

CAUTION: SOME OF THE WORDS AND SCENES IN THIS CLIP - ABOUT THE NOVEL *ULYSSES*, BY JAMES JOYCE - MAY BE OFFENSIVE TO SOME PEOPLE (JUST LIKE THE TEXT OF THE NOVEL ITSELF MAY BE OFFENSIVE TO SOME PEOPLE). PROCEED WITH CAUTION.

James Joyce, an Irishman, wrote one of the most famous English-language novels of all times. Who was Joyce? What was he up to in *Ulysses*?

Frank Budgen (1882-1971), one of Joyce's closest friends, provides some background - and insight - into what the writer hoped to accomplish with *Ulysses*. The story, itself, takes place over eighteen hours as one of the lead characters - Leopold Bloom - wanders around Dublin:

"I am now writing a book," said Joyce, "based on the wanderings of Ulysses. The Odyssey, that is to say, serves me as a ground plan. Only my time is recent time and all my hero's wanderings take no more than eighteen hours."

What was it about Ulysses, Homer's legendary hero who wanders for years (not hours), that inspired Joyce? Budgen continues:

"You seem to have read a lot, Mr. Budgen. Do you know of any complete all-around character presented by any writer?"

So ... Joyce wanted to create an "all-around character." What, exactly, would such a person be - or - who would he (or she) be like?

How about some of the most famous literary creations by authors like Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Balzac, Flaubert and Shakespeare? Who, among them, produced a "complete all-around character?" None, according to Joyce. None.

What about Faust, the hero of Goethe's tale? Joyce had especially choice words for him:

"Faust!" said Joyce. "Far from being a complete man, he isn't a man at all. Is he an old man or a young man? Where are his home and family? We don't know. And he can't be complete because he's never alone. Mephistopheles is always hanging round him at his side or heels. We see a lot of him, that's all." (Quoted passages, here and above, by Frank Budgen, from his book *James Joyce and the Making of 'Ulysses'*, quoted by Vassiliki Kolocotroni in *Modernism: An Anthology of Sources and Documents*, page 403.)

If we pay close attention to that observation, we learn something about how Joyce viewed a "complete all-around character." He would have to be someone who spends time "alone."

If we read a novel about someone who is alone - especially, frequently alone - how would we (the readers) know what's going on inside the character's head?

We'd have to read an "interior monologue" - a literary device which Joyce crafted. That's how we'd get to know his "complete all-around character." We'd have to take a trip inside the character's mind (as we read his streams of consciousness).

What may seem common today was unheard-of in Joyce's day. Authors did not use interior monologues or streams of consciousness to express the thoughts and ideas of characters. Joyce changed the world of writing when he went inside the mind of his creations to express their thoughts (as they internally talked to themselves).

And ... it was those private thoughts, those interior monologues, which contributed to the censorship of this famous novel.

The level of censorship was significant, including a case brought by America's federal government against the book itself. That case is known as *United States v. One Book Called Ulysses*.

In it, the government argued that:

- The novel is obscene;
- It could not be imported into the US; and
- If it *were* imported, it must be destroyed.

The publisher argued that the book must be protected by the first amendment.

The presiding judge ruled against the government, holding that the book must be judged as a whole, not by its

parts, and using *that* standard the book could be imported into the States.

In its August 7, 1934 opinion—agreeing with the lower-court judge—the Second Circuit Court of Appeals used these words:

We think that "Ulysses" is a book of originality and sincerity of treatment ... even though it justly may offend many.

This clip—from "Ten Great Writers of the Modern World - James Joyce's *Ulysses*"—introduces us to Stephen Dedalus, Leopold ("Poldy") Bloom, Molly Bloom, James Joyce and his novel, *Ulysses*.

See, also:

[James Joyce - Meet Leopold Bloom](#)

[James Joyce - Meet Stephen Dedalus](#)

[James Joyce - Obsessed with Dublin](#)

Credits:

From the British television series, "[The Modern World: Ten Great Writers](#)." This video clip is from the episode, "[James Joyce's Ulysses](#)," which originally aired 10 January 1988, on Channel Four.

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See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/James-Joyce-Intro-to-Ulysses>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/James-Joyce-Intro-to-Ulysses>