

# Love song of j.alfrd prufrock notes

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The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock “ A reader’s response to a text is influenced by that responder’s social, cultural and historical context”

Choosing one of T. S Eliot’s poems set for study, consider to what extent your personal response to your chosen poem has been shaped by the enduring power of its intellectual and artistic qualities. (Quote) “ There will be time, there will be time To prepare a face to meet the faces that you meet;” Good morning /Afternoon Ms and fellow classmates. A reader’s personal response to a text is shaped by the enduring power of its intellectual and artistic qualities.

Their response is influenced by that responder’s social, cultural and historical context which is why texts including ‘ The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock’ can be interpreted in various ways by various people. ‘ The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock’, was composed by poet T. S Eliot. Born in St Louis Missouri USA, he attended Harvard University in 1906 and was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1948. ‘ The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock’ was the earliest of T. S Eliot’s major works and was completed between 1910 and 1911.

It is an examination of the tortured mind of the prototypical modern man – eloquent, neurotic and emotionally stilted. The ideas and themes explored and their relevance to us today: In ‘ The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock’ there are various themes, symbols and ideas explored. The damaged mind of humanity and the changing nature of gender roles are two of the main themes explored in the poem. Like many modernist writers, Eliot wanted to capture the transformed world which he perceived as fractured and denigrated and also wanted his poetry to express the fragile psychological state of humanity in the twentieth century.

In the poem 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' Prufrock, the poem's persona, is constantly questioning the romantic ideal of society; wondering whether he should make a radical change, or if he has the fortitude to continue living demonstrating a sense of indecisive paralysis in the persona. This is seen when Prufrock, unable to make decisions, watches women wander in and out of a room, "talking of Michelangelo." Humanity's collectively damaged psyche prevented people from communicating with one another, an idea that is clearly evident in Eliot's poem.

This also reflects the theme of the changing nature of gender roles, over the course of Eliot's life, gender roles and sexuality became increasingly flexible, and Eliot reflected those changes in his work, including 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock'. Prufrock is unable to talk to women and fears rejection, this conveys the feeling of emasculation experienced by many men as they returned home from World War 1, which was during Eliot's time, to find women empowered by their new role as wage earners. These themes are evident throughout 'The Love Song of J.

Alfred Prufrock' are relevant in today's contemporary society. Women constantly faced oppression which was seen as conventional in society in the twentieth century, men were the bread winners while women left school early to stay at home and raise children. Throughout history, especially in Eliot's time, society transformed and women fought back against this inequality, discrimination and injustice in all its forms which led to The Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopting the convention of the equal rights of men and women.

This period of revolution is why today, in most parts of the world, women's rights and freedoms are supported by law and they are no longer ignored or suppressed. The unusual independence from men shown in the women in 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' is what cause a shift in society and history and is also why today women have the right to vote, attend school, earn the same wage as men, and even lead a nation. Your response to the poem as compared to Eliot's time: My own personal response to 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' was, at first, complete confusion as I was unable to understand what it was that Eliot was trying to convey.

I soon realised that Prufrock, the poems persona, was psyche Your time and place, reflecting upon the ways in which context has shaped your response to the text: Prufrock, the poems persona, seems to be addressing a potential lover, with whom he would like to "force the moment to its crisis" by consummating their relationship. But Prufrock knows too much of life to "dare" and approach the woman: in his mind he hears the comments others make about his inadequacies. The poem moves from a series of fairly concrete physical settings - a cityscape with several interiors- to a series of vague ocean images onveying Prufrock emotional distance from the world as he comes to recognise his second-rate status. "Prufrock" is powerful for its range of intellectual reference and also vividness of character achieved. The modernist movement and the new perception of the world at the time along with the desire to create something new was one of the main influences in Eliot's work. Modernist texts emerged in the early 20th century and were influenced by developments in psychoanalysis and anthropology , by social reforms and by the growing industrialisation and mechanisation of society.

Modernist texts such as Eliot's are more interested in representing the inner life of characters. For modernists the process of artistic creation exposed the alienation and displacement that individuals often experience in modern, industrial society. Other influences on Eliot's work were the changes in religion, evident in *Journey of the Magi*, his questioning of traditional political paradigms and the way society worked and how it was structured. It is evident that there is use of dramatic monologue throughout Eliot's piece which helps to express a condition of instability.

The epigraph to this poem is from Dante's *Inferno* and describes Prufrock's ideal listener; one who is as lost as the speaker and will not betray to the world the content of Prufrock's present confessions. In the world Prufrock describes, though, no such sympathetic figure exists, and he must, therefore, be content with silent reflection. Using fictional personalities such as J. Alfred Prufrock to express a state of inner turmoil or a multiplicity of selves contained within one person. J.

Alfred Prufrock is not just the speaker of one of Eliot's poems, he is the representative man of early modernism. Shy, cultivated and oversensitive, the speakers of his poems are trapped inside their own excessive alertiveness. The general fragmentation of the poem is obvious and notorious. The poem seems a perfect example of what Terry Eagleton calls "the modern transition from metaphor to metonym ; unable any longer to totalise his experience in some heroic figure, the bourgeois is forced to let trickle away into objects related to him by sheer contiguity. Eliot was interested in the divide between high and lowculture" *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* is, as the title, implies a song, with various lines repeated as

refrains. That poem ends with the song of mermaids luring humans to their deaths by drowning—a scene that echoes Odysseus’s interactions with the Sirens in the *Odyssey*. Music thus becomes another way in which Eliot collages and references books from past literary traditions. Eliot chooses to make Prufrock an unacknowledged poet