

Before You Read

The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock by T. S. Eliot

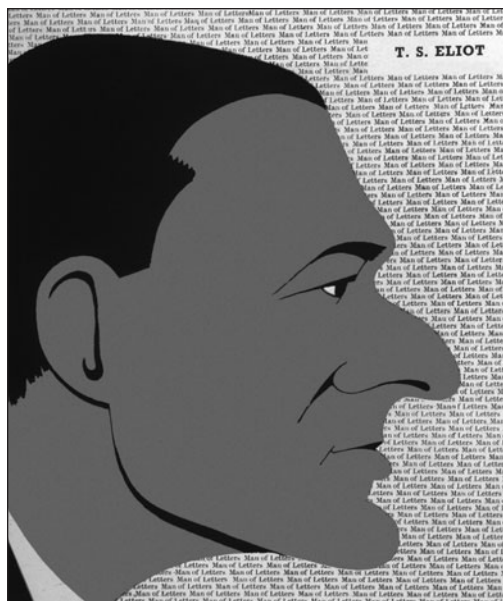
LITERARY FOCUS: DRAMATIC MONOLOGUE AND STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS

A **dramatic monologue** is a poem in which one character speaks directly to one or more listeners. In Eliot's poem the words are spoken by a man named Prufrock. In a dramatic monologue, you learn everything about the setting, the situation, supporting characters, and even the speaker's own personality from the speaker's words. Like people in real life, speakers in dramatic monologues give their own spin to the events and circumstances around them. As you read "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," you will begin to see the world as Prufrock sees it. Is it the way you see the world?

One reason that Eliot's poem may seem difficult at first is that it uses a **stream-of-consciousness** technique. With stream of consciousness, the writer tries to imitate the natural flow of a character's thoughts, memories, and reflections as the character experiences them. In attempting to capture the random movement of a character's thoughts, the logical connections and transitions of ordinary prose are often left out. Instead, the character jumps from one idea or association to another, as one thought suddenly triggers another, seemingly unrelated, one.

READING SKILLS: IDENTIFYING MAIN IDEAS

The **main idea** of a passage or a work of literature is its most important message, opinion, or lesson. Identifying the main ideas will help you better understand the meaning of a selection. In "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," look for main ideas about war (the poem was published during World War I), people, and life.



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REVIEW SKILLS

As you read "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," look for the following:

CHARACTER TRAITS

The qualities that a character in a work of literature displays, such as values, habits, likes, and dislikes.

SKILLS FOCUS

Literary Skills

Understand the use of dramatic monologue and stream-of-consciousness.

Reading Skills

Identify main ideas.

Review Skills

Determine character traits from what characters say about themselves.

The LOVE SONG of J. Alfred Prufrock

T. S. Eliot

BACKGROUND

Thomas Stearns Eliot—known to readers as T. S. Eliot—was born in St. Louis to an intellectual family with deep New England roots. After graduating from Harvard, Eliot studied for a time in Paris and then moved to London to begin his career as a poet. In 1915, just a year after the outbreak of World War I, Eliot published “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock,” the poem that made him famous.

“Prufrock” captures the mood of helpless paralysis that many Europeans and Americans felt in the face of the modern forces of technology and industrialism. The individual no longer seemed to count for anything; the war in Europe had quickly turned into a mechanized slaughter in which millions of young men were losing their lives, it seemed, for nothing.

DRAMATIC MONOLOGUE

Circle the pronouns in line 1 that indicate this is a **dramatic monologue**, a poem whose speaker addresses one or more listeners.

INTERPRET

Given the startling **simile**—a comparison using *like*, *as*, or *than*—in lines 2–3, how do you picture the evening?

