Counterparts

INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF JAMES JOYCE

James Joyce was the firstborn in a large and impoverished Catholic family of eight children. He was sent at a young age to Clongowes Academy, a school run by the strict Catholic order of the Jesuits. He excelled, and at 18 years of age went up to University College, Dublin, and then on to Paris where he attempted to study medicine, though he eventually dropped out and began living the life of an aspiring bohemian writer. It was in Paris that he began work on Dubliners, his collection of stories about the everyday lives of Dublin's inhabitants, which wouldn't be published until 1914. In 1902, he met Nora Barnacle, with whom he would spend the rest of his life. That life was characterized by exile, flight, and wandering, principally between the cities of Paris, Trieste, and Zurich. Forever poor, Joyce found work where he could—as a teacher, a bank clerk, even as a cinema manager. All the while, he worked on his various literary projects, revising Dubliners, writing his autobiographical work *A Portrait of The Artist as a Young Man*, and gathering material for what would be his most astonishing and enduring achievement, the novel *Ulysses*. As his work filtered through magazines, his reputation grew, until, with the publication of *Ulysses*, he became one of the most famous writers in the world. His final work was the polarizing *Finnegans Wake*, which took Joyce's experimental style to maddening heights. When Joyce died in 1941, his reputation as one of the most important writers of the 20th century was secure.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Joyce was born into an Ireland that was ruled by Britain. Many Irish people came to resent British rule as a humiliating, degrading and impoverishing state of affairs. Only 50 years prior to Joyce writing "Counterparts," there had been a terrible famine in Ireland which had killed one-seventh of the population, and whose devastating effects were often blamed on the incompetence or uncaringness of the British government. Dublin was known as "the second city of British Empire"—and it was indeed bedecked with Imperial monuments and bold boulevards—but poverty, squalor, unrest and what Joyce termed "paralysis" abounded. Politically, there were growing calls for "Home Rule," which would give Ireland its own limited parliament, though not full independence. In Britain, however, there was a strong resistance to this notion. Joyce's father was a deeply patriotic man and had a profound sympathy for the prospect of Home Rule. Joyce despised his father's romantic patriotism, which he saw as too ineffectual. Ireland was also an extremely Catholic country, with priests holding a very prominent position in Irish society.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

The primary literary influence on *Dubliners* is unquestionably the Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen. Joyce admired what he considered Ibsen's unflinching ability to expose his characters' illusions, bring them down to earth, and examine them almost scientifically. In "Counterparts," when Joyce exposes Farrington as a fantasist who exaggerates his ability to stand up to authority, he is following in Ibsen's footsteps as a writer who wants to puncture romantic delusions. Another formative influence on *Dubliners* was the work of the French writer Emil Zola, who wrote novels that connect poverty and squalor back to broader social or biological forces, such as the economic inequalities of city life and even genetics. In *Dubliners*, Joyce contextualizes his characters' plights, like Zola, through a broader lens of colonial oppression. After *Dubliners*, Joyce became increasingly experimental in his style and he moved away from his early realism. His interest in the everyday life of people and its (sometimes squalid) detail however remains in his most famous work, *Ulysses*.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** Counterpoints
- **When Written:** Around 1904
- **Where Written:** Paris and Trieste
- **When Published:** 1914
- **Literary Period:** Modernism
- **Genre:** Realism
- **Setting:** Dublin, Ireland
- **Climax:** Farrington beats his son for not leaving the stove on.
- **Antagonist:** Mr. Alleyne
- **Point of View:** Third Person

EXTRA CREDIT

Alcohol and the Joyce Family. James' brother Stanislaus, in his book *My Brother's Keeper*, relates how their father John would regularly come home drunk and terrify the children with his sudden angers. They would promise to pray to the Virgin Mary for him if he withheld beating them. Alcohol was the curse of the Joyce family: John, like Farrington in the story, was an alcoholic who could be very unpredictable when drinking, and was stricken throughout much of his life with a sense of futility and disappointment.

PLOT SUMMARY

The story opens at the end of a workday in Dublin. Farrington, a clerk, longs to leave work and go drinking with his friends, but he must copy out a long and tedious contract before he can go. To make matters worse, his boss has a vendetta against him because he overheard Farrington mimic his "North of Ireland" accent. The boss, Alleyne, calls Farrington into his office and berates him for being so slow to complete the copying; he threatens to report his ineffectiveness if he fails to complete it by the end of the day.

Angry and impatient, Farrington decides to sneak out of the office and have a quick drink before attempting to finish the project. He slinks off to a local pub, quickly drinks a small beer and whiskey, and returns to the office. On returning, the chief clerk asks Farrington to take the material to Alleyne's office immediately, which he does, even though Farrington knows it to be incomplete—he hopes Alleyne won't notice and he'll be able to leave and enjoy his night.

Farrington returns to his desk and falls into a reverie of hot pubs and plentiful drink, unable to concentrate on his work, increasingly frustrated by how slowly the time is going by. He hopes against hope that he might be able to convince Alleyne to give him his paycheck early. Meanwhile, Alleyne himself has noticed that Farrington's work is incomplete; he marches to the clerk's desk with the glamorous Miss Delacour and berates Farrington furiously for his laziness. Farrington replies to this barrage with a withering witticism, much to Miss Delacour's amusement and Alleyne's fury.

Farrington is forced to apologize to Alleyne for his comment, though he dreads the inevitable consequences in the coming days. He is now more determined than ever to get drunk, even though he hasn't managed to get his paycheck and is completely without money. He resorts to pawning his watch and heads to the pub. There, he meets his friends Nosey Flynn, O'Halloran, and Paddy Leonard and regales them of his tale of answering back to Alleyne, embellishing the details to emphasize his wit and sense of triumph. Another friend joins, and he repeats the story, all the while drinking beer and whiskey.

They move on the next pub, where Farrington is introduced to Weathers, a performer at a local theater. Farrington buys him several drinks, becoming increasingly angry that he Weathers doesn't return the offer. The party then moves on to a third pub, where Farrington catches the eye of a well-dressed woman at another table. He tries to flirt with her with his gaze from across the room, but she eventually gets up and walks past him. Incensed and spurned, Farrington is then goaded to compete in an arm-wrestling match with Weathers. He loses not once, but twice.

The party disperse and Farrington heads home to Shelbourne Street, a lower-middle-class area in southern Dublin. When he gets home, the house quiet and dark. There is no wife to greet him, and his dinner is unmade. He calls for his wife, but is answered by his son Tom, who tells him that she's at church. Farrington orders his son to prepare the dinner on the stove, but when he realizes that the stove-fire has been left to go out, his anger boils over and he grabs the boy to beat him. Tom pleads pitifully with his father not to hurt him, and promises to say Hail Marys for him.

CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Farrington – Farrington is the protagonist of the story and Mr. Alleyne's employee. He works in a legal office as a copy clerk, meaning he copies legal contracts by hand (in Ireland in the early 1900s, typewritten documents weren't considered official or legally binding, so contracts had to be handwritten by a clerk). Even though he clearly has his faults—like spending all of his money on **alcohol** or taking out his pent-up anger on his son Tom—Farrington is constantly emasculated and insulted throughout the story, especially at the hands of his boss, making him a somewhat sympathetic, even comic, character. However, as the story unfolds, Farrington shifts from a hapless office drone who simply detests the monotony of his job to a man who is deeply troubled in many other aspects of life. He is progressively exposed as a fantasist, imagining himself attractive to women in the street while Joyce continually draws the reader's attention to Farrington's drink-sodden ugliness (his moustache is flecked with saliva and beer, his face is "wine-dark," and he moves around "heavily"). He also clearly has a problem with alcohol, as he plans his days around drinking and even pawns his watch so that he has money to spend at the pub. By the time he **arm-wrestles** with an English man named Weathers, it is clear that Farrington is a man who is drunken, frustrated, and angry—not just a bored man working a tedious job. Besides underscoring Farrington's deep discontent in life, the arm-wrestling scene also paints Farrington as the embodiment of Ireland who is being repeatedly squashed—and downright humiliated—by Great Britain (Ireland didn't declare independence until 1919, 14 years after Joyce originally penned "Counterparts"). The final part of the story, when Farrington beats his son Tom for seemingly no reason, drives home the intense frustration, anger, and despair boiling up inside of Farrington. Unable to adequately take his anger out on his oppressors, Farrington lets his discontent fester and infect every inch of his life.

Mr. Alleyne – Mr. Alleyne is Farrington's boss at the legal office and the story's antagonist. He is from Northern Ireland, which means that he has a highly distinctive accent, something that Farrington has mocked in the past. At this time in Irish history, the ruling class came mostly from the North, a detail that

suggests the power imbalance between Farrington and his employer is not coincidental, but is arguably symbolic of the power imbalance between Northern Ireland and Southern Ireland. Because of his explicit origins in the North, it is possible to argue that Alleyne is a symbol of colonial authority. Throughout the first half of the story, Mr. Alleyne continually berates Farrington for not completing his work, which the latter resents. If Alleyne is symbolic of the authority of the Northern Irish, Farrington's resentment and indignity might be seen as the resentment and indignity of the colonially oppressed. The fact that Farrington endangers his job when he openly defies Mr. Alleyne by mocking him with a slight quip shows how difficult it is to act against such authority, because even after he has been insubordinate, he still needs Mr. Alleyne's money to pay for his **drinks** later in the evening. Farrington therefore thinks that by answering back he has defied authority and been victorious (this is how he tells the story later to his friends), but in reality he is still reliant on Mr. Alleyne, a situation which highlights the difference between harsh reality and Farrington's fantasy.

Weathers – Weathers is the English "*artiste*" performing at a local theater. Although he is a showman, which was not thought of as a masculine or noble profession at the time, he beats Farrington—twice—in an **arm-wrestling** match, deepening Farrington's already prodound sense of indignity. Like Mr. Alleyne, Weathers can be interpreted through the lens of Ireland's disgrace and indignity in the face of colonial oppression. Weathers, an Englishman, defeats the Irishman Farrington in a contest that one character explicitly describes as one of "national pride." Thus, Farrington's defeat in test of sheer strength is therefore symbolically linked to Ireland's subjugation by an unworthy colonial master, Great Britain. Furthermore, Weathers is portrayed as a man who likes having **drinks** bought for him without buying any in return, and he laughs at this "Irish hospitality"—a moment that perhaps gestures to the British colonizers taking advantage of the Irish.

Tom – Tom is one of Farrington's children, and he is portrayed as a scared and innocent young child. Joyce portrays him as an abandoned boy, with his mother away at church and his father out **drinking**. The savage treatment of the young and innocent Tom at the end of the story—when Farrington beats him for seemingly no reason—is essential to story's sudden and awful shift in tone, and the darkening of the story's portrayal of Farrington.

MINOR CHARACTERS

Miss Delacour – Miss Delacour is Mr. Alleyne's stylish and attractive client. She is present when Farrington humiliates Mr. Alleyne.

Paddy Leonard – Paddy Leonard is one of Farrington's friends and **drinking** buddies. He and O'Halloran both goad Farrington into arm-wrestling with Weathers "to uphold the national honour."

O'Halloran – O'Halloran is another one of Farrington's **drinking** buddies. Along with Paddy Leonard, O'Halloran urges Farrington to undertake an arm-wrestling match with Weathers.

Nosey Flynn – Nosey Flynn is another one of Farrington's **drinking** buddies.

Higgins – Higgins is another one of Farrington's **drinking** buddies.

Miss Parker – Miss Parker is Mr. Alleyne's assistant.

THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.

RESENTMENT, ANGER, AND INDIGNITY

James Joyce's "Counterparts" follows a hapless legal clerk names Farrington, who comes to resent the (perceived or real) injustices inflicted upon him. He is, at least in his mind, bullied and hounded by his boss, Mr. Alleyne, into copying a monotonous contract. He is ignored by a woman in a pub on whom he has his eye. He is beaten in an **arm-wrestling** match by an English "*artiste*" named Weathers, whom he considers beneath him in both strength and appearance. To top it all, he spends all of his money on **alcohol** and has a night of dreadful humiliation and disappointment. While Farrington is in some ways the cause of his own troubles—choosing, for instance, to spend all of his money on alcohol—Joyce highlights that there is a deeper force driving Farrington's anger, and that's indignity. Farrington feels emasculated and insulted by everyone around him, which Joyce uses to highlight how Ireland has been emasculated and insulted at the hands of the British.

Joyce suggests that the root cause of Farrington's resentment is the indignity he suffers in just about every area of his life, but this indignity is especially pronounced in his workplace. The story begins with an almost comic set-up: an unhappy employee berated by an irate boss. Anger is everywhere from the first line, as a bell rings "furiously" and the "furious" voice of Mr. Alleyne calls out for Farrington. After receiving a severe scolding the first time, a "spasm of rage gripped [Farrington's] throat for a few moments and then pass[es], leaving after it a sharp sensation of thirst," and after his final argument with Mr. Alleyne, Farrington "long[s] to execrate aloud, to bring his fist down on something violently. His body ached to do something

[...] The barometer of his emotional nature was set for a spell of riot." By the end of the story, this emphasis on violence and drink as an escape from indignity will come to have chilling significance, as Farrington resorts to beating his own son, allowing the indignity he experiences at work to seep into his private family life.

