

# [The four quartets by t.s. eliot essay](https://assignbuster.com/the-four-quartets-by-ts-eliot-essay/)

“ The battle is going very heavily against us. We’re being crushed by the enemy weight..

. We are facing very difficult days, perhaps the most difficult that a man can undergo” (Erwin Rommel). During World War II, Field Marshal Erwin Rommel says on behalf of Germany that his army faces the most difficult days they have ever been through. This relates to all soldiers in all wars, as well as to people who lost their loved ones from the war. The time during and after World War II, the Naturalist period, resembles a time when people grieve over their losses from the war, and they write about the war and its effects on them. In Thomas Stearns Eliot’s “ Four Quartets,” Eliot portrays a dark, hopeless, spiritual Naturalist point of view by referencing World War II and its effects on its victims through hospital and subway imagery, two bells at sea, and opportunities for spiritual reflection.

By describing active places of escape and physical treatment, Eliot references World War II, the popular subject of writing during the Naturalist period, and he also describes the effects of the war through people’s emotions. The tunnels he describes reminds the reader of the subways in London during the war. Specifically, he illustrates the situation in the subway “ when an underground train … stops too long between stations / And the conversation rises and slowly fades into silence / And you see behind every face the mental emptiness deepen / Leaving only the growing terror of nothing to think about” (Eliot, “ East Coker” III). The transition from “ conversation” to “ silence” in underground trains replicates the actual events of World War II, when people would escape underground from the incoming air raids, with “ nothing to think about” but the “ terror” and destruction exploding above. In addition, their “ silence,” “ mental emptiness,” and “ growing terror” express the emotions that people experience during the Naturalist period due to this war.

In addition to the tunnels, he describes a health care facility that refers to the wounds and sicknesses from the war. Namely, he generalizes the problem with the sicknesses, “ If we obey the dying nurse / Whose constant care is not to please / But to remind of our, and Adam’s curse, / And that, to be restored, our sickness must grow worse” (IV). “ Adam’s curse,” or the idea of original sin, esembles human corruption; this “ curse” results in the war and destruction. Since the only restoration solution is to “ grow worse,” treatment by a “ dying nurse” is futile; this unstoppable disease and the corruption of mankind both outline the darkness of Naturalist writing.

The subway tunnels and the hospitals depict the physical and sentimental causes and effects of the war as human sickness, a Naturalist idea, and these introduce the human anxiety due to the war. Eliot refers to the war also through two bells’ tolls out in the sea, a place where brave men die, similar to the battlefield of the war. The first bell warns the ones lost at sea of distant rocks, which mirrors the battlefield of World War II and distant enemies. Eliot introduces the first bell’s tolls, “ the distant rote in the granite teeth, / And the wailing warning from the approaching headland / …And under the oppression of the silent fog / The tolling bell” (“ Dry Salvages” II). This “ warning” bell, near the “ approaching granite” rocks unseen in the “ silent fog,” work similarly to the civil defense sirens and bells during World War II, which alert citizens of incoming air raids. Both bells in the poem and the war signify the danger coming ahead, and the situations mirror each other because both show humans at jeopardy, a dark Naturalist idea.

The second bell tolls in prayer and remembrance of the men who passed away in World War II as well. In addition to the first warning bell, the second bell leads “ a prayer also on behalf of / Women who have seen their sons or husbands / Setting forth, and not returning” (IV). This replicates the situation during World War II, as soldiers’ wives and mothers “ have seen” them “ setting forth, and not returning;” the grievances they face exemplify Naturalist writing this melancholy comes out of the war. The second bell, acting as a signal to pray for all the soldiers, dead or alive, refers to the World War II church bells to signify the hour for worshippers to come to church. The two bells reference the war through their purposes, to warn men of incoming danger and to lead prayers in respect to these soldiers, and he then reassures the melancholy ones with spirituality. Eliot offers victims of the war opportunities of spiritual reflection that enable them to transcend past their losses and recover. He attempts to calm the people who lost loved ones through a form of reflection. For example, Eliot invites the depressed victims “ to kneel / Where prayer has been valid” (“ Little Gidding” I).

When people visit a place “ where prayer has been valid,” they focus on a sense of hope; this spiritual faith conquers through the stress and dark (Naturalist) emotions they experience after the loss of their loved ones at sea. Also, since he wrote “ Little Gidding” during World War II, this poem also acts as a message for the ones depressed due to their losses from the war. He also reassures people that they can escape from events like the war through the use of a hopeful symbol. After the reminder of prayer, he describes this symbol of hope, “ What they had to leave us—a symbol: / A symbol perfected in death. / And all shall be well and / All manner of thing shall be well” (III). The symbol represents a desperate chance for loved ones at home for free interpretation. By leaving a vague symbol, people can at least imagine this as a sign of hope, so “ all manner of thing shall be well.

” Eliot allows to victims of World War II to recover from the war’s significant losses by offering a place for prayer and a hopeful symbol left by the soldiers. In the “ Four Quartets,” Thomas Stearns Eliot writes about the sad, spiritually hopeful, Naturalist behavior of the victims of World War II through the hospital and subway imagery, two bells at sea, and opportunities for spiritual reflection. He writes about the hospitals and subways, where people gather together as destruction occurs around them, gathering terror and fear in their minds. He then describes the two bells at sea, one to warn sailors of incoming rocks and another in prayer for the ones who died at sea, to reference the warning sirens and church bells that existed during World War II for similar reasons. Lastly, he offers victims of the war a place to pray and a hopeful symbol open for interpretation, to allow them the hope that they desperately need. By offering these spiritual reflections, he sends the message to all the victims of the war, as well as other future wars, that all will be well. Essentially, he teaches that humans cause war because of their corruption, but also that humans can move on from their losses, and once they do, all will be peaceful again. Works Cited Eliot, Thomas Sterns.

