



Araby

The title of this short story evokes the exotic East. The narrator is a nameless boy, who relates the story of his first love.

North Richmond Street being blind¹, 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, detached² from its neighbours in a square ground. The other houses of the street, conscious of decent³ lives within them⁴, gazed at one another with brown imperturbable faces.

The former tenant⁵ of our house, a priest, had died in the back drawing-room. Air, musty⁶ from having been long enclosed, hung in all the rooms, and the waste room⁷ behind the kitchen was littered with old useless papers⁸. Among these I found a few paper-covered books⁹, the pages of which were curled and damp¹⁰: *The Abbot*¹¹, by Walter Scott, *The Devout Communicant*¹² and *The Memoirs of Vidocq*¹³. I liked the last best because its leaves were yellow. The wild garden behind the house contained a central apple-tree and a few straggling bushes¹⁴ under one of which I found the late tenant's rusty bicycle-pump¹⁵. He had been a very charitable priest; in his will he had left all his money to institutions and the furniture of his house to his sister.

When the short days of winter came dusk¹⁶ fell before we had well eaten our dinners. When we met in the street the houses had grown sombre¹⁷. The space of sky above us was the colour of ever-changing¹⁷ violet and towards it the lamps of the street lifted their feeble¹⁸ lanterns. The cold air stung us¹⁹ and we played till our bodies glowed²⁰. Our shouts echoed in the silent street. The career of our play brought us through the dark muddy lanes²¹ behind the houses where we ran the gauntlet of the rough tribes²² from the cottages, to the back doors of the dark dripping²³ gardens where odours arose from the ashpits²⁴, to the dark odorous stables where a coachman smoothed²⁵ and combed the horse or shook music from the buckled harness²⁶. When we returned to the street light from the kitchen windows had filled the areas. If my uncle was seen turning the corner, we hid in the shadow until we had seen him safely housed²⁷. Or if Mangan's sister came out on the doorstep to call her brother in to his tea we watched her from our shadow peer²⁷ up and down the street. We waited to see whether she would remain or go in and, if she remained, we left our shadow and walked up to Mangan's steps resignedly²⁸. She was waiting for us, her figure defined by the light from the half-opened door. Her brother always teased²⁹ her before he obeyed and I stood by the railings³⁰ looking at her. Her dress swung³¹ as she moved her body and the soft rope³² of her hair tossed³³ from side to side.

Every morning I lay on the floor in the front parlour³⁴ watching her door. The blind was pulled down to within an inch of the sash³⁵ so that I could not be seen. When she came out on the doorstep my heart leaped³⁶. I ran to the hall, seized my books and followed her. I kept her brown figure always in my eye and, when we came near the point at which our ways diverged, I quickened my pace and passed her. This happened morning after morning. I had never spoken to her, except for a few casual words, and yet her name was like a summons³⁷ to all my foolish blood.

Her image accompanied me even in places the most hostile to romance. On Saturday evenings when my aunt went marketing I had to go to carry some of the parcels. We walked through the flaring streets³⁸, jostled³⁹ by drunken men and bargaining⁴⁰ women, amid the curses⁴¹ of labourers, the shrill litanies⁴² of shop-boys who stood on guard by the barrels of pigs' cheeks⁴³, the nasal chanting of street-singers, who sang a come-all-you about O'Donovan Rossa, or a ballad about the troubles in our native land. These noises converged in a single sensation of life for me: I imagined that I bore my chalice safely through a throng of foes⁴⁴. 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 flood⁴⁵ from my heart

James Joyce
Dubliners
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- 1 North Richmond ... blind. North Richmond Street (dove lo stesso Joyce visse), essendo a fondo cieco.
- 2 detached. Separata.
- 3 decent. Decorose.
- 4 within them. Al loro interno.
- 5 former tenant. Inquilino precedente.
- 6 musty. Ammuffita.
- 7 waste room. Ripostiglio.
- 8 old useless papers. Vecchia carta straccia.
- 9 paper-covered books. Tascabili.
- 10 curled and damp. Spiegate e umide.
- 11 *The Abbot*. Romanzo di Walter Scott sulla tragica storia di Maria Stuarda.
- 12 *The Devout Communicant*. Testo di devozione religiosa.
- 13 *The Memoirs of Vidocq*. Romanzo sulla vita avventurosa di un ladro francese di grande ingegno che diventa poliziotto.
- 14 straggling bushes. Cespugli sparsi.
- 15 rusty bicycle-pump. Pompa della bicicletta arrugginita.
- 16 dusk. Oscurità.
- 17 ever-changing. Cangiate.
- 18 feeble. Deboli.
- 19 stung us. Ci pungeva.
- 20 glowed. Avvampavano.
- 21 muddy lanes. Vicoli fangosi.
- 22 we ... tribes. Sfidavamo le bastonature delle tribù selvagge.
- 23 dripping. Gocciolanti.
- 24 ashpits. Pattumiere.
- 25 smoothed. Strigliava.
- 26 buckled harness. Fibbie dei finimenti.
- 27 peer. Far capolino.
- 28 resignedly. In modo rassegnato.
- 29 teased. Faceva disperare.
- 30 railings. Cancelli.
- 31 swung. Ondeggiava.
- 32 soft rope. Treccia morbida.
- 33 tossed. Oscillava.
- 34 parlour. Salotto.
- 35 sash. Telaio.
- 36 leaped. Batteva forte.
- 37 summons. Richiamo.
- 38 flaring streets. Strade sfolgoranti.
- 39 jostled. Spinti.
- 40 bargaining. Che contrattavano.
- 41 curses. Bestemmie.
- 42 shrill litanies. Litanie squillanti.
- 43 barrels ... cheeks. Barili di guanciale di maiale.
- 44 throng of foes. Folla di nemici.
- 45 flood. Marea.



