

BEYOND CONCEPT

超越概念——高等院校英语专业系列教材

总主编 ◎ 何其莘 [美] 杨孝明



A SELECTED  
ENGLISH  
STORY READER

# 英语小说选读

编 著 ◎ 刘国枝 周 铭

**B**超越概念——*Beyond Concept*——*同寸尸尸又天山* 专业系列教材

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# 前 言

胡适先生在其《论短篇小说》一文中，将短篇小说界定为“用最经济的文学手段，描写事实中最精彩的一段，或一方面，而能使之充分满意的文章”。的确，作为一种技巧性高、可读性强、贴近现实的文学样式，短篇小说往往透过有限的篇幅，传达出深邃的精神，其中的经典绝章更是在方寸之间、细节之内，产生照亮人心的效用，让读者管窥生命的神髓。

本书为英语专业本科生选修课教材，也适用于非英语专业学生和自学者的文学阅读与鉴赏，旨在通过对小说基本要素或技巧的讲解，引导学习者体验、解读和品鉴英语短篇小说，领略作家的语感、文思和才情，感悟作品所承载的审美价值、文化意蕴和社会历史意义。

全书由9个单元组成，前8单元围绕人物（character）、情节（plot）、语言与风格（language and style）、背景（setting）、视角（point of view）、象征（symbol）、反讽（irony）、主题（theme）等小说的基本要素而展开，第9单元聚焦于现代作家所青睐的实验性技巧（experimental technique）。各单元包含要素/技巧讲解和2篇短篇小说，所选18篇作品均为英语文学中的上乘之作，每篇均附有相关的作者简介、注释和思考题，便于教师按照每两周一单元的进度安排教学或学生自学。



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# Character

Characters are one of the basic elements that we care most when we read literature. Simply put, characters are persons represented in the work. According to the role they play in the story, characters can be conveniently classified as major and minor. A major character is one who stays at the center of the story's action and gets most of the author's attention, while a minor character just plays some supporting part in the development of the action. The character's status as major or minor is usually obvious, but sometimes, not one but two characters are major, and there are even occasions where no single character dominates a story, such as in Shirley Jackson's "Lottery".

An alternative term for the major character is the protagonist (or the hero or heroine), and if he or she is pitted against a prominent opponent, that opponent is called the antagonist. Very often, the antagonist is a villain setting out to frustrate the protagonist. But in some works, the protagonist is an evil character, so that the antagonist will be represented as virtuous or sympathetic.

Another distinction is made between dynamic and static characters. Dynamic characters are those who undergo a kind of change, in attitude, purpose, or behavior, as the story progresses. Static characters, on the other hand, remain stable throughout the story. Generally speaking, major characters are dynamic and minor ones are static. But exceptions can also be found in literature. For instance, Emily Grierson, the protagonist in William Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily", remains essentially unchanged in outlook and disposition from the beginning to the end.

Characters in stories are often presented in such ways that they are interpreted by the reader as being endowed with particular moral, intellectual, and emotional qualities. The way or means by which writers present or portray their characters is characterization. In general, there are two ways of characterization: showing and telling. Showing is the indirect method by which the writer simply presents what the characters look like, what they say or do and how they say or do it, and leaves the reader to infer qualities from their appearances or to deduce the motives and dispositions lying behind their speech or actions. It is not only external speech and actions that

the writer shows; he or she may also reveal characters' inner thoughts, feelings, and responses to events, and stream of consciousness is a well-developed mode of such inner showing. Telling, on the other hand, is the direct method of attribution of qualities in description or commentary, by which the author intervenes in order to tell about, and often to judge, the characters' motives and dispositions.

In each of the following two stories, the major character can be easily identified and the method of "showing" is employed as an important means of character portrayal. By revealing the consciousness of their protagonists, James Joyce and Katherine Mansfield successfully present the change experienced by them, either the radical one due to a crisis in "Miss Brill", or the gradual one through a process of development in "Araby".



## James Joyce: Araby

James Joyce (1882—1941), an Irish novelist and poet, was born to a middle class family in Dublin. He received his early education from Jesuits. In 1898 he entered the University College, Dublin, where he showed keen interest in the works of Henrik Ibsen, St. Thomas Aquinas, and W. B. Yeats. After graduation, he went to Paris and tried various jobs there. A year later, he returned to Dublin because of his mother's illness. After his mother's death, he moved to continental Europe again and started to lead a nomadic life there, with only occasional short visits to his homeland.

