



# Journeys with 'The Waste Land'

15 September - 18 November 2018

Herbert Art Gallery & Museum  
and Coventry Cathedral

**FREE ENTRY**

mead  
gallery



**Cecil Collins, *The Quest*, 1938, National Museum Wales**

The Mead Gallery is committed to increasing understanding of, and engagement with, international contemporary art. Through our exhibition programme, we encourage young people to engage with key themes and ideas relating to the world they inhabit and offer opportunities for them to meet and work with artists.

*Journeys with 'The Waste Land'* has been organised by the Mead Gallery in collaboration with the Herbert Art Gallery & Museum and Turner Contemporary in Margate, and in association with Coventry Cathedral.

These notes are designed to support your visit to the exhibition at both the Herbert Art Gallery & Museum and Coventry Cathedral, including planning prior to your visit and suggestions for follow up discussion and activities.

**This resource is designed to:**

- \* **help you with planning and preparing your class visit to the exhibition**
- \* **support you on your visit**
- \* **provide information about the artists and their work**
- \* **provide ideas for follow-up activities**
- \* **encourage individual and collaborative creative work**
- \* **encourage cross-curricular work**

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# Exhibition Context

*The Waste Land* is a major work of twentieth century literature, written by T.S. Eliot in the aftermath of World War One. *Journeys with 'The Waste Land'* explores the contemporary significance of Eliot's poem and the way it resonates with the work of many visual artists, past and present.

Thomas Stearns Eliot (1888 –1965) is generally acknowledged as one of the twentieth century's greatest poets. Born in St. Louis, in the United States, he moved to England in 1914 at the age of twenty-five, settling, working and marrying here. At the time of writing *The Waste Land*, Eliot's physical and mental state was poor, as was that of his wife, Vivienne. Eliot's poem, edited by Ezra Pound and published in 1922, has a disjointed structure, jumping from one voice to another and using multiple languages. It seems to reflect the world in crisis - physically, spiritually and socially fragmenting - and confounds its readers as much as it inspires them.

In early 2016, the Mead Gallery in Coventry made a call out, inviting people to express an interest in

being part of *Journeys with 'The Waste Land'*. The Coventry Waste Land Research Group was so formed and for over two years have worked together to select works for exhibition, write explanatory texts, design the gallery lay-out and a programme of events. The group have chosen to explore themes within Eliot's poem of journeys and fragmentation. Their selection also makes reference to Coventry's history as a city fragmented by, and rebuilt upon the ruins of war.

*Journeys with 'The Waste Land'* is shown in both the Herbert Art Gallery & Museum and Coventry Cathedral. The exhibition has been led by independent curator, Michael Tooby, and organised by the Mead Gallery in collaboration with the Herbert Art Gallery & Museum and Turner Contemporary in Margate, in association with Coventry Cathedral. Members of the Coventry Waste Land Research Group are: Eve Fleming, Wendy Freeman, Roger Green, Susan Green, Nigel Hutchinson, Celia O'Donovan, Karen Parker, Chris Stanley and Jayne Stanley.

# Pack Introduction

This pack has been designed for students at GCSE or A-Level or for interested community groups. It is structured around the 5 sections of the poem although most activities could be applied across the work.

The exhibition is not intended to be illustrative. The group have not sought to find definitive images for the poem, rather they have brought their own experiences as readers of the poem and residents of Coventry and Warwickshire to find images that resonate with them. The pack therefore aims to explore with students their own readings of the poem alongside other relevant reference material to create their own pieces of work. The pack assumes students are working in a sketchbook most of the time and will go on to create one or two pieces during the scheme of work.

The poem is not easy to understand and it may take a while for students to feel comfortable with this. Encourage them to listen to the poem aloud and get a feel for the meaning rather than trying to understand every word. A hyperlinked version of

the poem recommended by the T.S. Eliot Society can be found here:

[http://tseliot.com/poetry/the-waste-land/read/twl\\_prefatory](http://tseliot.com/poetry/the-waste-land/read/twl_prefatory)

If you have space in your classroom to set up a working wall, it would be good to build the collection of reference material and fragments of texts as they occur through the pack. This will further reinforce the sense of multiple meanings, interpretations and sources in the poem, but also give the students a chance to revisit sources as new parts of the poem are encountered.

Each exploration might last one or more sessions. This will depend on the depth you want to go into and the pieces of work you want your students to produce in response. For this reason, they aren't timed lessons, just a way of thinking and working through a section of the poem. You know your students, their interests and their needs, therefore this pack is designed as a stimulus to thinking not a prescriptive sessional plan.

The Poetry Archive has a recording of T.S. Eliot reading the poem aloud: <https://www.poetryarchive.org/poem/waste-land-part-i-burial-dead> and You Tube has other readings if students want to spend some time listening to the poem. Encourage them to read aloud in the classroom and find meaning in this way too.

