

**Banha University  
Faculty of Education  
English Department**

**A Guiding Model Answer for  
Fourth Grade  
19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries Poetry Exam**

**January 3 (Year 2013)**

**Faculty of Arts**

**Prepared by**

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First Term  
Faculty of Education  
English Department  
Fourth Grade



Banha University  
Year (2012-2013)  
Time: 2 hours  
First Term Exam

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### Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries Poetry Exam

#### Respond to the following questions:

1. In their affirmation of connecting with others, Browning's "Meeting at Night" and Whitman's "I Saw in Louisiana a Live-Oak Growing" are similar. Given our discussion in class, however, we would expect the worldviews and assumptions which underlie this affirmation to be quite different for each poet. How?

(Time Limit is **40 minutes**; **Grade is 40**)

2. The literary and the visual arts are very similar. Each strives to capture a moment, tell a story or pin down something that would otherwise be lost in the flow of time. When a writer composes a piece of written work about a piece of visual art, neither of the original pieces remain unchanged: the written work affects how one views the visual and the visual work informs the way a reader approaches the written. Understanding this relationship is essential to understanding some of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries' poems and their issues. In your answer, refer to Dante Gabriel Rossetti's "The Blessed Damozel," Ted Hughes' "Perfect Light," and W. H. Auden's "Musée des Beaux Arts"? (Time Limit is **50 minutes**; **Grade is 50**)

3. Analyze the persona of the speaker in T. S. Eliot's poem "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" by examining the way he sees the world?

(Time Limit is **30 minutes**; **Grade is 30**)

**Good Luck**  
**Mohammad Al-Hussini Arab**

## Answers

### Question One:

In their affirmation of connecting with others, Browning's "Meeting at Night" and Whitman's "I Saw in Louisiana a Live-Oak Growing" are similar. Given our discussion in class, however, we would expect the worldviews and assumptions which underlie this affirmation to be quite different for each poet. How?

### Answer:

In their affirmation of connecting with others, Browning's "Meeting at Night" and Whitman's "I Saw in Louisiana a Live-Oak Growing" are similar. Browning's "Meeting at Night" presents a certain sentiment, desire, or wish fulfillment perhaps, rather than the actual course of events. The situation presented in "Meeting at Night" is too beautiful to be true. It functions as an imaginary fulfillment of the poet's longing for human contact. Human details of the whole story are very carefully withheld—we know nothing of the speaker and nothing, consequently, of his mistress. What we receive instead is the multitude of physical details about the landscape—the "fiery ringlets," the "slushy sand," the number of fields, etc. Although the occasion for the poem is a romantic one, the encounter is presented in a very matter-of-fact fashion.

The poem both asserts and questions the idea that passionate emotion, especially love, is not only powerful but also enduring and vital. The speaker argues for the power of love by insisting upon his ability to conquer all that separates him from his lover. Time, distance, and even the lovers' "joys and fears" cannot stand in his way and are not important once the two are together. Displaying characteristic Victorian optimism, the speaker believes firmly in his ability to achieve his goals and ends the poem at the precise moment when he has done so.

At the same time, the speaker's own words amply demonstrate the difficulty of attaining the kind of experience that he exalts. Most of the poem's few lines are devoted to recounting the distance that the speaker must travel and the obstacles he must overcome. The fact that the speaker must travel a considerable distance to reach his lover's farm is especially important. The speaker says nothing about his day-to-day life, but he obviously lives far from the rural setting that his lover inhabits. The physical distance between the lovers points to other ways in which they, as a man and a woman, are different and irrevocably separate. Both before and after marriage, Victorian men and women lived within separate social spheres; men were increasingly called upon to identify themselves with work and with the world outside the home, while women were encouraged to participate primarily in domestic activities and to nurture the emotional and spiritual life of the family. It is therefore significant that the meeting takes place within the female lover's home, because the experience itself is nonrational and belongs within the domestic and private women's sphere.

The speaker must eventually leave the farm, along with the realm of female experience and emotion, to return to the male world. The journey depicted in the poem is thus in part a journey from the male world to the female; this accounts for the long distance that the speaker must travel and for his need to separate himself from the passivity he associates with nature and the female realm. Although the speaker's intense emotion causes him to represent the moment of reunion as all-powerful, the distance

between the speaker and his lover remains, like the distance between the social worlds of men and women, and this distance marks the reunion as a rare and transitory event.

