**Dr. S. CHOUCHANE**

**3rd Year Literature Module**

**Academic Year: 2024/2025**

## T.S Eliot’s *The Waste Land* (1922)

## Summary

## Part 1: The Burial of the Dead

## The poem's speaker talks about how spring is an awful time of year, stirring up memories of bygone days and unfulfilled desires.

## Then the poem shifts into specific childhood memories of a woman named Marie. This is followed by a description of tangled, dead trees and land that isn't great for growing stuff.

## Suddenly, you're in a room with a "clairvoyant" or spiritual medium named Madame Sosostris, who reads you your fortune. And if that weren't enough, you then watch a crowd of people "flow[ing] over London Bridge" like zombies (62). Moving right along…

## Part 2: A Game of Chess

You are transported to the glittery room of a lavish woman, and you notice that hanging from the wall is an image of "the change of [Philomel](http://www.pantheon.org/articles/p/philomela.html)," a woman from Greek myth who was raped by [King Tereus](http://www.pantheon.org/articles/t/tereus.html) and then changed into a nightingale.

Some anxious person says that their nerves are bad, and asks you to stay the night. This is followed by a couple of fragments vaguely asking you what you know and remember.

The section finishes with a scene of two women chatting and trying to sneak in a few more drinks before closing time at the bar.

## Part 3: The Fire Sermon

Section three opens with a speaker who's hanging out beside London's [River Thames](http://www.visitthames.co.uk/) and feeling bad about the fact that there's no magic left in the world. The focus swoops back to the story of [Philomel](http://www.pantheon.org/articles/p/philomela.html) for a second, then another speaker talks about how he might have been asked for weekend of sex by a "Smyrna merchant" (209).

Next, you're hearing from [Tiresias](http://www.pantheon.org/articles/t/tiresias.html), a blind prophet from myth who was turned into a woman for seven years by the goddess [Hera](http://www.shmoop.com/hera-juno/). You hear about a scene where a modern young man and woman—both not much to look at—are having this really awful, loveless sex.

Finally, you overhear someone singing a popular song, which in the context of this poem just sounds depressing.