
James Joyce

The Dead

Directed by John Huston

1987

Cast

Helena Carroll
Ingrid Craigie
Cathleen Delany
Donal Donnally
Rachael Dowling

Angelica Huston
Marie Kean
Donal McCann
Sean McClory
Dan O'Herlihy

Frank Patterson

The screenplay, by John Huston's son Tony, is based on Joyce's story "The Dead" from the collection called *Dubliners*, probably Joyce's most widely read work. Although less accessible to most audiences than some, the movie won wide acclaim, especially for the performances by the all-Irish cast. John Huston had wanted to film the story for many years, and this "family affair" closed out his career, which featured such celebrated movies as "The Maltese Falcon," "The Treasure of the Sierra Madre," "Moby-Dick," and "The African Queen."

To ponder:

1. The story has no real plot. What, then, if anything, holds it together? What structure does Joyce impose on his material here in place of a series of causally related events?
2. The dinner party (another dinner scene!) takes place in 1904. What atmosphere does Joyce try to create, and what devices or techniques does he use to accomplish the task?
3. What impressions does Joyce want us to have of the couple and their relationship that dominates the second part of the movie, and what devices does he use to convey those impression?
4. One critic says that the "film celebrates time, place, and atmosphere." Explain what he means by each.