

WHS Book Rationale

Title: *Dubliners*

Author: James Joyce

- **Intended Audience**

A.P. English Literature and Composition students—this is a college level course.
English 12 students

- **Brief summary and educational significance**

A series of short stories set in Joyce's hometown of Dublin, Ireland at the end of the 19th century. The stories focus on realistic Dublin characters, beginning with children as the main characters, then adolescents, young adults, middle-aged, institutions, and finally a story that closes the book by reflecting on the whole of Ireland. These stories represent Joyce's Dublin and his views of his homeland; these are the stories through which he introduced the literary epiphany that so many other writers now use.

- **Purpose of teaching the work and how it will be used**

Precise diction, attention to detail, and use of historical, cultural, and religious allusions within very short stories provide opportunity for students to apply skills of literary analysis to a variety of pieces in a short amount of time. Joyce's use of a wide variety of literary techniques allows students to learn/review the literary terms they need for the A.P. exam and practice finding examples within a given text. Joyce's focus on real people, places, and events in his hometown provides a jumping off point for students to write about their own hometown and to model Joyce's attention to detail to convey mood and develop character.

- **Potential problems**

By the time he wrote these stories, Joyce had turned away from Catholicism, and the many religious references in the stories present the Church and religious faith as something that stunts the growth of individuals and society. Stories include alcoholism, pedophilia, child abuse, and prostitution.

- **Addressing potential problems**

James Joyce's *Dubliners* nearly was not published because it was so controversial in his time; however, they seem rather tame to today's students. This provides opportunity to discuss students' own, as well as society's, views of what is acceptable in literature and the decisions authors make about what to include in their writing and why. We watch documentary film on Joyce's life to provide context for his views on religion, marriage, sex, and family. In response to Joyce's book, students write "Wyomingers" stories, modeled after Joyce's style. Making decisions about what to include in their own stories helps them consider the choices other writers make in the literature we will be reading.