

# How in the stories you have read essay



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

The two short stories I have chosen to study for this essay show an incredibly rich use of language and imagery to depict both the atmosphere and emotions of the characters.

The first Prose is called *Odour of Chrysanthemums* by D. H. Lawrence and the second piece is *Eveline* by James Joyce. In the short story the *Odour of Chrysanthemums* by D.

H. Lawrence the main character is Elizabeth Bates who is a miner's wife. The story evolves around her waiting for her husband's return from work. As usual he is late but on this occasion he died in a mining accident.

The main elements of the story are Elizabeth's changing thoughts and emotions throughout the whole experience. By using words like "trapped", "black" as well as "dreary" and "forsaken" D H Lawrence depicts Elizabeth's unhappy experiences so far and her current state of mind. I feel the writer has immediately made me empathise with the character and sets the mood of the story. Elizabeth Bates speaks more eloquently than the other characters who speak in a strong regional accent.

This is significant because the author has chosen an outsider as the main character who, as a deep-thinker, feels alienated from the simple-minded villagers. Elizabeth has two children; her daughter, Annie is depicted as angelic and similar to Elizabeth. She is described as having "wistful blue eyes" and hair that was "a mass of curls, just ripening from gold to brown." Her brother, John cares only for himself; he is often skulking in the shadows and is portrayed as having "an evil imagination". "He tore at the ragged wisps of chrysanthemums," showing a destructive nature.

The children's contrasting characters could be interpreted as representing the two parents, i. e. her innocence and gentleness on the one hand and his total selfishness and disregard. When John can't see anything Elizabeth tells him that he is as bad as his father when it was dark which is ironic because Walter is stuck in the bottom of the pit in blackness.

Elizabeth says, " He'll not come home till they bring him" and " I expect he's stuck in there" which is ironic because he is stuck in the mine and he is brought home. Chrysanthemums are a vital element in the story as shown by the title. They are a recurring symbol of the turning points of Elizabeth's life. As her son tears at the flowers you know that these are going to be important because Elizabeth tells him off and puts a sprig in her apron as if to salvage them. At first it appears that she likes the flowers until Annie smells them and exclaims how beautiful they smell.

Elizabeth then tells Annie that they don't smell nice possibly because this is what she once thought and does not want Annie to have a similar unhappy existence. " It was chrysanthemums when I married him and chrysanthemums when you were born, and the first time they ever brought him home drunk, he'd got chrysanthemums in his button-hole." She lists all the important and unhappiest moments of her life. Since she is carrying the very same flowers at the time, you get the impression that another equally poignant moment in her life is about to happen.

The physical sensations which accompany her emotional upheaval are vividly described, " suddenly all the blood in her body seemed to switch

away from her heart”; “ Is he dead?...and at the words her heart swung violently”. I felt able to identify with her because D. H.

Lawrence has graphically described what happens when someone suffers from shock. At the same time “ she felt a slight flush of shame at the ultimate extravagance of the question”. This illustrates the strength of her complete unhappiness. Could she be involuntarily wishing that he were dead? She is shocked at her own reaction. Elizabeth is much more worried about waking the children than she is about her dead husband.

“ Be still, mother, don’t waken th’ children: I wouldn’t have them down for anything!” She obviously finds her husband isn’t very important any more and she may as well get on with life. In the resolution Elizabeth prepares the room for Walter to be laid in and there is a “ cold, deathly smell of chrysanthemums”. This again reverts back to the title of the story with chrysanthemums as a symbol of Elizabeth’s negative experiences. Although she might not have loved her dead husband she still feels responsible for him and guilty that he has ended up the way he has, maybe this is why she bathes him and doesn’t let his mother do it, as if it is the last thing she can do for him.

“ She saw him, how utterly inviolable he lay in himself. She had nothing to do with him”. At this Elizabeth realises that her husband means nothing to her but she will not accept it and tries to feel some emotion towards him again. She “ embraced the body of her husband with cheeks and lips. She seemed to be listening, inquiring, and trying to get some connection. But she could not.

She was driven away. He was impregnable.” In using a succession of short sentences meaning the same thing this reinforces the idea of the void between them both in life and in death. I think that D H Lawrence depicts the turning points in Elizabeth Bates’ life very well. In my opinion, the symbolic use of chrysanthemums is very effective.

