

# **James Joyce's "A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man"**

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# *A Portrait of Artist as a Young Man*

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- ▶ *A Portrait of Artist as a Young Man* (1915) is one of the most famous Irish novels in English.
- ▶ It is story of a young man who desired self-exile in order to be an artist.
- ▶ According to Colm Boilin
  - ▶ In *A Portrait*, there is a constant and nourishing conflict going on between the artist and the young man, the artist concerned with style and texture and the refraction of experience, the young man with registering what he saw and remembered, how he grew.
- ▶ <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/dec/29/colm-toibin-james-joyce-a-portrait-of-the-artist-as-a-young-man>



# Greek Allusions / Myths

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- ▶ The novel recalls many Greek symbols and allusions.
- ▶ First is its Epigraph “And he turned his mind to unknown arts” is directly quoted from Ovid’s character, who constructed a labyrinth to capture the giant.
- ▶ Second is the hero Stephen Dedalus, whose name bears the resemblance with Dedalus, the creator of Labyrinth. Same character again re-mentioned in *Ulysses*, another famous novel by James Joyce in 1922.
- ▶ Although Stephen has a direct reference of Dedalus, yet he is more like his son Icarus, the third Greek symbol.



# Auto-biographical

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- ▶ One can say that similar like DH Lawrence's personal experiences finds its mention in *Sons and Lovers* (1913), the novel *A Portrait of Artist as a Young Man* (1915) nearly follows the same method or formula, but in a different manner.
- ▶ As said by many, the novel is semi-autobiographical in nature and content as it echoed the education and development of a young Irish boy Stephen Daedalus, who is none other than James Joyce in guise.
- ▶ Thus, novel can be called a self-portrait of James, rather than Daedalus. Its narrative begins from the infancy of Daedalus, who is moving from infancy to adulthood. Amid this course of events, he struggled with the social, religious and political crisis of the time, particularly in Ireland.
- ▶ Simply saying, the novel as a whole, is story of early twenty years of James or Daedalus life. The important phase of his life is the age of eighteen, a time when he, out of curiosity, decided to leave his country. His had a desire to be an artist and to achieve it he wanted to roam the whole of Europe.
- ▶ Sometimes, Joyce and Stephen almost merge but the artist creativity differentiate them from one another.



# Not-Auto-Biography

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- ▶ Although the novel is much autobiographical, yet it is not complete autobiography of Joyce, and thus has many differences.
- ▶ First is perhaps the health of Joyce. Like Daedalus, Joyce was not weak in body.
- ▶ Thus, the characters Daedalus is based upon his life yet Joyce able to maintain distance.
- ▶ No doubt, there is so much Joyce in the novel, yet it is not a real autobiographical novel. It can be called an artistic creation. Indeed, the life of Joyce is reshaped through Daedalus to reach at the artistic height.
- ▶ Thus, Joyce never tries to offer his real life heart, but he brought that heart through artistic vision. Therefore one can say that it is growth of art and more it is “a portrait of artist” and not of Joyce.
- ▶ In sum, art and artistic creativity separates this novel from the term autobiography.



# Buildngsroman

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- ▶ The novel is also termed Bildungsroman as it nicely depicts the development of a young boy from childhood to manhood.
- ▶ Another terms used for the novel are 'aesthetic autobiography' or 'künstlerroman'
- ▶ The boy is confuse either to stay at home or to achive his dream to be an artist by leaving home.
- ▶ No doubt, Daedalus has a close connection with the family, religion as well as country, yet he disassociates from them to fulfill his dream to be an artist.

