

Eveline – james joyce
(short personal
response)



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

“Eveline”, is a story about a 19-year-old girl who diligently reflects on the life she has had residing in the same town (in Dublin) with her siblings, everyone she knows, and her abusive father whom she labours excessively for to support. This is the same town her mother died in that she now anticipates leaving for Buenos Ayres, with her fiancé Frank. The story of Eveline, by James Joyce, handles many interconnected themes such as attachments, escape and identity, which employs great attention to a specific situation that is relatable to almost everyone: the time to leave home.

Though Eveline’s acting outlets resemble those prominent to my own, what interests me the most about her story is her overbearing dilemma to either leave a hard, yet full and interesting life, for an easy and safe, though mundane one. The reason this grabs my attention is because, I’ve often pondered about why it would be so hard for me to leave my own strenuous and distressing home, and my exasperating mother that has caused me so many detriments.

This curiosity has led me to believe that the harder one has had to work at home to make things work, regardless of the results, the more interesting their history becomes and the stronger their attachment to that life becomes. For anyone that has been in such a situation, it becomes clear frequently, how big of a part this life is to you and that through the struggles you have learned everything that you now know, and this life is the only one you do know.

Something less than ‘this life’ may leave someone, such as Eveline, feeling useless and lost, possibly causing them to spin out of control searching for meaning and value in a new life that seems too simple. The reader sees this

progression for Eveline as the story starts with her rested against the window where she goes to reflect not only on her self, but the relationship to the place which she sits whilst the evening rolls in. James Joyce wonderfully illustrates that, "the evening invade[d] the avenue" at the beginning of the story, while she leaned against the window.

This was my favourite line of the story though, I did not catch the second meaning of it until after I had read it a few more times. First, it is clear that, with evening coming, this represents for Eveline, that she is running out of time at home (not in a pleasant and welcomes way either, "invade" is a pretty harsh word); though it is latent to her until the end of the story that, she does have a choice to stay home. At this point her decision is so straight forward that, to even question not leaving with her fiance Frank would be absurd.

Second, Joyce cleverly uses the term "avenue," not only to describe the roads of the town which is being covered with the turning of day, but also because it represents the clouding or loss of an outlet or rather, an escape. Eveline sits at the window reminiscing the days that weren't so bad, when her father "was not so bad" either. This was a time prior, to when her mother died and before the man from Belfast bought the field which the neighbour kids used to play in and turned the old little brown houses in to bright brick and red houses.

In other words, the look of her home did change, some people left town, some people died, but their memories did not die and their meaning did not dissipate. This is important because it foreshadows the reluctance Eveline has to leave her home after having the epiphany that, even if she did run

away to a new setting, she would not change who either she or her father were. This realization that Eveline has is not one that everyone does when leaving home (or a place of equal meaning), but even those who do, don't always make the choice to stay as she did.

Some readers may be confused when trying to understand why she did not take the obvious route and leave her father and tiring jobs behind to be with a loving, safe, and wonderful guy as Frank appeared to be. I personally do not question it, I embrace it. The conclusion I drew from reading Eveline made me feel more secure about my own reluctance to leave home and the avenues which I extensively burdened with my attempts of escape and survival.

My first was a relationship that was so perfect in its own harmony that I depended on it too strongly to the point that I only saw it as my escape, instead of a separate entity of pleasure, love, and divinity. The second, like Eveline was faith, which is somewhat ironic considering I abandoned religion so effortlessly at such a young age. This turn was not because of a new belief in God, it was for the mysticism and miracles it provided for believers. Unfortunately, my abandonment of religion was so easy because it never made sense to me and it was never my own thought.

So my 'turn back' was rather unsuccessful when it came to making miracles out of heartache but, it did provide me with new insight on the meaning of faith and spirituality that brings me a sense of peace. Though it may only be alluded to in my eyes, what I see at the end of this story is a woman, Eveline, who realizes that she is so much more than just a runner. After all she has been through it would just be too easy to get up and leave with Frank. It

seems as if she believes she does not deserve the luxury of leaving while simultaneously feeling that she is beyond an escape.