On the other hand, Whitman's "I Saw in Louisiana a Live-Oak Growing" seems to be a reflection on the relation of the natural and human, with a special bearing on the artistic. While the tree utters its leaves regardless of the absence of companions, the human consciousness requires human companionship to inspire it to creativity. Readers who are familiar with *Leaves of Grass*, however, and specifically with "Calamus," the section (or "cluster") of the book in which the poem is found, will be aware of further implications. "Calamus" immediately follows "Children of Adam," a cluster dealing with what Whitman calls "amativeness" or the love between men and women. The organizing theme of "Calamus" is "adhesiveness" or male comradeship. Readers are increasingly inclined to read "Calamus" as an expression of the poet's homoerotic inclinations, but it seems that few of Whitman's contemporaries read it that way. To most of its nineteenth century readers, "Calamus" moved beyond the sexual concerns of "Children of Adam." In fact, some readers were scandalized by "Children of Adam," but "Calamus" seems to have raised scarcely an eyebrow during Whitman's lifetime. While later critics are prepared to ridicule the naiveté and bad faith of nineteenth century readers, those are the readers Whitman knew. If one attempts to read these poems as one of Whitman's contemporaries might have, the emphasis on relationships between men is not necessarily homosexual. For these readers, relationships between men are simply not sexual. Thus, these poems are about the spiritual dimensions of human experience, taking the reader beyond the physical and implying the judgment that the spiritual is "higher" than the physical.

Any interpretation of poetry reflects the worldview of the interpreter. More than a century has passed since Whitman's death, and in that time American culture has come to question hierarchies such as the one valuing the spiritual over the physical; it has also come to place the sexual much closer to the center of human experience than Whitman's contemporaries would have. Whether this has been, on the whole, for better or worse, it may have brought readers closer to the personal feelings and values of Whitman. For more recent readers, the poems of "Calamus" derive much of their emotional energy from the sexual longings of the poet, which seem to have been toward members of his own sex. The "manly love" of "I Saw in Louisiana a Live-Oak Growing" is thus the love (including, even if not limited to, the sexual) of man for man. No reading that denies that is likely to be accepted today by sophisticated readers. Does this mean that the poem affirms that poetry is based on homosexual love? It seems, rather, to suggest that poetry is inspired by the poet's deepest and most authentic feelings, whatever value the surrounding society may place on those feelings. For Whitman, these are the feelings of a homosexual man, and it is not difficult to see a symbol of male sexuality in the twig around which a little moss is twined. Yet the poem is not, in any reductive sense, about sex; the longing that drives the poem is linked to the artistic creativity of which the poem is an emblem. Further, the authentic feelings of a heterosexual man or of a heterosexual or homosexual woman are equally powerful sources of inspiration. What kills creativity, the poem suggests, is inauthenticity, the denial of oneself and of one's feelings. This, rather than mere physical separation from other people—there is no lover present as the poet speaks—is perhaps, at the deepest level, what would prevent the poet from uttering his leaves.

### **Question Two:**

The literary and the visual arts are very similar. Each strives to capture a moment, tell a story or pin down something that would otherwise be lost in the flow of time. When a writer composes a piece of written work about a piece of visual art, neither of the original pieces remain unchanged: the written work affects how one views the visual and the visual work informs the way a reader approaches the written. Understanding this relationship is essential to understanding some of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries' poems and their issues. In your answer, refer to Dante Gabriel Rossetti's "The Blessed Damozel," Ted Hughes' "Perfect Light," and W. H. Auden's "Musée des Beaux Arts"?

### **Answer:**

The literary and the visual arts are very similar. Each strives to capture a moment, tell a story or pin down something that would otherwise be lost in the flow of time. When a writer composes a piece of written work about a piece of visual art, neither of the original pieces remain unchanged: the written work affects how one views the visual and the visual work informs the way a reader approaches the written. Thus, when a famous painting is summarized in a poem, it gets to be called an example of ekphrasis, the embedding of one kind of art form inside another. Understanding this relationship is key to understanding both poems.