Although most of Joyce's adult years were spent abroad, his fictional world centers on Dublin, representing the lives of its ordinary people, youth, adolescence and adulthood. Many of the characters resemble family members, friends and enemies from his time there. The short story collection *Dubliners* was published in 1914 and contained such famous pieces as "Araby" and "The Dead".

Joyce is most renowned for his landmark novel *Ulysses* (1922), which takes place on one day (June 16, 1904) in Dublin. It shows Joyce's technical innovations in the art of the novel, including the extensive employment of interior monologue and the stream of consciousness, as well as the experimental use of language. Indeed, it combines almost every literary device available in a modern re-telling of Homer's *Odyssey*. His other major works are *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916), and *Finnegan's Wake* (1939).

During his literary career Joyce suffered from rejections from publishers, suppressions by censors (it was not until 1933 did *Ulysses* become legally available in



the Great Britain and the United States), attacks by critics, and misunderstanding by readers. But now he is acknowledged as one of the most influential writers in modernist literature.

North Richmond Street, being blind<sup>[1]</sup>, was a quiet street except at the hour when the Christian Brothers' School set the boys free. An uninhabited house of two storeys stood at the blind end, detached from its neighbours in a square ground. The other houses of the street, conscious of decent lives within them, gazed at one another with brown imperturbable faces.

The former tenant of our house, a priest, had died in the back drawing-room. Air, musty from having been long enclosed, hung in all the rooms, and the waste room behind the kitchen was littered with old useless papers. Among these I found a few paper-covered books, the pages of which were curled and damp: *The Abbot*, by Walter Scott, *The Devout Communicant* and *The Memoirs of Vidocq*. I liked the last best because its leaves were yellow. The wild garden behind the house contained a central apple-tree and a few straggling bushes under one of which I found the late tenant's rusty bicycle-pump. He had been a very charitable priest; in his will he had left all his money to institutions and the furniture of his house to his sister.

When the short days of winter came, dusk fell before we had well eaten our dinners. When we met in the street the houses had grown sombre. The space of sky above us was the colour of ever-changing violet and towards it the lamps of the street lifted their feeble lanterns. The cold air stung us and we played till our bodies glowed. Our shouts echoed in the silent street. The career of our play brought us through the dark muddy lanes behind the houses where we ran the gauntlet of the rough tribes from the cottages, to the back doors of the dark dripping gardens where odours arose from the ashpits, to the dark odorous stables where a coachman smoothed and combed the horse or shook music from the buckled harness. When we returned to the street, light from the kitchen windows had filled the areas. If my uncle was seen turning the corner we hid in the shadow until we had seen him safely housed. Or if Mangan's sister came out on the doorstep to call her brother in to his tea we watched her from our shadow peer up and down the street. We waited to see whether she would remain or go in and, if she remained, we left our shadow and walked up to Mangan's steps resignedly. She was waiting for us, her figure defined by the light from the half-opened door. Her brother always teased her before he obeyed and I stood by the railings looking at her. Her dress swung as she moved her body and the soft rope of her hair tossed from side to side.

Every morning I lay on the floor in the front parlour watching her door. The blind was pulled down to within an inch of the sash so that I could not be seen. When she came out on the doorstep my heart leaped. I ran to the hall, seized my books and followed her. I kept her brown figure always in my eye and, when we came near the point at which our ways diverged, I

[1] Closed at one end.

quickened my pace and passed her. This happened morning after morning. I had never spoken to her, except for a few casual words, and yet her name was like a summons to all my foolish blood.

Her image accompanied me even in places the most hostile to romance. On Saturday evenings when my aunt went marketing I had to go to carry some of the parcels. We walked through the flaring streets, jostled by drunken men and bargaining women, amid the curses of labourers, the shrill litanies of shop-boys who stood on guard by the barrels of pigs' cheeks, the nasal chanting of street-singers, who sang a *come-all-you* about O'Donovan Rossa<sup>[1]</sup>, or a ballad about the troubles in our native land. These noises converged in a single sensation of life for me: I imagined that I bore my chalice safely through a throng of foes. Her name sprang to my lips at moments in strange prayers and praises which I myself did not understand. My eyes were often full of tears (I could not tell why) and at times a flood from my heart seemed to pour itself out into my bosom. I thought little of the future. I did not know whether I would ever speak to her or not or, if I spoke to her, how I could tell her of my confused adoration. But my body was like a harp and her words and gestures were like fingers running upon the wires.

