

Araby and a little cloud english literature essay

[Literature](#), [British Literature](#)



' Symbols are objects, characters, figures, or colours used to represent abstract ideas or concepts'. In Araby, Joyce uses symbols to represent the narrator's frustration with the mundane, monotonous life which he lives. The nameless narrator is simply infatuated with a neighbour, only known to us as Mangan's Sister. Mangan's Sister is the epitome of escape for this young boy. However, this enchanting attraction must compete with the familiarity of everyday life in Dublin. Joyce achieves in portraying this through the use of symbols and real accounts. Joyce's narrator notices a girl walking to school every day, but rarely talks to her. He describes her poetically throughout the story. For example, he sees her as a ' brown figure' (Oxford University Press, p. 20), underscoring the exotic connections she holds with foreign lands. The word ' brown' and her ' Eastern enchantment' (Oxford University Press, p. 21) are strong reoccurring symbols. She reflects the images the boy has about strange, distant places and fills him with desire and joy. However, as previously mentioned, this foreign, exotic girl must rival the common life in which so many characters in Dubliners are consumed and engulfed in. Joyce uses many simplistic, yet simply perfect symbols to outline and underscore these monotonous, day to day events. For example, the account of the narrators school life. It is interesting to note the irony in this section. He hopes that his master doesn't think he is becoming idle, but really he is the opposite, flooded with desire. I watched my master's face pass from amiability to sternness; he hoped I was not beginning to idle. I could not call my wandering thoughts together. I had hardly any patience with the serious work of life which, now that it stood between me and my desire, seemed to me child's play, ugly monotonous child's play. The

narrator's trip to the bazaar, and his impending failure, ultimately underscores his inability to lose connection with the ordinary, and to live forever desiring something realistically unachievable. The dull, commonplace realities of his uncle's lateness, the bazaar's flower teacups and the English accents are all symbols of the narrator's mundane life, ultimately causing him distress and destitution. The bazaar is nothing like his idealistic 'enchanted east'. The narrator is also a symbol. It is clear by the end of the story that he will never achieve his romantic fantasies with Mangan's sister, nor will he ever escape from the overpowering normalities of real Dublin life. The individuals presented in *A Little Cloud* are also at once 'real' and 'symbolic'. This is very clear, especially in the two main characters, Little Chandler and Gallaher. They are highly contrasting as characters and in lives. This story reflects Little Chandler's frustration with circular routine life, in comparison to Gallaher's teasing travels and success in the literary field. Perhaps the most important quote from *A Little Cloud* occurs in the beginning of the story when Little Chandler remembers his poetry books lying on his shelf at home. He is located sitting in his office waiting for his work day to finish. He then thinks about his poetry books on the shelf, how he had bought them when he was young and wished he could read some lines to his wife, only to be prevented by shyness. He remembered the books of poetry upon his shelves at home. He had bought them in his bachelor days and many an evening, as he sat in the little room of the hall, he had been tempted to take one down from the bookshelf and read out something to his wife. But shyness always held him back; and so the books had remained on their shelves. (Oxford University Press 2000, pp. 53-4) The poetry books are symbolic, representing

Little Chandler's poetic desires. Chandler owns the books, but lacks passion to write his own. Furthermore they are left on their shelf, due to his shyness and hesitation. He also longs to read to his wife, but fails to. Little Chandler, therefore, is hinted to be in a contradictory role in his marriage, whereby he is weak. This is also present in the final scene where he takes the leap to read some poetry to himself, but to be interrupted by his wife-reality and normality crushing his dreams and aspirations once more. Little Chandler uses almost constant fantasy to insulate himself from the reality of his life as he is living it. This misreading of reality for the sake of shoring up a fragile self-esteem leaves him chronically exposed to abrupt disillusionment and frequent panic. (Cambridge University Press 2004, p. 92) 'Paralysis' being a major theme and symbol in Dubliners is seen again in A Little Cloud. Little Chandler is 'paralysed' in his routine life. His poetic aspirations are crippled by his lack of passion and his family, and his shyness, nervousness and uncertainty hold him back from living a bold life similar to Gallaher's. Again, the boring, banal realities undermine his life, ultimately arising to him becoming a 'prisoner' in his own house. Finally, the title of this short story is highly symbolic. In my honest interpretation, I believe that A Little Cloud symbolises how insignificant Little Chandler's life is, just as a little cloud is barely noticeable in a colossal sky. It may also symbolise the 'tears of remorse' (Oxford University Press 2000, p. 65) he cries at the end, reflecting the rain falling. I have no hesitations in reiterating that the individuals presented in Joyce's Dubliners are at once 'real' and 'symbolic'. From Mangan's Sister's exotic presence to Little Chandler's ultimate failing, Joyce

truly has merged both the 'real' and the 'symbolic' to create something extraordinarily beautiful.