The pack is designed for use in the classroom and/or as an accompaniment to a visit to the exhibition. If you would like to book a visit for your students to the exhibition at the Herbert please contact the Culture Coventry bookings team on **024 76237523**, email [info@culturecoventry.com](mailto:info@culturecoventry.com)

The exhibition is open 15 September – 18 November 2018 (closes 15 November at Coventry Cathedral). Art Workshops, Taster Tours and Gallery Highlights sessions are available and can include the *Journeys with the 'Waste Land'* exhibition. Further details of learning sessions available at the Herbert, including travel bursaries can be found here: <http://www.theherbert.org/learning/schools/default.aspx>.

We recommend that a visit to the Herbert is combined with a visit to Coventry Cathedral in which the exhibition continues with a series of temporary displays. Permanent artworks sited in and around the cathedral by artists including Jacob Epstein, Elisabeth Frink and John Hutton— as well as the history of the cathedral itself— are also linked through the exhibition to T.S. Eliot's poem. Information about booking school visits to the Cathedral is available here <http://www.coventrycathedral.org.uk/wpsite/school-visits/>.

If you do try out any of the activities in the pack, please share your students work with us at [creative.learning@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:creative.learning@warwick.ac.uk) and let us know if you are happy for us to share using our social media channels.

For more information about the exhibition visit Please engage with us on Social Media [@warwickartsmead](https://twitter.com/warwickartsmead) [@the\\_herbert\\_cov](https://twitter.com/the_herbert_cov) [@warwick\\_arts\\_learning](https://twitter.com/warwick_arts_learning)

# Exploration 1:

## T.S. Eliot in Context

### Aim

To invite students to become curious about T.S. Eliot and to understand perception through portraiture.

### Exhibition works relevant to this Exploration:

- \* Sir Jacob Epstein, *No 1 Portrait of T.S. Eliot*, 1950s  
(Epstein also made the statue of St Michael's Victory over the Devil on the side of Coventry Cathedral.)
- \* Patrick Heron, *Study for a Portrait of T.S. Eliot*, 1949
- \* David Jones, *Nam Sibyllam*, 1958

# Exploration 1:

## T.S. Eliot in Context

### Activity



What is this man like?

How old is he?

What's his job?

Does he have friends?

How does he move?

What is his emotional state?

What is his relationship with the artist?

Invite students to look at this painting by Patrick Heron.

In pairs, ask them to write a pen portrait of him using the following prompts. Ask students to respond fully, drawing detail out of the picture to justify their responses:

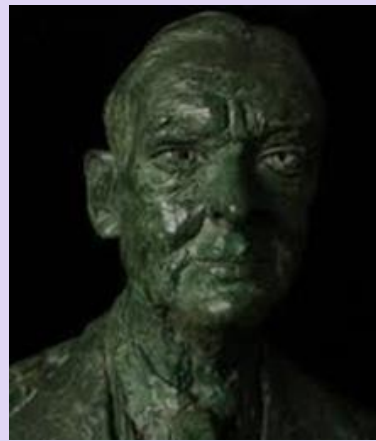
Above: Patrick Heron, *Study for a Portrait of T.S. Eliot*, 1949. National Portrait Gallery





Share this photograph, taken by an unknown photographer at home with his wife, the year Eliot wrote *The Waste Land*.

Explain this is the same man as painted by Patrick Heron and invite students to add to their pen portraits.



Now share this photograph of a sculpture by Sir Jacob Epstein, which was unveiled at Eliot's 70th birthday party and repeat again.

**Has Eliot's stature in society changed in this final work?**

**Left: Unknown photographer, *Vivien and T.S. Eliot at 18 Crawford Mansions, July 1919.* T.S. Eliot Estate. Right: Jacob Epstein, *No 1 Portrait of TS Eliot*, poss 1951. University of Kent**

Share some of the students' pen portraits. Reflect on the similarities and differences. What have the students drawn from each of the images?

Share the pen portrait of Eliot written for the exhibition:

*"Thomas Stearns Eliot (1888 –1965) is generally acknowledged as one of the twentieth century's greatest poets. Born in St. Louis, in the United States, he moved to England in 1914 at the age of twenty-five, settling, working, and marrying here. At the time of writing The Waste Land, Eliot's physical and mental state was poor, as was that of his wife, Vivienne."*

Ask them to reflect on:

**Were any of these 'facts' about the man in the paintings discoverable in the images?**

**Painterly vs photographic portraiture vs sculpture – which is the most truthful?**

**Which gives the artist the most scope to 'read' the person?**

# Exploration 1:

## T.S. Eliot in Context

### Homework/Sketchbook Task: Exploring the Epigraph

At the front of the poem Eliot includes, in Latin followed by Greek, the opening lines of a poem called *Satyricon* written in the first century:

