

General Vision and Viewpoint



Home Before Night
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What is meant by general vision and viewpoint?

- ❖ The author's view of life
- ❖ Optimistic / Pessimistic
- ❖ Realistic
- ❖ Etc.

- ❖ Conveyed by language, imagery, camerawork, key moments etc.



Past Questions - Focus

- ❖ How the v&v of a text is determined by the success or failure of a character to achieve fulfilment
- ❖ How you came to your understanding of the v&v
- ❖ The way in which key moments can influence your understanding of the v&v
- ❖ Your understanding of the v&v

- ❖ How v&v is shaped by reader's feeling of optimism or pessimism
- ❖ What you enjoyed about the v&v
- ❖ How relating an aspect of the text to your own experience of life can shape your understanding of the v&v
- ❖ How reader's attitude towards central character can shape reader's view of v&v
- ❖ How reader's emotional response can create v&v

Positive

- ❖ Realistic portrayal of life in working class Dublin of the thirties and forties.
- ❖ Does face sad moments and is quick to criticise both his family and Irish society, but the overall mood is positive because of the author's ability to see humour in almost every situation.

Cynical

- ❖ 'My grandmother made dying her life's work.'
- ❖ Opening line sets the tone for the rest of the chapter.
- ❖ Cynical but amusing anecdotes highlight ridiculous aspects of the Doyle family.

- ❖ Could be pessimistic about poverty, death, unemployment, crime, alcoholism, mental disability
- ❖ Presents these facts in an amusing way.
- ❖ Grandfather's death occurs suddenly 'after cleaning out a cesspit'. This makes a potentially sad story entertaining and faintly ridiculous.

Choices the author makes

- ❖ Key moments the author chooses to share with us reflect his view of the world.
- ❖ Blend of happy, almost idyllic scenes of childhood with occasions of pain and sadness.
- ❖ Nostalgia not permitted to dominate at the expense of realism.

Key Moments

- ❖ Walks around Dalkey with his father, perfect Sundays spent in the company of his family and trips to the cinema described in loving detail.
- ❖ Even when recounting these pleasant memories, the author maintains a realistic, unromantic view of life. He and his friends play happily in the lane outside their houses, but it is 'a place of weeds, rusting cans and boy-made swamps where, when the sun came out, the earth blazed with broken glass'.

- ❖ The perfection of an evening walk with his father is marred by young Jack's memory of his aunt's threat about his birth mother coming to take him away.
- ❖ Jack's father deals with the boy's fears the best way he can by telling him that his birth mother is out on the Kish lighthouse and that he will give her 'the biggest root up the arse a woman ever got' if she turns up at their house.
- ❖ Humour and sadness blended here but the overall impression is positive. Jack thinks his da is the best da 'in the whole of Dalkey'.

Sadness alleviated by notes of optimism and wry comments.

- ❖ Key moment is the trip around the harbour on 'The Royal Iris'. Although his mother was drunk and obstreperous, there is no sense of the author wallowing in sadness.
- ❖ He remembers other, happier occasions with his mother.
- ❖ Views the woman who wants to help him as an irritation rather than a rescuer and admires his father for sweeping him up 'the way a snowball would pick up a stone' and carrying him off without even breaking his stride.

View of family life

- ❖ Parents are not perfect, but they do love and support Jack
- ❖ Those aspects of his parents' personalities that the teenage Jack dislikes have less to do with their own natures than prevailing attitudes of the time.
- ❖ Mother's attitude towards illegitimacy
- ❖ Father's fawning admiration for the 'quality'

View of wider society

- ❖ Scathing criticism of those who engage in 'rabid nationalism': mocks their sectarianism and ignorance.
- ❖ Key moment: parents and neighbours standing by indulgently as Jack and his friends parade up and down chanting anti-English rhymes outside the house of a local man who is pro-British.
- ❖ Key moment: author's disgust and embarrassment at his father's support of Hitler during WWII.

Church and education

- ❖ Unsympathetic view
- ❖ Father Creedon is pompous, unsympathetic and lacking in compassion
- ❖ Brother Berchmans is an almost diabolical character: 'long coffin-shaped face'; smile 'like a cut throat'; robes 'hiss like snakes'.
- ❖ Entirely negative view.



Changing view of home

- ❖ As he ages, author's view of his home becomes less positive.
- ❖ Place which could be perfect for young child has little to offer young man.
- ❖ Metaphors highlight author's view that life is stultifying and restrictive: the sea front is 'a treadmill' or 'an exercise yard' and they are 'short-term prisoners' who hope not to have to serve 'a life sentence'.

Working in the civil service

- ❖ Loathes his job
- ❖ On his first day he reflects bitterly that he has worn new trousers 'to go to prison'.
- ❖ Even in the midst of his misery, author sees the humour and the absurdity around him
- ❖ Mr Hozier - the hunchback - 'ran like a spider'
- ❖ Mr Kennedy - silent all day - would suddenly shout out apropos of nothing, 'I weighed meself this morning in the men's lavatory in Ballsbridge'



Ending

- ❖ Gives us the greatest insight into the author's view of his childhood
- ❖ Key moment: his return to Dublin after his parents' deaths
- ❖ As he drives towards the city, he remembers when, as a boy of seven or eight, he found himself quite far from home and had to run to make it home before dark. Final scene is one of warmth, comfort and love.

- ❖ Mother peering down lane, father checking his watch
- ❖ Everything in the cottage is cosy and welcoming
- ❖ Tea is ready and waiting
- ❖ Author envisions himself hurrying towards 'the two lighted rooms that were the harbour at world's end'.
- ❖ Reader is left with a sense of joy and optimism as the boy runs towards the love, security and comfort that await him