*S'io credessi che mia risposta fosse
a persona che mai tornasse al mondo,
questa fiamma staria senza più scosse.
Ma per ciò che giammai di questo fondo
non tornò vivo alcun, s'i'odo il vero,
senza tema d'infamia ti rispondo.¹*

Let us go then, you and I,
When the evening is spread out against the sky
Like a patient etherized² upon a table;
Let us go, through certain half-deserted streets,

1. This quotation is from Dante's epic poem *The Divine Comedy* (1321). The speaker is Guido da Montefeltro, a man sent to Hell for dispensing evil advice. He speaks from a flame that quivers when he talks: “If I thought my answer were to one who ever could return to the world, this flame should shake no more; but since none ever did return alive from this depth, if what I hear be true, without fear of infamy I answer this” (*Inferno*, Canto 27, lines 61–66). Think of Prufrock as speaking from his own personal hell.
2. **etherized**: anesthetized; paralyzed.

5 The muttering retreats
Of restless nights in one-night cheap hotels
And sawdust restaurants with oyster-shells:
Streets that follow like a tedious argument
Of insidious intent
10 To lead you to an overwhelming question . . .
Oh, do not ask, "What is it?"
Let us go and make our visit.

In the room the women come and go
Talking of Michelangelo.³

15 The yellow fog that rubs its back upon the window-panes,
The yellow smoke that rubs its muzzle on the window-panes,
Licked its tongue into the corners of the evening,
Lingered upon the pools that stand in drains,
Let fall upon its back the soot that falls from chimneys,
20 Slipped by the terrace, made a sudden leap,
And seeing that it was a soft October night,
Curled once about the house, and fell asleep.

And indeed there will be time
For the yellow smoke that slides along the street
25 Rubbing its back upon the window-panes;
There will be time, there will be time
To prepare a face to meet the faces that you meet;
There will be time to murder and create,
And time for all the works and days of hands
30 That lift and drop a question on your plate;
Time for you and time for me,
And time yet for a hundred indecisions,
And for a hundred visions and revisions,
Before the taking of a toast and tea.

3. **Michelangelo:** Michelangelo Buonarroti (1475–1564), a great artist of the Italian Renaissance.

INFER

Where does the speaker want to take his companion in lines 4–7? Who might his companion be?

IDENTIFY

What is the fog compared to in the **extended metaphor** in lines 15–22? Underline words and phrases that develop the comparison.

IDENTIFY MAIN IDEAS

In lines 23–34, circle the words that are repeated. How would you state the **main idea** of this stanza?

FLUENCY

Read the boxed passage aloud twice. Focus on conveying simple meaning the first time around. During your second reading, try to bring the speaker's words to life.

DRAMATIC MONOLOGUE

What do you learn about Prufrock's **character traits** from what he says about himself in lines 37–48? (*Review Skill*)

INTERPRET

How would you describe a life measured out by coffee spoons (line 51)?

35 In the room the women come and go
Talking of Michelangelo.

And indeed there will be time
To wonder, "Do I dare?" and, "Do I dare?"
Time to turn back and descend the stair,
40 With a bald spot in the middle of my hair—
(They will say: "How his hair is growing thin!")
My morning coat,⁴ my collar mounting firmly to the chin,
My necktie rich and modest, but asserted by a simple pin—
(They will say: "But how his arms and legs are thin!")
45 Do I dare
Disturb the universe?
In a minute there is time
For decisions and revisions which a minute will reverse.

For I have known them all already, known them all—
50 Have known the evenings, mornings, afternoons,
I have measured out my life with coffee spoons;
I know the voices dying with a dying fall⁵
Beneath the music from a farther room.

So how should I presume?

55 And I have known the eyes already, known them all—
The eyes that fix you in a formulated⁶ phrase,
And when I am formulated, sprawling on a pin,
When I am pinned and wriggling on the wall,
Then how should I begin
60 To spit out all the butt-ends of my days and ways?
And how should I presume?

4. **morning coat**: formal daytime dress for men.

5. **dying fall**: in music, notes that fade away.

6. **formulated** *v.* used as *adj.*: reduced to a formula and made insignificant.

And I have known the arms already, known them all—
Arms that are braceleted and white and bare
(But in the lamplight, downed with light brown hair!)

