

## THOMAS STEARNS ELIOT

Thomas Stearns Eliot is one of the most significant figures of the 20th century. He is one of the great innovators. He was a poet, a playwright but also a literary critic. He wrote almost nothing negligible.

He was born in Missouri in **1888**, he studied at Harvard at the Sorbonne in Paris and at Oxford: those giving a cosmopolitan bent to his education. At the outbreak of WWI he settled in London where he started to work first as a teacher and then as a bank clerk.

In **1914** he met the American poet Ezra Pound with whom he would work closely on several major poems.

In **1915** he married Vivien Haigh-Wood, she was a British ballet dancer but this marriage was not successful since she suffered from mental instability.

In **1917** he published his first collection of poems that is called "Prufrock and Other Observations" which established Eliot as an important avant garde poet.

With its vocal fragmentation and allusiveness, with its precision of imagery, with its condemnation of the modern world together with the recurrence to a dry self-conscious wit this collection established Eliot as a modernist poet.

In **1922** he founded the influential literary journal "The Criterion" which he also edited during the 17 years of publication.

In **1925** he became director of the publishing house "Faber and Faber".

After the publication of his first collection of poems, unhappily married, Eliot suffers from a nervous breakdown and he spent some time in a sanatorium in Switzerland where he underwent psychological treatment.

During this period poetry became officially his only refuge, his only shelter as well as the tool to transcend his personal situation and represents the general crisis of Western culture.

In Switzerland he completed his famous poem "**The Waste Land**" which was published in the first issue of "**The Criterion**" after Ezra Pound revision and cuts.

Eliot later dedicated this poem to his friend Ezra Pound.