

Before you read

This is a story about a young teenage boy who becomes obsessed with an older girl. He hardly knows her but he is determined to buy her a present to please her.

Thinking about the story

1 In the story, 'Araby' is the name of a special market, a 'bazaar', that opens for a few days on the edge of Dublin. Choose four reasons from a-f which are likely to attract people to visit this market.

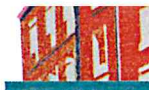
- a It has a glamorous, magical name.
- b It is likely to sell the same things as the shops in Dublin city centre.
- c There is only a short opportunity to buy things there.
- d It is likely to be very expensive.
- e It is likely to sell unusual or special things.
- f It is a good opportunity to have fun shopping.

Thinking about the behaviour of characters

2 When teenage boys fall in love for the first time, do you think that A or B is more likely to be true?

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1A <input type="checkbox"/> They tell everyone about it. | 1B <input type="checkbox"/> They keep it a secret. |
| 2A <input type="checkbox"/> Their mood keeps changing. | 2B <input type="checkbox"/> They are always happy. |
| 3A <input type="checkbox"/> They like to be alone to dream about love. | 3B <input type="checkbox"/> They like to be in groups. |
| 4A <input type="checkbox"/> They try to be with the other person. | 4B <input type="checkbox"/> They are shy and avoid the other person. |

Araby



STORY 1



I lived with my uncle and aunt in North Richmond Street, a cul-de-sac.¹ It was quiet except when the boys came out of the Christian Brothers' School. An empty house stood at the end. The outsides of the other houses were brown and seemed to show that decent, respectable people lived inside them.



track 02

The previous tenant of our house had been a priest who had died in the back room. I found some old books in a room behind the kitchen. The garden was wild, with an apple tree and a few untidy bushes. The priest had left all his money to charity.

When the short days of winter came, it got dark before we finished dinner.

When the other children and I met in the street, the houses looked dark and serious.

1. cul-de-sac : a street that is closed at one end; also known as a 'dead-end street'.

The street lamps lifted their weak light towards the ever-changing violet sky.

The cold air stung us and we played until our bodies glowed. Our shouts echoed in the silent street. We went into dark muddy lanes where rough children lived, into wet gardens and into the stables where we watched the groom look after the horses.

If my uncle came round the corner, we hid in the shadows until he had gone in. My friend Mangan had an older sister who used to call him when it was time to stop playing and come in. We hid from her as well but if she stayed on the doorstep, Mangan went home. She waited for him, her figure outlined in the light of the door. I stood looking at her. Her brown dress swung as she moved her body and her soft hair moved from side to side.

Every morning, I lay on the floor of the front room, looking through the window and watching her door. Nobody could see me. When she came out, my heart leaped. I picked up my schoolbooks and ran outside to follow her. I kept sight of her brown figure until, just before we went in different directions, I walked and passed her. This happened morning after morning. I had never spoken to her except a few words but her name was magic to me. I was stupidly in love.

I thought about her all the time, even in unromantic places. My aunt went to the market on Saturday evenings and I carried some of her parcels. There were drunk men and shouting women, shop-boys and street singers. But the noise made me feel special like a romantic hero. I did not understand my emotions.

I whispered Mangan's sister's name and I often started to cry. I didn't know if I would ever speak to her or tell her about my love. But my body was like a harp² that reacted to her words and gestures.

2. a harp : a typical Irish musical instrument.





One evening I went into the room where the priest had died. It was dark and rainy outside and silent in the house. I heard the rain falling persistently on the wet earth and a weak light gleamed from the lamps. I wanted to lose myself in the darkness and the silence. I pressed my trembling hands together like someone praying and I murmured, 'O love! O love!' many times.

At last she spoke to me. I was so confused I couldn't answer.

'Are you going to Araby?' she asked.

Araby was a big bazaar³ on the outskirts of Dublin. You could buy all sorts of things there just before Christmas.

'It will be splendid. I'd love to go,' she said.

'Why can't you?' I asked.

She turned a silver bracelet round and round her wrist. 'I have to go on a retreat⁴ with the nuns', she explained.

I was standing alone with her as her brother and two other boys were busy fighting. The light from the street lamp lit up the curve of her neck and her hair and her hand. It lit one side of her dress and the edge of her petticoat⁵ which was just visible.

'You're lucky, you can go,' she said.

'If I go,' I said, 'I'll bring you something.'

For the next few days, I only thought about Mangan's sister and the bazaar. The exotic word 'Araby' called to me. I asked my aunt for permission to go there on Saturday night.

She was surprised but she agreed. I didn't concentrate in school and my teacher became angry with me. I had no patience⁶ with

3. a **bazaar** : a collection of shops or stalls which sell a variety of goods; in this case, it is temporary, open for only a few days. There are famous bazaars in places like Istanbul and Morocco but 'Araby' is a local Irish market.