Things aren't much better for Farrington outside of the office, either, as he is repeatedly feels emasculated by people around him—whether or not they're an authority figure. On one such occasion, after he is ignored by a woman in the pub, Farrington's heart is "full of smoldering anger and revengefulness. He felt humiliated and discontented and when he thought of the woman in the big hat who had brushed his side and said Pardon! his fury nearly choked him." To many readers, Farrington's indignity may seem wholly misplaced, as his entitlement comes across as crude and arrogant. However, given Farrington's time and place—steeped in sexism and rigid gender roles—this interaction would have read as an inferior (the woman) snubbing a superior (the man). It's also significant that Farrington is snubbed in a pub, which in early 20th-century Dublin was a distinctively male space. So not only does Farrington experience indignity at the hands of his boss, a clear authority figure, he's also humiliated by someone whom society dictates is below him, and in a space where he's supposed to have power and influence.

At times, Farrington's resentment and anger show him as an embittered and cruel man. However, Joyce also uses Farrington—and the indignity he experiences—to illustrate the shame that Ireland experiences at the hands of Great Britain. Even the characters' names hint at this: it's fitting that Farrington is a Saxon-Celtic name native to the British Isles, while Alleyne is derived from French-Norman, since in much of British literature people who are powerful or upper class often have French-Norman names, while lower-class characters tend to have more Saxon-like names. Joyce is here echoing that tradition, highlighting that there is a hidden but steep power imbalance between the native Farrington and foreign Alleyne. The fact that Alleyne speaks with a "North of Ireland" accent is significant, too, because during the British control of Ireland, they allowed mainly Northern Irish people—who were mostly Protestants whose families were originally from Britain—in positions of power. Once again, Joyce is suggesting that in some ways Farrington's resentment towards his boss is mirrored in the resentment of the Irish more broadly towards Britain.

Joyce's overarching point about Ireland's emasculation at the hands of the British is reinforced by the way the two explicitly English characters—Weathers and the lady in the pub—humiliate Farrington. Farrington participates in an arm-wrestling match with the Englishman Weathers to "defend the national honor." It is as though the match is a symbolic tussle between Great Britain and Ireland, and in losing the match and being so disgraced, Farrington's shame embodies Ireland's shame. Likewise, the woman whom Farrington feels has ignored and humiliated him speaks with an emphatically "London" English accent. Given these details, it's reasonable to view her as a stand-in for the haughty British who disrespect and subjugate the Irish. These subtle references to Great Britain peppered throughout the story thus link Farrington's specific anger with a broader sense of national disgrace and honor. Though Farrington's anger and resentment often bleed out in ugly ways—such as when he horrifically beats his son Tom at the end of the story—Joyce paints a more nuanced picture of the man, suggesting that he is weary and beaten down, just like Ireland itself.

FANTASY, REALITY, AND ESCAPISM

In "Counterparts," Joyce depicts Farrington, the story's protagonist, as an escapist and a fantasist. From the story's start, Farrington longs to go the pub instead of working in his office. His mind keeps wandering away from his desk (at one point he even physically leaves the office to have a quick pint), and he fantasizes about how happy **alcohol**, the pub, and gossiping with his friends will make him. And when he makes a witty but professionally ruinous retort to his boss, Mr. Alleyne, he imagines himself much braver and funnier than he actually is, escaping reality through his daydreams. The rest of the story consists of a series of disappointments from losing an **arm-wrestling** match, to being ignored by a well-dressed lady, to wasting his money on drink after drink, all of which highlight how bleak and depressing Farrington's existence is and how desperately he longs to escape it. Through Farrington, Joyce emphasizes how escapism—be it through drinking, storytelling, or fantasizing—is only a temporary balm for pain and is ultimately unproductive or even outright harmful. And it's not just Farrington who has this penchant for escapism—Joyce also subtly hints that Farrington is the embodiment of stereotypical Irish traits, such as "blarney" (flattery), fantasizing, and gossip, all of which are ways Irishmen avoid the reality of their colonial situation.

At the beginning of the story, Farrington spins his argument with Alleyne into a fantasy wherein Farrington appears far more clever and bold than he actually is. And while this fantasy certainly bolsters Farrington's self-esteem in the moment, it does nothing to alleviate the tensions between the two men or make Farrington better at his job, thus highlighting how escapism doesn't actually get at the root problem. Right off the bat, there is an obvious irony between what actually happens to Farrington and how he describes it to his friends. Joyce describes how, as "[Farrington] walked along he preconsidered the terms in which he would narrate the incident to his friends: 'so I just looked at him—coolly, yer know—and looked at her.'" The fact that Farrington rehearses the story and changes the facts demonstrates that his conception of himself is much

higher than it actually is, and that he wants other people to think highly of him too. Farrington's actual retort and the way he narrates how he retorted to Alleyne are very similar, but the difference lies in their tone, emphasis, and embellishment. To his friends, Farrington relates how he responded "very coolly," with a marked theatricality ("taking my time, as you know"), which contrasts with how Joyce relates the scene: before Farrington could even think, he had uttered the witticism, which duly "astounded" him because it unconsciously came out. It seems clear that Farrington wants to think that he has gotten the upper hand in the situation, but actually all that's happened is that he's uttered an unpremeditated quip which likely costs him his livelihood. In other words, Farrington's embellished retelling does nothing to smooth things over with his boss, making it ultimately unproductive.

Joyce shows how alcohol can be used a way to escape reality, too, and how drinking can impart an inflated sense of achievement and self-confidence. This is especially important in the context of the story, since heavy drinking is stereotypically associated with the Irish. One method Joyce uses to emphasize the distance between Farrington's rather expansive conception of himself (a sense inflated by alcohol) and the sad reality is to dwell on how physically repulsive he is. Just after receiving a roar of laughter from his friends, who applaud his supposed wit in the face of Alleyne's accusations, Farrington "look[s] at the crowd with heavy dirty eyes, smiling and at times drawing forth stray drops of liquor from his moustache with the aid of his lower lip." By drawing out attention immediately to such physical detail Joyce is drawing readers away from what Farrington is saying about himself towards how he looks—those looks being reminders of just how distant his proud self-conception is from the reality.