***"Nam Sibyllam quidem Cumis  
ego ipse oculis meis vidi  
in ampulla pendere, et cum  
pueri illi dicerent: Στβμλλ  
τί Θέλεις; respondebat illa:  
ἀπσθονειν Θελω."***

The translation is:

***"With my own eyes I saw the  
Sibyl of Cumae hanging in a  
bottle; and when the boys said  
to her: Sibyl, what do you  
want?" she replied: "I want to  
die."***

David Jones took these words and created them in a print he gifted to Eliot, which can be seen in the exhibition. Invite the students to take these lines and use them to create a sketched image in response. Remind them that this image does not have to be illustrative but could represent some of the key themes they think might emerge.

Encourage the students to find out who Sibyl is to inform their work.



Vandy Rattana, *Bomb Ponds*, 2009. University of Warwick Art Collection

# Exploration 2:

## Between the Wars in Part 1

### Burial of the Dead

Aims	To understand the context the poem was written in.
	To explore how multiple sources can inform writing.
	To understand how readers create multiple responses to work.

#### Exhibition works relevant to this Exploration:

- \* Walter Ashworth, *The City Centre*, 1941
- \* David Jones, *Tailpiece to In Parenthesis (The Victim) (The Visitors)*, 1959-60
- \* R.B. Kitaj, *If Not, Not*, 1975-76
- \* Colin Moss, *Morning after the Blitz*, 1940
- \* Vandy Rattana, *Bomb Ponds*, 2009
- \* Man Ray, *Dust Breeding (Duchamp's Large Glass with Dust Motes)*, 1920
- \* Ernest Boye Uden, *Coventry Blitz*, 1940

# Exploration 2:

## Between the Wars in Part 1

### Burial of the Dead

#### Activity

Share the Imperial War Museum's First World War Art powerpoint found here:

<https://www.iwm.org.uk/learning/resources/british-art-of-the-first-world-war>.

Invite discussion about what the war was like.

Encourage students to share knowledge that they have acquired from family or school. You might find that there is some confusion between First World War and Second World War recollections of knowledge. If this occurs, you might want to discuss why the two have become confused.

Invite students to make small annotated sketches predicting what the end of the war might have felt like.

Encourage them to consider soldiers, those at home, the points of view of women and children as well as figures of authority.

Invite students to share some of their sketches using a visualiser or leave sketchbooks open on desks and invite the students to walk around looking at each-others' work.

When they return to their seat ask the students to jot the emotions that they have seen/heard about.





Make available some/all of:

***Smile, Smile, Smile* by Wilfred Owen**

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/57347/smile-smile-smile>

***Armistice Day* by Robert Graves**

<http://ww1lit.nsms.ox.ac.uk/ww1lit/items/show/6395>

***The Victory Ball* by Alfred Noyes**

<https://rickrozoff.wordpress.com/2017/02/15/alfred-noyes-the-victory-ball/>

***Peace* by Eleanor Farjeon**

<https://allpoetry.com/poem/8603747-Peace-by-Eleanor-Farjeon>

Invite students to read the poems to each other, adding further annotated sketches to their books.

**Do these impressions differ from their original impressions?**

**Why is the end of the war more sombre than celebratory for some?**

Explore issues such as soldiers returning home without their friends and colleagues, women who have had more freedom, a sense of worry across the country about what will happen next etc.

Explain that you will now read *Part 1: The Burial of the Dead* from T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*.

Remind students it was published in 1922, only a few years later. Explain that as you read you would like the students to sketch. They will not be able to catch every word or even sentence in this way, so they should be looking to capture impressions. Invite them to listen for images or words that particularly stick out. Reassure the students that this isn't a poem that immediately makes sense.

You might want to do one read through before they start sketching so they get a basic impression of the poem beforehand. You will almost certainly want to read it more than once.

Now provide students with a copy of the words and invite them to transfer some of their images over the relevant section of text using pencil or charcoal.

Reflect on:

**What does this section of the poem seem to be about?**

**Does it bear any relation to the section title?**

You might want to explore the idea of being worse off as a survivor here but be aware that this might be a trigger for some of your students.





Share an image of, or better still visit, Coventry Cathedral.

The destruction of the old cathedral and rebuilding is a key image for Coventry.

