

Literature review on gabriel in "the dead"

[Sociology](#), [Women](#)



In James Joyce's short story "The Dead," Gabriel Conroy, the main character, is depicted as an awkward, self-absorbed and pathetic man, constantly unsure of himself yet confident in his superiority over others. The short story sees him perpetually attempt to navigate social niceties and his relationship with his wife, always lacking the necessary information and awareness to conduct himself accordingly. Gabriel, throughout the poem, finds himself unable to communicate well with others (especially the religious) to the point where his personal relationships fail him.

Gabriel himself is a bit of an antisocial misanthrope; he has difficulty relating to and talking to others, and he is one of the few people in the story to actively state that he dislikes Ireland. His relationship with his wife is extremely frustrated and confused, as he often does not recognize her or know her as well as he should for being with someone so long. Much of his relationship over her is based on control, which he tries to exert over others at the Morkans' party - he continually tries to guess and stab at what ways he should react to and engage other people, and flounders when he cannot guess correctly (like with the joke about the maid). This extends to his lack of understanding about religion as well, since he cannot relate to the Catholic guests at the party; he has no interest in religion, and thus no frame of reference. As a result, he is shut out of all the conversations that he starts with those guests, and the exclusive nature of religion makes him feel left out.

Gabriel reaches a bit of an epiphany at the end of the story, after Gretta relates to him the story of Michael Furey, a former lover whom she loved truly before ever meeting Gabriel. Fully understanding the relationship

between himself and his wife, Gretta, and being shattered by the realization that she has loved other men before him, he quickly realizes that he will never experience the kind of love from his wife that she feels for Michael Furey. With that in mind, he opts to move to Ireland despite his overall distaste for the land, in order to make a sacrifice to Gretta to showcase his true love.

Works Cited

Joyce and The Dead. The Anthology World Literature Vol. F, pp. 174-207.

Joyce, James. " The Dead."