Both a poet and a painter, in 1848 Rossetti, along with Holman Hunt and John Everett Millais, reacted against the neoclassic tendencies and low standards of the art of their day, and sought to express a new moral seriousness and sincerity in their works. Their adoption of the name Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood expressed their admiration for what they saw as the direct and uncomplicated depiction of nature in Italian painting before the High Renaissance. In general, both their painting and their literature are characterized by an interest in the medieval and the supernatural, simplicity of style, love of sensuous beauty, exactness of detail, and much symbolism. "The Blessed Damozel" epitomizes the Pre-Raphaelite school. Rossetti used the medieval form of damsel, "damozel"—a young, unmarried woman of noble birth—in the title to emphasize the medieval setting and visionary aspects of the poem. He was commissioned in 1871 to do a painting of the poem and by 1879 had given it a *predella* showing an earthly lover (wearing a cloak and a sword) lying under a tree in the forest looking up at his beloved. The poem is presented as his reverie.

Thus, an important aspect of Gabriel Rossetti's poetry is his "painterly" style. It is often said that reading one of his poems is almost like looking at a painting. Rossetti himself said that the supreme perfection in art is achieved when the picture and the poem are identical—that is, when they produce the same effect. Rossetti achieves this effect by paying meticulous attention to detail and by using concrete images in his poem "The Blessed Damozel." The damozel's eyes are as deep as waters "stilled at even" (at twilight); she wears seven stars in her hair, which is yellow like corn; holds three lilies in her hand (seven and three are mystical numbers); and wears a white rose on her robe. The earth spins in the void "like a fretful midge"; the "curled moon" is a "little feather" in the gulf—all of these are concrete images that present a portrait of the damozel, the earth, and the moon.

The reader can see in "The Blessed Damozel" the expression of an ancient and well-known theme: the desire of an isolated, separated lover to achieve unity with the

beloved. Rossetti has framed this vision as a reverie, a daydream, a wish-fulfilling dream in the mind of a lover. The heart of the poem is the ironic conflict between the earthly bodily desire and the tradition that heaven is a place of disembodied souls, comforted and joyful in the presence of God. This irony is emphasized by the poem's religious framework. The earthly, fleshly dimension of the lover in heaven is unconsciously revealed in several places in the poem: Her bosom "warms" the bar of heaven; she imagines taking her lover's hand, lying together in the shadow of the mystic tree, laying her cheek against his, and, finally, living in heaven "as once on earth."

These are all images of touching in the earthly sense. Yet, by the standards of medieval theology which the whole framework of the poem implies—she ought to be contemplating the joy of God and exhorting her lover to lay aside grief and remember that she now enjoys the real reward of life: eternal life with God. The Christian imagery, which is largely derived from Dante and other medieval Italian poets, is used decoratively and in this context does not support the sensuous desires of the lover. As much as Rossetti tried to emulate the austere spiritual idealization of Dante, his own sensuousness prevented him from achieving it. The heavenly lover yearns passionately, intensely, for her earthly companion. In her yearning, she moves from a vision of their reunion, to hope of everlasting unity, and finally to doubt and despair. The void between heaven and earth is immense. What is emphasized is the separateness of the lovers: The wish is not the thing itself; the traditional Christian sops about being in heaven hold no comfort for the bereaved lover, for without the beloved, the heaven becomes a hell.

In 1555, Pieter Brueghel painted "The Fall of Icarus," a work depicting the mythological character who flew too close to the sun on his man-made wings. The painting shows Icarus plummeting into the sea—but doing so far in the background. The foreground features scenes from the daily grind of peasant life: plowing and shepherding are given much more space on the canvas than Icarus, who is a mere speck near the horizon. Almost four-hundred years later, W. H. Auden published "Musée de Beaux Arts," a poetic appreciation of Brueghel's painting and an insight into the vanity of human literal (and figurative) attempts at flight. The lines in which Auden praises the old masters (like Brueghel) because they "never forgot" that "dreadful martyrdom must run its course" in a "corner" or "some untidy spot" offer a critical commentary on the painting; they also, however, affect the way that any viewer of the painting will re-examine it. Opening with generalizations and moving to specifics, the poem argues that the image presented by the "Old Masters" of the Renaissance period, that individual human suffering is viewed with apathy by others, is an accurate one. Juxtaposing images of suffering and tragedy with the banal actions of everyday life suggests that individual tragedies are individual burdens as humankind responds with indifference. Auden's poem seeks to deromanticize death, martyrdom and suffering and achieves this through the juxtaposition of "ordinary" events with universally recognized "extraordinary" ones.