**Does this resonate with the poem for you?**

You might share the works listed on page 10 that the group chose for the exhibition, which are largely relating to Second World War Coventry and other conflicts but don't include artworks from World War One. Ask them to consider:

**Why do you think this has happened?**

**Is it problematic that we make connections with a war that the poem isn't about?**

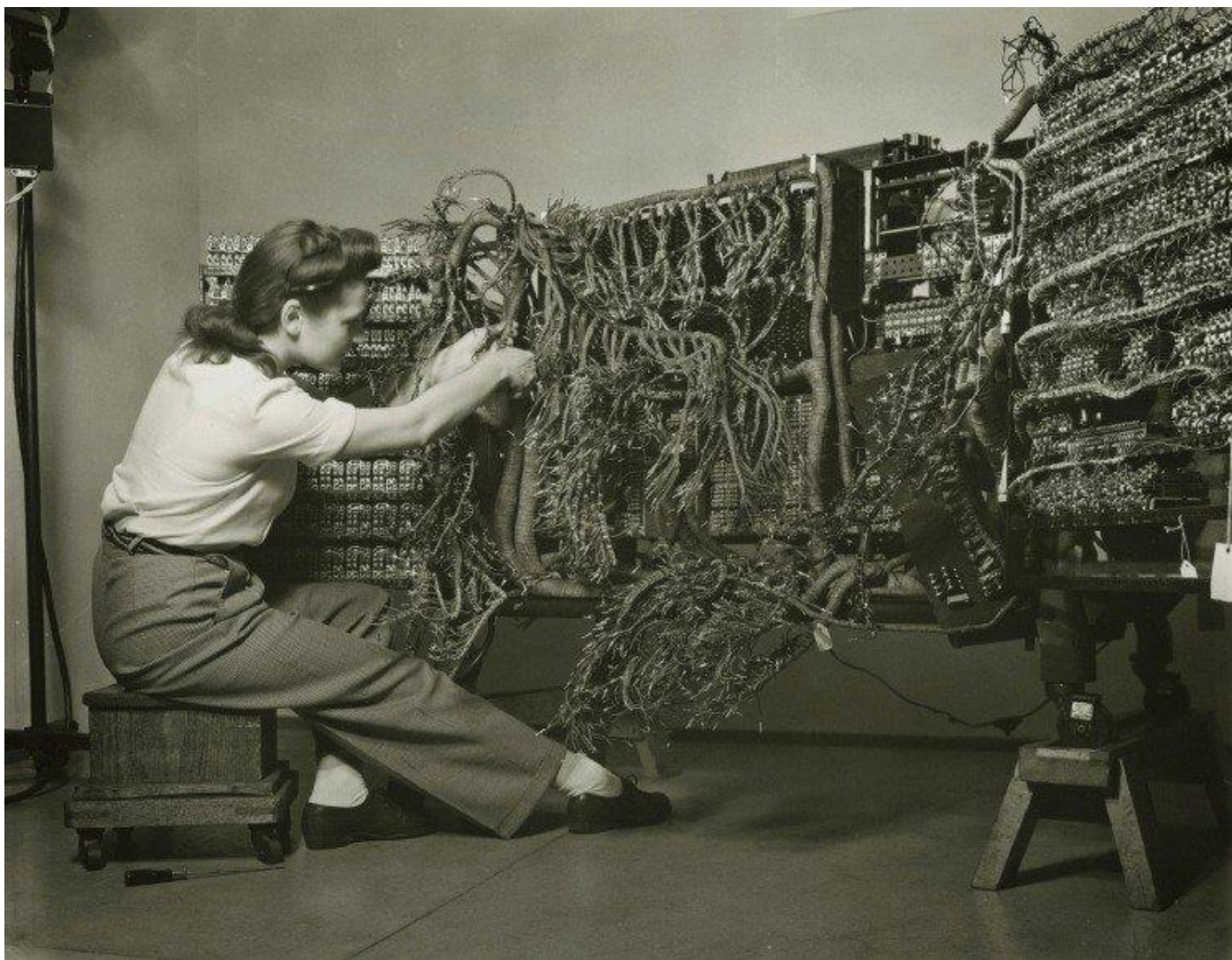
# Exploration 2:

## Between the Wars in Part 1

### Burial of the Dead

#### Homework/Sketchbook Task

Create an annotated collection of images that this section of the poem has evoked for you. Try and include artworks as part of your collection. Annotate them with the connection they made and the line of the poem if appropriate.



Berenice Abbott, *IBM, Untitled (Woman and Wires)*, 1940s. Ryerson Image Centre

# Exploration 3:

## Fragmentation in Part 2

### A Game of Chess

Aims	To explore Fragmentation in the Poem.
	To consider juxtaposition and its role in the poem and explore its potential in our work.
	To explore whether abstraction is useful in the interpretation of <i>The Waste Land</i> .

