

# Araby; a literary analysis essay sample



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BUSTER**

The vivid imagery in “ Araby” by James Joyce is used to express the narrator’s romantic feelings and situations throughout the story. The story is based on a young boy’s adoration for a girl. Though Joyce never reveals any names, the girl is known to be “ Mangan’s Sister.” The boy is wrapped up around the promise to her that he would buy her a gift if he attends the Araby Bazaar. From the beginning to the end, Joyce uses imagery to define the pain that often comes when one encounters love in reality instead of its elevated form.

Imagery is used in the very first line of the story stating, “ North Richmond Street, being blind, was a quiet street except at the hour when the Christian Brothers’ School set the boys free. An uninhabited house of two storeys stood at the blind end, detached from its neighbors in a square ground. The other houses of the street, conscious of decent lives within them, gazed at one another with brown imperturbable faces.” (609). Joyce uses many light and darkness references in the first paragraph to set up the plot of the story. The story starts in a street that is “ quiet” until the “ Christian Brothers’ School sets the boys free.” The narrator also makes notice of an “ uninhabited house of two storeys stood at the blind end, detached from its neighbors.” Showing the setting, the reader is forced to picture an old house, most likely bigger than most houses for their time, at the end of a neighborhood.

In the third paragraph of the story the narrator says, “ When the short days of winter came dusk fell before we had grown somber. The space of sky above us was the color of ever-changing violet and towards it the lamps of the street lifted their feeble lanterns. The cold air stung us and we played till

our bodies glowed. Our shouts echoed in the silent street. The career of our play brought us through the dark muddy lanes behind the houses where we ran the gauntlet of the rough tribes from the cottages, to the back doors of the dark dripping gardens where odors arose from the ashpits, to the dark odorous stables where a coachman smoothed and combed the horse or shook music from the buckled harness” (610).

When talking about how and where the narrator plays with his friends, the reader is automatically envisioning the scenery. The pinkish-blue winter skies, “ The...sky above us was the color of ever-changing violet...”, the mud ridden alleys of which the kids “ ran the gauntlet”, to the dark stables which had terrible fragrance from the horses the coachman took care of. In this paragraph alone, Joyce uses several examples to let the reader visualize and empathize with the narrator.

When describing the narrator’s fascination for Mangan’s sister, Joyce does not hold back on his imagery. “ She was waiting for us, her figure defined by the light from the half-opened door.... I stood by the railings looking at her. Her dress swung as she moved her body and the soft rope of her hair tossed from side to side” (610). This is the first time the young narrator shows his interest in his friend’s sister. He begins to grow fascinated with her.

Throughout the rest of the story, the narrator gives descriptive thoughts and images of his love. With each line and image the narrator describes, it helps the reader see the visions that the young boy is seeing.

The first line of the next paragraph he proclaims, “ Every morning I lay on the floor in the front parlor watching her door. The blind was pulled down to

within an inch of the sash so that I could not be seen" (610). It is almost as if he begins to "stalk" the young lady. "When she came out on the doorstep my heart leaped. I ran to the hall, seized my books, and followed her" (610). The boy begins to spend day and night thinking about his love. The reader begins to understand the longing the narrator has for Mangan's sister. "Her image accompanied me even in places the most hostile to romance" (610). The narrator states that he carries groceries for his aunt while they are shopping and all he can do is think of her. He imagines that he "...bore my chalice safely through a throng of foes. Her name sprang to my lips at moments in strange prayers and praises which I myself did not understand. My eyes were often full of tears (I could not tell why) and at times a flood from my heart seemed to pour itself out into my bosom" (610). He begins to look at her as a trophy or a prize. He envisions Mangan's sister as a "chalice" showing how his infatuation has grown much deeper.

In the scene where the narrator is in the late priest's house during the middle of the night, he states, "It was a dark rainy evening and there was no sound in the house.... I heard the rain impinge upon the earth, the fine incessant needles of water playing in the sodden beds" (611). The auditory image helps contribute to the drama. "There was no sound in the house", but outside the narrator heard the rain "impinge upon the earth" with "fine incessant needles of water". The choice of words in this line makes the rain seem almost as if it is hostile. This helps the reader be able to "hear" the force and fury of the storm making the narrators emotions even more intense.

Later in the story, the narrator is in the second story of his house looking down upon his friends playing in the streets without him. The cries of his friends reach him “weakened and indistinct”. This image brings about an impression that the boy now feels “removed” from his friends and their games, because he is caught up in his fantasy. Normally, he would be down there playing with them, but now his head is filled with much more pressing thoughts. They drown out the laughter and fun of his friends’ childish games. Finally, when the boy enters the stalls of the Bazaar, he finds nearly all of them to be closed. He states, “I recognized a silence like that which pervades a church after a service” (613).

This image makes the Bazaar feel depressed or low-spirited, almost as if the narrator does not wish to be in attendance. It stresses that he is late and has missed the main events. It also seems to introduce a shift in the boy’s perspective. It seems as the boy enters the bazaar and notices this silence, the vainness of his fantasy slowly begins to dawn on him. In “Araby” by James Joyce, the message of this short story is made clear by the depiction of imagery; the pain that often comes when one encounters love in reality instead of its elevated form. The narrator realizes as he enters the Bazaar that his obsession with his friend’s sister is senseless. He begins to reminisce on the times where he did nothing but think about her. He saw her as a pure girl as he had been taught in his church. While standing in the Bazaar, he begins to realize the hardships of the world. He thinks of the girl from a worldly view and sees the major difference in the way he was raised and taught in his church.