

***ULYSSES***

**(1922)**

This novel by James Joyce first appeared in serialized form in the *Little Review* of 1918 and was then published in book form in 1922 in Paris because it was banned in England for obscenity. The first English edition appeared in 1936. The novel had a terrific impact not only because of its alleged obscenity, but also because of its revolutionary form.

*Ulysses* is a novel of eighteen "episodes," all set in Dublin on 16<sup>th</sup> June 1904 (the day of Joyce's first walk with his future wife). It covers only the events of that single day, following **the physical and psychological wanderings of three main characters:**

**Leopold Bloom**, a middle-aged Jew whose job as an advertisement canvasser forces him to travel throughout the city on a daily basis; Leopold's wife, **Molly Bloom**; **Stephen Dedalus**, a young school teacher and aspiring writer (Stephen is the main character of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* - the first novel written by James Joyce - published in 1916).

The first three episodes are centered on Stephen Dedalus, who, having rejected his own father, is in search of a paternal figure.

The Odyssey of Leopold Bloom starts in the fourth episode, when he leaves home in the morning to go about his job, brooding about his unfaithful wife (Molly - a singer - is having an affair with a co-worker), who has been estranged from him since the death of their son eleven years previously.

Leopold goes to a Catholic Church, to a funeral, to a newspaper office and the National Library where he meets Stephen. He is attacked by an anti-Semitic nationalist, visits the Maternity Hospital where a woman is giving birth, and, before midnight, he rescues Stephen from a fight in a brothel. He takes him home where his wife is already in bed. The three characters are momentarily united but Stephen refuses Bloom's invitation to stay and goes away to meet his uncertain future.

**As the novel covers one single day, it has no traditional plot** apart from the chance meeting of Bloom and Dedalus which is significant for the internal growth of the two men. It is based both on the trivial details of everyday life and the inner life of the characters and is written in a variety of styles and techniques **(the book closes with a twenty-page monologue by Molly Bloom which is one of the most famous examples of *stream of consciousness* technique).**

It is realistic but also highly symbolic and one key to its interpretation is given by its title and main structure. Its eighteen chapters, in fact, correspond to episodes in the *Odyssey* by Homer and in the serialized edition they had the titles of the corresponding episodes in that epic poem (**the title of the last episode – Episode Eighteen – is “Penelope”...**).

**Leopold Bloom represents Ulysses, Molly represents Penelope and Stephen, though not Bloom's real son, represents Telemachus.**