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A Portrait: As a story of development of a young man as an artist.

'A Portrait of a young man as an artist' is a masterpiece of James Joyce's fictional writings. Joyce is a pioneer of modern English novel and occupies an important position in the 20th century fictional world. He has the personal experiences of all the vicissitudes of human life. His novels reveal his creative art and techniques and, at the same time, paint a true picture of Irish Society. 'A Portrait' is an autobiographical novel that demonstrates his rebellious attitude towards the existing condition in his fatherland which is not conducive to the growth of an artist. Here, Joyce has used the stream of consciousness technique, symbols and motifs that have enabled him to move freely into the past and the present to depict the actual thoughts and actions of his hero. This novel records the growth of Stephen, the hero, from a creature to Creator.

In fact, 'A Portrait' is a story of the development of a child into a young man ready to take up his mission as an artist. His experiences and mental conflicts are faithfully delineated. He wants to become an artist and feels that he can achieve his aim only when he is free from all other commitments. He struggles to free himself from all allegiances and ties and finally leaves his family, his country and his Church and goes into exile to pursue his vocation in peace and silence. As a matter of fact, his struggles begin while he is just a child. The fear of authority is instilled in him and is made to learn that to escape from punishment is to submit. He is told by Dante that if he thinks of marrying Eileen, a Protestant girl, the eagles will pull out his eyes.

When Stephen goes to Clongowes College, he finds that the boys are rough, bullying and unsympathetic. He is pushed into the ditch of dirty water

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and gets cold. Father Dolan beats him mercilessly although he has committed no fault. Though he feels happy after reporting the matter to the Rector but soon he gets dejected to know the truth about the Rector making the episode just a joke. Stephen finds his father to be an irresponsible person who only boasts about his past and do nothing in the present. He also learns that the Irish people have been cruel to their great leaders and writers. He comes to the conclusion that Ireland is like a sow that eats its own farrows.

Stephen is now sent to Belvedere College. There he finds the atmosphere of the institution absolutely hostile. He is beaten up with stick and cabbage stump for calling Byron a great poet. He is asked to be a good son, a good Irishman, and a good Catholic. He feels that he will revolt against these absurd ideals. He now joins the university and forms romantic visions of a girl whom he calls E.C. But he is not satisfied with the dreams and feels a fierce fire of flesh craving for immediate satisfaction. This sensual urge takes him into the arms of prostitutes where he experiences a different feeling of being strong, fearless and sure of himself.

But, the sermons of Father Arnall on the horrors of punishments awarded by God to the sinners who do not repent and continue to commit sins, cause a great upheaval in his heart and mind. He feels that he is destined to undergo all the tortures of the hell for he is a greater sinner. Then he makes confession of his sins before an old priest who exhorts him to drive away the devil that may tempt him to hell. He is happy for he has been pardoned by God and his soul is again made pure. Now he starts living a life of a saint and practices all the virtues and avoids

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all Vices. The Rector notices his piety and devotion to God, and subsequently, offers him to join the fold of priesthood that may confer him secret power and secret knowledge as well as improve his financial condition. But he does not appreciate the ordered and passionless life of Jesuit Father. He feels that being a priest, he will not be able to fulfill his mission in life, that is to become an artist. Hence, he must be free from all sorts of loyalty and attachment.

These vague ideas develop into a firm resolve when he walks towards the sea shore. His class mates jokingly call him 'Stephanos' and 'Daedalus'. But, to him, these words appear like a prophecy. Just like Daedalus, a mythical character, who flew from his captivity, Stephen also <sup>feels to</sup> get freedom from all loyalties. Wandering alone by the sea shore, he sees a girl wading in the water like a sea-bird. He contemplates her intently and frankly. The girl's image passes into his soul and he realises that he is not to become a priest of the Church but the priest of the imagination. He has to live, to err, to fall, to triumph and to recreate life out of life. Now, the dedicated artist is fully born. His inner life is completely developed and wants expression in the work of art. He leaves his land with an invocation to Daedalus, his mythic ancestor "old father, old artificer, stand me now and ever in good stead."

To conclude, we see that 'A Portrait of an artist as a young man' is the story of Stephen's constant struggle against a hostile environment at home, in school and at university; in church and in the country and he goes into voluntary exile to work as a dedicated artist who owes loyalty to nothing but his art.