He uses a lot of descriptive words to bring the important people and objects to life. He makes clever use of suspense, irony and adjectives. The way he portrays Elizabeth as a philosophical, deep-thinking person who puts herself in a difficult marriage. I particularly like his style of writing when he depicts the hidden turmoil of Elizabeth’s emotions in parallel with the mother-in-law’s expressive mourning.

To sum it up, I think that Lawrence has successfully brought Elizabeth’s experiences to life. The second Short story I have studied for this essay also gives clear and precise images through the use of language used. James Joyce’s Eveline is based upon the friction which can exist between family and romantic love. The story begins with the picture of a young woman who is agonising over the choices in her life. She is bored and overworked, victimised and threatened by her aggressive and occasionally drunken father yet she has been offered the chance of escape by a potential lover who would transport her far away perhaps never to return.

Her decision as to whether to take this chance causes her much distress as she wrestles with the arguments for both staying and going. In the end she decides to stay but with the impression that in the future to regret what might have been. The opening paragraph creates for us a powerful image of

her own recognition of what she will be leaving behind if indeed she escapes with Frank, “ Her head was leaned against the window curtains ..

....

... she was tired”. The writer instils in you the fact that every one Eveline has loved and care for has experienced some form of change or departure except her.

Now, for the first time she is faced with abandoning all of her roots ‘ Now she was going to go away like the others , to leave her home’. Eveline has grown lonely as members of her family have died or departed and her father has become more hostile to her. I get the impression that prior to Frank’s arrival in her life she was exposed to very little sympathetic adult “ Her brothers and sisters were all grown up, her mother was dead. Tizzie Dunn was dead too and the Waters had gone back to England”. She resents her job at the stores and the fact that feels she is undervalued, “ her place would be filled up by advertisement.

Miss Gavan would be glad.....

..... She would not cry many tears at leaving the stores”.

With out stating the date the writer makes you aware of the era as she believes that marriage would ensure “ People would treat her with respect then. She would not be treated as her mother had been”. From the text itself “ It was hard work – a hard life” she is clearly an industrious person combining a job with looking after a household that includes two young children and the ever sinister presence of her potentially violent and money-

obsessed father ” he wasn’t going to give her his hard-earned money to throw about the streets”. I can only imagine how it must have felt as when her mother died she became her replacement as surrogate wife and mother. It is the relationship with her father that lies at the heart of any desire Eveline has to escape from her current life. We learn that years ago, things were better than today “ Her father was not so bad then, and besides, her mother was alive”.

On the day of the Hill of Howth picnic he had been a source of fun, “ She remembered her father putting on her mother’s bonnet to make the children laugh”. The writer skilfully paints a picture for us of a man whom perhaps himself having failed to recover from the grief of his wife’s death, is venting his wrath upon the only other human within reach. There is a hint of drunken anger “ for he was usually fairly bad of a Saturday night”. Eveline is vulnerable as a lone female who evokes memories of her mother in him, a mother whom he used to mistreat, “ And now she had nobody to protect her. Ernest was dead and Harry ..

..... was nearly always down somewhere in the country”.

When we learn of her lover, the writer implies a knight in shining armour image and tells us of many positive aspects a life with Frank. She will be married, Frank is “ very kind, manly, open-hearted”, is handsome “ his hair tumbled forward over a face of bronze “, Frank would save her, he would “ take her in his arms, fold her in his arms”. In spite of all of the negatives about Eveline’s existence we learn early in the story that she harbours strong doubts about giving up everything which is familiar to her in

exchange for a new life from which there would be no going back. “ She had consented to go away, to leave her home” and that “ in her new home in a distant unknown country.

.. “. There does not seem to be any love from herself to Frank and often refers to just like him.

In the end Eveline decides to stay and we are witness to the wonderfully descriptive scene as she finally agonises and then succumbs to let her fears of the unknown dominate her decision. I believe it is purely fear that keeps Eveline at home and the promise made to her dying mother to “ keep the home together as long as she could”. James Joyce’s story is a powerfully written piece which is very successful in portraying the pressures which can exist for a young woman who wants to be just that, a young woman. The anguish that Eveline experiences builds during the story from the quiet time when she “ sat at the window watching the evening invade the avenue” to when “ Her distress awoke a nausea in her body and she kept moving her lips in silent fervent prayer. A bell clanged upon her heart”.

The sadness of the story is evident throughout, so the anticlimax of the ending seems such an absurd decision to make, deprived of love, deprived of escape, yet Eveline looks after Frank and “ her eyes gave him no sign of love or recognition” as she lets him board the ship alone.