Reading Auden's poem affects the way a viewer sees Breughel's painting and, of course, looking at Breughel's painting will affect the way a reader understands Auden's poem. "The Fall of Icarus" and "Musée de Beaux Arts" exist independently from each other, yet they are welded together in a kind of artistic Gestalt. If art, as traditionally conceived, is the deliberate, labored product of human attentiveness to detail, "Musée des Beaux Arts" is centrally concerned with the temptations of artlessness. It is itself



artful in its own guise of criminal artlessness. Brueghel's *The Fall of Icarus* captures the final moment of an elaborate and portentous Greek myth. Icarus was imprisoned with his father Daedalus in the labyrinth that the latter had constructed on the island of Crete. In order to escape, Daedalus devises wax wings that will enable father and son to fly free of the island. He cautions Icarus not to soar too close to the sun, lest it melt the wings' wax. With the arrogance of youth, Icarus ignores his father's warning and, after his wings melt, plummets into the sea and drowns. In Brueghel's rendition, as though the event were indeed marginal to the course of human affairs, Icarus' leg is the only part of him still—barely—visible above the water, in the lower right-hand corner of the canvas. The disappearance of the imprudent boy is not the center of the viewer's attention, just as it passes unnoticed by everyone else within the frame. Like Brueghel, Auden would force one to take notice of universal disregard.

All this has to do with the motif in the poem of the relation between art and human response to suffering. This motif involves the allusion, through the Brueghel painting, to the myth of Icarus, who flies by means of the craft of Daedalus. The poem questions the ability of art to matter in a world of intractable apathy. Not only is Daedalus rendered powerless, but the horrendous death of his son Icarus passes unheeded and unmourned. Even the sun, which, by melting the wax wings, is most directly responsible for the catastrophe, shines without pause or compunction.

In response to suffering, art has an anesthetic effect. When made the content of art, suffering ceases to be existential in its meaning and becomes aesthetic. It is subsumed by beauty if the art is successful, by ugliness if it is not. In either case, sympathy or horror elicited by suffering gives way to aesthetic response. In this sense, art displaces suffering and generates apathy. This effect has its symbol in the flight of Icarus, which tries to do in time what art does psychologically. The wings Daedalus made for himself and his son both postpone the inevitable, and, for Icarus, inadvertently help bring it to pass. As antidotes to suffering and death, art and the art of Daedalus are limited in effect. This is true in time for Daedalean utilitarian art. It is hue in scope for fine art, which anesthetizes us to the suffering of others but not our own.

Ted Hughes's "Perfect Light" works in much the same way as Auden's poem: it is the speaker's reaction to a work of visual art (in this case, a photograph) that changes the way the reader looks at and understands the work being described. The poem works by evoking this sense of "double time," the sense that there are, in a way, two "versions" of the photograph. First, there is a kind of prelapsarian one in which Plath and her children seem posed "as in a picture" titled "Innocence," and a kind of postlapsarian version in which the viewer's knowledge of good and evil (and suicide) make Plath's smile more enigmatic. Knowledge is power, but it also pulls one out of paradise, in this case, the paradise of innocence where there is no suicide or torrent of emotions that need to be sorted out in verse.

The poem begins by addressing Plath directly. To an innocent observer who had never heard of Sylvia Plath, Hughes's description would seem an apt one, but those who know her fate cannot be so comfortable. Plath *seems* posed "as in a picture" titled "Innocence," but she is not. Instead, she is posed for a picture with a much different and unspoken title, a title that would (if one could) encapsulate all of the contrary emotions felt by Hughes while viewing this photograph. The only way in which the photograph could be titled "Innocence" would be if the person bestowing the title were wholly

unaware of its subject's tragic end. Yet, Plath's own innocence of what would be her fate can still be perceived by Hughes and it is his perception of this innocence that he tries to convey to the reader.

The daffodils and "perfect light" of the title are similarly viewed as both innocent and ironic. Plath is, in one sense, like the daffodils surrounding her: beautiful and positioned so as to catch the rays of the sun just so. The light illuminates Plath's face "like a daffodil" while Plath turns her face to her daughter in the posture of a daffodil. The thoughts of the natural death of the daffodils in the photograph serve as a reminder of the unnatural death of Plath.

As Hughes's eye scans the photograph, it finds other details that suggest a longed-for (yet impossible to attain) prelapsarian view. Her "new son" is "Like a teddy bear" and "only a few weeks into his innocence"; he and Plath seem the epitome of "Mother and infant, as in the Holy portrait." The infant Jesus is, of course, a symbol of innocence, yet one is also reminded of another time in which the Virgin Mary held her son: the Pieta. Any depiction of the infant Jesus brings with it the knowledge of his ultimate fate on the cross, just as any photograph of Sylvia Plath brings with it the knowledge of her suicide.

