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## The Waste Land

Thomas Stearns "T. S. Eliot (1888 - 1965)

Read by: Elizabeth Klett  
 Length: 31 minutes  
 Genre(s): Poetry

Language: English  
 Style: Solo

Format	Package	SKU	EAN/UPC	MSLP
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*The Waste Land* is a long poem by T. S. Eliot is considered one of the most important poems of the 20th century. First published in 1922, *The Waste Land* is Eliot's best known work and marked a significant turning point for modern poetry. On the macro level, the poem conveys a sense of a disjointed, unreal world devastated by the Great War and populated by damaged people numbed by violence, heartbreak and trauma. The poem loosely follows the legends of the Holy Grail and the Fisher King interwoven with vignettes of modern society. The five sections treat the over arching themes of disillusionment, despair and death from a variety of perspectives that are populated with allusions, quotations, and references to a vast range of eastern and western cultures, languages and literatures. It is deliberately obtuse and difficult to follow. Frequent and abrupt shifts in time, place, character

and tone add to the sense of discomfort and dissonance that underscore the themes. Eliot had experienced a breakdown in 1921 and was treated for what we would now call depression. He was advised to take three months off from work and first went to the seaside resort of Margate, where he began the poem, and then to Lausanne, Switzerland, where he undertook therapies to help rewire his thinking. These practices corresponded with the tenets of Buddhism and Hindu philosophy he had studied at Harvard that found their way into the poem, especially the last section, which Eliot said he wrote "in a trance".

**Thomas Stearns ("T. S.") Eliot** (September 26, 1888 - January 4, 1965) was a poet, playwright, essayist and literary critic. He was born in St. Louis to a family with deep roots in Boston. He was educated at Smith Academy, Milton Academy, and Harvard College, earning a degree in philosophy. He immigrated to England in 1914 and became a British subject in 1927 at about the time he converted to Catholicism. He first achieved recognition with "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" in 1915, hailed as a Modernist masterpiece, and established his voice as a major poet with *The Waste Land* in 1922. He worked outside the realm of poetry for most of his adult years, finding a position at Lloyd's bank in 1917 and moving to the publishing business in 1925 at Faber and Faber, eventually becoming a director and guiding the careers of W. H. Auden, Steven Spender, and Ted Hughes. He wrote seven plays, several collections of well-regarded essays, and a book of light verse entitled *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats*, which became the basis of the *Cats* musical adaptation by Andrew Lloyd Weber. He regarded *The Four Quartets* as his finest work, and it led to his being awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1948.