65 Is it perfume from a dress
That makes me so digress?
Arms that lie along a table, or wrap about a shawl.
 And should I then presume?
 And how should I begin?

70 Shall I say, I have gone at dusk through narrow streets
And watched the smoke that rises from the pipes
Of lonely men in shirt-sleeves, leaning out of windows? . . .

I should have been a pair of ragged claws
Scuttling across the floors of silent seas.

75 And the afternoon, the evening, sleeps so peacefully!
Smoothed by long fingers,
Asleep . . . tired . . . or it malingers,⁷
Stretched on the floor, here beside you and me.
Should I, after tea and cakes and ices,

80 Have the strength to force the moment to its crisis?
But though I have wept and fasted, wept and prayed,
Though I have seen my head (grown slightly bald)
 brought in upon a platter,⁸
I am no prophet—and here’s no great matter;
I have seen the moment of my greatness flicker,

85 And I have seen the eternal Footman hold my coat,
 and snicker,

INTERPRET

What does Prufrock compare himself to in lines 57–58? What does this **metaphor** tell you about him?

IDENTIFY MAIN IDEAS

Prufrock wonders if he should tell his story, then decides to begin. What **main idea** about life does he express in lines 70–72?

INTERPRET

The “eternal Footman” is a **metaphor** for death. What vision of his future does Prufrock see in line 85?

7. **malingers**: pretends to be sick to get out of work or duty.
8. **my head . . . a platter**: biblical allusion to the execution of John the Baptist (Mark 6:17–28; Matthew 14:3–11). The dancing of Salome so pleased Herod Antipas, ruler of ancient Galilee, that he offered her any reward she desired. Goaded by her mother, who hated John, Salome asked for John’s head. Herod ordered the prophet beheaded and his head delivered on a serving plate.

IDENTIFY
MAIN IDEAS

Re-read lines 90–98. What is Prufrock afraid would happen if he tried to explain his views of the world?

DRAMATIC
MONOLOGUE

The speaker continues to ask questions of his listener(s) in lines 99–110. Underline the question he repeats.

INTERPRET

What do you think the woman in lines 96–98 and 107–110 **symbolizes**, or represents?

And in short, I was afraid.
And would it have been worth it, after all,
After the cups, the marmalade, the tea,
Among the porcelain, among some talk of you and me,
90 Would it have been worth while,
To have bitten off the matter with a smile,
To have squeezed the universe into a ball
To roll it towards some overwhelming question,
To say: “I am Lazarus,⁹ come from the dead,
95 Come back to tell you all, I shall tell you all” —
If one, settling a pillow by her head,
Should say: “That is not what I meant at all.
That is not it, at all.”

And would it have been worth it, after all,
100 Would it have been worth while,
After the sunsets and the dooryards and the sprinkled streets,
After the novels, after the teacups, after the skirts that trail
along the floor—
And this, and so much more?—
It is impossible to say just what I mean!
But as if a magic lantern¹⁰ threw the nerves in patterns on a
105 screen:
Would it have been worth while
If one, settling a pillow or throwing off a shawl,
And turning toward the window, should say:
“That is not it at all,
110 That is not what I meant, at all.”

.

No! I am not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be;
Am an attendant lord, one that will do
To swell a progress,¹¹ start a scene or two,

9. **Lazarus:** In the Bible, a man that Jesus brought back from the dead (John 11: 38–44).

10. **magic lantern:** early type of projector that could magnify and project images.

11. **swell a progress:** fill out a scene in a play or pageant by serving as an extra.

