

A painful case: james duffy lives a predictable life

Literature



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In James Joyce's short story "A Painful case", the protagonist James Duffy cannot tolerate unpredictability. James Duffy feels comfortable living a predictable life, resulting in James becoming very uncomfortable when change occurs in his life. To begin, James Duffy escapes from potential capricious occurrences. He moves as far away as possible from the suburbs to avoid civilization and unpredictable events that may occur there. Living in the city is very unpredictable for James Duffy, making it very uncomfortable for him to reside there.

James Duffy lived in Chapelizod because he wished to live as far as possibly from the city" (107) Throughout the story James's life stays consistent, just the way he wishes. His life exists as a routine, resulting in no unpredictable events. James performs the same routine each day of his life and they are all done independently, evoking a comfortable lifestyle with no unpredictable situations. " Every morning he came in from Chapelizod by tram.

At midday he went to Dan Burke's [where he ate lunch] ... At four o'clock he was set free ... He dined at an eating house ... evenings were spent either before his landlady's piano or roaming about the outskirts of the city. " (108-109) James Duffy never added excitement to his life throughout the story. If James added excitement to his life it would ignite the possibilities for unpredictable events to occur. In order to avoid exciting situations, James Duffy lives his life independently and routinely.

Working as a cashier and doing the same routine daily are huge factors involved in the fact that James Duffy added no excitement to his life. "[H]is life rolled out evenly-an adventureless tale. " (109) With regards to the fact

that James cannot tolerate unpredictability, he does not show any emotions or feelings throughout this story. Showing no emotion or feeling can cause people surrounding James's daily routines to avoid him and pay no attention to him whatsoever.

James is satisfied to know that his actions cause people to avoid him, in order for his daily routines to stay uninterrupted. " She asked him why he did not write out his thoughts. For what, he asked her," (111) Considering the fact that Duffy cannot tolerate unpredictability, his actions of keeping his mind in order contribute to having no surprises and unpredictable moment in life. For the duration of the story James's mind is abundant with orderliness and daily routines.

He is constantly aware of his daily routines, making for no unpredictable moments in his life. " His room still bore witness of the orderliness of his mind. " (112) In conclusion, James Duffy's interactions in life make him invisible. He has no companionship in his life and isolates himself from the rest of the world. James's behaviour is how he feels content about his life, even though surrounding civilization may view his lifestyle as irregular.