#### Exhibition works relevant to this exploration

- \* Berenice Abbott, *IBM, Untitled (Women and Wires)*, 1940s
- \* Peter Blake, *Marcel Duchamp's World Tour: Playing Chess with Tracey*, 2003-5
- \* Bert Hardy, *Southwark Pub*, 1949; *Dancing in Pub*, 1951; *Fun in Southend*, 1952; *Cabaret Night*, 1951
- \* Percy Wyndham Lewis, *Abstract Design*, 1912
- \* Henry Moore, *Sculptural Objects*, 1949
- \* Walter Sickert, *Off to the Pub (The Weekend)*, 1912
- \* Hannah Starkey, *Untitled*, June 2007
- \* John Stezaker, *Mask (Film Portrait Collage) CLXI*, 2012; *Mask (Film Portrait Collage) CCV*, 2016

# Exploration 3:

## Fragmentation in Part 2

### A Game of Chess

#### Activity

If you have time before the students arrive, set up the classroom with these images displayed (provided on the following pages):

**Peter Blake, *Marcel Duchamp's World Tour: Playing Chess with Tracey*, 2003-5**

**Bert Hardy, *Southwark Pub*, 1949; *Dancing in Pub*, 1951; *Fun in Southend*, 1952; *Cabaret Night*, 1951**

**Walter Sickert, *Off to the Pub (The Weekend)*, 1912**

**Hannah Starkey, *Untitled, June 2007*, 2007**

Also lay out chess sets or pieces and have some rag time music playing:

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A44QDL-K-bY&list=PL8DF504CDE7860A2C>).

Alternatively, the images could be rolling on a powerpoint with the music playing behind. If you are doing this you might want to include further pub images.





Peter Blake, *Marcel Duchamp's World Tour: Playing Chess with Tracey*, 2003-5.  
Norfeldt Art Collection



**Bert Hardy, *Southwark Pub*, 1949; *Fun in Southend*, 1952;  
*Dancing in Pub*, 1951; *Cabaret Night*, 1951. Getty Images**





Walter Sickert, *Off to the Pub (The Weekend)*, 1912. Leeds Art Gallery





Hannah Starkey, *Untitled, June 2007, 2007*. The Artist and Maureen Paley, London

Invite students to sketch in response to what they see and hear.

Once they have collected several ideas, invite them to enlarge the sketch they best feel captures the atmosphere and to add some colour.

Provide the students with tracing paper and invite them to paperclip it over their sketch.

As before, read aloud from *A Game of Chess* from the beginning of the section to line 138 ‘... knock upon the door.’

Ask the students to overlay their pub scene sketches with these new images.

Initially these might be fragmented sketches. As their exploration of the poem continues, students might want to create a more unified overlaying image.

Explain that the lines you have read come from a multitude of sources that Eliot has combined.

These are listed in Eliot’s own notes to the poem as being:

- 77. Shakespeare. *Antony and Cleopatra*, II, ii, 190.
- 92. Laquearia. V. *Aeneid*, I, 726:  
dependent lychni laquearibus aureis  
incensi, et noctem flammis funalia  
vincunt.
- 98. Sylvan scene. V. Milton, *Paradise Lost*, IV, 140.
- 99. V. Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, VI, Philomela.
- 100. Cf. Part III, 204.
- 115. Cf. Part III, 195.
- 118. Cf. Webster: ‘*Is the wind in that door still?*’
- 125. Cf. Part I, 39, 48.
- 137. Cf. the game of chess in Middleton’s *Women beware Women*.

Provide students with a copy of the section of the poem you have read aloud.

Either print for the students or invite them to find the references, mostly available online.

**Can they identify how the source has been used?**

**Have the words been copied exactly?**

**Why is Eliot using so many different inspirations?**

**Do they think this is typical of all artists and Eliot is just more forthcoming about it or is it something peculiar to this poem?**

Having reviewed some of the references, offer the students an opportunity to further work on their overlay image.

Invite students to return to their original bar room image and read the remainder of *The Game of Chess*.

Invite students to add to their previous sketching. You might want to display the words as you read and clarify meanings of words such as 'demobbed' and 'brought on'. Encourage students to work on both their bar room and tracing paper pieces to complete their overlay piece. You might want the students to take this piece out of their sketchbooks and create a piece on a larger scale.

Reflect on:

**What do the two sections of this part have common?**

**Do they feed each other?**

**How does the change of style impact you?**

**Does this way of representing the poem visually work?**

**How would you prefer to do it?**

# Exploration 3:

## Fragmentation in Part 2

### A Game of Chess

#### Homework/Sketchbook Task

We have explored the juxtaposition of images to represent this section of the poem. As a possible alternative you are going to explore abstraction. <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/a/abstract-art>

you feel is more effective.

If you aren't familiar with abstraction already, spend some time browsing abstract art. If there are particular pieces that you like, make a note of the artists' names and explore some more of their work.

Make some initial sketches for a possible abstract response to this section of the poem. Consider how you will use shape, colour and composition to create your response. Make some notes in your sketch book reflecting on which response



JMW Turner, *The Golden Bough*, 1834, Tate

# Exploration 4:

## Metaphor and Journeys in Parts 3 and 4 The Fire Sermon and Death by Water

### Aims

To consider opposing metaphors and how they are used.

