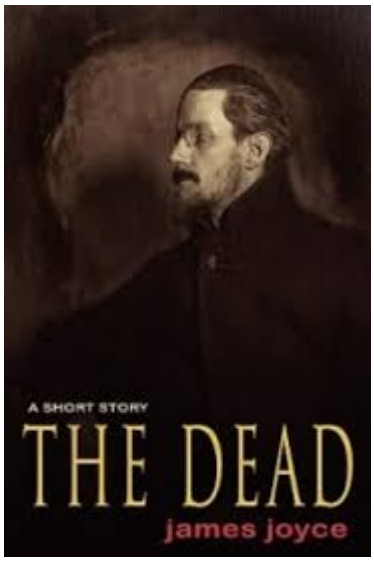
Twitter Thread by John McCourt



John McCourt
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Joyce's great story, "The Dead" takes place today 6 January, feast of the Epiphany. I look forward to discussing it this evening @IrlEmbRome. An endlessly rich story for our times, it turns the comforting Christmas tale of new life into a meditation on death, memory, loss. Thread



It corrects or seems to correct some of the bleakness of the earlier stories. Joyce wrote that he had "been unnecessarily harsh" in not reproducing any Dublin's "ingenuous insularity and its hospitality. The latter 'virtue' so far as I can see does not exist elsewhere in Europe".



It offers a wonderful evocation of hospitality and a luscious description of the laden Christmas table "A fat brown goose lay at one end of the table and at the other end, on a bed of creased paper strewn with sprigs of parsley, lay a great ham, stripped of its outer skin ...



Joyce wrote this extraordinarily mature story when he was just 25 years of age. Part of its inspiration came from a tough Christmas he and Nora spent in Rome in 1906. Christmas dinner, he complained, was just an uninspiring plate of pasta.

The Dead is also a fitting story for #NollaignamBan as Gabriel is made aware of his failure to see and properly hear the three women who challenge him: Lily, the caretaker's daughter, Miss Ivors, and of course his wife, Gretta.

The role of women is key with Aunt Kate "fiercely" replying to her niece about the position of women. She is furious that Aunt Julia has lost her place in the Church choir: "it's not at all honourable for the pope to turn out the women out of the choirs that have slaved there...

The Dead is also a moving meditation on lost love and on lost intimacy within a marriage. It shows the damaging effect on Gabriel of relying on habit and his need to move beyond the superficial so as to see and accept the depth, mystery, history of the woman he loves, Gretta.



The closing section depicts Gabriel's great epiphany, his moment of revelation or, in Joyce's words, "sudden spiritual manifestation". You could do worse today than read "The Dead" or even watch John Huston's moving film version with Donal McCann and Angelica Huston.



Today is also a good day to remember that the House of the Dead at 15 Usher's Island remains at risk. We hope @DubCityCouncil @anbordpleanala @MichealMartinTD @LordMayorDublin @cathmartingreen will find a way to secure this unique heritage site for future generations.

