

This poem explored the disintegration of values in the modern world.

It was highly innovative and it confirmed Eliot as a major poet and also as a significant spokesman for his generation.

In **1925** he published "*The Hollow Man*". This poem can be read as a sequel to the despair expressed in "The Waste Land".

In **1927** Eliot became a British citizen and it was about this time that he entered the Anglican Church finally finding the answer to his own uncertainties and to the despair of the modern world's lack of faith and religion. (Eliot is American from birth)

The major works of this period expressed Eliot's search for religious certainties and they include "Ash-Wednesday" published in 1939 and the "Four Quartets" published in 1943.

Ash-Wednesday is a poem with a penitential and questioning mood whereas the "Four Quartets" deals with the relation between time and eternity.

When his wife's mental instability got worse Eliot placed her into a mental asylum where she later died provoking a strong sense of guilt in Eliot.

Ten years later he was happily remarried to his secretary.

During the 30's Eliot also devoted himself to writing verse drama which he also continued writing during the 40's and the 50's.

He isn't only a poet, he is also a playwright and a literary critic.

All his plays mainly address directly or indirectly religious themes.

During his life Eliot proved to be an extremely prolific writer. He even wrote a book of poems for children which is called "Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats" in 1939. This book was later transformed into the highly successful musical "Cats".

During his life Eliot also wrote several works of criticism. He was an influential literary critic and in his critical essays he shared with the modern novelist James Joyce the view about the importance for the artist to be impersonal and to separate the man who suffers from the mind which creates.

He believed that the artist had to separate the man who suffers from the mind which he creates.

The characters of his works are often archetypes of human beings who turn their own subjective experience into a universal form which anyone can identify with.

His idea was that impersonality must prevail over personality.

In **1948** he was awarded the "Nobel Prize for Literature" and he was internationally recognised as one of the most important poets of the century.

He died in London in **1965**.

WORKS

Eliot wrote in a period when new techniques were needed to express the complex realities of the so-called "Age of Anxiety".

Even though a definitive interpretation of his work is not possible we can roughly divide his literary production into 2 periods: before and after his conversion to the Anglican Church.

BEFORE HIS CONVERSION TO THE ANGLICAN CHURCH:

The works of the first period show a pessimistic vision of the world and the main works belonging to this first phase are "Prufrock and Other Observations", "The Waste Land" and "The Hollow Man".

All these poems expressed a certain nihilism (existence is useless) and reflects the sense of spiritual dryness of modern man.

AFTER HIS CONVERSION TO THE ANGLICAN CHURCH

The works of the second period show a more optimistic vision. After entering the anglican Church his religious faith gave him an optimistic vision of the world and so from a mood of desolation Eliot turned into an ardent believer in Christian faith.

The main works belonging to this second phase are "The four quartets", "Harsh-Wednesday" and his verse poem

With his works Eliot represented the complexity of modern civilization. For Eliot this complexity resulted from the fragmentation of Western tradition which was the result of the Modern processes of industrialization, mass production and consumerism.

Alienated modern man no longer experiences a coherent sense of moral and religious community with his fellow man. His actions are no longer governed by a shared ethical code. The modern man is morally and spiritually empty.

Eliot sees his poetic mission as that of piecing together these broken worlds and finding redemption by creating a new symbolic system but inevitably such missions lead to a very difficult poetry.