- Advise the prince; no doubt, an easy tool,
 115 Deferential, glad to be of use,
 Politic, cautious, and meticulous;
 Full of high sentence,¹² but a bit obtuse;¹³
 At times, indeed, almost ridiculous—
 Almost, at times, the Fool.
- 120 I grow old . . . I grow old . . .
 I shall wear the bottoms of my trousers rolled.
- Shall I part my hair behind? Do I dare to eat a peach?
 I shall wear white flannel trousers, and walk upon the beach.
 I have heard the mermaids singing, each to each.
- 125 I do not think that they will sing to me.
- I have seen them riding seaward on the waves
 Combing the white hair of the waves blown back
 When the wind blows the water white and black.
- We have lingered in the chambers of the sea
 130 By sea-girls wreathed with seaweed red and brown
 Till human voices wake us, and we drown.

DRAMATIC MONOLOGUE

The speaker says he is not Prince Hamlet. Instead, he describes himself as another character in Shakespeare's play: Polonius, a foolish old advisor to the king. Underline the **character traits** Prufrock gives himself in lines 115–119. (*Review Skill*)

INFER

The style of Prufrock's time called for fashionable young men to turn up the cuffs of their trousers. How do you think Prufrock approaches growing old (lines 120–123)?

INTERPRET

In lines 124–125, what do the mermaids **symbolize**? If they don't sing for Prufrock, what will he miss in life?

12. **high sentence**: pompous talk.
 13. **obtuse**: slow to understand.

The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock

Reading Skills: Identifying Main Ideas The chart below lists four **main ideas** from “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock.” In the right-hand column, fill in at least two passages from the poem to support each main idea.

Main Idea	Lines from the Poem
People lead lonely existences.	
People have trouble communicating their feelings.	
People have a hard time being decisive.	
Ordinary life keeps people from following their dreams.	

SKILLS PRACTICE

The River-Merchant's Wife: A Letter

Reading Skills: Paraphrasing Paraphrasing can help you understand what a poet is saying. In the chart below are three passages from "The River-Merchant's Wife: A Letter." In the right-hand column, paraphrase each passage in your own words. **Sample paraphrases appear below.**

Passage from Poem	Paraphrase
At fourteen I married My Lord you. I never laughed, being bashful. Lowering my head, I looked at the wall. Called to, a thousand times, I never looked back. (lines 7–10)	I married you when I was fourteen years old. I was shy and didn't laugh at anything. I hung my head and felt trapped inside the wall. I didn't respond when you called me, no matter how often you called.
At fifteen I stopped scowling, I desired my dust to be mingled with yours Forever and forever and forever, Why should I climb the lookout? (lines 11–14)	When I was fifteen, I stopped frowning. I loved you and wanted to be with you always, even after death. I have no interest in the world outside of our love.
The paired butterflies are already yellow with August Over the grass in the West garden; They hurt me. I grow older. (lines 23–25)	A pair of butterflies, who are flying over the grass in the West garden, have already turned yellow in August. It upsets me to see them together. They remind me that I am growing older without you.

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Before You Read

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LITERARY FOCUS: DRAMATIC MONOLOGUE AND STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS

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May Evans Picture Library.

REVIEW SKILLS

As you read "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," look for the following:

CHARACTER TRAITS

The poet includes a character's work of literature displays, such as values, habits, likes, and dislikes.

SKILLS FOCUS

Literary Skills Understand the dramatic monologue and stream-of-consciousness.

Reading Skills Identify / main ideas.

Review Skills Determine character traits from what characters say about themselves.

The LOVE SONG of J. Alfred Prufrock

T. S. Eliot

BACKGROUND

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DRAMATIC MONOLOGUE

Circle the pronouns in line 1 that indicate this is a dramatic monologue, a poem whose speaker addresses one or more listeners.

INTERPRET

Given the starting simile—a comparison using *like*, *as*, or *than*—in lines 2–3, how do you picture the evening?

The evening is still, lifeless, dying.

- This quotation is from Dante’s epic poem *The Divine Comedy* (1321). The speaker is Guido da Montefeltro, a man sent to Hell for dispensing evil advice. He speaks from a flame that quivers when he talks: “If I brought my answer were to one who ever could return to the world, this flame should shake no more; but since none ever did return alive from this depth, if what I hear be true, without fear of infamy I answer this” (*Inferno*, Canto 27, lines 61–66). Think of Prufrock as speaking from his own personal hell.
- etherealized**: anesthetized; paralyzed.

