

**T.S. ELIOT'S USE OF DESCRIPTION IN  
THE LOVE SONG OF J. ALFRED PRUFROCK**

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Description, like style, is a must for story or poem writers. Clear descriptions help to make the story or poem more interesting, like style. In **The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock**, T.S. Eliot uses similes and metaphors, images, and personification to describe his poem vividly.

One way for Eliot to explain **The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock** expressively is through smiles and metaphors. Eliot portrays the poem with a small plethora of similes and metaphors. The character, Prufrock, invites the audience to attend a social gathering "when the evening is spread out against the sky like a patient etherized upon a table." (3) The evening, which is the tenor, compares to the patient, which is the vehicle. The metaphor of the yellow fog is perhaps Eliot's best use of description. Eliot likens the yellow fog or smoke to an animal, as it "rubs its back" and "rubs its muzzle." (15-16) It is as though the smoke is a dog roaming the streets waiting for something. Eliot again puts the metaphor into practice. The afternoon moves to the evening, and it "sleeps...smoothed by long fingers...stretched on the floor..." (75-78) The afternoon is a metaphor of a woman spending a lazy afternoon at a social event with her male companion. Similes and metaphors are not the only ways Eliot depicts his poem descriptively.

Images are a large part in **The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock**. The very self-conscious Prufrock worries about what people think of him. Old age is a scary idea to Prufrock. "They

will say: 'How his hair is growing thin!'" (41) The picture of being old and homely is very unappealing to Prufrock. Another image is Prufrock showing his comparison with Hamlet, a character in a Shakespeare tragedy. "I am not Prince Hamlet," Prufrock insists, but the two characters demonstrate an amount of indecision. (111) Prufrock is afraid to speak his mind. A final image is Prufrock walking on the beach. The image of Prufrock as a very depressed individual is clear. Prufrock is so lonely, he worries if mermaids will sing to him. Prufrock is so shy, he doesn't think of anyone else walking with him on the beach. Eliot uses images very much to show the mood and personality of Prufrock.

Eliot vividly establishes description with personification. The afternoon in Eliot's metaphor has a human aspect to it. Voice personifies itself in Eliot's poem also. Prufrock hears "voices dying with a dying fall." (52) Voices die just like humans. Next, Prufrock sees "the eternal Footman hold my coat, and snicker." (85) The eternal Footman is Death, and Eliot gives Death a human quality. Prufrock is afraid that Death will jump out like some man and kill him. Finally, the waves have human quality in Eliot's poem. Prufrock walks on the beach and mermaids comb "the white hair of the waves." (127) Eliot personifies the sea as a very old man and that the waves are his white hair. Personification is one of Eliot's specialties in *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*.

T.S. Eliot uses similes and metaphors, images, and personification to evoke **The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock** poetically. Without the distinct parts of description Eliot uses, this poem would not be as well written as it is.