In Lois Tyson's "Critical Theory Today" Tyson discusses the use of the feminist perspective throughout literature. Tyson states that feminism " examines the ways in which literature (and other cultural productions) reinforce or undermines the economic, political, social, and psychological oppression of women." (79) Tyson goes on to further state that feminism doesn't "agree that such differences as physical size, shape, and body chemistry make men naturally superior to women: for example, more intelligent, more logical, more courageous, or better leaders… women are not born feminine , and men are not born masculine. Rather, these gender categories are constructed by society" (82) It is here Tyson discusses that the roles in which both genders perform is not due to genetics or human nature but simply due to the fact that as humans, we fall in line with the ideological views in which society places each of us. When utilizing the feminist perspective to analyze James Joyce's "Eveline" one can see how the main character, Eveline, is stuck, unconsciously functioning under the oppression in which the society has set for woman.

The story opens up featuring the main character Eveline who is assumed by the reader to take on the caretaker role within her family. The text states "she had hard work to keep the house together and to see that the two young children who had been left to her charge went to school regularly and got their meals regularly." (Joyce 3) Her father is perceived to be the "man of the house" but ironically he is a drunk and the only one doing the real work is Eveline herself. (Joyce 1) Furthermore, the text discusses the fact that her mother is no longer living. Before her mother passed the text discusses how Eveline remembered her mother crying out due to her "life of commonplace sacrifices." (Joyce 4) She remembered the complacent life that her mother lived under the reign of her father and knew she didn't want to becomes stuck just like her. In order to solve her current situation with her father, Eveline believed that leaving the country with her boyfriend Frank was the ultimate way to freedom. The text states "She stood up in a sudden impulse of terror. Escape! She must escape! Frank would save her. He would give her life, perhaps love, too. But she wanted to live. Why should she be unhappy? She had a right to happiness. Frank would take her in his arms, fold her in his arms. He would save her." (Joyce 5)

When one views her situation from a feminist perspective, although she considered taking a stand for her freedom, she ultimately fell back into the power of the patriarchal structure. It seems that no matter if her final decision was to stay with her father or go with Frank, her future would've still been dictated by a male presence. Eveline even stated herself that "the town will respect me when I'm married", concluding that her only worth or value is her association/connection to a man. Essentially, either way the story ends, Eveline ends up with a man. It appears that she is making her own decisions, but in reality, she did not have a choice. She is not *actively* making a choice, instead, she is unconsciously letting herself and her identity be dictated by the power of the patriarchal structure which reinforces the oppression of women.

On your own:

Compose a short essay using a feminist approach. (500-600 words) Your essay should have a **clear thesis presented in the first paragraph,** and should develop that thesis by examining the text in concert with some of the questions and assumptions feminist critics ask. You may want to start inductively by asking questions of your text that will lead you to specific conclusions, but in writing the essay **foreground the conclusion and then support it with the evidence you found**. Remember- this is practice for using the theory to write formal critical arguments- a skill you will utilize many times in the future so work towards writing a miniature formal paper. Use the question below to guide your thinking- (you will need to pick and choose which ones to focus on)