

Chapter 1: Telemachus

Stephen Dedalus, a young poet employed as a school teacher; Buck Mulligan, a med student; and an Englishman called Haines, who is in Ireland to study Celtic culture, spend their morning in their Martello Tower at the seaside resort town of Sandycove, south of Dublin. Stephen, who is mourning for his dead mother, watches Buck shave on the parapet, they discuss things, Buck goes inside to cook breakfast. They all eat while a local farm woman brings them their milk. Then they walk down to the "Forty Foot Hole," where Buck swims in Dublin Bay. Pay careful attention to what the swimmers say about the Bannons and the photo girl.

Look for parallels between Stephen and Hamlet, on one hand, and Telemachus, the son of Odysseus, on the other. In the



Martello (now called the "Joyce") Tower at Sandycove

Odyssey, Odysseus was missing, presumed dead by most, for ten years after the end of the Trojan War, and his palace and wife in Ithaca were beset by "suitors" who wanted to become king.



Ulysses is a sequel to Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, which is a bildungsroman starring Stephen Dedalus. That novel ended with Stephen graduating from University College, Dublin and heading off for Paris to launch his literary career. Two years later, he's back in Dublin, having been summoned home by his mother's illness. So he's something of an Icarus figure also, having tried to fly out of the labyrinth of Ireland to freedom, but having fallen, so to speak.

My advice for reading: treat this as a conventional novel, assessing which characters you like or dislike and why. The difficulty will be with the "stream of consciousness" narrative, which gives us Stephen's unfiltered thoughts. They begin with the "Chrysostomos" on the first page, as Stephen contemplates the fillings in Buck's teeth--the word means "golden-mouth" or "good talker," and was the epithet for a 4th-century archbishop of Constantinople. Stephen's mind is filled with Catholic trivia, and we'll see lots of references to ancient church fathers.

