

Dubliners

Sample Analytical Paper Topics

TOPIC #1

Discuss three instances in the collection wherein a dead or missing figure possesses greater vitality than do those of the present. Indicate the influence these dead have on the living who remember them.

Outline

I. Thesis Statement: *Whether a deceased relative, former love, or prominent political figure, the figures of the dead in Dubliners influence the lives and behavior of the living to a profound degree. Of particular significance are the dead characters haunting the characters in "Eveline," "Ivy Day," and "The Dead."*

II. Eveline

A. Mother

1. Keeps Eveline from moving away from home.
2. Continues to induce guilt that makes her subservient to her father.

B. Brother Ernest

1. Happy memories of childhood fool Eveline into thinking her current family life is bearable.

III. Ivy Day in the Committee Room

A. Charles Stewart Parnell

1. Reminds the political canvassers of their unfair treatment of him years earlier.
2. Unsettles their consciences regarding their current political practices.
3. Inspires in some a desire to be truer to the cause of Irish autonomy.

IV. The Dead

A. Gabriel's Mother

1. In guaranteeing Gabriel a superior education, also made him overly conscious of his intellectual superiority, thereby stifling the emotional side of his character.
2. Always disregarded Gretta as being beneath her son because Gretta was a country girl.

B. Michael Furey

1. Causes Gretta anguish as she remembers that she was partly responsible for his death.
2. Reminds Gretta of the emotional void she currently has in relationship with Gabriel.

TOPIC #2

Discuss the inequities of class and gender in three stories and the consequences of these inequities.

Outline

- I. Thesis Statement:** *Gender and class cause certain members of Dublin society to be oppressed by others, often forcing them to submit to humiliation, degradation and—to some degree—the selling of their self-worth. In these same stories, those in a “superior” position exploit those beneath them to help support their own fragile existence.*
- II. Two Gallants**
 - A. Corley treats servant girls abusively because he is from a higher class.
 - B. The girls Corley mistreats endure his boorishness in hopes that he’ll marry them.
- III. The Boarding House**
 - A. Mrs. Mooney allows her daughter to compromise her values in order to “trap” a husband.
 - B. Because he needs to hold onto his job, Bob Doran allows himself to be forced into an undesirable marriage.
 - C. Because an unmarried woman had no way of providing for herself, Polly Mooney must accept Doran as a husband, even though they are incompatible.
- IV. Counterparts**
 - A. Farrington must endure being verbally abused by his boss because he probably could not find other employment.
 - B. Farrington’s wife cannot expect support from him but cannot leave him because:
 1. She’s Catholic.
 2. She has five children to support and would be unable to earn wages on her own.
 - C. Farrington’s son Tom must bear the brunt of his father’s anger because he’s too young and helpless to live on his own.

TOPIC #3

Discuss the theme of the “unlived life” as it’s represented in at least three of the stories.

Outline

- I. Thesis Statement:** *Due to their spiritual paralysis, many of Joyce’s characters cannot seize the opportunities they long for, even when such opportunity is close within their grasp. Fear, self-doubt and psychic inertia have caused these characters to halt the progress of their own development, abandoning any possibility of or hope for change.*
- II. A Little Cloud**
 - A. Little can’t become a poet because he’s too afraid to take a risk in his life.
 - B. Intimidated by his wife, whom he doesn’t love, Little must obey her.
 - C. Because of his frustration and lack of emotional fulfillment, Little cannot enjoy (or love) his own son.
- III. Clay**
 - A. Maria works in an artificially sheltered environment around people with whom she doesn’t enjoy an emotional connection.
 - B. Afraid of her sexuality and/or maturity, Maria lives a celibate life.
 - C. Because her existence is so devoid of substantial meaning, Maria’s life revolves around trivialities which frustrate and sometimes bewilder her.
- IV. A Painful Case**
 - A. Duffy has convinced himself that he needs no human contact and has robbed himself of emotional interaction.
 - B. Emily Sinico has been deprived of human affection by her husband.

- C. Because of each of their thwarted experience in relationships with others, neither character can successfully reach out to the other.
- D. As a result, both destroy themselves:
 - 1. Emily by suicide.
 - 2. Duffy by self-deception and, therefore, a missed opportunity for love.