

Eveline



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

In James Joyce's "Feline," a young woman faces the difficult choice of taking a risk or remaining in safety. Feline must choose between following her heart and impulsively following a man she barely knows or remaining with her family in a relatively uneventful and predictable life. Joyce uses several certain concepts, actions, and images such as dusting, names, and Joyce's past to symbolize the true nature of the short story. Even the act of cleaning a house by dusting the many objects within emphasizes Feline's weariness with her current situation.

However, the same act also elaborates on the comfort and familiarity she feels with such aspects of her life. Feline reminisces about the objects in the house and how she interacted with these objects through dusting. There is a picture of a nameless priest, but she knows this picture just as easily as she knows the dusty curtains and all of the other comfortable objects. As much as the task of cleaning and maintaining the home tires her, she takes comfort in the routine. There is no predictability in dusting the curtains; she dusted the curtains last week, but the ever-present dust will still coat the fabric the week next week (Engelhardt).

As much as the predictability tires Feline, a life in a new world will not have the same comforts and constants of her life at home. The various names used in "Feline" contribute to the meaning of the story at an etymological level. The name Feline is derived from the Gaelic equivalent of Helen, and several comparisons have been made between Feline and Helen of Troy. Like Helen, Feline considers the option of running away to elope with a man on impulse. To Feline, Buenos Aires is her Troy. However, unlike Helen,

Beeline's motivation is not even for Frank; Beeline's main concern is her own freedom.

At this point, Frank's name becomes somewhat significant; the name Francis means "free man," and Beeline's interest in Frank revolves around his ability to provide an escape from her mother's fate. Feline confesses that she does not love Frank, but she recognizes the potential to love what he represents (Frank's). Frank's name signifies a beacon of freedom and Beeline's name could perhaps be compared to the story of Helen of Troy. Several aspects of Jockey's past play significant roles in his stories, but a grand impression can be made between Feline and James Jockey's sister Margaret.

The use of a nickname such as "Open," which Frank calls Feline, seems insignificant until certain details of Jockey's family are revealed. The fact that Margaret was called "Pipe" in Jockey's home could have been a complete coincidence, but the fictional character of Feline quite clearly reflects certain aspects of Jockey's Margaret. For example, at the age of twenty, Margaret made a promise to her dying mother to keep the household running. Like Margaret, Feline takes on the responsibility of running the household after her mother dies.

This responsibility plays a large role in Beeline's decision to remain at home; as much as Feline desires freedom, respect for her deceased mother and responsibility for two younger children influences Beeline's decision (De Bog). In the end, Feline makes the decision to remain in her predictable and overly unhappy life. The overwhelming control of her responsibilities

motivates her choice to maintain her situation. The presence of symbolic features such as Jockey's past, the use of significant names, and small actions such as dusting help to elaborate on Beeline's nature and the nature of the story.