Joyce combines three quintessential Irish stereotypes in Farrington: the fantasist, the storyteller, and the drinker. By depicting Farrington as stereotypically Irish in his love of gossip, fantasy, and drinking, Joyce is critiquing his nation's inability to face up to its reality as a belittled colony of the British Empire. "Counterparts" is filled with subtle references to colonial subjugation, revealing Joyce's deeper purpose in penning the story. Farrington's long, slow humiliation by Alleyne began when he was overheard mocking Alleyne's "North of Ireland" accent—which is significant, because the Irish ruling class all come from the North and are largely British by descent. It is thus Farrington's theatricality that sets Alleyne initially against him. The ability to tell a story, relate a joke, and to mimic and gossip are all proverbial Irish traits, and Farrington's gift of "blarney" would have been quite recognizably Irish, especially to the first readers of *Dubliners*. Indeed, "blarney," the "gift of the gab" as it is sometimes called, was something that many Irish people took great pride in and thought it gave them intellectual superiority over their dull-witted English masters. Joyce is here exposing that as an illusion.

Perhaps Farrington's most amiable features are his love of comradeship and his delight in storytelling. Likewise, his love of drinking might not necessarily be regarded as the most appalling of vices, and there are certainly comic elements of the story which complicate its status as a warning against the dangers of escapism, drink, and self-delusion. However, the shocking and sudden shift in tone during the latter part of the story—when Farrington's misery and fury come to the fore and he beats his son Tom—suggests that reality is not something that can be avoided or escaped from, no matter how innocent the intention of doing so. In the context of Joyce's critique of Ireland and "Irishness" throughout *Dubliners*, Farrington's plight suggests that Ireland must look at itself as it really is and stop escaping into the romance of fantasy.

MASCULINITY

Throughout the story, Farrington engages in activities typically associated with a pronounced, stereotypical masculinity: **drinking** and getting drunk, fighting (in this case, **arm-wrestling**), showing off, and flirting. However, all of Farrington's efforts are exposed to eventual ridicule. Throughout "Counterparts," Joyce criticizes traditional masculinity by showing how it imposes an ethic of humiliation or victory and of mastery or defeat, making it a primary source of Farrington's anger and resentment. In the end, subscribing to this particular form of masculinity fails to make Farrington a better father, employee, suitor, or friend, raising the question of what Farrington—or anyone else, for that matter—has to gain from aligning himself with this kind of macho and performative masculinity. As the story comes to a close with a heartbreaking scene in which Farrington beats his own son, Joyce seems to imply that all that comes from this kind of stereotypical masculinity is pain.

So many of the masculine relationships in the story are defined by mastery and defeat or humiliation and victory, from Farrington's relationship to his boss, Mr. Alleyne, to his arm-wrestling match with Weathers, and even to the relationship he has with his son Tom. Farrington's relationship with Mr. Alleyne has, before the story, been poisoned by Alleyne overhearing Farrington make fun of his accent. At this perceived humiliation, Farrington suspects that Mr. Alleyne has launched a campaign of persecution against him. Joyce indeed suggests that Mr. Alleyne wants to humiliate Farrington, since he deliberately tells him off in front of Miss Delacour—his attractive female client—and the entire office. Farrington's feeling of triumph over Mr. Alleyne is also telling, since it shows that the primary way their relationship, so skewed by power, can give him satisfaction is by the thrill of humiliation, despite him having to offer an "abject apology" in order to keep his job. Farrington feels humiliated in his job, because he is so powerless, and it is only by humiliating others that he feels

powerful—and he is quite certain that this story of humiliation will greatly amuse his friends at the pub.

Likewise, when Farrington arm-wrestles with Weathers later in the story, he is ostensibly engaging in a bit of harmless play, but the game is indeed underpinned by the traditional masculine dynamic of humiliation and victory. The pressure of maintaining "honor" and the genuine humiliation of two defeats are too much for Farrington, and when he explodes with rage, readers can see that even behind these seemingly playful masculine games there lies the necessity of humiliation. It's clear, then, that Joyce is not critiquing men themselves, but rather the toxic codes of behavior which define relations between men as based on dominance and humiliation.

By aligning himself with this toxic brand of performative masculinity, Farrington only causes more pain and suffering both in his life and in others'. After being humiliated, Farrington wants to commit violence—"he long[s] […] to bring his fist down on something violently"—which reads as a stereotypical male response to enduring humiliation. In other words, after being humiliated and defeated, he longs to humiliate and defeat someone else to make himself feel victorious rather than beaten down. Perversely, the object of this pent-up violent rage at the end of the story is his innocent son Tom. Through the story's painful end—with Tom crying out to his father to stop hurting him—Joyce underscores how damaging this yo-yo of violent masculinity and humiliation can be.

SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.

ALCOHOL

In this story, alcohol is symbolic of Farrington's desperate need to escape reality, along with the idea that escapism is often more harmful than helpful. Returning to his desk after being told off by Mr. Alleyne, Farrington feels an immediate need to "slake the thirst in his throat […] then he could work." At this point in the story, is not yet clear whether Farrington craves alcohol or whether he is simply thirsty, though this "thirst" acts as a convenient excuse for him to shirk his work duties and leave the office for the "dark snug interior" of the pub. In this sense, Farrington's "thirst," which is really his craving for alcohol, literally pulls him away from his responsibilities, and the "snug[ness]" of the pub is a kind of protection against his work duties. Later in the story, when he has yet again been chastised by Mr. Alleyne, Farrington broods on "the indignities of his life," and he feels "savage and thirsty and revengeful." That thirst, of course, is his longing for alcohol, and he "aches for the comfort of the public-house."

Often, Farrington's appetite for alcohol goes hand in hand with his tendency to lose himself in fantasy, further suggesting that alcohol symbolizes Farrington's need for escapism and his deep unhappiness with his life. When he realizes he lacks money to buy drink, he pawns his watch, and—oddly, one might think, for a man who is penniless and nearly out of a job—he feels a sense of "triumph." While he has manifestly failed at his job, he has succeeded in getting enough money to drink, which bolsters his sense of "triumph" and leads him to create a fantasy in which he confronted Mr. Alleyne triumphantly and "coolly"—which is not at all how it happened in reality. Farrington tells his tall tale because "the sight of the five small hot whiskies was very exhilarating," and so Joyce explicitly links Farrington's proclivity for fantasy with his consumption of alcohol. Alcohol therefore symbolizes Farrington's need to escape from the perceived "indignities" of his life, his misery and poverty.

This need to divorce oneself from reality is, however, portrayed as largely fruitless and even outright destructive. Most conspicuously, Farrington's "thirst" for alcohol causes his mind to wander and makes it wholly impossible for him to concentrate on his work. Moreover, it is easy to infer that Farrington spends most—if not all—of his money on alcohol, since he is clearly living a hand-to-mouth existence, working from paycheck to paycheck, which is of course why he needs to pawn his watch. When the story ends and Farrington is enraged, unhappy, embarrassed because of he lost the **arm-wrestling** match, it is clear that he has squandered all of his money on alcohol for nothing. That is to say, his attempts to escape from reality have lead only to anger, poverty, and indignity. By attempting to escape reality, Farrington now feels "humiliated and discontented; he did not even feel drunk; and he had only twopence in his pocket."

