Why is the story called “The Dead”?

- Is there a thesis? I.e. “Death is [something]”? Or is it more that the author is just saying, “Death is.”
- “Death” is not about dead people as such, but rather that the living characters are stuck in routine—drunks who stay drunks, married couples who are not really sure why they’re married. The only person really alive is, paradoxically, Michael Furey, because he lived fully. Also Molly Ivors? She has a passion for her ideals. The others are stuck in a rut. They are spiritually dead because they lack this passion in their lives.
- The snow covers everything—it does not care what is what. It covers the dead as well as the living. Doesn’t care about their memories. Just covers them for what they are.
- Aunt Julia—described as “gray.” Living characters are less colorful than the dead ones.
- Snow: Not just dead but also pure—symbol for a new beginning (blank canvas). Very last line in the story. Death is not a bad thing because something new can come from it. Snow melts in the spring and something new and colorful emerges.
- 3rd-to-last paragraph in the story: “Better pass boldly into that other world…” Everyone dies. Last line connects to Gabriel’s speech—old giving way to new.
- Gabriel losing touch with all that is right. Speech: New generation lacks important qualities of Irishness. Does Molly leave because of shame at her attack on G?
- At the end of the story G sees what his life has come to.
- References to death: Monks sleeping in coffins. Use of terms like “shade” and “gray.”
- P. 34 G’s fingers tapped the window… Lots of references to death here—e.g. the assassination that took place in the park. Is Irish nationalism itself dying out?
- Difference between living and dead.
- Use of color symbolism: gray, black—but also red. Page 23: “High color of his cheeks pushed upward… pale red.” What does red symbolize? Life? P. 24: Aunt Julia’s hair gray. Aunt Kate more vivacious, face “like a shriveled red apple.” P. 30: Red in Aunt Julia’s clothes when she was young.
- End of story: Is Gabriel seeing his life come to an end? Or is he discovering a new meaning to his life? (“Generous tears filled his eyes”).