One evening I went into the back drawing-room in which the priest had died. It was a dark rainy evening and there was no sound in the house. Through one of the broken panes I heard the rain impinge upon the earth, the fine incessant needles of water playing in the sodden beds. Some distant lamp or lighted window gleamed below me. I was thankful that I could see so little. All my senses seemed to desire to veil themselves and, feeling that I was about to slip from them, I pressed the palms of my hands together until they trembled, murmuring: "*O love! O love!*" many times.

At last she spoke to me. When she addressed the first words to me I was so confused that I did not know what to answer. She asked me was I going to *Araby*. I forgot whether I answered yes or no. It would be a splendid bazaar, she said she would love to go.

"And why can't you?" I asked.

While she spoke she turned a silver bracelet round and round her wrist. She could not go, she said, because there would be a retreat that week in her convent. Her brother and two other boys were fighting for their caps and I was alone at the railings. She held one of the spikes, bowing her head towards me. The light from the lamp opposite our door caught the white curve of her neck, lit up her hair that rested there and, falling, lit up the hand upon the railing. It fell over one side of her dress and caught the white border of a petticoat, just visible as she stood at ease.

"It's well for you," she said.

"If I go," I said, "I will bring you something."

What innumerable follies laid waste my waking and sleeping thoughts after that evening! I

[1] O'Donovan Rossa was Jeremiah O'Donovan, Irish nationalist. "Come-all-you" here refers to street songs that were sung not only on the streets but also in pubs.

wished to annihilate the tedious intervening days. I chafed against the work of school. At night in my bedroom and by day in the classroom her image came between me and the page I strove to read. The syllables of the word *Araby* were called to me through the silence in which my soul luxuriated and cast an Eastern enchantment over me. I asked for leave to go to the bazaar on Saturday night. My aunt was surprised and hoped it was not some Freemason<sup>[1]</sup> affair. I answered few questions in class. I watched my master's face pass from amiability to sternness; he hoped I was not beginning to idle. I could not call my wandering thoughts together. I had hardly any patience with the serious work of life which, now that it stood between me and my desire, seemed to me child's play, ugly monotonous child's play.

On Saturday morning I reminded my uncle that I wished to go to the bazaar in the evening. He was fussing at the hallstand, looking for the hat-brush, and answered me curtly:

“Yes, boy, I know.”

As he was in the hall I could not go into the front parlour and lie at the window. I left the house in bad humour and walked slowly towards the school. The air was pitilessly raw and already my heart misgave me.

When I came home to dinner my uncle had not yet been home. Still it was early. I sat staring at the clock for some time and, when its ticking began to irritate me, I left the room. I mounted the staircase and gained the upper part of the house. The high cold empty gloomy rooms liberated me and I went from room to room singing. From the front window I saw my companions playing below in the street. Their cries reached me weakened and indistinct and, leaning my forehead against the cool glass, I looked over at the dark house where she lived. I may have stood there for an hour, seeing nothing but the brown-clad figure cast by my imagination, touched discreetly by the lamplight at the curved neck, at the hand upon the railings and at the border below the dress.

When I came downstairs again I found Mrs. Mercer sitting at the fire. She was an old garrulous woman, a pawnbroker's widow, who collected used stamps for some pious purpose. I had to endure the gossip of the tea-table. The meal was prolonged beyond an hour and still my uncle did not come. Mrs. Mercer stood up to go: she was sorry she couldn't wait any longer, but it was after eight o'clock and she did not like to be out late as the night air was bad for her. When she had gone I began to walk up and down the room, clenching my fists. My aunt said:

“I'm afraid you may put off your bazaar for this night of Our Lord.”

At nine o'clock I heard my uncle's latchkey in the halldoor. I heard him talking to himself and heard the hallstand rocking when it had received the weight of his overcoat. I could interpret these signs. When he was midway through his dinner I asked him to give me the money to go to the bazaar. He had forgotten.

“The people are in bed and after their first sleep now,” he said.

[1] Freemasonry is a fraternal organization that was feared and mistrusted by the Roman Catholics of the time.

I did not smile. My aunt said to him energetically:

“Can’t you give him the money and let him go? You’ve kept him late enough as it is.”

My uncle said he was very sorry he had forgotten. He said he believed in the old saying: “All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy.” He asked me where I was going and, when I had told him a second time he asked me did I know *The Arab’s Farewell to His Steed*<sup>[1]</sup>. When I left the kitchen he was about to recite the opening lines of the piece to my aunt.