50 seemed to pour itself out into my bosom⁴⁶. I thought little of the future. I did not know whether I would ever speak to her or not or, if I spoke to her, how I could tell her of my confused adoration. But my body was like a harp and her words and gestures were like fingers running upon the wires.

One evening I went into the back drawing-room in which the priest had died. It was a dark rainy evening and there was no sound in the house. Through one of the broken panes⁴⁷ I heard the rain impinge⁴⁸ upon the earth, the fine incessant needles of water playing in the sodden⁴⁹ beds. Some distant lamp or lighted window gleamed below me. I was thankful that I could see so little. All my senses seemed to desire to veil themselves⁵⁰ and, feeling that I was about to slip from them, I pressed the palms of my hands together until they trembled, murmuring: 'O love! O love!' many times.

At last she spoke to me. When she addressed the first words to me I was so confused that I did not know what to answer. She asked me was I going to Araby. I forgot whether I answered yes or no. It would be a splendid bazaar⁵¹, she said; she would love to go.

65 'And why can't you?' I asked.

While she spoke she turned a silver bracelet round and round her wrist⁵². She could not go, she said, because there would be a retreat⁵³ that week in her convent. Her brother and two other boys were fighting for their caps⁵⁴ and I was alone at the railings. She held one of the spikes⁵⁵, bowing her head towards me. The light from the lamp opposite our door caught the white curve of her neck, lit up her hair⁵⁶ that rested there and, falling, lit up the hand upon the railing. It fell over one side of her dress and caught the white border of a petticoat⁵⁷, just visible as she stood at ease⁵⁸.

'It's well for you,' she said.

'If I go,' I said, 'I will bring you something.'

75 What innumerable follies laid waste⁵⁹ my waking and sleeping thoughts after that evening! I wished to annihilate the tedious intervening days. I chafed⁶⁰ against the work of school. At night in my bedroom and by day in the classroom her image came between me and the page I strove⁶¹ to read. The syllables of the word Araby were called to me through the silence in which my soul luxuriated and cast⁶² an Eastern enchantment over me. I asked for leave to go to the bazaar on Saturday night. My aunt was surprised and hoped it was not some Freemason⁶³ affair. I answered few questions in class. I watched my master's face pass from amiability to sternness⁶⁴; he hoped I was not beginning to idle⁶⁵. I could not call my wandering thoughts together. I had hardly any patience with the serious work of life which, now that it stood between me and my desire, seemed to me child's play, ugly monotonous child's play.

85 On Saturday morning I reminded my uncle that I wished to go to the bazaar in the evening. He was fussing at the hallstand⁶⁶, looking for the hat-brush, and answered me curtly⁶⁷:

'Yes, boy, I know.'

90 As he was in the hall I could not go into the front parlour and lie at the window. I left the house in bad humour and walked slowly towards the school. The air was pitilessly raw⁶⁸ and already my heart misgave⁶⁹ me.

When I came home to dinner my uncle had not yet been home. Still it was early. I sat staring at the clock for some time and, when its ticking began to irritate me, I left the room. I mounted the staircase and gained the upper part of the house. The high cold empty gloomy rooms liberated me and I went from room to room singing. From the front window I saw my companions playing below in the street. Their cries reached me weakened and indistinct and, leaning my forehead against the cool glass, I looked over at the dark house where she lived. I may have stood there for an hour, seeing nothing but the brown-clad⁷⁰ figure cast by my imagination, touched discreetly by the lamplight at the curved neck, at the hand upon the railings and at the border below the dress.

100 When I came downstairs again I found Mrs Mercer sitting at the fire. She was an old garrulous⁷¹ woman, a pawnbroker's widow⁷², who collected used stamps for some

46 bosom. Petto, cuore.

