

T.S. Eliot

Text analysis- The Waste Land - What the thunder said.

What the thunder said is an extract from the last section of The Waste Land.

The title comes from the holy Hindu book Upanishad where the Lord of the Creation speaks through the thunder.

The first stanza alludes to Christ's passion, agony and death, while the second and third stanzas partly refer to Christ's disciples' journey to Emmaus.

The landscape evoked in the first stanza is arid, dry and full of pain.

A "thunder of spring" is heard in the distance: it was supposed to bring a possible revival.

We apprehend that He (Jesus) who was living now is dead, while we who were living are now dying, but with a little patience.

The landscape described in the second stanza is stony, sandy and without water; the mountains are described as dead and offer no comfort or inspiration.

As a reinforcement of the first part of the section, there's also a description of the houses, which are mudcracked.

The inhabitants of the houses are portrayed as "red sullen faces" that "sneer and snarl", like they were evil and negative characters.

In the second part of the extract the poet expresses a wish: if there were water.

The poet himself realizes this wish is impossible to achieve so he changes few times, with smaller and smaller wishes: water, then rock and water, then just the sound of water.

The metre is not traditional, it doesn't follow a regular rhyme scheme; the rhythm is very irregular and it highlights the pain and the suffering described in the scene.

Eliot uses different figures of speech in order to produce a sense of sickness in the reader: Hendiadys, onomatopoeias, metaphors.

The poem is focused on the opposition between rocks and water: the two words are repeated several times, and it produces an effect of anxiety and suffering, because the reader feels a sensation of dryness and sterility.