*. The Project Gutenberg.