The stanza break signifies the moment in Hughes's apprehension of the photograph when he deals directly with the fact that he is looking at a soon-to-be suicide: the "knowledge" that she would kill herself is "Inside the hill" on which she is posed. The landscape itself seems pregnant with meaning. Hughes remarks that this knowledge "Failed to reach the picture," but this is only true in one sense. While Plath is innocent of the knowledge of what she will do to herself, Hughes (and, by extension, any informed viewer) is not. The hill is compared to a "moated fort hill" to make it seem like a bastion of innocence, a place protected from the knowledge that time will bring. This knowledge, however, is "Inside the hill"—in other words, the very thing against which this bastion of innocence is supposed to stand has already corrupted it. One cannot pretend that the knowledge of Plath's suicide is not there. Thus, Plath's "next moment," a moment that would both disrupt the "perfect light" and bring her closer to her suicide, was "coming towards" her "like an infantryman / Returning slowly out of no-man's-land"—but never "reached" her. In other words, the moment is static, frozen in time by the photograph, and in that frozen moment, the violence that the "infantryman" time would bring to her is no match for the power of her innocence. Therefore, it "Simply melted into the perfect light." The poet thus stands in awe of Plath's innocence while simultaneously struggling with the knowledge that longs to assault such innocence. One cannot avoid the knowledge brought about by time, nor can one pretend that such knowledge does not affect one's perceptions of the past. Before Plath's suicide, the "perfect light" is that of perfect innocence; today, the light seen in that photograph is painful and ironic.

### **Question Three:**

Analyze the persona of the speaker in T. S. Eliot's poem "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" by examining the way he sees the world?

### **Answer:**



Throughout T. S. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," a man's characterization explains why he hides his true self behind an impenetrable shell, unintentionally stunting his personality. This poem uses J. Alfred Prufrock, a nervous and obsessively introspective man, to show readers that only open vulnerability, not fantasy and dreams, can serve as a bridge to meet emotional needs and provide meaning to life.

Prufrock's characterization explains his fear that his true self will be revealed to the ladies at the tea party he is about to attend. No master of small talk, he repeatedly wonders how-and why-he should begin to talk about his unexciting life. He wants to sound important, but what will he say if a lady expects him to talk about himself? Any revelation about him could bring indifferent rejection. He is certain that the ladies will not care about "the butt-ends of my days and ways," fearing that when he shares part of himself with another, she will be uninterested in his life.

The introspective Prufrock is afraid of being exposed at the tea party because he does not see himself as a worthwhile individual. He fears that the ladies will mock his thin hair (symbolizing an unimpressive mind) and his thin arms and legs (symbolizing an unimpressive body). His self-focus is pathetically ironic because he is mostly unnoticed by the ladies at the tea party. He wonders if he will dare "disturb the universe" and show his true self, but twice a brisk couplet slices his monologues. The women "come and go/ Talking of Michelangelo," and miss Prufrock's moment of greatness, which was, sadly, only a "flicker." As he describes how he sees himself—and how he thinks others see him—he succinctly sums up his feelings towards self-revelation, "[a]nd in short, I was afraid."

Admittedly, Eliot's vivid imagery reveals that Prufrock's life is not a heroic epic. He recognizes that his "days and ways" are only "butt-ends," like wasted cigarettes. Prufrock admits that he has "measured out my life with coffee spoons," implying that in his small world, tea parties are his only sort of entertainment. He has "seen the eternal Footman hold my coat, and snicker." Prufrock implies that even Jesus, the Servant of man, finds his petty life without meaning. He choppily describes his life, revealing that he is an unimportant man, someone small. He will "[a]dvice the prince" because he is "an easy tool" to be used by others. He confesses that he is, "[a]lmost, at times, the Fool."

Eliot also utilizes different character allusions to contrast meaningful lives with the insignificant life of J. Alfred Prufrock. The women in the poem talk of Michelangelo, a genius whose varied masterpieces have earned him immortality. Ironically, these women do not notice Prufrock, although he is alive and present. Eliot alludes to John the Baptist when Prufrock mentions that "I have seen my head brought in upon a platter/ I am no prophet." John the Baptist was murdered because he had the courage to tell a king that he was living corruptly. He died because he spoke the truth, but Prufrock imagines that revealing his true self to others would kill him, so he will not. He is "no prophet" because he has not the courage. Prufrock also snaps, at the end of the poem, that "I am not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be." Prufrock is a tragedy of sorts, but he is no one great.

