

Eveline's Epiphany

The epiphany that takes place for the title character in "Eveline" is the realization that she cannot move forward with her life and the fact that she will not be able to find true happiness. When Eveline Hill is at the docks and is about to start a new and promising life in a distant country, she realizes her duty to her family. She fully understands why she has to stay in Dublin even though in the long run she will not benefit from the stay. This becomes apparent as she thinks to herself as she moves through crowd on the docks and hears an organ player: "Down far in the avenue she could hear the organ playing. She knew the air. Strange that it should come that very night to remind her of the promise to her mother, her promise to keep the home together as long as she could" (39-40). Eveline's promise to her mother in her mind obligates her to stay in a distressing situation and forfeit her chance of ever being truly happy. Thus, Eveline's epiphany is seen literally when she remembers her promise to her mother.

Joyce also uses symbols through the short story to illustrate Eveline's static situation. In For instance, her mother's absence is a sign of a permanent void in her life. Since she is the only woman left in the household, she is expected to take on many of the roles and responsibilities that belonged to her mother. She even goes so far as to promise her mother that she will keep that family together after her mother's death. Furthermore, the reader becomes aware that Eveline has a tendency to live in the past when the story begins with her recalling all of childhood friends and neighbors. In addition to her mother's death and her reminiscing, the two most prominent men in her life, her father and her lover Frank, are in disagreement. Her father represents a static life in Dublin that will be full of sacrifice and possibly abuse. In contrast, Frank represents new opportunities and true love in a new country. Thus, Eveline's epiphany is seen symbolically.