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- 5 The muttering retreats
Of restless nights in one-night cheap hotels
And sawdust restaurants with oyster-shells:
Streets that follow like a tedious argument
Of insidious intent
To lead you to an overwhelming question . . .
Oh, do not ask, “What is it?”
Let us go and make our visit.

In the room the women come and go
Talking of Michelangelo.³

- 15 The yellow fog that rubs its back upon the window-panes,
The yellow smoke that rubs its muzzle on the window-panes,
Licked its tongue into the corners of the evening,
Lingered upon the pools that stand in drains,
Let fall upon its back the soot that falls from chimneys,
Slipped by the terrace, made a sudden leap,
And seeing that it was a soft October night,
Curled once about the house, and fell asleep.

- 20 And indeed there will be time
For the yellow smoke that slides along the street
Rubbing its back upon the window-panes;
There will be time, there will be time
To prepare a face to meet the faces that you meet;
There will be time to murder and create,
And time for all the works and days of hands
That lift and drop a question on your plate;
Time for you and time for me,
And time yet for a hundred indecisions,
And for a hundred visions and revisions,
Before the taking of a toast and tea.

3. **Michelangelo**: Michelangelo Buonarroti (1475–1564), a great artist of the Italian Renaissance.

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INFER

Where does the speaker want to take his companion in lines 4–7? Who might his companion be?

- He wants to take his companion to certain streets with cheap hotels and restaurants.
- The companion might be a friend or lover, the reader, or even himself.

IDENTIFY

What is the fog compared to in the extended metaphor in lines 15–22? Underline words and phrases that develop the comparison.

The fog is compared to a cat.

IDENTIFY MAIN IDEAS

In lines 23–34, circle the words that are repeated. How would you state the main idea of this stanza?

- Possible response: Anything is possible, but ordinary events take over our lives.

INTERPRET
What does Prufrock compare himself to in lines 57–58? What does this metaphor tell you about him?
A squirming insect
pinned to a board; he is uncomfortable being looked at and judged by others.

IDENTIFY MAIN IDEAS
Prufrock wonders if he should tell his story, then decides to begin. What main idea about life does he express in lines 70–72?
People are lonely and isolated in life.

INTERPRET
The “eternal Footman” is a metaphor for death. What vision of his future does Prufrock see in line 85?
He has a vision that he will be mocked even in death.

And I have known the arms already, known them all—
Arms that are braceleted and white and bare
(But in the lamplight, downed with light brown hair!)
Is it perfume from a dress
That makes me so digress?
Arms that lie about a table, or wrap about a shawl.
And should I then presume?
And how should I begin?
.
.
.
70 Shall I say, I have gone at dusk through narrow streets
And watched the smoke that rises from the pipes
Of lonely men in shirt-sleeves, leaning out of windows? . . .
I should have been a pair of ragged claws
Scuttling across the floors of silent seas.
.
.
.
75 And the afternoon, the evening, sleeps so peacefully!
Smoothed by long fingers,
Asleep . . . tired . . . or it malingers,⁷
Stretched on the floor, here beside you and me.
Should I, after tea and cakes and ices,
80 Have the strength to force the moment to its crisis?
But though I have wept and fasted, wept and prayed,
Though I have seen my head (grown slightly bald)
brought in upon a platter,⁸
I am no prophet—and here’s no great matter;
I have seen the moment of my greatness flicker,
85 And I have seen the eternal Footman hold my coat,
and snicker,

7. **malingers:** pretends to be sick to get out of work or duty.
8. **my head . . . a platter:** biblical allusion to the execution of John the Baptist (Mark 6:17–28; Matthew 14:3–11). The dancing of Salome so pleased Herod Antipas, ruler of ancient Galilee, that he offered her any reward she desired. Goaded by her mother, who hated John, Salome asked for John’s head. Herod ordered the prophet beheaded and his head delivered on a serving plate.

