



T. S. Eliot (1888-1965)

# Biography

- Though he became a naturalized British subject in 1927, **Thomas Stearns Eliot** was born in **St Louis, Missouri (U.S.A.)**.
- In 1914 he met Pound, who encouraged him to settle in England.
- In June 1915 he married **Vivien Haigh-Wood**.
- From 1917 he was also assistant editor of the *Egoist*.
- In 1922 Eliot founded a new quarterly, the *Criterion*, in the first issue appeared ***The Waste Land***.
- In 1948 he was awarded the **Nobel Prize** for literature and the **OM**.
- He married his second wife, **Valerie Fletcher**, in 1957.

# The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock (1915)

- The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock is an interior monologue first published in 1915.
- His first volume of verse, *Prufrock and Other Observations* (1917).
- The poet uses stream of consciousness technique in narrating the experience of Prufrock.
- The epigraph is taken from Dante's Inferno.

I am Lazarus, come from the hell to tell you all

....

No, I am not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be

....

I am no prophet – and here's no great matter

....

Time for you and time for me,  
And time yet for a hundred indecision  
And for a hundred visions and revisions

....

It is impossible to say just what I mean!

# Four Quartets (1943)

- A set of **four interlinked sections**. Each poem **has five sections**. **Religion** is the thread that binds all. Stories from **Bhagvad Gita** find mention in this poem. Time, experience, purgation, prayer and wholeness are themes of the five sections.
- These are the four sections:
- **“Burnt Norton” (1936): Two epigraphs** taken from **Heraclitus**, a) “Though wisdom is common, the many live as if they have wisdom of their own.” b) “The upward and the way downward is one and the same.”
- Idea of time is discussed in the poem.
- **Air** is the dominant element in the imagery of Burnt Norton

- **“East Coker” (1940):** It discusses life and death. East Coker is associated with a place – a Somerset village. Earth is the dominant element in this section.
- **“Dry Salvages” (1941):** It presents a harsh picture of human condition. Water is the symbol of birth.
- **“Little Gidding” (1942):** Air, earth, water, and fire are present in this section. But fire is the dominant element in this section.



# Sweeney among the Nightingales (1920)

- *Sweeney among the Nightingales* was published in *Poems of 1920*.
- Eliot has taken the title form Elizabeth Barrett Browning's "Bianca among the Nightingales."
- The nightingale stands for a prostitute.
- Written in mock heroic pattern.
- Epigraph is taken from Aeschylus' "Agamemnon." 'Alas! I am struck deep with a mortal blow.'
- Sweeney is a modern, sexually degraded and uprooted urban person.
- A plot is hatched to murder Sweeney but he escapes.
- Besides Sweeney there is a woman in the Spanish Cape (prostitute without name), Rachel (prostitute Rabinovitch), the silent man in the leather dress and the owner of the pub.
- Myth of Philomela's rape is mentioned.

# The Hollow Men (1925)

- It is a poem divided into **five parts** and contains 98 lines.
- It has the titles of two poems, which are, **William Morris' The Hollow Land** and **Rudyard Kipling's The Broken Man**.
- Shakespeare has also mentioned hollow man in *Julius Caesar*.
- The hollow man is the unfeeling and lifeless men of the modern world.
- It has two epigraphs, one is '**Mistah Kurtz – he dead**' from **Conrad's The Heart of Darkness** and the other is '**A penny for the old Guy**' a line of a song sung by children who celebrate Guy Fawkes Day.
- A pessimistic poem presenting the horrors of the modern life.

**This is the way the world ends**

**This is the way the world ends**

**This is the way the world ends**

**Not with a bang but with a whimper.**

# Portrait of a Lady (1915)

- Finally published in the volume of poems, *Prufrock and Other Observations (1917)*.
- The title is from Henry James' novel *Portrait of a Lady*.
- The epigraph contains three lines from Marlow's *Jew of Malta*.

Thou hast committed  
Fornication: but that was in another country  
And besides, the wench is dead.

- Theme is man-woman relationship.

We must leave it now to fate...  
I shall sit here, serving tea to friends.