I held a florin<sup>[2]</sup> tightly in my hand as I strode down Buckingham Street towards the station. The sight of the streets thronged with buyers and glaring with gas recalled to me the purpose of my journey. I took my seat in a third-class carriage of a deserted train. After an intolerable delay the train moved out of the station slowly. It crept onward among ruinous house and over the twinkling river. At Westland Row Station a crowd of people pressed to the carriage doors; but the porters moved them back, saying that it was a special train for the bazaar. I remained alone in the bare carriage. In a few minutes the train drew up beside an improvised wooden platform. I passed out on to the road and saw by the lighted dial of a clock that it was ten minutes to ten. In front of me was a large building which displayed the magical name.

I could not find any sixpenny entrance and, fearing that the bazaar would be closed, I passed in quickly through a turnstile, handing a shilling to a weary-looking man. I found myself in a big hall girdled at half its height by a gallery. Nearly all the stalls were closed and the greater part of the hall was in darkness. I recognised a silence like that which pervades a church after a service. I walked into the centre of the bazaar timidly. A few people were gathered about the stalls which were still open. Before a curtain, over which the words *Café Chantant*<sup>[3]</sup> were written in coloured lamps, two men were counting money on a salver. I listened to the fall of the coins.

Remembering with difficulty why I had come I went over to one of the stalls and examined porcelain vases and flowered tea-sets. At the door of the stall a young lady was talking and laughing with two young gentlemen. I remarked their English accents and listened vaguely to their conversation.

“O, I never said such a thing!”

“O, but you did!”

“O, but I didn’t!”

“Didn’t she say that?”

“Yes. I heard her.”

“O, there’s a ... fib!”

Observing me the young lady came over and asked me did I wish to buy anything. The tone of her voice was not encouraging; she seemed to have spoken to me out of a sense of duty. I

[1] A sentimental poem written by Caroline Norton (1808—1877).

[2] A coin worth two shillings.

[3] Café offering musical entertainment.

looked humbly at the great jars that stood like eastern guards at either side of the dark entrance to the stall and murmured:

“No, thank you.”

The young lady changed the position of one of the vases and went back to the two young men. They began to talk of the same subject. Once or twice the young lady glanced at me over her shoulder.

I lingered before her stall, though I knew my stay was useless, to make my interest in her wares seem the more real. Then I turned away slowly and walked down the middle of the bazaar. I allowed the two pennies to fall against the sixpence in my pocket. I heard a voice call from one end of the gallery 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 driven and derided by vanity; and my eyes burned with anguish and anger.



### Questions for Discussion:

1. Since the author tells us very little about the past history of the characters, how does he make us understand them?
2. What are the major qualities of the narrator's character? How did his feelings for Mangan's sister help reveal these qualities?

## Katherine Mansfield: Miss Brill

Katherine Mansfield (1888—1923) was New Zealand's most prominent writer. She was born into a middle-class colonial family. Her father was a banker and her mother was of genteel origins. But she was rebellious against her background. In 1908, she left for Great Britain and wasn't able to visit her home country again. Her first marriage in 1909 was unhappy and ended in divorce in 1918. In the same year, she married John Middleton Murry, a Socialist and former literary critic.

In London, Mansfield got closely associated with modernist writers such as D. H. Lawrence and Virginia Woolf. Under their influence, she started to write, first as a journalist and then as an innovative artist in the short fiction. The early 1920s witnessed her best literary achievements, the peak of which being the “Garden Party” (1922). “Miss Brill” and “The Daughters of the Late Colonel” also rank among her most well-known stories. But her creative years were burdened with illness (she contracted tuberculosis

during the WWI and eventually died of pulmonary hemorrhage), loneliness, jealousy and alienation, all of which can be seen in the bitter description of the marital and family relationships of her middle-class characters.

Greatly influenced by Russian writer Anton Chekov, Mansfield showed warm concern for humanity and was good at depicting trivial events and subtle changes in human behavior. Her works tend to focus on moments of disruption, and the use of stream of consciousness is pervasive. Although only three volumes of stories were published during her lifetime, Mansfield obviously made her share of contribution to the development of the modern short story.