ARM-WRESTLING

In "Counterparts," Farrington loses an arm-wrestling match—twice—to an Englishman named Weathers, a contest that has several layers of symbolic significance. On the surface, the arm-wrestling match symbolizes a sort of measure or test of the men's masculinity, something that their society defines narrowly in terms of physical strength and dominance over others. Just before the match takes place, Weathers is "showing [off] his biceps muscle" to everyone in the pub and "boasting" about his "feats of strength," essentially touting his worth as a man and inviting someone to challenge him. At this, two of Farrington's friends—O'Halloran and Paddy Leonard—call Farrington over. Both men's biceps are "examined and compared and finally it was agreed to have a trial of strength," meaning an arm-wrestling competition. That both men's muscles are carefully examined and then put to the test emphasizes that masculinity in their circle hinges on a dynamic of victory or defeat. Weathers and Farrington can't be considered equally

masculine; someone has to be the winner and someone has to be the loser. Given arm-wrestling's connection to performative masculinity, when Farrington loses the match (twice), it indicates his failure as a man. After this loss, Farrington's inflated self-conception as a strong, proud, and successful man comes crashing down. Thoroughly emasculated, he flushes a deep red, overcoming by "anger and humiliation at having been defeated by such a stripling [young man]."

There's also a political layer to the match, as it symbolizes what at this point in time was Ireland's fruitless struggle for power against the domineering British. Joyce penned "Counterparts" around 1904, when Ireland was still firmly under Great Britain's colonial grip. It's fitting, then, that Farrington is an Irishman and Weathers is an Englishman; Farrington is literally crushed by Weathers' stronger grip, and even trying to rise up against him again—in the form of a rematch—is useless. O'Halloran and Paddy Leonard even explicitly frame the match as being about "national honour"; in losing to Weathers and feeling so humiliated over the whole thing, Farrington represents Ireland's disgrace and indignity at the hands of the British.

QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Penguin Classics edition of *Dubliners* published in 1993.

Counterparts Quotes

> The bell rang furiously and, when Miss Parker went to the tube, a furious voice called out in a piercing North of Ireland accent. "Send Farrington here!"

Related Characters: Mr. Alleyne (speaker), Farrington

Related Themes:

Page Number: 82

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, which comes from the first line of the story, Joyce introduces Mr. Alleyne and Farrington, the story's antagonist and protagonist, respectively. Right away, it's clear that Mr. Alleyne is an angry and no-nonsense kind of man, as Joyce tellingly repeats the word "furious" twice in quick succession—Alleyne has a "furious voice" and rings for his assistant "furiously," clearly with great urgency, unwilling to be left waiting even for a moment. This repetition of the word "furious" immediately sets the tone of the story, which indeed contains much anger and fury right up until the last line.

That Mr. Alleyne has a "piercing" Northern Irish accent is also significant to Mr. Alleyne's characterization as a domineering figure—at this point in time, the British rulers of Ireland favored people from Northern Ireland, who were largely protestants. Given this piece of context, the story further implies that Mr. Alleyne is a man of authority, domineering over the Irish Farrington. A similar gesture to colonial power crops up two other times in the story (first with the London woman in the pub, then with the Englishman Weathers), and in both cases, Farrington is slighted and helpless—a reflection of Ireland's helplessness under Britain's colonial power.

> A spasm of rage gripped his throat for a few moments and then passed, leaving after it a sharp sensation of thirst. The man recognized the sensation and felt he must have a good night's drinking.

Related Characters: Mr. Alleyne, Farrington

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 83

Explanation and Analysis

Farrington thinks this to himself just after getting told off by his boss, Mr. Alleyne, for slacking on his work and not meeting an important deadline. This passage contains the first sign of Farrington's intense anger and resentment, which afflicts him like a "spasm" that "grips his throat," suggesting that he desperately wants to say something but is almost choked back from saying so. This pent-up anger, symbolically located in the throat, quickly subsides into a "sharp sensation of thirst," a euphemistic way to say that Farrington wants to deal with his anger by getting drunk. Indeed, throughout the story, Farrington consistently turns to alcohol—whether by fantasizing about being in the warm pub or by actually drinking—whenever he is angry. But each time, the story makes it clear that Farrington's impulse to stuff down his anger and turn to drink doesn't actually dull the resentment brewing within him.

His head was not clear and his mind wandered away to the glare and rattle of the public-house. It was a night for hot punches. He struggled on with his copy, but when the clock struck five he had still fourteen pages to write. Blast it! He couldn't finish it in time. He longed to execrate aloud, to bring his fist down on something violently.

Related Characters: Farrington

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 86

Explanation and Analysis

After he returns from his brief—and what he hopes was discreet—trip to the pub in the middle of his work day, Farrington realizes that he can't possibly copy all the sheets in time for Mr. Alleyne. He feels so incapable of finishing his work that he's practically paralyzed, a theme that crops up in all of the short stories that appear in *Dubliners*. Instead of buckling down, Farrington lets his mind wander (again) to the public-house and to drinking, showing how Farrington is by nature a fantasist who struggles to follow through with his responsibilities. It's also significant that the pub—and, by extension, the alcohol that's served there—with its alluring "glare and rattle," is the space he associates with obliterating his worries. As readers see throughout the story, though, turning to alcohol never really does obliterate Farrington's worries. By the end of his drunken night, Farrington finds himself emasculated, broke, and possibly without a job—but here, he naively assumes that the pub will be the answer to his problems.

Farrington's deep-rooted anger in this passage, and his desire to hit something, will have a chilling resonance by the end of the story, since he does ultimately bring his fist down on his son.

He felt strong enough to clear out the whole office singlehanded. His body ached to do something, to rush out and revel in violence. All the indignities of his life enraged him [...] he knew where he would meet the boys: Leonard and O'Halloran and Nosey Flynn. The barometer of his emotional nature was set for a spell of riot.

Related Characters: Nosey Flynn, O'Halloran, Paddy Leonard, Mr. Alleyne, Farrington

Related Themes:

Page Number: 86

Explanation and Analysis

Farrington has just returned from handing his incomplete copy of an important document to his boss, Mr. Alleyne, and he knows he is about to be found out and be yelled at for the second time today, or even fired. He fantasizes about committing violence but, being the fantasist that he is, he doesn't act on it. His desire for violence thus remains—like the "spasm of anger" which sticks in throat—locked in his body, and Farrington remains paralyzed. Though the reader has seen him shirk his responsibilities by sneaking out to the pub—which is in large part why the document he handed in to Mr. Alleyne was incomplete—Farrington constantly feels a sense of indignity, as though he were being victimized at every turn. To escape this horrible feeling, he once again longs to escape to his friends where he will later project a far more dignified and "masterly" image of himself.