# Preludes (1917)

- Published in the volume of poems, *Prufrock and Other Observations (1917)*.
- Poet uses stream of consciousness technique.
- The poem is a sequence of description of urban experience.
- The first part describes a dirty wet winter evening, second part deals with the monotonous morning which smells of stale beer, the third part deals with the sordid images which are seen in a dozing half-dream of the early morning and in the fourth part there is a touch of pity at the sight of an old woman who gathers fuel.

# Gerontion (1920)

- Published in *Poems of 1920*.
- It is dramatic monologue.
- The title is from the Greek word 'Geron' which means a little old man.
- Eliot wished to make Gerontion a part of The Waste Land.
- It presents a modern man in a state of disintegration.
- The epigraph is from Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*.

Thou hast nor youth nor age  
But as it were an after dinner sleep  
Dreaming of both

# The Waste Land (1922)

- It is an epic poem of 434 lines in free verse, first published in *The Criterion* (UK) and *The Dial* (USA).
- It has five sections:
  - The Burial of the Dead
  - A game of Chess
  - The Fire Sermon
  - Death by Water
  - What the Thunder Said

# The Waste Land

- It has an epigraph from the [Satyricon of Petronius](#). The epigraph is: 'I saw with my own eye the Sibyl of Cumae hanging in a jar, and when the boys said to her, Sibyl, what do you want? She replied: I want to die.'
- Dedicated to Ezra Pound, 'the better craftsman.'
- The main theme is the disillusionment of the post war generation and sterility of the modern man.
- Sexual perversion, loss of faith and moral values, lack of human relationship, commercialization of life, mental tension, politics and wars are some causes for the disintegration of the modern civilization.

# The Waste Land

- Begins with, 'April is the cruellest month' and ends with 'Shantih, Shantih, Shantih.'
- **Tiresias** is the narrator. He is hermaphrodite (has characteristics of male and female).
- **The Burial of the Dead** refers to fertility gods taken from Frazer's *The Golden Bough*.
- **A game of Chess** is from Middleton's play *Women Beware Women*.
- **The Fire Sermon** is taken from a sermon by Lord Buddha.



# The Waste Land

- The Waste Land follows the legend of the [Holy Grail](#) and [the Fisher King](#).
- Tiresias, Madam Sosostri, Stetson, Mr. Eugenides, Phlebas, Philomel, Marie, Hyacinth Girl, Lil, Albert, Queen Elizabeth, Earl of Leicester, and the Typist Girl are some of the characters that appear in it.
- He mentions the [story of Prajapati](#).
- The Thunder says [da, da, da](#). Which means [Datta](#) (give), [Daydhvam](#) (sympathise) and [Damyati](#) (control). These words are from [Brihadranyka Upanishad](#).

# Ash Wednesday (1930)

- The poem has **six** parts.
- The title refers to **the first day of the month of Lent**.
- It is a religious poem.
- The rose stands for Virgin Mary. The leopards stand for pleasure, ambition and avarice. The three dreams are sexual activity, artistic activity and spiritual efforts. The three colours – green, white, and blue stand for hope, purity and heavenly things.

# Drama

- *Sweeney Agonistes (1932)* is first verse play of Eliot and is incomplete.
- *Murder in the Cathedral (1935)* is a verse play which describes the assassination of Archbishop Thomas Becket in Canterbury Cathedral in 1170 by Henry II of England.
- Thomas Becket returns to Canterbury after a seven-year absence: he receives visits from four Tempters, the last of whom tempts him to spiritual pride ('to do the right deed for the wrong reason').
- He gives a sermon which is the interlude of the play.

- ***The Family Reunion (1939)*** is a verse play in two acts, set in Wishwood
- Eliot uses **myth of Orestes** in the play.
- ***The Cocktail Party (1950)*** is based on **Euripides' Alcestis** and deals with the troubled married couple Edward and Lavinia Chamberlayne.
- ***The Confidential Clerk (1954)*** is a comic verse play and is autobiographical in tone.
- ***The Elder Statesman (1959)***
- ***The Rock (1934)***

# Non Fictional Works

- *Christianity and Culture (1939, 1948)*
- *Tradition and Individual Talent (1920)*
- *The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism (1920)*, 'Hamlet and His Problems'
- *For Lancelot Andrews (1928)*
- *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism (1933)*
- *The Frontiers of Criticism (1956)*
- *On Poetry and Poets (1943)*



**Thank You**