To explore how to combine metaphors in a single piece of sculpture.

### Exhibition works relevant to this exploration

- \* William Blake, *Facsimile of illustrations to the Divine Comedy of Dante*, pub. 1922
- \* Cecil Collins, *The Quest*, 1938
- \* John Hutton, *Untitled*, 1983
- \* Lee Miller, *Portrait of Space, Al Bulwayeb, Nr Siwa Egypt*, 1941
- \* Paul Nash, *The Shore*, 1923
- \* George Shaw, *Twelve Short Walks*, 2005
- \* Derek Jarman's Garden, with photographs by Howard Sooley, Thames and Hudson, 1995
- \* Joseph Mallard William Turner, *The Golden Bough*, exhibited 1834

# Exploration 4:

## Metaphor and Journeys in Parts 3 and 4 The Fire Sermon and Death by Water

### Activity Part 1

In advance of the session prepare a slideshow that has images of water from flood to drought.

You could include the water mentioned in the poem: the Thames and Thames Estuary, particularly Margate, a polluted river, mountain springs, Sir John Everett Millais', *Ophelia*. You might also want to include baptismal imagery and images of funerals on the Ganges or more mythical images that your students will respond to. You might also want to include the images listed on the previous page.

Share the powerpoint with water sounds behind:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f7GzJBAIhRk/>

Invite the students to sketch in response to the images, adding any of their own connections with water from fiction or their own experience.

Create a class mind map of the connections the students made and put it up in the classroom to use as reference material.



Tape out a line on the floor with one end representing 'Water as a life giver' and the other 'Water is Dangerous'.

Invite the students to place themselves on the line to represent their opinion.

Invite students to justify why they have placed themselves where they have on the line.

Challenge every student, or pair of students, to identify one person for each extreme and one for the centre. Invite them to consider religion, geographical location, caring responsibilities etc.

Repeat the opinion line exercise. Have people moved?

Invite the students to make a reflection in note or sketch form in their notebooks. Explain or reflect on the fact that water is a very well used metaphor in the poem.

**Why might water be an important metaphor for Eliot?**

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# Exploration 4:

## Metaphor and Journeys in Parts 3 and 4 The Fire Sermon and Death by Water

### Homework/Sketchbook Task

Fire is often seen as the opposite of water.

Can you create a slideshow of images to represent how fire can be seen. You might find examples of fire as a purifier, fire as danger, emotional fire or passion.

Investigate art works and myths or stories that incorporate fire symbolism too.

# Exploration 4:

## Metaphor and Journeys in Parts 3 and 4 The Fire Sermon and Death by Water

### Activity Part 2

Share some of the students fire explorations and invite a repeat of the sketchbook activities for water.

Explain that *The Fire Sermon* is a key piece of Buddhist text similar to the Sermon on the Mount in Christian traditions.

Share the translation that Eliot used:  
<http://www.sacred-texts.com/bud/bits/bits073.htm>

Invite discussion about what the intended learning is here.

**Who is it written for?**

**What behaviours are they wanting the audience to adopt?**

Invite students to consider what behavioural messages could be framed around a water metaphor and note these in sketch or note form in their sketchbooks.

Read aloud from *The Fire Sermon*.

This is a particularly dense section of the poem and you might want to display the text and invite students to ask for vocabulary clarification before reading aloud a second time.

**Is this what you were expecting?**

**What is the behaviour that Eliot is describing/denouncing?**

**How are the references to water used to deliver this message?**

In response to their initial thoughts, invite students to use pastels to create images where fire and water meet.

Ask them to annotate how bringing the metaphors together worked

**Did it offer more scope for their thinking?**

## Extended Task

Re-read the section about Tiresias.

You might have asked students to complete some research on Tiresias in advance of this.

Discuss the character of Tiresias.

**Why is a character who is both male and female appropriate here?**

**What are their characteristics?**

**How does this follow from the fire and water metaphors?**

**Are fire and water useful metaphors to explore gender stereotypes?**

**Is Tiresias a physical character or a metaphor?**

Encourage students to collect some reference material, using the Tate <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/s/sculpture> and other resources to investigate sculptures and forms that might be supportive.

Share these mood boards to stimulate further thought.

Invite students to create a series of sketches to plan their sculpture.

Encourage them to explore each possible alternative portrayal and then an appropriate mixing of them. Each sketch they make invite them to question whether it is a true representation of their reading of Tiresias.

Encourage students to pick materials and processes that support their idea, maybe explore trialing casting, carving, modelling and construction as part of the development phase to find the materials to work for their idea.