Although it was so brilliantly fine—the blue sky powdered with gold and great spots of light like white wine splashed over the Jardins Publiques<sup>[1]</sup>—Miss Brill was glad that she had decided on her fur. The air was motionless, but when you opened your mouth there was just a faint chill, like a chill from a glass of iced water before you sip, and now and again a leaf came drifting—from nowhere, from the sky. Miss Brill put up her hand and touched her fur. Dear little thing! It was nice to feel it again. She had taken it out of its box that afternoon, shaken out the moth-powder, given it a good brush, and rubbed the life back into the dim little eyes. “What has been happening to me?” said the sad little eyes. Oh, how sweet it was to see them snap at her again from the red eiderdown! ... But the nose, which was of some black composition, wasn’t at all firm. It must have had a knock, somehow. Never mind—a little dab of black sealing-wax when the time came—when it was absolutely necessary... Little rogue! Yes, she really felt like that about it. Little rogue biting its tail just by her left ear. She could have taken it off and laid it on her lap and stroked it. She felt a tingling in her hands and arms, but that came from walking, she supposed. And when she breathed, something light and sad—no, not sad, exactly—something gentle seemed to move in her bosom.

There were a number of people out this afternoon, far more than last Sunday. And the band sounded louder and gayer. That was because the Season had begun. For although the band played all the year round on Sundays, out of season it was never the same. It was like some one playing with only the family to listen; it didn’t care how it played if there weren’t any strangers present. Wasn’t the conductor wearing a new coat, too? She was sure it was new. He scraped with his foot and flapped his arms like a rooster about to crow, and the bandsmen sitting in the green rotunda blew out their cheeks and glared at the music. Now there came a little “flutey” bit—very pretty! —a little chain of bright drops. She was sure it would be repeated. It was; she lifted her head and smiled.

Only two people shared her “special” seat: a fine old man in a velvet coat, his hands clasped over a huge carved walking-stick, and a big old woman, sitting upright, with a roll of knitting

[1] French for “Public Parks”.

on her embroidered apron. They did not speak. This was disappointing, for Miss Brill always looked forward to the conversation. She had become really quite expert, she thought, at listening as though she didn't listen, at sitting in other people's lives just for a minute while they talked round her.

She glanced, sideways, at the old couple. Perhaps they would go soon. Last Sunday, too, hadn't been as interesting as usual. An Englishman and his wife, he wearing a dreadful Panama hat and she button boots. And she'd gone on the whole time about how she ought to wear spectacles; she knew she needed them; but that it was no good getting any; they'd be sure to break and they'd never keep on. And he'd been so patient. He'd suggested everything—gold rims, the kind that curved round your ears, little pads inside the bridge. No, nothing would please her. "They'll always be sliding down my nose!" Miss Brill had wanted to shake her.

The old people sat on the bench, still as statues. Never mind, there was always the crowd to watch. To and fro, in front of the flower-beds and the band rotunda, the couples and groups paraded, stopped to talk, to greet, to buy a handful of flowers from the old beggar who had his tray fixed to the railings. Little children ran among them, swooping and laughing; little boys with big white silk bows under their chins, little girls, little French dolls, dressed up in velvet and lace. And sometimes a tiny staggerer came suddenly rocking into the open from under the trees, stopped, stared, as suddenly sat down "flop," until its small high-stepping mother, like a young hen, rushed scolding to its rescue. Other people sat on the benches and green chairs, but they were nearly always the same, Sunday after Sunday, and—Miss Brill had often noticed—there was something funny about nearly all of them. They were odd, silent, nearly all old, and from the way they stared they looked as though they'd just come from dark little rooms or even—even cupboards!

Behind the rotunda the slender trees with yellow leaves down drooping, and through them just a line of sea, and beyond the blue sky with gold-veined clouds.

Tum-tum-tum tiddle-um! tiddle-um! tum tiddley-um tum ta! blew the band.

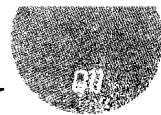
Two young girls in red came by and two young soldiers in blue met them, and they laughed and paired and went off arm-in-arm. Two peasant women with funny straw hats passed, gravely, leading beautiful smoke-coloured donkeys. A cold, pale nun hurried by. A beautiful woman came along and dropped her bunch of violets, and a little boy ran after to hand them to her, and she took them and threw them away as if they'd been poisoned. Dear me! Miss Brill didn't know whether to admire that or not! And now an ermine toque and a gentleman in grey met just in front of her. He was tall, stiff, dignified, and she was wearing the ermine toque she'd bought when her hair was yellow. Now everything, her hair, her face, even her eyes, was the same colour as the shabby ermine, and her hand, in its cleaned glove, lifted to dab her lips, was a tiny yellowish paw. Oh, she was so pleased to see him—delighted! She rather thought they were going to meet that afternoon. She described where she'd been—everywhere, here, there, along by the

