

# James joyce's the dead



Hot and Cold and Light and Dark images in "The Dead" Taken from the short story collection "The Dubliners", The Dead is widely considered to be a masterpiece of short fiction, embedded throughout with vivid imagery of the hot and the cold and the light and the dark. The protagonist of the story, Gabriel Conroy is depicted as a flawed character.

"Cold" could be interpreted in two ways: literally and metaphorically. In its former meaning, the frequent references in The Dead to the inclement and hostile climatic conditions of Joyce's Dublin are applicable. The best example of such an usage is seen in the following lines: "A light fringe of snow lay like a cape on the shoulders of his overcoat and like toecaps on the toes of his goloshes; and, as the buttons of his overcoat slipped with a squeaking noise through the snow-stiffened frieze, a cold fragrant air from out-of-doors escaped from crevices and folds". There are other common allusions to the near freezing Dublin weather in which the story is set. The instance when Gretta Conroy, Gabriel's wife caught cold infection is again a literal citing of the word "cold". The sole occasion when "cold" was used in the metaphorical sense is when Gabriel replies unenthusiastically to Gretta that "You can go if you like, said Gabriel coldly".

Talking of the dark aspects of the story, in the context of Gabriel's address to the gathering, he mentions how "our path through life is strewn with many sad memories" and continues in a morbid tone, how "were we to brood upon them always we could not find the heart to go on bravely with our work among the living" and further in the narrative he says "His soul had approached that region where dwelt the vast hosts of the dead". This poignant remembrance of his own past had shaken up his composure. Gabriel had now been overwhelmed by a sense of losing his love and the

pain associated with it. Joyce depicts the state he is in with the following dark imagery: " into a grey impalpable world", " all the living and the dead". As for the " light" in The Dead, there are again two interpretations - one is light as in humor and frivolity the other is insight or revelation. There are plenty of instances of both cases. Phrases such as " laughing very heartily", " There was a great deal of confusion and laughter and noise", " The table burst into applause and laughter at this sally", " She laughed herself this time good-humouredly", etc represent the light-hearted elements in the narrative. Light as brightness can be seen in Gabriel's exchanges with the porter. Some examples include phrases such as, " We have light enough from the street", " A ghostly light from the street lamp lay in a long shaft from one window to the door", etc. In the case of " Instinctively he turned his back more to the light lest she might see the shame that burned upon his forehead", the usage of " light" is loaded with subtle implications. The fact that Gabriel had come to see his flawed past in " new light" and hence overcome with shame is an emphatic statement by the author.

In The Dead, there were exchanges of words between different characters throughout the narrative. Some of these would anger or offend the addressee, advertently or otherwise. Such occasions can be said to represent the " hot" images of the story. A prime example of this would be the exchange of words between Gabriel and Miss Ivors when the latter accuses the former of lacking in patriotism and a sense of professional ethic.