47 panes. Vetri.

48 impinge. Battere.

49 sodden. Inzuppati.

50 to veil themselves. Nascondersi.

51 bazaar. Bazar, luogo dove si vendono oggetti appariscenti di scarso valore.

52 wrist. Polso.

53 retreat. Ritiro.

54 were fighting ... caps. Stavano litigando per i berretti.

55 spikes. Punte.

56 lit up her hair. Illuminava i suoi capelli.

57 petticoat. Sottoveste.

58 at ease. Rilassata.

59 follies laid waste. Follie si impossessavano.

60 I chafed. Mi irritavo.

61 I strove. Mi sforzavo.

62 cast. Gettavano.

63 Freemason. Legato alla Massoneria.

64 sternness. Severità.

65 idle. Oziare.

66 He ... hallstand. Stava frugando nel cassetto dell'attaccapanni.

67 curtly. In modo sbrigativo.

68 raw. Fredda.

69 misgave. Faceva presentire una disgrazia.

70 brown-clad. Vestita di marrone.

71 garrulous. Loquace.

72 pawnbroker's widow. Vedova di un usuraio.



105 pious purpose. I had to endure⁷³ the gossip of the tea-table. The meal was prolonged beyond an hour and still my uncle did not come. Mrs Mercer stood up to go: she was sorry she couldn't wait any longer, but it was after eight o'clock and she did not like to be out late as the night air was bad for her. When she had gone I began to walk up and down the room, clenching my fists⁷⁴. My aunt said:

'I'm afraid you may put off your bazaar for this night of Our Lord.'

110 At nine o'clock I heard my uncle's latchkey⁷⁵ in the halldoor. I heard him talking to himself and heard the hallstand rocking when it had received the weight of his overcoat. I could interpret these signs. When he was midway through his dinner I asked him to give me the money to go to the bazaar. He had forgotten.

'The people are in bed and after their first sleep now,' he said.

115 I did not smile. My aunt said to him energetically:

'Can't you give him the money and let him go? You've kept him⁷⁶ late enough as it is.'

My uncle said he was very sorry he had forgotten. He said he believed in the old saying: 'All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy⁷⁷'. He asked me where I was going and, when I had told him a second time he asked me did I know *The Arab's Farewell to his Steed*⁷⁸. When I left the kitchen he was about to recite the opening lines of the piece to my aunt.

I held a florin tightly⁷⁹ in my hand as I strode down Buckingham Street towards the station. The sight of the streets thronged with⁸⁰ buyers and glaring with gas recalled to me the purpose of my journey. I took my seat in a third-class carriage of a deserted train. After an intolerable delay the train moved out of the station slowly. 125 It crept onward among ruinous houses⁸¹ and over the twinkling⁸² river. At Westland Row Station a crowd of people pressed to the carriage doors; but the porters moved them back, saying that it was a special train for the bazaar. I remained alone in the bare carriage. In a few minutes the train drew up⁸³ beside an improvised wooden platform. I 130 passed out on to the road and saw by the lighted dial⁸⁴ of a clock that it was ten minutes to ten. In front of me was a large building which displayed the magical name.

I could not find any sixpenny entrance and, fearing that the bazaar would be closed, I passed in quickly through a turnstile⁸⁵, handing a shilling to a weary-looking⁸⁶ man. I found myself in a big hall girdled⁸⁷ at half its height by a gallery. Nearly all the stalls⁸⁸ 135 were closed and the greater part of the hall was in darkness. I recognised a silence like that which pervades a church after a service. I walked into the centre of the bazaar timidly. A few people were gathered about the stalls which were still open. Before a curtain, over which the words *Cafe Chantant* were written in coloured lamps, two men were counting money on a salver⁸⁹. I listened to the fall of the coins.

140 Remembering with difficulty why I had come, I went over to one of the stalls and examined porcelain vases and flowered tea-sets. At the door of the stall a young lady was talking and laughing with two young gentlemen. I remarked their English accents and listened vaguely to their conversation.

'O, I never said such a thing!'

145 'O, but you did!'

'O, but I didn't!'

'Didn't she say that?'

'Yes. I heard her.'

'O, there's a ... fib⁹⁰!'

150 Observing me the young lady came over and asked me did I wish to buy anything. The tone of her voice was not encouraging; she seemed to have spoken to me out of a sense of duty. I looked humbly at the great jars⁹¹ that stood like eastern guards at either side of the dark entrance to the stall and murmured:

'No, thank you.'

155 The young lady changed the position of one of the vases and went back to the two young men. They began to talk of the same subject. Once or twice the young lady glanced at me over her shoulder.

73 **endure**. Tollerare.

74 **clenching my fists**. Chiudendo i pugni.