Prufrock's characterization shows that he is a shallow person, which is why he has developed a method to keep his true personality hidden from those around him. He shields himself within a protective shell that seems harmless to the casual reader and

himself. His nervous response to the "overwhelming question" at the start of the poem is contrasted by the peaceful yellow smoke that in the next stanza acts like a cat in the "soft October night," surrounding the "house" (symbolizing Prufrock) and resting there. The tone of these twelve lines is rhythmic and peaceful, with soft sounds repeating. This smooth smoke seems out of place compared to the nervous, introspective tone of Prufrock's monologues. However, the yellow smoke is not harmless as it appears. Symbolizing how Prufrock engulfs his true self with a shell of pretense, his protective façade is deadly. It seems calm, but is more like a cloud of mustard gas that chokes life.

Ironically, Prufrock's protective shield that hides his flaws prevents any realization of his emotional needs, especially the need for love. His shell means that he cannot find love and acceptance at this tea party or anywhere else. In the past, he has unsuccessfully attempted to meet desires for intimacy by sexual excursions. He mentions "restless nights in one-night cheap hotels," implying time spent with prostitutes. His tone is fearful as he describes the women's eyes that pin him to the wall like a collector's butterfly, but his tone is dreamy as he desirously describes their arms. This shift in tone is because he has "known the arms already" and has seen them "in the lamplight, downed with light brown hair." "Knowing" their arms, and his sensual description of them, implies a sexual experience.

His mostly fearful fantasies, however, show that impersonal sex has not met his emotional needs. He needs to be able to share his true self with someone who will accept him as he is, but is afraid to do so, fearing that physical intimacy with a lady at the tea party will not bring emotional intimacy, and wondering if she will, as she is "settling a pillow by her head," causally reject him. He anticipates her turning towards the window, away from him. Prufrock regretfully states, "I should have been a pair of ragged claws/ Scuttling across the floors of silent seas." This imagery shows Prufrock admitting that he should have been a lobster or a crab. Like a crustacean, he is trapped in a protective shell, and lives in a "silent," lonely world. But a crab does not recognize its loneliness. Prufrock does.

Prufrock's unmet desires for emotional acceptance are tied to the beginning and ending of the poem. The title claims to be a love song, yet Prufrock does not seem to be singing to anyone but himself, except at the end. This "love song," shares his life desire, emotional satisfaction derived from love that he cannot achieve because of his frightened aloofness towards others. At the end of the poem, Prufrock says that he has "heard the mermaids singing, each to each." After a pause, he wistfully states, in the only isolated line of the poem, "I do not think that they will sing to me," again explaining his legitimate fear that no one will notice him or care for him. Prufrock is an island to himself, and this isolation is the greatest factor making him an insignificant person.

Throughout "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," T. S. Eliot uncovers a man who will not embrace his greatest need. The irony of Prufrock refusing to share himself, stunting emotional growth, is especially bitter at the ending of the poem. Prufrock abruptly states his vision of himself and shows the reader the ultimate results of life in a shell. He wearily states, "I grow old. I grow old." and asks himself ludicrous, irrelevant questions, "Shall I part my hair behind? Do I dare to eat a peach?" He has become so concerned with anyone seeing a glimpse of the self behind his prepared face that he worries about trivialities.

The last three lines, in particular, show the reader the dangerous results of living in a safe fantasy world without ever sharing one's true person with others. Prufrock states that "[w]e have lingered in the chambers of the sea / By sea-girls wreathed with seaweed red and brown," implying that we, as humans, often live in fantasy worlds, in environments where we cannot properly exist. Eliot's diction in using "we" implies that the reader is being equated with Prufrock. Just as a human cannot live in the sea, we cannot truly live without revealing ourselves to others, even though it means others notice our faults and flaws. The "chambers of the sea" are no place for real people. When "human voices wake us" and shatter our fantasies, "we drown." When a life spent in a sterile fantasy world crashes into solid reality, only a shriveled carcass remains.

In "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," Eliot exposes Prufrock's protected, pathetic life to show readers that they should embrace openness and vulnerability to meet their intimate emotional needs. An obsessive concern over appearances, and not reality, leads to a shrunken self. The character of Prufrock warns readers against the protection of a stifling shell holding no possibility of growth. Possible pains of open vulnerability far outweigh the cramped confines of a wasted life.