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27 Jan. 2011. . Brandon Yung Mr.

Healy Period 6 “ The Open Boat” Stephen Crane Nature’s Fracture According to BBC News, a catastrophic earthquake in Port-au-Prince, Haiti’s capital, on Tuesday 12th, February 2010, killed 316, 000, injured 300, 000, and made 1, 000, 000 homeless. The devastation hit one of the already most impoverished countries in the world. Despite the country’s struggle to survive with food shortages, forces of nature decide to destroy the country further.

Many writers, affected by these types of natural, catastrophic events, adopt this ‘ nature versus man’ theme, such as Stephen Crane. In the “ The Open Boat”, Crane argues that nature is indifferent to man through the uneasy setting that the gulls, winds, and oceans create; the unpredictable beneficial and hostile actions done to man; and the oiler’s death by sea. The gulls, wind, and sharks, agents of nature, cause uneasiness among the crew, thus proving that nature does not feel sympathy for man’s plight. In the first place, the canton flannel gulls, sitting and flying around the men, “ were uncanny and sinister in their unblinking scrutiny, and the men hooted angrily at them, telling them to be gone” (605). The gulls’ “ uncanny and sinister” presence only distracts and irritates the crew, causing them to be uneasy and nervous.

By annoying them, nature is causing them harm since any distraction could capsize their boat, and this clearly shows nature’s lack of consideration for mankind. Just in the same way, Crane describes the night breeze, “ the wind bore coldness with it, and the men began to shiver” (612). Even as the men are seeking help from people on a distant island, nature brings “ coldness” to them, distracting them from their ultimate goal. Since the wind causes them discomfort, nature refuses to share any sympathy even as they are fighting for their lives at sea. Finally, the last agent of nature, the shark, disturbs their peace when “ the correspondent saw an enormous fin speed like a shadow through the water… he did not wish to be alone with the thing” (614). Continuously, nature sends agents like the birds and the wind to cause uneasiness among the crew, and the shark only adds onto this as it lurks around the boat. Nature again does not care about the men’s situation when this shark bothers them as their boat is foundering. Nature sends three agents of nature – the gulls, winds, and the shark – to disturb the crew’s concentration despite their desperate situations at sea.

To add to nature’s deliberate disturbances by the animals and environment, the unpredictability of beneficial and hostile actions done to man prove that nature barely cares about man’s plight. Crane uses contradictory wordplay and oxymoron to convey nature as an unpredictable and confusing factor that could help them or sink them. Specifically, he describes the motion of the waves, “ There was a terrible grace in the move of the waves, and they came in silence, save for the snarling of the crests” (604). The oxymoron “ terrible grace” of the waves displays nature as gracious in movement and silence, and also as malevolent in its terrible force and snarling sounds. By describing nature with an oxymoron, Crane displays the forces of the universe as contradictory, thus unpredictable in its motivations toward mankind. Similar to the oxymoronic wordplay, there are also beneficial and harmful actions done to man, conveying nature as random and thus indifferent to the men’s plight.

For example, Crane explains how “ a changed tide tried to force them southward, but wind and wave northward” (610). A “ changed tide,” one force of nature, attempts to drive them away from their destination, while two other forces, “ wind and wave” fight back against its own ‘ allies’ of nature. The two clashing forces of nature represent its unpredictability in its motives for the boat. Furthermore, for a moment, “ the particular violence had ceased,” but “ suddenly there was a growling of water … it was a wonder that it did not set the cook afloat” (613). The sudden change from peaceful tides to the “ growling of water” again exemplifies the insignificance of man in the universe – no matter how badly the crew needs help, nature persists in an unpredictable series of helpful and harmful tides that could aid them or kill them. The randomness of nature’s behavior suggests that they do not notice man’s danger in its world, thus why nature acts however it desires. The random occurrences of helpful and hostile natural events done to man show how nature does not show any concern for man’s life.

Lastly, even more devastating than nature’s unpredictability, the oiler’s death by sea shows nature’s complete lack of sympathy for mankind. Especially, despite the oiler’s hard work and persistence throughout the story, such as when “ The oiler had worked double-watch in the engine-room of the ship,” the sea kills him later on (608). Compared to the rest of the crew, the oiler named Billie works twice as hard as them to keep them afloat, so Billie is the most determined and hardworking man in the crew. However, the forces of nature kill him despite the fact he worked hardest to survive. As the boat sinks, the crew dives into the ocean, and soon “ The oiler was ahead in the race [to the shore]. He was swimming strongly and rapidly” (618). The rest of the crew hails in comparison to the oiler’s strength and perseverance, as seen by their weakness in swimming in the ocean.

Yet, despite the more probable outcome of the most hardworking man to survive, the oiler dies instead of the weaker ones; nature’s selected murder shows that it holds no feelings for mankind’s perseverance. In spite of the oiler’s diligence to keep his fellow men alive, nature decides to end his life, proving its lack of sympathy for man. In Stephen Crane’s “ The Open Boat,” Crane argues that nature holds no concern for man through the disturbances by its gulls, sky, and oceans; the oiler’s death by sea; and the unpredictability of nature’s beneficial and hostile actions done to man.

Despite the crew’s constant struggle to survive on the ocean, nature’s gulls, winds, and oceans work together to disturb them. On top of these disastrous agents of nature, the randomness of nature’s occurrences confuse the crew, making them uneasy and giving them a hard time to survive since they cannot predict what will happen to them next. Finally, to torture man to his death, nature allows the oiler to come close enough to spot land, and then kills him despite all his hard work. These occurrences show how nature truly does not care if man works hard to deserve to live. Stephen Crane essentially teaches that nature is a destructive force against mankind, and that eventually nature will bring doom to him.

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