

A Ulysses Book Report

By Michael Molinelli

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Ulysses – Book Report, English 300, Mr. Cooney

Okay. So I've got to read **Ulysses**. The teacher gave us over two months and I put it off until the last week. No problem. I can do this. I was busy anyway. There was that Chemistry report and other stuff. But I can do this.

Ulysses. Wow this book is thick. Let's see, 780 pages. Okay that's only about 110 pages a day. That's okay. I'll read 200 a day.

Ulysses by James Joyce. Okay, skip the forward and start.

Stately, plump Buck Mulligan came from the stairhead, bearing a bowl of lather on which a mirror and razor lay crossed. A yellow dressinggown, ungirdled, was sustained gently behind him by the mild morning air. He held the bowl aloft and intoned:
- *Introibo ad altare Dei*.

What? I have to read this class for English and there's Latin in it? It is probably important, but I can't let it slow me down. I thought Ulysses was a Greek guy. Who is this Buck Mulligan dude?

Halted, he peered down the dark winding stairs and called up coarsely:
-Come up, Kinch. Come up, you fearful Jesuit.

Solemnly he came forward and mounted the round gunrest. He faced about and blessed gravely thrice the tower, the surrounding country and awakening mountains. Then catching sight of Stephan Dedalus, he bent towards him and made rapid crosses in the air, gurgling in his throat and shaking his head. Stephen Dedalus, displeased and sleepy, leaned his arms on the top of the staircase and looked coldly at the shaking gurgling face that blessed him, equine in its length, and at the light untousured hair, grained and hued like pale oak.

What!? What does that mean? I don't have time to read that again. I thought this book was banned. I thought this would be fun. Where the part about some secretary and nurse or something? I can't do this. Man, if I don't though, I fail English and then I have to go to summer school. I can't risk that. Summer school and a job. Kill my summer. I've got one summer left, next summer college faces me down, and I was going to have a good time this summer. Donna and me at the beach three times a week. Her in her bathing suit – I really get to stare up her legs and down her cleavage. I was going to touch Donna's this summer; I better.

But this book! If I can't...summer school. Kill my summer. When do I get a great summer? Like all those movies and those rich kids in school who don't need to get summer jobs. When do I have the youthful well-financed fling of a carefree summer? Me and Donna going all the way on the beach. That would be so great...

-Damn, gotta read this book.

Buck Mulligan peeped an instant under the mirror and then covered the bowl smartly.

-Back to barracks, he said sternly.

He added in a preacher's tone:

For this, O dearly beloved, is the genuine Christine: body and soul and blood and ouns.

Ouns? I need a freakin' dictionary with this book. Ouns? What is an oun? "blood and ouns. Slow music..." Nope, not going to get the meaning from the sentence. Move on, kid, you gotta read 200 pages today.

...blood and ouns. Slow music, please. Shut your eyes, gents. One moment. A little trouble about those white corpuscles. Silence all.

-What is this book about? When do I get to all the good banned stuff? That "oun" must be the key. Let me google it. There "oun" Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists. The way this book is headed that is probably right. Seven hundred eighty pages of this!

He peered sideways up and gave a long low whistle of call, then paused awhile in rapt attention, ("rapt attention" that's a good porn phrase – maybe this is a good part) his even white teeth glistening here and there with gold points. Chrysotomos. (What!) Two strong shrill whistles answered through the calm. (Keep reading, kid!)

-Thanks, old chap, he cried briskly. That will do nicely. Switch off the current, will you? (Don't worry what it means, just keep reading.)

He skipped off the gunrest and looked gravely at his watcher, gathering about his legs the loose folds of his gown. The plump shadowed face and sullen oval jowl recalled a prelate, patron of arts in the middle ages. A pleasant smile broke quietly over his lips. (This is sounding kind of gay.)

-The mockery of it, he said gaily. (I was right!) Your absurd name, an ancient Greek.

He pointed his finger in friendly jest and went over to the parapet, laughing to himself. Stephan Dedalus stepped up, followed him wearily halfway and sat down on the edge of the gunrest, watching him still as he propped his mirror on the parapet, dipped the brush in the bowl and lathered cheeks and neck.

Buck Mulligan's gay voice went on.

This is gay! A guy name Buck Mulligan wakes up with a guy named Stephan in the same room and references to ancient Greeks! Man, what is my teacher, Mr. Cooney, having us read? He's not gay. I saw his wife. Man, if a high school English teacher can get it that good. She's like a lingerie model with real porn quality breasts. Donna's got what she's got; she's just 6 inches shorter. Every time I get Donna to smile, wow! What a great smile and her big brown eyes just squint in the cutest way.

-I've got to hook up with Donna this summer or I will explode. **Ulysses**. This book is interminable and I'm only on the second page, 198 to go. Maybe I'll just do 100 pages today. That will be enough. Let's see what I've got to read up to.

