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## Bitter Truth About Life

In James Joyce's "Araby", an arcane glimpse into the life of a young boy is revealed as he passes from a state of naivete into cognizance of his life. We watch as he leads himself through a fateful-ending journey in which he realizes his disillusionment about love, adults and the world he lives in. The boy is a representative of each of us as we mature in our dark and dirty world and discontinue looking at life through rose-colored glass. Joyce incorporates imagery of light and dark in the boy's journey to reveal how we, like the boy, are disillusioned by the light and upon discovery of the true darkness of our world our innocence is lost.

Joyce begins the story by depicting the na?ve life that we, as humans, develop our childhood in. By exposing the gloomy and dismal environment that the boy resides in we begin to perceive the narrow-mindedness that we initially have about our own world. The dark surroundings were a comfortable setting to the boy, because it was what he had grown accustomed to and familiar with. He and his friends played in the "dark dripping gardens" (106), along the "dark muddy lanes" (106), and in the town's shadows with little fear. The darkness and its shadows represent the people of the town who have already experienced the disillusionment. The boys, who are surrounded by the shades of the people, were very much alive and their youth and "glow" (106) tell us that their souls had not yet been suppressed by the ways of the world.

This disillusionment is a common deception that a person must face in his life before they awaken to the realization that there is more to his life than what meets the eye. In "Araby," the boy begins to open to the idea that there might be more than what is in his little world when he caught sight of the sister of his friend, Mangan. He awed at her majestic glow as the light spinned off her and invited him to revere her and her essence. Here the boy began to separate himself subconsciously from his childish nature and inherit the adult attributes of love and adoration that one obtains as he matures.

The girl, in his mind, was an object of devotion. The boy began to acquire a false sentiment towards her, as we all often do upon finding our first love, and he developed an idolistic stature of her in his mind. Although he was aware of his feelings for her, he had a hard time just approaching Mangan's sister, even though she was only a few feet away. Instead, as he gazed at the light, which surrounded the girl, he concealed himself from her view in the comfortable shadows of the night. His retreat imparts the intimidation one faces as he sees everything grand before him, yet is unable to command himself to go forward with the feelings that he is impassioned with. This relinquishment, into his familiarity of the dark, is the first advance towards observing innocence and breaking the barriers that holds one in their sheltered circle. The boy was scared to approach Mangan's sister because he did not know how to

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comprehend the emotions of love and sexuality that he was feeling towards her. He desired to go near her, but did not know how he could tell her of his "confused adoration" (107). He expressed this urge that one has to try something new and step outside their naive comprehension of love when he wandered through the dark drawing room of his house on a dismal and rainy evening. It is here that Joyce unveils the turning point that the boy and a person reach when he decided that he wanted to advance on into the unfamiliar grounds of love.

The boy chose to face his friend's sister and this newfound love with non-seeing eyes. When he went to the back room, where the priest had died, to think about her, "some distant lamp or window gleamed below (him) and (he) was thankful that (he) could see so little. All (his) senses seemed to desire to unveil themselves" (108). Part of the problem of infatuation is that the object of your adoration is unconscious of your existence and his or her significance in your life. It is a form of blindness. The one who is infatuated is blind to the fact that he might not be the center of the other person's universe. Where as that is often the case, it certainly was in this young boy's story. So he willed himself not to see because it is necessary for him to be blind so he might experience the exquisite pains of first love. This is all a part of growing up and making personal decisions rather than depending on the advice of others.

With a blinded mindset, the boy finally found the courage to speak with Mangan's sister and he further lost himself in her ardor. In their brief conversation he found out that she desired to go to Araby, a bazaar outside of the town that the boy lived in, but was unable to. He once again wrapped himself up in his own fantasy of love and he didn't even realize the overtones of envy and bitterness that the girl expressed to him. She said, "It's well" (108) for him to go to Araby but the boy, being blinded, did not take notice. Instead he attempted to please his idol and win her over by declaring that he would purchase something for her in Araby, a pursuit to buy her love.

During the days that laid before his journey to Araby, Joyce divulges the discontent that began to arise as the romantic quest began to take precedence over everyday reality for the boy, destroying his ability to function. In the story the boy began to dread the world that he lived in. He did not care for the things that esteemed him earlier, such as school and studying. His thoughts wandered as he dreamed of the day when he would be able to leave his town and travel to the bazaar. All the actions that he normally performed seemed to be "ugly monotonous child's play" (109). There is a hint of new understanding here, as the boy seems critical of his past; at the same time he seems to condemn his own feelings, which he still brings together with the "serious work of life (108-109). On the day of his departure, the boy was brimming with pleased emotions. He could not remain still and paced out his excitement throughout his house. The author shows how one separates from their cognizance as the boy walked through the "empty, gloomy rooms" of his house and he felt relieved at the fact that brighter more inspiring ones awaited him only miles away. His journey was delayed, though, because of the

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thoughtlessness of his uncle, who arrived home late, drunk, and unconcerned about the anticipated journey of his nephew. As a result the boy is awakened to the disillusionment that he had acquired about adults thus far in his life.

When the boy finally reached Araby it was late and he feared that it would be closed. He entered the gates of the bazaar and found that nearly all of the booths were closed and surrounded in darkness. Araby was not the glamorous and wonderful place that he had imagined it to be. It was as dreary and dark as the town that he lived in. The disillusionment of the market is similar to the consequences that one must face when the path they choose does not work out as they expected. The boy continued throughout the market, hoping to find something to take back with him to please his love. He examined items at one booth and overheard the conversation between two Englishmen and a woman. He listened to their vulgar banter and was further disappointed by the nature of adults. After a few minutes he decided that his visit was useless, turned to go home and the lights went out, leaving the boy alone in this new world filled with the fury of the deception he was led to believe about love and life.

At this point in his life he "saw" (111) himself and he was totally defeated: his quest had failed and he had not achieved his aim, which was to buy a present for the girl. His infatuation was over and his ego was hurt. He expresses his disgust and disappointment in terms of blindness and insight while he was "Gazing up into the darkness" (111) and saw himself "as a creature derided by vanity" (111). He had sacrificed everything and even ventured into the adult world realizing that it was not as he expected. The decisions that he made regarding love were not childish ones. He decided to cross the line that separated him from being a child into being an adult, jeopardizing his innocence, all for the vain love of a woman, which turned out to be disillusioned.

James Joyce allows us to experience this journey that young boy had to face in "Araby" in an attempt to guide us to the realization that we all, at one point in our lives, have been disillusioned by a situation where the end product was not what we had anticipated. We see our lives as dark and boring and desire to go towards the more exhilarating lighted pathway, like the boy, hoping that it will be better than the previous. There is comfort in the familiarity of the norm, but the desire to experience the new always exists. Joyce's nostalgic lament on innocence lost warns us of the dangers that we may face when taking things on in blind faith and following an unfamiliar lighted pathway. Which pathway we choose is all a part of the decisions that one must face on becoming an adult.

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