



# The Dead

*James Joyce*

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## **The Dead** James Joyce

The Dead is the final short story in the collection *Dubliners* by James Joyce. It is the longest story in the collection and widely considered to be one of the greatest short stories in the English language. At between 15-16,000 words it has also been considered a novella. It was adapted as a one act play of the same name by Hugh Leonard in 1967. "The Dead" was made into a film also entitled *The Dead* in 1987, directed by John Huston. In 1999 it was adapted into a musical by Richard Nelson and Shaun Davey. Christopher Walken starred in the original production. The story centres on Gabriel Conroy on the night of the Morkan sisters' annual dance and dinner in the first week of January 1904, perhaps the Feast of the Epiphany (January 6). Typical of the stories in *Dubliners*, "The Dead" develops toward a moment of painful self-awareness; Joyce described this as an epiphany. The narrative generally concentrates on Gabriel's insecurities, his social awkwardness, and the defensive way he copes with his discomfort. The story culminates at the point when Gabriel discovers that, through years of marriage, there was much he never knew of his wife's past. JOYCE HOUSE, the fictional Morkan sisters' home. 15 Usher's Island, Dublin. Upon arriving at the party with his wife, Gabriel makes a joke that is not funny about the maid's marriage prospects; and he fidgets, adjusts his clothing, and offers her money as a holiday present. Not long after that, he gets flustered again when his wife pokes fun at him over a conversation they had earlier, in which he had forced her to wear galoshes for the bad weather. With such episodes, Gabriel is depicted as particularly pathetic. Similarly, Gabriel is unsure about quoting a poem from the poet Robert Browning when he is giving his dinner address, as he is afraid to be seen as pretentious. But, at the same time, Gabriel considers himself above the others when he speculates that his audience would not understand the words he uses.

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