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FLUENCY
Read the boxed passage aloud twice. Focus on conveying simple meaning the first time around. During your second reading, try to bring the speaker’s words to life.

DRAMATIC MONOLOGUE
What do you learn about Prufrock’s character traits from what he says about himself in lines 37–48? (*Review Skill*)
He is thin, balding, and well dressed.
He worries about what other people think of him. He doesn’t want to bother anyone.
He is indecisive.

INTERPRET
How would you describe a life measured out by coffee spoons (line 5)?
It is dull, ordinary, and routine.

In the room the women come and go
Talking of Michelangelo.
And indeed there will be time
To wonder, “Do I dare?” and, “Do I dare?”
Time to turn back and descend the stair,
With a bald spot in the middle of my hair—
(They will say: “How his hair is growing thin!”)
My morning coat,⁴ my collar mounting firmly to the chin,
My necktie rich and modest, but asserted by a simple pin—
(They will say: “But how his arms and legs are thin!”)
40 Do I dare
Disturb the universe?
In a minute there is time
For decisions and revisions which a minute will reverse.

For I have known them all already, known them all—
Have known the evenings, mornings, afternoons,
I have measured out my life with coffee spoons;
I know the voices dying with a dying fall⁵
Beneath the music from a farther room.
So how should I presume?
55 And I have known the eyes already, known them all—
The eyes that fix you in a formulated⁶ phrase,
And when I am formulated, sprawling on a pin,
When I am pinned and wriggling on the wall,
Then how should I begin
60 To spit out all the butt-ends of my days and ways?
And how should I presume?

4. **morning coat:** formal daytime dress for men.
5. **dying fall:** in music, notes that fade away.
6. **formulated** v. used as *adj.*: reduced to a formula and made insignificant.

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IDENTIFY
MAIN IDEAS

Re-read lines 90–98. What is Prufrock afraid would happen if he tried to explain his views of the world?
He is afraid his ideas would be wrong or misunderstood.

DRAMATIC
MONOLOGUE

The speaker continues to ask questions of his listener(s) in lines 99–110. Underline the question he repeats.

INTERPRET

What do you think the woman in lines 96–98 and 107–110 symbolizes, or represents?
She symbolizes society, the people whose opinions matter to Prufrock.

And in short, I was afraid.
And would it have been worth it, after all,
After the cups, the marmalade, the tea,
Among the porcelain, among some talk of you and me,
Would it have been worth while,
To have bitten off the matter with a smile,
To have squeezed the universe into a ball
To roll it towards some overwhelming question,
To say: "I am Lazarus," come from the dead,
Come back to tell you all, I shall tell you all"—
If one, settling a pillow by her head,
Should say: "That is not what I meant at all.
That is not it, at all."
And would it have been worth it, after all,
Would it have been worth while,
After the sunsets and the dooryards and the sprinkled streets,
After the novels, after the teacups, after the skirts that trail
along the floor—
And this, and so much more?—
It is impossible to say just what I mean!
But as if a magic lantern⁹ threw the nerves in patterns on a
screen:
Would it have been worth while
If one, settling a pillow or throwing off a shawl,
And turning toward the window, should say:
"That is not it at all,
That is not what I meant, at all."
.....
No! I am not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be;
Am an attendant lord, one that will do
To swell a progress,¹⁰ start a scene or two,
9. **Lazarus:** in the Bible, a man that Jesus brought back from the dead (John 11: 38–44).
10. **magic lantern:** early type of projector that could magnify and project images.
11. **swell a progress:** fill out a scene in a play or pageant by serving as an extra.

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DRAMATIC
MONOLOGUE

The speaker says he is not Prince Hamlet. Instead, he describes himself as another character in Shakespeare's play: Polonius, a foolish old advisor to the king. Underline the character traits Prufrock gives himself in lines 115–119. (Review *SKILL*)

INFER

The style of Prufrock's time called for fashionable young men to turn up the cuffs of their trousers. How do you think Prufrock approaches growing old (lines 120–123)?
He wants to appear young. He still embraces life.