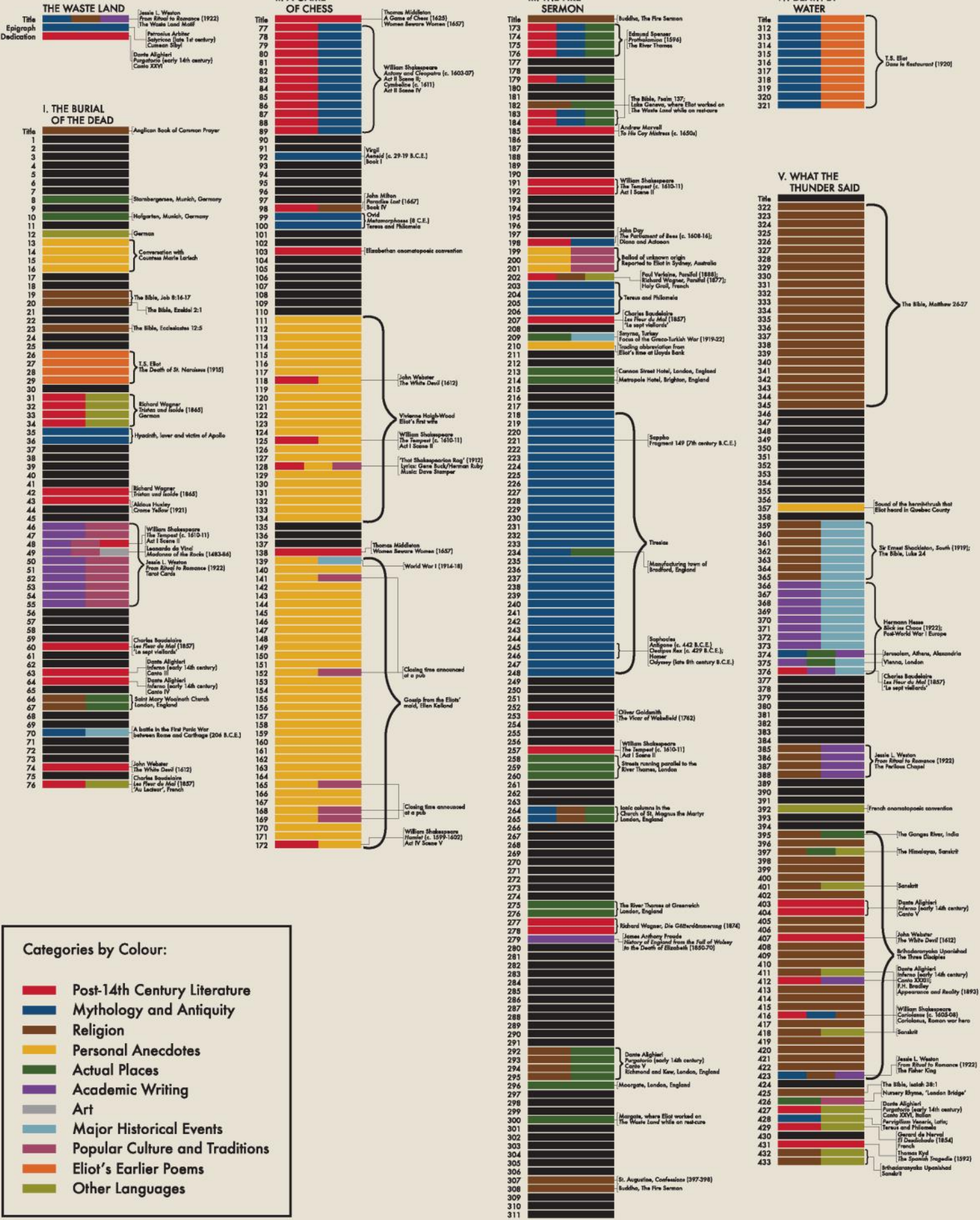
Invite students to put their work on display and to consider how they will add interpretation.

**Do they want to talk about process / include lines from the poem / offer their own interpretation of the character in writing alongside the work?**

Invite students to reflect on each-others' work and interpretations and to respectfully discuss their preferences.

**Which interpretative approach should be chosen to best represent the preferences of the artists?**

A Visual Guide to References in T.S. Eliot's The Waste Land (1922)



Categories by Colour:

- Post-14th Century Literature
- Mythology and Antiquity
- Religion
- Personal Anecdotes
- Actual Places
- Academic Writing
- Art
- Major Historical Events
- Popular Culture and Traditions
- Eliot's Earlier Poems
- Other Languages

# Exploration 5:

## Creating Myths or

## Conclusions in Part 5 What

## the Thunder Said

### Aims

To consider what mythology is left at the end of the poem.

To create a piece which contains the fragments that make up their belief systems.

