Lesson Plan: “Araby”

James Joyce, *Dubliners* (1914) — taught for ESL students, with scaffolding throughout.

Facilitator: Andrew Eder-Moreau · Produced from Session One, Friday, October 30, 2026 · The core sequence in this plan was field-tested in that session with a second-language reader.



Dublin, where the story is set: an ordinary street, a boy, and a promise about a fair called Araby.

Best level: CEFR B2

Why B2 fits. The plot is deliberately simple — almost nothing happens — so B2 learners can follow the story line without help. The load sits elsewhere: a dense, older vocabulary (in Session One, a strong second-language reader met 7–8 unknown words on a first pass) and symbolic language, where Catholic and ceremonial words carry a schoolboy crush. B2 learners have the reading stamina for a roughly 2,400-word text and the language to discuss feelings, motives, and self-deception — the discussion this story exists to produce. Below B2, the vocabulary wall blocks the discussion; above B2, the scaffolding can be thinned, but the story still rewards the work.

At a glance

Item	Detail
Text	“Araby” by James Joyce (*Dubliners*, 1914), about 2,400 words. Read whole, then reread in parts.
Level	CEFR B2 (upper-intermediate). See the level note above.
Timing	One 60-minute lesson, with the reading started in class. Stretch option: 90 minutes, adding a full second reading.
Setting in one line	A boy in 1890s Dublin promises the girl he admires that he will bring her something from a visiting fair — the bazaar called Araby.
Materials	The story text, the student handout on the last page of this plan, a board, and dictionaries or translation apps for the second pass only.

Learning objectives

By the end of the lesson, learners can:

- Retell the story’s arc in order: the promise, the wait, the dark hall, and what changes for the boy.
- Use the target vocabulary in speech and writing: *bazaar, stall, chalice, vanity, infatuated, doe-eyed, anguish, derided, driven*.
- Answer the core question with evidence: was the narrator in love with the girl, or in love with the idea of her?
- Explain the final sentence in their own words, and say what an *epiphany* is — a small, ordinary moment that suddenly shows a person the truth about themselves.

BEFORE READING

Sell the fantasy first, then hand over the text

The story is about the gap between a word and the thing itself, so start with the word. Write **ARABY** on the board before anyone opens the text and ask what it promises: the exotic, the romantic, escape. Learners keep that promise in mind while the story tests it.

One line of context is enough: a boy in 1890s Dublin promises the girl he admires that he will bring her something from a visiting fair. Do not explain the ending, the symbolism, or Joyce.

Scaffold 1 — Pre-teach only the load-bearing words

Five words carry the story. Teaching more than these before reading turns the first pass into a vocabulary lesson and spoils the discoveries later in the plan.

Word	Plain meaning	Why it matters here
bazaar	A market or fair, often selling things from many places	Araby is a bazaar — the name itself is the fantasy
stall	One small shop or table inside a market	What he finds at the end, and what he hears there
chalice	A special cup used in church	The key image for how the boy sees himself
vanity	Caring too much about yourself and how you look to others; emptiness	The word the whole story lands on
blind (of a street)	A street with no way out at the end; a dead end	The story opens on one — the setting is a clue

Scaffold 2 — Prediction frame

Learners complete these aloud or in writing before reading. The frames give B2 speakers the grammar for a guess, so the guess itself is the only hard part.

"From the name *Araby*, I expect the fair to be … because …"

"I think the boy will / will not keep his promise because …"

Scaffold 3 — The two-pass reading routine

1. **First pass — story only.** Read for what happens. No dictionary. Mark unknown words with a dot in the margin and keep going. In Session One, a second-language reader described this pass as "blanking" on the hard language — that is normal, and naming it in advance stops it feeling like failure.
2. **Second pass — with support.** Reread the marked sections with a dictionary or translation app, the word bank on the handout, and a partner. This is the pass where, in the reader's own words, it becomes "oh, now I get it."

> **Teacher note:** Protect the two passes. If learners translate every word on the first pass, the story never gets a chance to work as a story — and the final sentence loses the payoff it earns.

WHILE READING

Three pauses, two hard spots

Read in three movements and pause at each break. Each pause has one question, a scaffold, and a short teacher move.

Pause	Question	Scaffold and teacher move
1. The promise She speaks to him once, about the bazaar she cannot attend.	What does he actually know about her?	**Evidence list.** Pairs list everything the narrator tells us about the girl. The list will be very short — and that emptiness is the lesson. Keep the list on the board for the core discussion.
2. The wait The uncle is late; the evening stretches.	How does Joyce slow time down?	**Detail hunt.** Learners underline every detail that makes the wait feel long, then read one aloud. Frame: "Time feels slow when …"
3. The dark hall Most stalls are closed; he buys nothing.	What has he lost — and what has he gained?	**Two-column sort.** Lost / Gained columns on the handout. Push past "nothing": he has lost a fantasy and gained knowledge of himself.

