Indecisiveness In Eveline James Joyce

James Joyce shows the struggle of paralysis and inaction in making changes in his character's life. Eveline is a very static character. We believe that Eveline is truly going to make the decision to leave with Frank to another country; but as we come to the conclusion of the story, we learn quickly that she has a reluctance to leave her family behind. Joyce uses the rise and downfall of the plot to show that guilt can be an important component when it comes to decision-making, especially about one's future.

In the short story "Eveline" by James Joyce, he shows a story of a woman who wants to make a change in her life, but her fear of change and previous promises keep her rooted.

Eveline speaks so thoroughly about how she wants a new life, as well as how excited she is about meeting and getting ready to begin a new life with Frank; but as the story continues, she continuously brings up the promise she made to her mother to keep the family together as long as possible, and how she doesn't want to break that promise. Joyce uses the juxtaposition of the altering setting and the unchanging character of Eveline in order to illustrate the reluctance and inability to move forward (Bartleby). The verbs that Joyce uses to describe her are those of inaction, for example, using the word "sat" (Joyce 72) in the first paragraph, and continuing to use that word throughout the story (75) up until the end, where the story concludes with the description of Eveline "passive, like a helpless animal" (76).

As the plot thickens, we as the reader can pick up the idea that Eveline is not actually going to leave the country with Frank. Her subconscious guilt, as well as the promise to her mother, is what keeps her rooted to her home. She admits that her current life is a hard life, but after she starts to make plans to leave, she begins to think about the good things and the certainty that her current life provides, finding it "not a wholly undesirable life" (74). Because of this, Eveline falls into a sort of 'mental paralysis' at the end of the story concerning the idea of leaving with Frank. When she is standing on the dock, Joyce uses the imagery "all the seas of the world tumbled about her heart" (76) to show us how her mind is working through her anxiety over whether to stay or to go. Eveline then decides that she does not want to go with Frank, and stays on the dock when he gets on the boat.

Joyce uses the plot to direct the reader's ideas as to what Eveline is thinking versus what she is going to do.