"You—know—nothing. Of course you know nothing," said Mr. Alleyne. "Tell me," he added, glancing first for approval to the lady beside him, "do you take me for a fool? Do you think me an utter fool?" The man glanced from the lady's face to the little egg-shaped head and back again; and, almost before he was aware of it, his tongue had found a felicitous moment: "I don't think, sir," he said, "that that's a fair question to put to me."

Related Characters: Farrington, Mr. Alleyne (speaker), Miss Delacour

Related Themes:

Page Number: 87

Explanation and Analysis

This passage takes place during Farrington's final telling off. Mr. Alleyne has been entertaining his glamorous and wealthy client Miss Delacour (the "lady" in this quote) when he notices that Farrington's work is incomplete. Besides being the first time that Farrington vents his anger in some capacity in this story, this scene is important for the way that it soon grows into a fantasy in Farrington's mind. What is actually a quip he makes "almost before he was aware of it"—in other words, something that he says unwittingly and accidentally—becomes in Farrington's later account of it a much cleverer and more consciously made witticism. This quote therefore highlights how exaggerated Farrington's

later telling of the story is, and therefore how much of a fantasist he is.

Masculine embarrassment and pride are present here, too, since Mr. Alleyne glances at Miss Delacour for approval before asking whether Farrington takes him for a fool. That detail signifies that Alleyne is showing off his authority in front of a lady—metaphorically "flexing his muscles," so to speak—and explains why Mr. Alleyne responds to Farrington's quip so savagely.

He came out of the pawn-office joyfully, making a little cylinder, of the coins between his thumb and fingers. In Westmoreland street the footpaths were crowded with young men and women […] the man passed through the crowd, looking on the spectacle with proud satisfaction and staring masterfully at the office-girls.

Related Characters: Farrington

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 88-89

Explanation and Analysis

After Mr. Alleyne chastises him, Farrington realizes he lacks the money for night out, and so he pawns his watch. Though Joyce never inserts his authorial judgment or opinion, it is clear that Farrington is disproportionately cheerful about this arrangement, since he's almost lost his job and he has to trade in his property (his watch) to get money to then get drunk. These are not the actions, Joyce implies, of a man who has reasons to feel "proud" or "masterful."

That he pawns his watch also acts as further evidence that Farrington has a genuine problem with alcohol. He's not just a bored and mistreated employee who'd rather have fun with his friends at a pub—he's a desperate man who's willing to do or sell anything for a drink, again pointing to his deep and tragic need to escape the bleak reality of his life. This moment takes on additional weight when, at the end of the story, the reader gathers from Farrington's dark, cold house that the family is struggling economically—and, despite this, Farrington still carries on with his drinking.

"So, I just looked at him—coolly, you know, and looked at her. Then I looked back at him again—taking my time, you know. 'I don't think that that's a fair question to put to me,' says I."

Related Characters: Farrington (speaker), Miss Delacour, Paddy Leonard, Higgins, Nosey Flynn, O'Halloran, Mr. Alleyne

Related Themes:

Page Number: 89

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Farrington muses this to himself, rehearsing how he is going to tell the story of his confrontation with Mr. Alleyne to his friends in the pub. The fact that he pre-rehearses this story is in itself significant, since it shows that Farrington is consciously embellishing and creating a fiction or an exaggerated account of the events. It's also notable that Farrington's version exaggerates just how premeditated his quip is, since in the original version Farrington speaks almost without thinking. In this version, Farrington presents himself as "cool" and "taking [his] time." He also doesn't refer to Mr. Alleyne as "sir" in his version—in reality, though, it's clear that Farrington was somewhat differential towards Mr. Alleyne and talked back on accident rather than on purpose.

Throughout the story, Farrington turns to fantasy as a means of escapism, just as he does here. Farrington is haggard and weary after a long day of work—and being yelled at multiple times—so he escapes the pain and humiliation of this by constructing a narrative in which he "won" the interaction between him and his boss. Of course, this kind of embellished thinking is ultimately unhelpful, because it does nothing to change Farrington's bleak reality. No matter how he rehashes the story to his friends, he's still on rocky terms with his boss and may even be without a job.

Weathers was showing his biceps muscle to the company and boasting so much that the other two had called on Farrington to uphold the national honour. Farrington pulled up his sleeve accordingly and showed his biceps muscle to the company. The two arms were examined and compared and finally it was agreed to have a trial of strength.

Related Characters: Paddy Leonard, O'Halloran, Weathers, Farrington

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 91-92

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Farrington and Weathers prepare for their arm-wrestling match in the pub while O'Halloran and Paddy Leonard, two of Farrington's friends, eagerly look on. This is the moment that Farrington's strength and his eventual disgrace become more explicitly symbolic of Ireland's subjugation to the British Empire. The Englishman Weathers faces off against the Irishman Farrington in "a trial of strength"; if he loses, Farrington will disgrace the" national honor." Honor is a key word here, since so much of the story has consisted of Farrington being disgraced, dishonored, and even outright dishonorable (through lying, sneaking around, and pawning his valuables). This final dishonor is explicitly national in its implications, suggesting that this match isn't just about Farrington's own pride and indignity but that of his country.

It's also important that this scene starts out simply as a competition of who has the better biceps. The men are unable to determine this through sight alone, but they're clearly unwilling to call it a tie and allow the men to be equals—they have to duel it out in an arm-wrestling match. This points to the way that masculinity, in the world of the story, revolves around a dynamic of humiliation and victory. Only one man, the passage implies, can be the "true" man.

> Farrington's dark wine-coloured face flushed darker still with anger and humiliation at having been defeated by such a stripling.

Related Characters: Weathers, Farrington

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 92

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Farrington grapples with intense feelings of humiliation after Weathers, an Englishman in the pub, defeats him in two arm-wrestling matches. The fact that Farrington regards Weathers as a "stripling" (i.e., a weak man) could mean one of two things: either that Farrington has underestimated Weathers and overestimated himself, which would be characteristic of Farrington's fantasizing, or he has indeed been defeated by a weakling, in which case the humiliation is all the more stinging. Either way, Farrington's overblown self-projection has been exposed as a sham. Whenever he wishes to remind the reader of how distant Farrington's self-perception is from the reality, Joyce will usually home in on Farrington's ugly, drink-sodden physical state, which is also what he does here.