sea. The day was so charming—didn't he agree? And wouldn't he, perhaps? ... But he shook his head, lighted a cigarette, slowly breathed a great deep puff into her face, and even while she was still talking and laughing, flicked the match away and walked on. The ermine toque was alone; she smiled more brightly than ever. But even the band seemed to know what she was feeling and played more softly, played tenderly, and the drum beat, "The Brute! The Brute!" over and over. What would she do? What was going to happen now? But as Miss Brill wondered, the ermine toque turned, raised her hand as though she'd seen some one else, much nicer, just over there, and pattered away. And the band changed again and played more quickly, more gayly than ever, and the old couple on Miss Brill's seat got up and marched away, and such a funny old man with long whiskers hobbled along in time to the music and was nearly knocked over by four girls walking abreast.

Oh, how fascinating it was! How she enjoyed it! How she loved sitting here, watching it all! It was like a play. It was exactly like a play. Who could believe the sky at the back wasn't painted? But it wasn't till a little brown dog trotted on solemn and then slowly trotted off, like a little "theatre" dog, a little dog that had been drugged, that Miss Brill discovered what it was that made it so exciting. They were all on the stage. They weren't only the audience, not only looking on; they were acting. Even she had a part and came every Sunday. No doubt somebody would have noticed if she hadn't been there; she was part of the performance after all. How strange she'd never thought of it like that before! And yet it explained why she made such a point of starting from home at just the same time each week—so as not to be late for the performance—and it also explained why she had quite a queer, shy feeling at telling her English pupils how she spent her Sunday afternoons. No wonder! Miss Brill nearly laughed out loud. She was on the stage. She thought of the old invalid gentleman to whom she read the newspaper four afternoons a week while he slept in the garden. She had got quite used to the frail head on the cotton pillow, the hollowed eyes, the open mouth and the high pinched nose. If he'd been dead she mightn't have noticed for weeks; she wouldn't have minded. But suddenly he knew he was having the paper read to him by an actress! "An actress!" The old head lifted; two points of light quivered in the old eyes. "An actress—are ye?" And Miss Brill smoothed the newspaper as though it were the manuscript of her part and said gently, "Yes, I have been an actress for a long time."

The band had been having a rest. Now they started again. And what they played was warm, sunny, yet there was just a faint chill—a something, what was it? —not sadness—no, not sadness—a something that made you want to sing. The tune lifted, lifted, the light shone; and it seemed to Miss Brill that in another moment all of them, all the whole company, would begin singing. The young ones, the laughing ones who were moving together, they would begin, and the men's voices, very resolute and brave, would join them. And then she too, she too, and the others on the benches—they would come in with a kind of accompaniment—something low, that scarcely rose or fell, something so beautiful—moving... And Miss Brill's eyes filled with tears and





she looked smiling at all the other members of the company. Yes, we understand, we understand, she thought—though what they understood she didn't know.

Just at that moment a boy and girl came and sat down where the old couple had been. They were beautifully dressed; they were in love. The hero and heroine, of course, just arrived from his father's yacht. And still soundlessly singing, still with that trembling smile, Miss Brill prepared to listen.

"No, not now," said the girl. "Not here, I can't."

"But why? Because of that stupid old thing at the end there?" asked the boy. "Why does she come here at all—who wants her? Why doesn't she keep her silly old mug at home?"

"It's her fu-ur which is so funny," giggled the girl. "It's exactly like a fried whiting."

"Ah, be off with you!" said the boy in an angry whisper. Then: "Tell me, *ma petite chère*<sup>[1]</sup>—"

"No, not here," said the girl. "Not yet."

On her way home she usually bought a slice of honey-cake at the baker's. It was her Sunday treat. Sometimes there was an almond in her slice, sometimes not. It made a great difference. If there was an almond it was like carrying home a tiny present—a surprise—something that might very well not have been there. She hurried on the almond Sundays and struck the match for the kettle in quite a dashing way.

But today she passed the baker's by, climbed the stairs, went into the little dark room—her room like a cupboard—and sat down on the red eiderdown. She sat there for a long time. The box that the fur came out of was on the bed. She unclasped the necklet quickly; quickly, without looking, laid it inside. But when she put the lid on she thought she heard something crying.



### Questions for Discussion:

1. What is the function of the minor characters?
2. What role does the "fur coat" play? What aspects of Miss Brill's character are revealed by the successive events? And what does the final episode suggest about Miss Brill's future days?

[1] French for "my little darling".