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Dubliners (Unabridged Classics For High School And Adults)



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Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I wish I could stand up here and make some pretentious claim that this is the "greatest short story collection of all time!" or something along those lines but I generally don't read short stories or short story collections. But I like James Joyce and so figured what the heck, I made it through Ulysses, this should be a cakewalk. So I read it and if you were wowed by Ulysses then this should reconfirm Joyce's genius for you and that he could do other writing besides that wacky postmodern stuff (before there really was a postmodern). If you're not a Joyce fan most of these (other than a notable handful) probably won't convert you. In essence these are Joyce's portraits of the people of Dublin and the city itself, most of these stories are character sketches, mostly following a few people around as they go about their lives. They were written over a period of time so the quality does vary a bit, the first few stories I don't find anything special but by the time you get to around "Two

Gallants" the quality takes a sharp spike upward and stays there right until the end. The prose is fairly easy to follow, the worst part is deciphering all the Irish names and slang that are used liberally for obvious reasons . . . if anything it showed me how two cultures who technically speak the language can sound so different. The stories run the gamut of the "slice of life" genre, if such a thing exists, showing people from all walks of life and all classes of society, showing them as realistically as Joyce could, all their fears and foibles, warts and all. At his best he makes you live the lives of the characters and immerses you deeply into the city of Dublin, probably more than any group of short stories has ever brought a city to life.

Having grown up in a small town much like Joyce's Dublin, this book has a special significance for me. I've seen so many people from my town graduating from high school without really understanding that there is an entire world outside the place they grew up and lacking the ambition to go explore it. I fear many of them will spend their lives "getting by" in a job they hate, raising children who will inevitably do the same thing. Joyce's "Dubliners" depicts this cycle with as much complexity and compassion as any author I've read. In an age where the most publicized fiction tends to be simple-minded and genre-bound, it's refreshing to come across a writer with Joyce's complexity. "Dubliners" is so rich in its intellectual and symbolic atmosphere that many readers may be put off by the overall weight of the prose. The writing is so thick with metaphorical contexts that the literal content of the story occasionally becomes obscured, which can be frustrating for those not used to reading Joyce. Yet, while difficult, "Dubliners" is far from impossible to decipher, and although these stories function well as a whole, they are also more or less self-contained, which makes "Dubliners" easier to get through than Joyce's other works(it's a lot easier to take on a ten page short story than a 600+ page novel like "Ulysses" or "Finnegan's Wake"). For readers who are new to Joyce, this would be a good place to start. A final note: since this book is old enough to be considered a "classic," there are a plethora of editions available from various publishers. I own the Vintage edition (ISBN: 0679739904).

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