

Araby by James Joyce

Summary

The story "Araby" conveys the idea that the personal feelings of a person and the real world are two different things. First, we do not understand this difference but when we come to understand that, we are disillusioned. Then we are sad. The narrator of the story is a schoolboy and lives with his uncle. He plays with his companions in the street until dusk and then they return their homes.

Mangan is his playmate. He falls in love with his sister. However, he cannot express his love to her. He keeps looking at her from a distance. He keeps on thinking about her all the time. Her image is always before his eyes. He is very intense in his love. Tears fill his eyes but he does not know why.

Once she talks to him and asks him to go to Araby. Araby is a bazaar. He promises that he will bring something for her if he goes there. Now going to Araby becomes his business. He takes permission to go. He waits for the appointed day impatiently. Now everything appears to him unimportant and a child's play.

On the appointed day, he leaves for Araby very late with a very little money. He goes to a shop, looks at things. However, he cannot buy anything because of his little money. He repents on his promise and his eyes burn with anger and anguish. (235)

Describe the schoolboy's departure, feelings and visit to Araby in your own simple English.

The narrator's visit to Araby proved useless because he could not buy anything for the girl. Therefore, he was very disappointed and angry and his eyes burned with anguish.

He got one florin from his uncle and went to the station. He was in a state of absent-mindedness. He got a seat in a third class carriage. The train was deserted because there were no passengers. He wanted to reach Araby very soon but the train left very late. It was a special train for Araby so the porters did not let the crowd of people get into the train. He remained alone in the carriage.

When he reached Araby it was ten minutes to ten. Therefore, he was too late. He entered the bazaar by handing a shilling to a weary looking man. Most of the shops and stalls were close. The boy went to an open stall and looked at vases and tea sets. Three shop assistants were arguing. A young lady came over to him and asked what he wanted to buy. Perhaps he had read the prices written on the vases. He had come to know that he did not have enough money, so he told her that he did not want to buy anything. He was very much disappointed now. He stayed at the stall for some time and then turned away.

Now the upper part of the hall was completely dark. He touched the little money in his pocket. He had realized his foolishness. He should not have promised the girl to bring something for her. Therefore, his eyes burnt with anger and anguish. He does not know anything about the bitter realities of life. He promises to the girl that he would bring something for her. He forgets that he depends on his uncle and he does not have any money with him.

Why is the protagonist angry at the end of the story and why do his eyes burn with anguish?

“Araby” describes a conflict between the subjective feeling of the protagonist and the objective world.

What is the disillusionment of the schoolboy or the protagonist?

What is epiphany? Explain with reference to Araby.

Discuss the narrator’s mental condition and the gap between his hopes and their fulfillment.

The stories of James Joyce have epiphany, that is, a sudden moment of realization which becomes a turning point in the life of character making him wise and experienced. Conflict is a state of disagreement between opposing ideas. When we read the story “Araby” carefully, we find that two opposing ideas have been presented. The first idea is schoolboy’s subjective feelings and the second idea is his objective or real world. There is a conflict between the personal feelings of a person and the real world.

The boy falls in love with his friend’s sister. To him his subjective feeling of love is the only reality. All the other things have no importance for him. To him the serious work of life is a child’s play. He keeps on thinking about her all the time. Even when he goes to market, he thinks about her.

In the classroom, he cannot pay attention to his studies. Nothing is important for him now. He usually weeps without knowing why he is weeping. He promises to buy a gift for the girl. These are the subjective feelings of the boy. This is his illusion. His objective world is that he is just a schoolboy. Perhaps he is an orphan too. His uncle is his patron. He should not have promised the girls to bring something for her. He cannot buy anything for her because he himself is dependent on his uncle.

Therefore, we see that there is a big disagreement between his subjective feelings and objective world.

It is only at the end of the story that he comes to know what he is and what he should not have done. He is disillusioned. With his little money, he cannot buy anything for her. It was his vanity when he promised to bring something for her. It is the sense of reality that makes his eyes burn with anguish and anger.

What is the theme of the story “Araby”?

The theme of the story “Araby” is that the subjective feelings of a person and the objective world are two opposing things. There is no agreement between them. First, we do not understand this disagreement, but later we come to understand that, and we are disillusioned. Then we are sad and dejected.

When we read the story carefully, we see the subjective feelings of a schoolboy. He is in love with his friend’s sister. To him his subjective feeling of love is the only reality. All other things have no importance for him. To him the serious work of life is child’s play. He keeps on thinking about her all the time. Even when he goes to market, he thinks about her. In the classroom, he cannot pay attention to his studies. Nothing is important for him now. He usually weeps without knowing why he is weeping. These are the subjective feelings of the boy. This is his illusion.

His objective world is that he is just schoolboy. Perhaps he is an orphan too. His uncle is his patron. He should not have promised the girls that he would bring something for her. He cannot bring anything for her, because he is himself dependent on his uncle.

We see that is a great disagreement between his subjective feelings and the objective world. First, he does not understand this disagreement, but later he comes to understand that and he is disillusioned. Then he is sad and dejected. It happens to all of us. Sometimes we wish for such things as are out of our reach. We keep on thinking about them, but at the end, we are disillusioned.

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