### Exhibition works relevant to this exploration

- \* Terry Atkinson, *History Snap I*, 1984
- \* Henry Moore, *Homage to El Greco*, 1921
- \* John Newling, *Eliot's Soil* and *Eliot's Note Books*, 2017
- \* John Stezaker, *Scarecrow*, 2015
- \* Graham Sutherland, *Illustrations for T.S. Eliot*, 1973
- \* Berny Tan, *A Visual Guide to References in T.S. Eliot's The Waste Land*, 2011
- \* Uwe Wittwer, *Cracking Glass*, 2014

# Exploration 5:

## Metaphor and Journeys in Parts 3 and 4 The Fire Sermon and Death by Water

### Activity

In advance of this session, lay out the materials you have explored so far to support the students' discussion and thinking.

You might want to bring in rocks as stimulus material for this session. If you decide to do this, give students an opportunity to touch and sketch, exploring the shape and feel of them. You might want to draw comparisons to fire and water, encouraging the students to consider each of these elements in comparison with the other.

Display lines 341-2 from *What the Thunder Said*:

*“There is not even silence in the  
mountains  
But dry sterile thunder without  
rain”*

Invite students to create a sketched impression of this environment, considering their tonal palette and the mood they want to evoke from the image.

Once they have completed their sketches invite the students to discuss and note their impressions of this image as one of the final ones within the poem.



Read from the beginning of *What the Thunder Said* to line 395 *Bringing rain*.

Invite students to identify the themes the poet is returning to by choosing from the source materials you have used so far to illustrate lines/sections of this text.

Encourage them to think beyond literal illustration and to prioritise evoking mood.

### **What is their sense of the poem as it comes to a close?**

Guide them through, reflecting on the war poetry, the metaphorical use of water and fire.

Share Berny Tan's *A Visual Guide to References in T.S. Eliot's The Waste Land*, 2011 (page 35).

**What does this infographic show about the poem?**

**Does this give you any further insights into what Eliot was trying to do?**

**How helpful is it to see the poem pictured in this way?**

**Is it possible to hold all these references in your head at once?**

**What does having these multiple voices suggest about how Eliot sees the world?**

Play students [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tB3ld\\_7jIH4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tB3ld_7jIH4) and ask them to use charcoal or black pastels to sketch what they hear.

You can choose to tell them that it is thunder or not. Invite them to compare their sketches.

## How have these sounds been represented in the sketches?

Explain that the final myth that is referenced in the poem is a Hindu one from the Upanishads, which talks about how the gods, men, and demons of India asked their father how to live well. The father answered each of them with the sound of thunder, which was heard as the onomatopoeic **"DA"**.

Each of the three groups interpreted this sound in a different way. The gods thought it was the word **Datta**, which means to give; the men

thought it was **Dayadhvam**, which means to have compassion; and the demons heard it as **Damyata**, which means to have self-control.

Read aloud whilst sharing the text from line 396 onwards.

## How has Eliot used this myth?

### What is he suggesting by offering this different hearing of the same word as the closing words of the poem?

You might explore ideas of multiple points of view being less clear than single points of focus, or the demise of religion.

Invite students to offer a response to this  
by sketching the final lines:

***“Datta. Dayadhvam. Damyata.  
Shantih shantih shantih”***

Translated as:

***“Give compassion, control,  
peace, peace, peace”***

Think about the whole poem in context of  
final lines. Sketch the image the poem  
leaves you with.

This could be worked into a larger piece if you  
prefer.

# Final Piece:

## These fragments shore me up

*The Waste Land* is made up of fragments of other pieces of literature which Eliot uses to create his own mythology. This project offers the opportunity for you to explore the fragments which shore you up and create the mythology of your life.

Start by scrapbooking sources which are important to you. These can be images (including photographs), stories, words, phrases (family sayings or famous quotes), gifts etc.

Review your scrapbook.

**Are there any links to be drawn between the items you've included?**

**What are the images/words that stick out in particular?**

Consider a piece that could hold these multiple references.

**What form will it take?**

**Do you need to consider digital elements to your piece?**

**Does it need to be multi-sensory?**

**Are you going to create abstractions of your images or quote them directly?**

Remember this isn't illustration. Think more about a vessel that can contain sometimes contradictory things.

Once you have finished, create an interpretation card for your work.

You might want to refer back to the epigraph at the beginning of the Eliot poem:

*"Nam Sibyllam quidem Cumis  
ego ipse oculis meis vidi  
in ampulla pendere, et cum  
pueri illi dicerent: Στβμλλ  
τί Θέλεις; respondebat illa:  
ἀποσθνεῖν Θελω."*

Translation:

*"With my own eyes I saw the  
Sibyl of Cumae hanging  
in a bottle; and when the boys*

*said to her: Sybil,  
what do you want?" she  
replied: "I want to die."*

What did these lines preface for the poem?

What starting point do you want to give the viewer of your work?



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**Herbert**  
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Above: John Newling, *Eliot's Note Books*, 2017. The Artist