The epithet "wine-coloured" is repeatedly used to describe Farrington's face to highlight both the discoloration of his features and its obvious source, alcohol. That Farrington's face is the color of wine as he deals with such deep and painful feelings of humiliation also reminds the reader that alcohol is in part what causes Farrington's troubles. While Farrington often turns to alcohol as an escape from his bleak reality throughout the story, this passage makes it clear that this kind of coping mechanism is ultimately unproductive and can even cause more harm than good.

> He was full of smoldering anger and revengefulness. He felt humiliated and discontented; he did not even feel drunk; and he had only twopence in his pocket. He cursed everything. He had done for himself in the office, pawned his watch, spent all his money; and he had not even got drunk.

Related Characters: Weathers, Farrington

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 93

Explanation and Analysis

Farrington has just lost two arm-wrestling matches to Weathers, an Englishman at the pub, and now in this passage Farrington devolves into self-pity. This is the moment of complete clarity Farrington has when assessing his situation: he itemizes what has gone wrong with total lucidity, and he achieves that clarity which the reader has had all along. As if to emphasize just how much of a complete a failure Farrington is, Joyce repeats the fact that Farrington isn't even drunk. Getting drunk was the one thing he wanted, the thing he pawned his watch for, the thing he shirked work for—for all that "and he had not even got drunk." With this, the story makes it clear that escapism, especially through drinking, is only a temporary balm for

pain. In fact, it did little to numb Farrington's pain at all—save for a few lighthearted moments in which Farrington reenacted his embellished version of talking back to his boss, Farrington spends most of the night at the pub feeling emasculated or put out for having to buy other people drinks.

SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

COUNTERPARTS

A "furious voice," marked by a distinctive North Ireland accent, shouts at his assistant, Miss Parker, to send Farrington up to his office. Miss Parker relays the message to Farrington that Mr. Alleyne wants to see him, and Farrington begrudgingly rises from his desk and "heavily" plods across the room and up the stairs to Mr. Alleyne's private office.

The word "furious" is repeated twice in the very first sentence of the story, suggesting that anger will play a significant part in the plot. The "furious" boss's power over his employee is immediately made clear in the opening section through his authoritative tone and Farrington's silent and cowed response. Joyce also highlights Alleyne's identity as a Northern Irish man, which is significant because Northern Irish people made up the ruling classes of Ireland during this period, when Britain controlled the country—yet another indication that Alleyne is a symbol of power and authority.

Mr. Alleyne—a small man with a pinkish bald head—immediately lays into Farrington, yelling at him for not yet making a copy of a very important contract, which he was supposed to have completed by 4:00 p.m. Farrington begins to protest that Mr. Shelley told him differently, but Alleyne interrupts, telling Farrington to always listen to *him* and not Mr. Shelley. He berates Farrington for always making excuses and then threatens to get Mr. Crosbie involved if Farrington doesn't have the contract copied by the end of the day. Before dismissing Farrington, Mr. Alleyne sharply reminds him that his lunch break is a half an hour—not an hour and a half.

Mr. Alleyne's criticisms in this passage introduce Farrington as a man who is not exactly reliable with his work. While it's possible that Farrington does have a fair reason for not having the contract done—he implies that another person at the company told him something that conflicted with Mr. Alleyne's instructions—Mr. Alleyne's comment about Farrington's excessively long lunch breaks seems to solidify the fact that Farmington is flaky and unreliable.

Farrington remains rooted on the spot, staring at Mr. Alleyne. He's overcome with a rush of anger and knows that he'll need to go out **drinking** after work, hoping that Mr. Alleyne might give him his paycheck a little bit early. Realizing the copy clerk is still standing there, Mr. Alleyne dismisses him sharply, reminding him again to have the contract copied by the end of the day or else Mr. Crosbie will be notified.

Here, Farrington is forced to bottle up his anger, seemingly knowing that lashing out would only cost him his job, since Mr. Alleyne is already deeply displeased with him. It's telling, too, that whenever Farrington feels his rush of anger throughout the story, he immediately starts craving alcohol, suggesting that he drinks to escape his bleak reality. The pub is the place he can forget his woes, but by the end of the story, the reader will come to realize that such a desire to escape reality through alcohol is entirely destructive.

Farrington slinks back to his desk, depressed. He simply cannot concentrate on the work, and he feels desperately thirsty for alcohol. He sneaks out to the warm pub around the corner for a quick beer, which he quickly downs and then hurries back to the office, hoping that no one has noticed him and that he still has time to finish his work. But when he returns, Mr. Alleyne immediately demands that the contract is sent to him, and Farrington has no choice but to comply.

The theme of escaping reality is continued in this scene and is made literal by the fact that Farrington no longer just daydreams, he actually shirks his responsibilities at work and leaves for the pub—despite just getting yelled at for this very behavior. This brief attempt to forget and escape causes Farrington more harm than good—now he's even further behind than before—which suggests to the reader that escapism and fantasy are temporary balms for unhappiness but not a solution in themselves. In fact, as it happens here, turning to escapism as a coping mechanism can be unproductive and even outright harmful.

Certain that he's in deep trouble, Farrington waits for Alleyne to notice that he hasn't finished the contract. He feels the urge for violence bubble up inside of him because "All the indignities of his life enraged him." He wishes he could be out drinking with "the boys": Leonard, O'Halloran, and Nosey Flynn.

Farrington's inability to finish copying the document is a kind of paralysis—a common thread that links all of the short stories in Joyce's Dubliners. *This first failure prefigures Farrington's later failures. In each case, Farrington's mind wanders off in fantasy and anger when confronted by his inadequacy.*

Moments later, Alleyne bounds to Farrington's desk and berates him angrily in front of all the staff and in front of the glamorous and wealthy Miss Delacour, one of Alleyne's clients (whom, it is rumored, he is "sweet on"). Scathingly, Alleyne asks Farrington, "do you take me for a fool?" Before he can even think, Farrington blurts out, "I don't think, sir, [...] that that's a fair question to put to me." For a moment, everyone is silent and shocked, Farrington included. The clerks smile, but Mr. Alleyne is incensed with rage and threatens Farrington's job.

Farrington's comment embarrasses Alleyne in front of Miss Delacour, whom Alleyne is interested in romantically, so this exchange is potentially a blow to the man's masculinity. Alleyne's embarrassment at being answered back to in front of a lady also foreshadows Farrington's own embarrassment at being ignored by the lady in the pub.

