

People are half-alive, hungry for any form of spiritual experience.

20 marks

To what extent does this view align with your understanding of Eliot's poetry?

### Possible Plan

#### Introduction

- Thesis: T.S. Eliot's poetry strongly aligns with the assertion that individuals in the modern world are spiritually desolate and yearning for meaning. This is reflected in his portrayal of characters who are emotionally and spiritually fragmented. Eliot's modernist lens, through vivid imagery and fragmented structure, underscores the characters' yearning for a deeper spiritual experience amidst the bleakness of modernity.
- Overview of chosen poems: The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock, Rhapsody on a Windy Night, and Journey of the Magi.
- Context: Eliot's poetry, written during the early 20th century, reflects the disillusionment post-World War I, where traditional beliefs were eroded.

#### Body Paragraph 1: The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock

- Topic Sentence: The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock encapsulates the spiritual barrenness and inner paralysis of modern individuals who long for a meaningful existence.
- Evidence 1: "I have measured out my life with coffee spoons".
  - Analysis: This metaphor reveals Prufrock's life as defined by trivialities, symbolising his disconnection from deeper, meaningful experiences.
- Evidence 2: "In the room the women come and go / Talking of Michelangelo".
  - Analysis: The repetition highlights social superficiality and Prufrock's isolation, underscoring his desire for true connection amidst spiritual emptiness.
- Link to Thesis: Prufrock embodies the spiritual yearning Eliot presents, showcasing the desperation for a connection beyond the banalities of life.

#### Body Paragraph 2: Rhapsody on a Windy Night

- Topic Sentence: Rhapsody on a Windy Night portrays a cityscape filled with spiritual decay, where the protagonist's journey at night reflects a fragmented search for meaning.
- Evidence 1: "Midnight shakes the memory / As a madman shakes a dead geranium".
  - Analysis: The simile and imagery evoke the unsettling nature of memory, suggesting the intrusion of existential dread and the dissonance between past and present.
- Evidence 2: The personified streetlamps, "The street lamp sputtered, / The street lamp said, 'Regard that woman'".
  - Analysis: These lamps direct the protagonist's thoughts, highlighting urban life's bleak control over human consciousness and indicating a hunger for clarity or spiritual insight.
- Link to Thesis: The disjointed scenes in Rhapsody depict a city in moral and spiritual decline, echoing the modern individual's craving for meaning amidst a landscape of disillusionment.

#### Body Paragraph 3: Journey of the Magi

- Topic Sentence: In Journey of the Magi, Eliot explores the spiritual transition from despair to the possibility of redemption, reflecting an intense yearning for transformative experience.
- Evidence 1: "A hard time we had of it" and "with the voices singing in our ears, saying / That this was all folly".
  - Analysis: The juxtaposition of the arduous journey and the perceived 'folly' illustrates the struggle for spiritual fulfillment and the disillusionment faced during transformation.
- Evidence 2: The ending: "I should be glad of another death".
  - Analysis: The magus's longing for another death underscores his awareness of spiritual rebirth but also his alienation from his past beliefs and community.

#### Conclusion

- Restate Thesis: Eliot's poetry reveals characters who are spiritually parched, trapped between inertia and the yearning for deeper significance. Through Prufrock, Rhapsody, and Magi, Eliot illustrates the modern condition of seeking meaning amidst pervasive emptiness.
- Final Insight: Eliot's poetic techniques—such as fragmented imagery, metaphor, and allusion—demonstrate how the modern world's spiritual drought fuels a desperate search for redemption or connection.

**To What Extent**

- present evidence for both sides of an argument
- make judgements about this evidence

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**Alienation**

*Prufrock's internal struggles and hesitation to connect with others reflect a profound sense of alienation that leaves him yearning for purpose within a detached society.*

**Despair**

*The characters in *The Hollow Men* exist in a barren world, their lives devoid of hope, echoing Eliot's exploration of modern despair.*

**Hollow**

*Eliot's depiction of the "hollow men" symbolises spiritual emptiness, as these figures struggle to find substance and meaning in a decaying world.*

**Paralysis**

*Prufrock's indecision and constant questioning symbolise the paralysis that prevents him from pursuing deeper spiritual connections.*

**Redemption**

*Journey of the Magi reveals Eliot's nuanced portrayal of redemption, suggesting that true spiritual fulfilment requires sacrifice and profound transformation.*

**Spirituality**

*Throughout *Selected Poems*, Eliot's use of religious allusions underscores the human search for spirituality in a world that feels increasingly secular and devoid of purpose.*

**Yearning**

*Characters like Prufrock express an unfulfilled yearning for meaning, symbolising a universal human desire that remains elusive in Eliot's depiction of modernity.*

**Disillusionment**

*In *Preludes*, Eliot's depiction of urban decay captures the disillusionment of modern life, as individuals grapple with unfulfilled routines and spiritual emptiness.*