

Coming of age- portrait of an artist

Life



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man is a complete work of art, complete in the sense that it gives such great insight to human nature and the people of the world. The title is essentially what this novel represents. The “ coming of age” is represented like a portrait because it takes a long time, with many different attempts, to reach the final work of art. In even greater context, the protagonist experiences a series of epiphanies in which he gains insight into his own nature and into the people of the world.

In the main characters “ coming of age” there are crucial components that are lost and gained, which can be derived from his love offamily, religion, and art. Stephen Dedalus, the main character, is what many would consider a typical boy with a normalchildhood. His family loves him and they support him with essentially anything he would need. Stephen is taught well as a young boy whose parents grapple with many problems for themselves, yet always seem to show the difference between right and wrong.

As Stephen grows older his family’s struggles become his own problem whenever finances force them to move, therefore making Stephen the new kid at school. ” No life or youth stirred in him as it had stirred in [his father and his friends]. He had known neither the pleasure of companionship with others nor the vigour of rude malehealthnor filial piety. Nothing stirred within his soul but a cold and cruel and loveless lust. His childhood was dead or lost and with it his soul capable of simple joys and he was drifting amid life like the barren shell of the moon. (76)

School shows to be a challenge in itself as he has problems fitting in, but eventually he finds his place in the “ social circle”. As Stephen grows even

older and moving now into his teenage years family is becoming one of his lesser problems. Although his family may not always physically be there, Stephen has roots for his mind and soul which his family created for him. In a way these ideals can be looked at as good or bad, the good being that he is from Ireland and it is tradition, the bad being that his family may be the source of the rest of his problems later in life.

Religion to Stephen is a very important matter. From the time he was a little boy, the Catholic religion and the fear of God had been instilled in him. For this, Stephens traditional Irish upbringing is to blame. As for religion becoming a problem for him, it arose after his first sexual experience with a prostitute. " His soul had arisen from the grave of boyhood, spurning her grave-clothes. Yes! Yes! Yes! He would create proudly out of the freedom and power of his soul, as the great artificer whose name he bore, a living thing, new and soaring and beautiful, impalpable, imperishable. (133)

Stephen had been introduced to the world of sin and was now indulging in gluttony and greed. " He turned to appease the fierce longings of his heart before which everything else was idle and alien. He cared little that he was in mortal sin, that his life had grown to be a tissue of subterfuge and falsehood. Beside the savage desire within him to realize the enormities which he brooded on nothing was sacred. "(79) Stephen is happy at first by the man he has become, but after he has a religious retreat, things quickly change.

This is where his first epiphany comes in and he decides that he must seek god's forgiveness and straighten his life out. It seems as if this small streak of sin was a minor setback for Stephen, and he is now disgusted with himself

knowing what awaits him after death if he continues. As time goes by Stephen becomes more religious and manages to block out his temptations. The fact that the temptations are still there though worries him, and he wonders if he has really corrected himself. Stephen then faces many problems, from home to school, where he begins to question faith and religion once again.

This is where the second epiphany comes in. After some thought Stephen decides that he must pursue his ambitions and live his life freely without inhibitions. Throughout Stephen's early life the idea of art is almost lost for him. Stephen always has the idea of art in his mind and can be considered his one true love. The ambition of art did not always influence his thinking and ideals until later in his teenage years. The challenges and mental boundaries he experiences can contribute to the artist he wants to become, therefore making him very open minded artist with traditional Irish roots.

Stephen was a confused boy who was on his own personal pursuit of happiness. Stephen was fortunate enough to realize that the choices he made before adulthood would effect the rest of his life. With that in mind, Stephen's "coming of age" causes him to lose some things, while at the same time gaining others. The main part of Stephens "coming of age" was his transformation between one of religious conformity and one free of inhibitions as an artist. "I mean, said Stephen, that I was not myself as I am now, as I had to become." (193)