-That is where Childs was murdered, he said. The house.

Good. There is a murder; something to look forward to. I thought this book was about a day in the life of some guy named Bloom. What's all this other gay stuff? I think it is time to find the Cliff Notes on line. Except Mr. Cooney is good at finding out if you didn't read the report. He can tell if your book report was downloaded off the web and he comes up with questions on his test that are not in the Cliff Notes. Thinks he is quite the computer geek. I guess in his day he mastered Mist and that was enough. I bet I could cook his butt in a game of Wii golf. I might as well read some more. Back to the second page.

-My name is absurd too: Malachi Mulligan, two dactyls. (Teradactyls?) But it has a Hellenic ring, hasn't it? Tripping and sunny like the buck himself. We must go to Athens. Will you come if I can get the aunt to fork out twenty quid?

He laid the brush aside and, laughing with delight, cried:

-Will he come? The jejune Jesuit.

Ceasing, he began to shave with care.

-Tell me, Mulligan, Stephen said quietly.

-Yes, my love?

Geez! This is really gay. And not just totally lame gay, but gay gay. *Not that there's anything wrong with that.* My mom told that once "gay" just meant happy, but I don't believe her.

I don't need this. I need Donna. Man, she makes even a McDonald's uniform look hot. Boy, did that kill last summer. She worked the morning shift; I worked the dinner shift. Aside from occasionally bumping into her at the parking lot, I barely saw her. Meanwhile, every jerk-customer is hitting on her right after he gets his food. It's like some primordial drive about guys. Food first, reproduction second. So a cute McDonalds girl is like everything they could want in life.

-Last summer. What a downer. I had the job and no girl. I could only afford a phone or a car, not both.

I opted for the cell phone and wasted my paycheck text messaging Larry dirty jokes. So, no money or time for the beach. Just phoning guys about how we have no money for a car or a date. Driving Dad's beat up Civic was not going to do it for me and I couldn't get that all the time either.

-Those kids on MTV, those stoned jerks, having fun they can't even remember, ending up on some gone wild nutcase DVD. Man, I need that kind of summer. But damn, its got to be with Donna. It can't any girl, its got to be Donna.

My older brother, the toll collector – there's a good career choice: pick a field where automation works the next lane over. He hits on every pretty girl that drives through. Pretty and dumb, I guess, she can't even figure out EZ-Pass. He doesn't care which one, so he'll always find one. But for me, it's got to be Donna. If I mess up my lines with

her, its over: the summer, my life. I see guys at parties who can go up and say something stupid to a girl and maybe she falls for it half the time, well less than half. But that only works if it doesn't matter who she is. Me, I can't think of anything to say that doesn't sound like someone else's stupid line.

-Have you ever tried initiating a conversation without asking a question? Talk to a stranger and the first thing has to be a question. Or they think you are a weirdo. "What time is it?" "Can you tell me where the police station is?" "Would you like to dance?" Even "Great weather we are having" intones like a question even if you don't end it with "Isn't it?"

-I've got to read this book. My mind is drifting.

-Yes, my love?

-How long is Haines going to stay in this tower?

Buck Mulligan showed a shaven cheek over his right shoulder.

-God, isn't he dreadful? he said frankly. A ponderous Saxon. He thinks you're not a gentlemen. God, these bloody English. Bursting with money and indigestion. Because he comes from Oxford. You know, Dedalus, you have the real Oxford manner. (Okay, scan down to something that looks important.) ...shaved warily ...woeful lunatic.... – the bard's noserag. A new color for our Irish poets: snotgreen. You can almost taste it can't you.?

He said "snot", cool. That is just over two pages. Seven hundred seventy eight to go.

Donna, I got to hook up with Donna. Oh, that green low-cut velvet mini-dress she wore at that Christmas party. Her legs, the way the dress hugged the tops of her thighs, curving up her rump and in at her waist and up her breasts. She was wearing some kind of amazing bra. Real pear shaped, with a touch of visible flesh at top. Does she know what that does to a guy? I think she does, which is why she does it.

Larry said he got Wendy to go all the way by buying her beer. But I don't want that with Donna. I want her and me to remember it. And I wouldn't want Donna to be the kind of girl who sleeps around after two beers. Larry's a liar anyway. You just know the guys in high school talking about it are not getting it. They have the rest of us thinking we are the only ones left out, but I know there are a lot of us. Hey, why is it the first time some one has sex they say they "lost it" and after that they say they are "getting it"?

Look, we all know the girls who are easy but if you want someone specific, and want someone who wants you; if you want love, it is not that easy. Without Donna, I couldn't be happy. How do I let her know that?

I got to read this book! Damn, its long. How long does the book report have to be? Four pages. Hmmmm. I might be able to write four pages on what I read so far.