Farrington is forced to give Mr. Alleyne "an abject apology." Farrington hates everyone—himself included—and he feels "savage and thirsty and revengeful." He knows his job is on the rocks, and the office is bound to be a hellish place for him now. In fact, things have been rocky ever since Mr. Alleyne overheard Farrington making fun of the man's Northern Irish accent to Higgins and Miss Parker. Thinking of all this, Farrington's entire body longs "for the comfort of the public-house."

Throughout the story, Joyce emphasizes that the brand of masculinity that permeates Farrington's world rests on a dichotomy of humiliation and victory. As this scene shows, Farrington and Alleyne are participating in a sort of tug-of-war for power and authority—but since Alleyne is the boss, he has the final say, and Farrington is once again defeated. And, once again, Farrington copes with his sense of indignity by getting lost in his fantasies of the pub.

Desperate for money with which he can buy alcohol, Farrington pawns his watch—thinking himself genius for coming up with the idea—and quickly heads to the pub. On his way, he looks around at the street urchins and young women wandering around, and he feels a quiet sense of triumph in his wit and cleverness. Through the smokiness of the first pub, he sees his friend Nosey Flynn and tells him the tale of the day's affairs—how he had brilliantly made his boss to look like a fool and impressed the other clerks.

As he gets farther away from the office, Farrington's self-loathing and humiliation begins to morph into a feeling of triumph. Even though it was clear to Farrington—and the reader—that Mr. Alleyne "won" their fight, Farrington now turns to fantasy and reconstructs a totally different image of the argument. While dipping into his daydreams may help Farrington feel better in this moment, it doesn't change the fact that his job is seriously threatened, emphasizing how fantasy and the escapism it provides can be more of a hurt than a help.

After a while, the pair are joined by O'Halloran and Paddy Leonard. Farrington tells them the tale again, and they all laugh together and order **drinks**. All of the men are clearly quite drunk now, and Farrington decides to repeat the story once more to his friend Higgins, who has just arrived. The roaring laughter gets louder and louder, and the men all stand and admire Farrington's bravery and wit. Meanwhile, Farrington watches his friends with his "dirty eyes," his moustache dripping with liquor.

Alcohol and fantasy intertwine in this passage as two key methods of escapism. Having just come from a humiliating day at work, Farrington turns to alcohol to numb his mind and fantasy to bolster his spirit, making himself seem far more powerful, brave, and witty than he actually is. Joyce reminds readers not to fall for Farrington's embellished story by describing the man's sloppy, drunken appearance.

Money is becoming a little tight, and the men decide—a little regretfully—to leave the pub in search of another. At the next bar, which is "full of men," Farrington is introduced to an Englishman named Weathers, an "*artiste*" who's performing at a local theater. Farrington buys the man a drink, but much to his anger, Weathers repeatedly accepts Farrington's offers without reciprocating. He praises the hospitality of the Irish, without giving that hospitality back. Farrington takes a dislike to him.

The next pub is described as being "full of men," which cues readers into the idea that at this time, the pub was primarily a male space. This context, plus the fact that Farrington has been telling the group his tall tale of standing up to Mr. Alleyne, suggests that this society lends itself to a kind of performative masculinity, which impels showing off and boasting. It is also significant that Farrington—in this explicitly *masculine context—is introduced to Weathers, who is employed in characteristically un-masculine profession as an "*artiste,*" or performer.*

When the pub closes, the men venture back out into the night in search of even more **alcohol**. The group enters another bar through a door at the back. A pair of strikingly dressed women enters, the men saluting them. Farrington gazes at one of the women: she is dressed in a feathered hat with a pair of yellow gloves. Farrington sees a chance to flirt. He holds her gaze for what seems like a while as the noise of the pub fades into the background. She gets up and makes her way towards him, but she merely passes him, excusing herself in a London accent.

Joyce is careful to mention every time the group orders another round of drinks. This might seem repetitious, but it is done to show the reader how much alcohol plays a part in how these men socialize. On another note, Farrington thinks that he's successfully flirting with the woman, but this fantasy is exposed when she gets up and ignores him, clearly unmoved by his advances. As with Mr. Alleyne and Weathers, whose accents are also indicative of their social standing, this lady's "London accent" identifies her as English, the colonial masters of Ireland. Given the symbolism underpinning her accent—plus her outright rejection of Farrington—it is clear that the woman is in a completely different league to Farrington. This also reinforces the idea that in the world of the story, masculinity hinges on either humiliation or victory.

Farrington, unhappy now, is called back to the table where Weathers is boasting about his biceps. They look strong, but the men are convinced that Farrington's are better, so they challenge both men to **arm-wrestle**. Farrington is goaded to protect the "national honor." Reluctantly, he places his elbow on the table and puts takes Weathers's hand.

In this section, the themes of resentment, masculinity, and fantasy all overlap. Farrington's obligation to defend Ireland's national honor against the Englishman Weathers symbolizes the subjugation and indignity suffered Ireland has suffered at the hands (so to speak) of the English, while the choice of an arm-wrestling match has clear overtones of masculinity.

After a short tussle, Farrington loses the first round. He again puts his elbow on the table and takes Weathers's hand. The fight begins, and Farrington pulls with all his might. But it is no use—his hand is pulled down, and he loses again. Enraged, rejected, and embittered, Farrington explodes at a nearby man who comments on his defeat. Perhaps fearing the possible violence in the situation, O'Halloran tells them it's time to go.

Farrington's disgrace here becomes symbolic of Ireland's disgrace, which is compounded by the embarrassment he felt in the last section because of the English lady's rejection. The spectacle of Farrington's disgrace is a highly macho game: arm-wrestling. Therefore, Farrington's disgrace is not only one of national dishonor, but is also indicative of his failure as a man.

Farrington returns home in a foul mood. The house is cold and silent. He calls up to his wife, but the only answer is the plaintive welcome of his son, Tom. Clearly afraid of his father, he explains that his mother, Farrington's wife, is at church. Farrington orders his son to heat the dinner, but, noticing the fire has been left to go out, grabs his son to beat him. Tom pleads with his father not to hurt him, crying that he'll say a Hail Mary for his father if only he'll stop hurting him.

At the beginning of the story, Farrington had longed for the "warmth" and snugness of the pub, but he ends the story in a cold and apparently deserted house, with his wife absent and the fire unlit. In other words, even though he did indulge in escapism by drinking all night in the pub, it did nothing to change his underlying life. At the beginning of the story, Farrington's rage had always stuck in his body—he had never been able to act or speak his rage, though he longed to. In the final scene, he finally vents his anger, but he vents it on his defenseless and innocent son—a boy so innocent that he thinks his father can be stopped by promising to say Hail Mary's on his behalf. With this heartbreaking ending, Joyce shows how Farrington's bottled-up resentment is poisonous, infecting every area of his life.

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