4. a **retreat** : a religious event where you go away to pray and meditate.

5. a **petticoat** : a light skirt which women might wear under their dress.

6. **patience** : the ability to wait for things without complaining.

serious things and life seemed monotonous and stupid. Only Araby mattered to me.

On Saturday morning, I reminded my uncle that I wanted to go there. I needed to get some money from him so that I could buy something at Araby. He was too busy to pay me attention.

'Yes, boy, I know,' he said.

I walked slowly to school in a bad mood. The weather was very cold. I had a bad feeling about the day.

When I came home for dinner, my uncle had not come home yet. It was still early. I stared at the clock. It ticked loudly. I escaped from the sound and went upstairs. I went from room to room singing. My friends were playing in the street outside the window. I looked out and saw the dark house where she lived. I stood there for an hour, imagining her figure with the lamplight on her neck. I remembered her hand and the edge of her petticoat.

When I came downstairs again, a neighbour was sitting with my aunt. It was Mrs Mercer, a very talkative old lady. I had to listen to all their gossip. An hour passed and my uncle still didn't come home. Mrs Mercer left after eight o'clock. I began to walk up and down the room. My uncle didn't appear. My aunt said:

'I'm afraid you won't be able to go to the bazaar tonight.'

At nine o'clock, I heard my uncle's key in the door. He was talking to himself; I think he was late because he had been drinking with his friends. I asked him for the money while he was eating dinner.

'I forgot about it,' he said. 'The bazaar will be closed and everyone will be asleep.'

I did not smile. My aunt spoke to him.

'Can't you give him the money and let him go? He has waited a long time.'

'I'm very sorry,' said my uncle. 'Where are you going?'

STORY 1

'To Araby,' I told him for the second time.

He gave me the money and continued joking, beginning to sing an old song about an Arab prince and his horse.

I ran out of the house and went to the station. There was a special train to the bazaar but it was empty because it was so late. I sat down and waited while the train was delayed in the station. Finally, it moved slowly among the houses and over the twinkling river. At the next station, crowds of people wanted to get on but the porter said this was a train only for the bazaar. At last it arrived. It was ten minutes to ten. In front of me was a large building. Above the door 'ARABY' was written!

I had twenty-four pence from my uncle. I looked for the cheap entrance but when I couldn't find it, I paid twelve pence to go inside. I entered a big hall. Nearly all the stalls were closed because it was so late and most of the hall was dark. A few people were at the open stalls. In front of a sign 'Café Chantant', some men were counting money. I listened to the coins falling.

I went to one of the stalls. There were two tall jars at the entrance painted in an Arabic style. I passed inside and looked at porcelain vases and tea-sets decorated with flowers.

At the door, a young lady was laughing with two young gentlemen. I listened to them talking.

'O, I never said that!'

'O, but you did!'

'O, but I didn't!'

'That's a lie!'

The young lady saw me, came over and asked: 'Do you want to buy anything?'

She didn't seem really interested. I looked at the great jars like two eastern guards at the entrance. I murmured: 'No, thank you.'



She changed the position of one of the vases and went back to her companions. They began talking again. Once or twice she glanced at me over her shoulder.

I waited by the counter for a little longer. I pretended that I really wanted to examine the vases. Then I turned away slowly and walked down the middle of the bazaar. I heard a voice call from above that the light was out. The upper part of the hall was now completely dark.

Gazing up into the darkness, I saw myself as a creature that was driven by empty dreams. I was mocked for my vanity.⁷ My eyes burned with anguish⁸ and anger.

7. **vanity** : thinking about yourself, being proud of your own appearance or personality or achievements.

8. **anguish** : deep emotional pain.

The text and *beyond*

Comprehension check

① For each question, choose the correct answer — a, b, c or d.

- 1 The description of the children playing in the street
 - a uses light and sound to make it vivid.
 - b is negative about the children's behaviour.
 - c emphasises the children's fear in the darkness.
 - d is written from the point of view of Mangan's sister.
- 2 The boy
 - a knows Mangan's sister well.
 - b likes her brown dress.
 - c watches her and follows her.
 - d calls out to her through the window of the priest's old room.
- 3 Mangan's sister is sad because
 - a she cannot go to the bazaar.
 - b she has no money to buy things at the bazaar.
 - c she doesn't like the nuns.
 - d she doesn't think the boy will buy her anything.
- 4 When the boy arrives at Araby, he finds
 - a it is full of laughter and conversation.
 - b it is not as glamorous as its name.
 - c it has no shops which are open.
 - d the cheap entrance is closed.
- 5 At the end of the story, the boy
 - a feels that his dreams of love are ridiculous.
 - b wishes he had bought the vases.
 - c is angry that he has wasted his entrance money.
 - d realises that the goods at Araby are too expensive for him.