75 **latchkey**. Chiave.

76 **You ... him**. L'hai fatto aspettare.

77 **All ... boy**. Tanto lavoro e nessuna distrazione fanno annoiare i ragazzi.

78 **The ... Steed**. L'addio dell'arabo al destriero.

79 **tightly**. Stretto.

80 **thronged with**. Piene di.

81 **It ... houses**. Avanzò lentamente tra le case in rovina.

82 **twinkling**. In movimento.

83 **drew up**. Si fermò.

84 **dial**. Quadrante.

85 **turnstile**. Piccolo cancello girevole.

86 **weary-looking**. Dall'aria stanca.

87 **girdled**. Circondata.

88 **stalls**. Banchetti.

89 **salver**. Vassoio.

90 **fib**. Frottola.

91 **jars**. Vasi.



I lingered⁹² before her stall, though I knew my stay was useless, to make my interest in her wares⁹³ seem the more real. Then I turned away slowly and walked down the middle of the bazaar. I allowed the two pennies to fall against the sixpence in my pocket. I heard a voice call from one end of the gallery that the light was out. The upper part of the hall was now completely dark.

Gazing up into the darkness I saw myself as a creature driven and derided by vanity; and my eyes burned with anguish and anger.

92 I lingered. Indugiare.

93 wares. Vasellame.

LITERARY COMPETENCE

> VOCABULARY

1 READ the first section of the text and match the highlighted words and phrases with their Italian translation.

- 1 accolto in casa
- 2 scure, tenebrose
- 3 ballata
- 4 aghi
- 5 tendina
- 6 luccicava
- 7 testamento
- 8 disseminato di

> COMPETENCE: READING AND UNDERSTANDING A TEXT

2 READ the text and identify the three sections. Then write a heading for each section.

- Part 1 (lines 1-60):
- Part 2 (lines 61-92):
- Part 3 (lines 93-164):

3 READ the first section again and find out

- the setting in place;
- how the interior of the protagonist's house is described;
- whether a story about a present or a past experience is told;
- who represents authority.

4 STATE

- how the girl is always mentioned;
- what physical features the boy perceives of that female character;
- what makes him follow the girl every morning;
- what his indefinite tension causes;
- when he finally gives a name to his feelings for the girl.

5 READ the second section of the text and analyse

- the boy's feelings when the girl first speaks to him;
- what she asks him and how he answers;
- in what perspective the boy perceives the girl talking to him;
- what the boy is particularly fascinated by.

6 FOCUS on the girl's memory which makes the boy behave in a different way during his everyday activities. What happens to him at school? What does he always think about? Why is his aunt surprised?

**7 LIST** the inconveniences which irritate and worry the boy about his visit to Araby.

- (lines 86-89);
- (line 93);
- (lines 102-104);
- (lines 110-121).

8 READ up to the end of the story and answer the following questions.

- 1 How does the boy reach the bazaar?
- 2 When does he arrive at Araby?
- 3 What does he see inside?
- 4 Does the girl at the stall pay attention to him?
- 5 Does he buy anything?
- 6 Why does he feel so angry at the end of the story?

> COMPETENCE: ANALYSING AND INTERPRETING A TEXT**9 CONCENTRATE** on the narrator. Note down

- what kind of narrator he is;
- whose point of view is adopted.

10 FOCUS on the character of the boy.

- 1 Does Joyce introduce the character of the boy in a traditional way? What is the reader obliged to do?
- 2 In line 60 the boy understands he is in love with Mangan's sister. What sort of relationship does he establish with the external world from that time on? Where does he always perceive the girl?
- 3 The boy uses some words connected with religion in lines 47-52. Square them and say how they are related to his feelings for the girl.
- 4 Underline the particular expressions the boy uses to signal his feelings. How does he judge his attitude towards his adolescent love? Tick as appropriate.

<input type="checkbox"/> Ironical.	<input type="checkbox"/> Frustrated.	<input type="checkbox"/> Objective.
<input type="checkbox"/> Sympathetic.	<input type="checkbox"/> Resigned.	<input type="checkbox"/> Rebellious.

11 FOCUS on lines 163-164 and explain what revelation the boy has through his visit to Araby. What does the narrator want to suggest about his 'escape' to the bazaar from his flat reality?**12 STATE** what his platonic love, his inability to express his feelings openly and his passage from childhood to adolescence are symbol of.

- Platonic love: ;
- inability to express his feelings: ;
- passage from childhood to adolescence:

13 TRACE the various images of light and shadow through the story and show how they define the boy's feelings.**> COMPETENCE: FINDING AND UNDERSTANDING LINKS AND RELATIONSHIPS****14 DISCUSS.** Point out the most important stylistic devices and themes present in *Araby*.