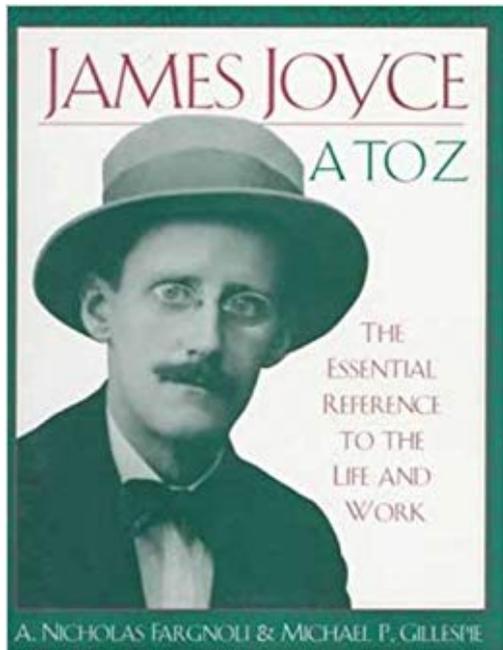


# James Joyce A to Z: The Essential Reference to the Life and Work by Michael Patrick Gillespie,A. Nicholas Fargnoli



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Features synopses of works, character descriptions, biographies of contemporaries, and explanations of literary terms and place names



## Reviews of the James Joyce A to Z: The Essential Reference to the Life and Work by Michael Patrick Gillespie,A. Nicholas Fargnoli

### Zut

Elvis, the Beatles and Marilyn Monroe have received the A to Z treatment in which every aspect of their lives and works have been reordered alphabetically, so it was only a matter of time that the mania would spread to lesser figures in our popular culture, in this case Mark Twain, James Joyce and Virginia Woolf.

This series of three books, originally published by Facts On File and now updated and reprinted by

Oxford University Press, combines facts culled from the writers' lives and works, shakes them up thoroughly, and recasts them into easily locatable entries. The result is an addictive pleasure, a page-turning odyssey for anyone interested in learning more about their favorite writer.

At 304 pages, the Joyce volume is the smallest of the trio, but what it lacks in size it more than makes up by offering extensive commentaries on "Ulysses" and "Finnegans Wake." Those who have tried to read these modernist (or post-modernist, the argument still rages) classics have quickly recognized the need for assistance. For "Ulysses," the Joyce volume reprints Joyce's chart that lists each chapter's time frame, location, symbols, technics, organs, art and correspondences to the original. Each chapter is given its own entry, which describes the action, Joyce's intentions, and clarifies points of Dublin's history. As one who attempted "Ulysses" solo, and suffered for his sin, I can speak with authority that this volume would have saved me a great deal of agony. I only wish they had abandoned their schema and combined the chapter descriptions into a single, lengthy appendix.

No detail is too small to escape the editors. There are also entries on Gustave Flaubert, an influence on Joyce's writing style; Throwaway, the race horse whose victory in the Ascot Gold Cup figures in "Ulysses," and the Volta Cinema, Dublin's first movie theater, which Joyce helped to open.

In short, this guide can help the Joyce reader move through the complexities of his work without feeling like you've earned a Ph.D in comparative literature while you're doing so.

### **Folsa**

Presents, in alphabetical order, brief (one paragraph to about 2 pages) synopses and explanations of people, places, themes, and phrases from several of Joyce's works, including his major novels and his poetry. Wonderful as either a tool for decoding Joyce, or as "skimming material." It's a treat to just wander through these pages, seeing explanations for 'Finnegan' across from those for "Dubliners," a biography of T.S. Eliot one page after a description of the fictional "Earwicker."

Includes over 800 entries, illustrations, synopses of books and chapters, biographies of Joyce and his contemporaries, bibliography, a very useful index, as well as the text of Jude Woolsey's ruling to lift the ban on "Ulysses." The writing is clear, wide-ranging, and complete without bogging the reader down in minutiae. Not as thorough as the encyclopedic "Ulysses Annotated," but very useful in disentangling Joyce and his works without great effort! Written by a Professor of Theology and English at Molloy College (and vice president of the James Joyce Society), and a professor of English at Marquette University.

### **Nagor**

This is an outstanding reference for readers ranging from those having casual interest to serious Joyceans. All of Joyce's works are covered in some depth and the material on Ulysses and Finnegans Wake is fantastic. It includes chapter outlines and summaries. The book is also very good at providing concise summaries of people, places and things in or connected to Joyce's work. I wish I had discovered this book much earlier in my academic career.

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**Nicholas Fargnoli**

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