

Ulysses is widely considered a literary masterpiece and one of the hardest works of literature to read. A famously difficult novel that inspires many around the world, the book has held up as one of the key texts of literary modernism.

The plot transpires over the course of a single day focusing on three central characters: Stephen Dedalus, Leopold Bloom, a half-Jewish advertising canvasser for a Dublin newspaper, and Bloom's wife Molly who's about to embark on an affair.

Each chapter is written in a different style which makes reading it enjoyable, but the range of styles also makes it difficult.

Chapter 12 – is a story with bizarre exaggerated interruptions

Chapter 13 – is like a cheesy romance novel

Chapter 14 – reproduces the evolution of English literary prose style from its beginning in the Anglo-Saxon times right up to the 20th century.

The final chapter follows Molly's stream-of-consciousness as it spools out in just eight long paragraphs with almost no punctuation.

Joyce fills his narrative gymnastic routines with some of the most imaginative use of language readers find anywhere. One you start excavating the text, you'll find the book to be an encyclopedic treasure trove. It's filled with all manner of references and allusions from medieval philosophy to the symbolism of tattoos and from Dante to Dublin slang. Some of these allusions revolve around Homer's *Odyssey*. Each chapter is named after a character or episode from the *Odyssey*, but the literary references are often coy, debatable, sarcastic or disguised.

Ulysses is a very funny book that includes highbrow intellectual humor and lowbrow dirty jokes. Those and other sexual references were too much for some. In the United States, the book was put on trial, banned, and censored before it had even been completed, because it was originally published as a serial novel.

Readers of *Ulysses* are given a rich and accurate tour of Dublin in 1904. He wrote the entire novel while living outside his native Ireland taking great care in precisely representing details of his home city.

It's a testament to Joyce's genius that *Ulysses* is a difficult book. There's a lot of joy to be found in reading it. Upon its publication there was a lot of praise, but also a lot of criticism, when *Ulysses* was first published. Responding to the criticism, Joyce said that if *Ulysses* isn't worth reading, then life isn't worth living.