

# [A refreshing analysis of t.s. eliot’s "the love song of j. alfred prufrock”](https://assignbuster.com/a-refreshing-analysis-of-ts-eliots-the-love-song-of-j-alfred-prufrock/)

To say that “ The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” is a typical romantic ode to the wonders of love, as the title may suggest, is quite far from the truth. To the contrary, this poem enters the straggling mind of J. Alfred Prufrock, a man plagued with irresolution, and because of this irresolution will probably never realistically be in love with a woman. “ Love Song” is a dive into Prufrock’s inconsistent thought processes, and the foggy workings of his less-than-optimistic mind. Through bleak imagery, a wavering tone that feels timeless, and carefully connoted diction, T. S. Eliot portrays J. Alfred Prufrock as an uneasy, indecisive, and ultimately scared man. The first few lines of the poem set the scene as to what kind of content Prufrock has to offer. He uses a simile in comparing the evening, “ spread out against the sky,” to “ a patient etherized upon a table” (2-3). It’s a fairly unappealing comparison, and it puts an awkward image in the reader’s mind from the beginning. He goes on to set the scene of a kind of tour through a city-like atmosphere: “ Let us go, through certain half-deserted streets…of restless nights in one-night cheap hotels and sawdust restaurants…” (4-7). Again, a bleak image is cast into the mind of the reader, reminiscent of a twisted Gotham City where no one would want to be unless accompanied by someone very dear – a someone who Prufrock is not with. He goes on to make another type of “ etherized” comparison later on, which adds to the bleak, uneasy feeling: And I have known the eyes already, known them all-The eyes that fix you in a formulated phrase, And when I am formulated, sprawling on a pin, When I am pinned and wriggling on the wall, Then how should I beginTo spit out all the butt-ends of my days and ways? And how should I presume? This stanza dives into Prufrock’s uneasy nature through the use of carefully connoted diction (e. g., “ pin”) that conveys imagery of a bug or animal ready to be dissected. He is describing what happens when he runs into people he may know: they “ fix [him] in a formulated phrase,” and then pin him down, and when he is “ pinned and wriggling on the wall,” he is then forced to interact with them and make a decision about how to go about saying how his day went. To almost everyone else in the world, this type of interaction is a daily occurrence of life, and usually isn’t conveyed as a feeling of being pinned down. However, Prufrock’s uneasy nature is very similar to that of The Catcher in the Rye’s Holden Caulfield, in the fact that he really isn’t one for lighthearted social interaction. Instead, every little detail of life, in Prufrock’s eyes, is not considered an idle task, but a high-strung, uneasy chain of decisions. Throughout the poem, Prufrock seems to jog around in his mind, and is quite abstract with his thoughts. The result is a wavering, fragmented tone that further suggests Prufrock’s indecisiveness and digressive habits. One of the subtle ways that Eliot adds to this wavering tone is the fact that no definite rhyme scheme is used throughout “ Love Song.” For example, one stanza includes mostly rhyming words, ending lines with words such as “ dare,” “ stair,” and “ hair,” and then “ thin,” “ chin,” and “ pin.” But the next couple of lines in the stanza may have no rhyme pattern at all, and the same goes for the next stanza; it’s totally fragmented. This wavering rhyme scheme cleverly adds to the notion of an indecisive Prufrock. Besides the wavering rhyme scheme, the overall tone suggests that Prufrock is very uneasy and indecisive. Prufrock really does continually ask questions, always questioning things. This may seem normal, but considering the subject matter and the uneasy feeling connoted with them, this mode of thought does not come off as entirely healthy. There are close to 20 stanzas in “ Love Song”, and in almost all of them, Prufrock is questioning something. Whether the subject matter consists of whether he should “ disturb the universe” or not, or how he should deal with people who ask him how his day is, he is constantly questioning everything. He almost mockingly asserts his indecisive manners by saying “ Do I dare disturb the universe? In a minute there is time for decisions and revisions which a minute will reverse” (45-48). Essentially, he is declaring that he can make a decision now, with only a minute left, but since in one minute there will be no time anyway, he’s leaving it at that. This feeling of time passing too rapidly is present throughout the poem. More than a couple of times he says, “ And indeed there will be time,” or a variation of this line, which not only adds to his irresolute manner, but also reiterates the fact that he often trails off and picks up another topic on a whim – again, recalling Holden Caulfield’s digressive tendencies. Prufrock even directly refers to this tendency when he analyzes a woman’s arm in the lamplight; he says, “ It is perfume from a dress that makes me so digress?” (65-66). He mentions, too, his awareness of the passage of time and of the fact that he is growing old by confirming that he is becoming slightly bald. Ultimately, this realization of mortality makes him afraid: “ And in short, I was afraid” (86). Towards the end of the poem, the tone of “ Love Song” seems to waver more and more, and Prufrock becomes even more of a shaky, uneasy, scared figure. Starting from line 120, he begins to trail off: “ I grow old…I grow old…”, filling the reader’s mind with an image of a man who sits silently, the world passing him by while he ponders questions without answers. The final stanza, solidifies the elusive nature of Prufrock’s thoughts: We have lingered in the chambers of the seaBy sea-girls wreathed with seaweed red and brown Till human voices wake us, and we drown. Through Eliot’s use of bleak imagery, a wavering tone, and carefully connoted diction, Prufrock is portrayed as a highly uneasy, indecisive, and scared man. “ The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” is not a true love song, but instead a plunge into the shades-of-grey world of J. Alfred Prufrock, and ultimately the grave flaws of a fragmented mind.