INTERPRET

In lines 124–125, what do the mermaids symbolize? If they don't sing for Prufrock, what will he miss in life?
The mermaids symbolize magic, beauty, art, love. Their not singing to him means Prufrock has missed out on the best things in life.

Advise the prince; no doubt, an easy tool,
Deferential, glad to be of use,
Politic, cautious, and meticulous;
Full of high sentence,¹² but a bit obtuse;¹³
At times, indeed, almost ridiculous—
Almost, at times, the Fool.
I grow old . . . I grow old . . .
I shall wear the bottoms of my trousers rolled.
Shall I part my hair behind? Do I dare to eat a peach?
I shall wear white flannel trousers, and walk upon the beach.
I have heard the mermaids singing, each to each.
I do not think that they will sing to me.
I have seen them riding seaward on the waves
Combing the white hair of the waves blown back
When the wind blows the water white and black.
We have lingered in the chambers of the sea
By sea-girls wreathed with seaweed red and brown
Till human voices wake us, and we drown.

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12. **high sentence:** pompous talk.
13. **obtuse:** slow to understand.

SKILLS PRACTICE

The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock

Reading Skills: Identifying Main Ideas The chart below lists four main ideas from "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock." In the right-hand column, fill in at least two passages from the poem to support each main idea.

Main idea	Lines from the Poem
People lead lonely existences.	"And watched the smoke that rises from the pipes / Of lonely men" (lines 71–72) "I do not think that they will sing to me." (line 125)
People have trouble communicating their feelings.	"In the room the women come and go / Talking of Michelangelo." (lines 13–14) "That is not what I meant at all." (line 97)
People have a hard time being decisive.	"In a minute there is time / For decisions and revisions which a minute will reverse." (lines 47–48) "Do I dare to eat a peach?" (line 122)
Ordinary life keeps people from following their dreams.	"Should I, after tea and cakes and ices, / Have the strength to force the moment to its crisis?" (lines 79–80) "Till human voices wake us, and we drown." (line 131)

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Before You Read

A Rose for Emily by William Faulkner

LITERARY FOCUS: SETTING

Most works of fiction have a specific setting that is an important element of the story. The **setting** is the time and location in which a story takes place. Setting also refers to the customs and social conditions of that place and time.

You may find some of the language in "A Rose for Emily" offensive. Faulkner included it in order to portray accurately a racially segregated southern town at the turn of the last century.

Setting the Story Knowing the setting of a story gives you certain expectations or ideas about what it will be like. For example, if the setting is a large Victorian mansion, you might expect either a murder mystery or a romance. The chart below lists several settings. In the right-hand column, jot down what the setting leads you to expect from the story.

Setting	What the Story Might Be Like
a spaceship	a sci-fi story, a story about NASA
the Arctic	a story about survival, a nature story, a story about Inuits
a tropical island	a story about a shipwreck, a story about life on the island
1800s: California	a story about the Gold Rush or Chinese immigration

READING SKILLS: MAKING INFERENCES ABOUT CHARACTER

The personalities of literary characters are often as complicated as those of people you know in life—and just as hard to get to know. One way to learn what a character is like is by making inferences. An **inference** is a good guess that is based on information in the text and on your own knowledge and experience. To make an inference about a character, you look for clues in the character's speech, appearance, and behavior; you listen to what other characters say about him or her; and you compare the character's behavior with that of other people you know.

REVIEW SKILLS

As you read "A Rose for Emily," look for the following literary devices.

FORESHADOWING
The use of hints and clues to suggest what will happen later in a plot.

FLASHBACK
A scene that interrupts the normal chronological sequence of events in a story to show what happened at an earlier time.

SKILLS FOCUS

Literary Skills
Infer and setting.

Reading Skills
Make inferences about characters.

Review Skills
Make inferences about foreshadowing and flashback.