Hard spot 1 — The chalice hunt

> *"I bore my chalice safely through a throng of foes."*

Learners stall here because the language is Catholic and ceremonial while the feeling is a schoolboy crush. Do not explain it. Instead, learners hunt the text for every religious word — *chalice, prayers, praises, confessions* — and note what each one is attached to. The discovery is theirs: sacred vocabulary, spent on an ordinary girl. That mismatch is the story's engine.

Frame for reporting a find: "Joyce uses the religious word … for …. This shows the boy feels …"

Hard spot 2 — The final sentence, word by word

> *"I saw myself as a creature driven and derided by vanity; and my eyes burned with anguish and anger."*

Word	Unpack it as
driven	Pushed and controlled by a force, not choosing freely
derided	Laughed at, treated as foolish
vanity	From the pre-teach list — now felt, not just defined
anguish	Strong mental pain, stronger than sadness

Then name the technique: this is Joyce's *epiphany* — a trivial instant that detonates into self-knowledge. In Session One this unpack worked as designed: the second-language reader reached "burned with anguish and anger" from his own reading and explained it himself.

AFTER READING

The core discussion: the idea of her

CORE QUESTION

Was the narrator in love with her — or in love with the idea of her?

This question carried a full session with a second-language reader, and it pulled the target vocabulary out in context: *infatuated, doe-eyed,* and *anguish*. Three steps:

1. **Return to the evidence list** from Pause 1. He barely knows her; she barely knows him. What, exactly, is he in love with?
2. **Self-deception or delusion?** Is the boy's blind belief good, bad, or necessary? Session One's position: some self-deception is the price of attempting anything; expectations must grow step by step, not leap — the anguish is what the leap costs.
3. **The tone contrast (5 minutes).** At the stall, the boy overhears cheap, real-world flirtation: "O, I never said such a thing!" Learners rewrite one of his grand inner thoughts as a plain sentence a real teenager would say.

Frames: "He was in love with the idea of her because …" · "I disagree, because he …" · "His belief helped / harmed him because …"



The bazaar as the boy imagines it: glowing and exotic. What he finds is a dark hall and closing stalls — that gap is the lesson.

Scaffolding at B2: support and stretch

Support (same text, more carrying)	Stretch (same text, less carrying)
Word bank and frames on the table all lesson; evidence list in pairs before whole-class talk; second pass with dictionary and partner.	Frames removed for discussion; a second religious word found without the hunt list; final sentence rewritten as the adult narrator, in plain words.

Exit ticket and what to look for

Prompt (one short paragraph): a time your expectation met reality. The story just read gives learners the shape — and the words — to tell theirs. A real model exists from Session One: a student whose "delusional" goal, acted on with borrowed confidence, turned out to be within his ability.

	Look for
☐	The expectation stated clearly first, then the reality.
☐	At least two target words used correctly (*vanity, anguish, infatuated*).
☐	One sentence of self-knowledge: what the writer understands now.

STUDENT HANDOUT — PRINT THIS PAGE

“Araby” by James Joyce — Working Page

Name: _____ Level: CEFR B2 Rule for the first reading: **no dictionary**. Mark words you do not know with a dot and keep reading.

Word bank

Word	Meaning	Word	Meaning
bazaar	a market or fair	**infatuated**	filled with a feeling that is not yet love
stall	one small shop in a market	**doe-eyed**	soft, innocent, admiring
chalice	a special cup used in church	**anguish**	strong mental pain
vanity	caring too much about yourself; emptiness	**derided**	laughed at as foolish
blind street	a dead end	**driven**	pushed by a force, not free

1 — What do we actually know about the girl?

List everything the narrator tells us. Keep it honest: only what is in the text.

2 — The chalice hunt

Find religious words in the story. What is each word used for?

Religious word	Used for…

3 — The dark hall: lost and gained

What he lost	What he gained

4 — Core question

“He was in love with **her / the idea of her** (circle one) because the text shows …”

5 — Exit ticket: a time your expectation met reality

One short paragraph. Try to use two word-bank words. Start if you need to: “I expected … In reality … Now I understand …”

Text: James Joyce, “Araby,” *Dubliners* (1914). Photos: a Dublin street; an evening bazaar.