

T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*: *Bildungsroman* and the European Mind

Student Name: Diya Chopra
Student ID: 8384351



A Brief Introduction to the Topic:

- Focus Text: T.S. Eliot's 'The Waste Land' (1922)
- Formation of the European Mind
- *Bildungsroman* Analysis of the poem
- Secondary Texts:
 - 'The Birth of Tragedy' (1872)
 - 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' (1915)
 - 'Four Quartets' (1941)



Aims and Objectives

1

Demonstrate a contextual understanding of *Bildungsroman* and the focus text.

Bildungsroman as a type of biography.

2

Explore and analyse how the focus text is a representation of the European mind in the form of a *Bildungsroman* literature.

3

Employ contextual readings, secondary literature and criticism to support my analysis.

4

Affirm how the focus text can be read as a *Bildungsroman* and as a *bildung* of the mind of the poet and Europe.



T.S. Eliot's 'The Waste Land' (1922)

- Dramatic monologue -Robert Browning
- Split into a five section depiction of the modern world
- Constant change of speakers, locations and times emphasising the different stages of the European culture whilst representing the mind of Europe
- Draws upon historical, musical, literary, religious and popular cultural references
- Eliot presents and comments on the European culture as it stood in the 1920s -a cultural decline.



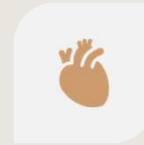
Bildungsroman Interpretation



DEFINE



BILDUNGSROMAN
STAGES OF THE
INDIVIDUAL



EMOTIONS AND
INDIVIDUALISM

The general preface of Mikhail Bakhtin's essay 'The *Bildungsroman* and its Significance in the History of Realism', argues the genre presents "the image of the man in the process of becoming" (1986).

Romantic Era produced literature that emphasised on spiritual growth and emotions, providing readers with an escapism from the realities of the Industrial (1760) and French (1789-99) Revolution.

Edward Said identifies the three great human episodes common to all cultures and traditions as being "birth [...], maturity [...], decay [...]" (2006:4-6).



Stages of *Bildungsroman* in European Culture



Criticism of 'The Waste Land' and Eliot

- "[...] indeed an important bit of social criticism. To me it was only the relief of a personal and wholly insignificant grouse against life" (Eliot 1971)
- "It has long been known that Eliot composed most of 'The Waste Land' in the fall of 1921 [...] Switzerland [...], from a severe crisis of health" (Unger 1972:161)
- "A reason besides philosophical bias which makes the disconnection to the poem [...] we do not quote Greek Tragedy and modern cockney with the same breath or with the same kinds of minds" (Ransom 1923)



Criticism of European Culture

- “we look to Europe as the determinator of values [...] even met Europeans who have calmly declared Europe is dead and the future belongs to America” (Munson 1924)
- “since the Renaissance, the clock of Europe has been running down” (Seldes 1922)



Criticism of *Bildungsroman*

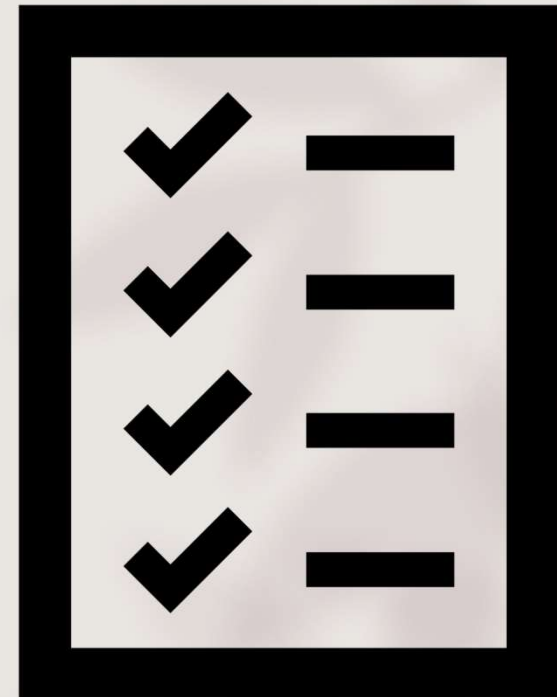
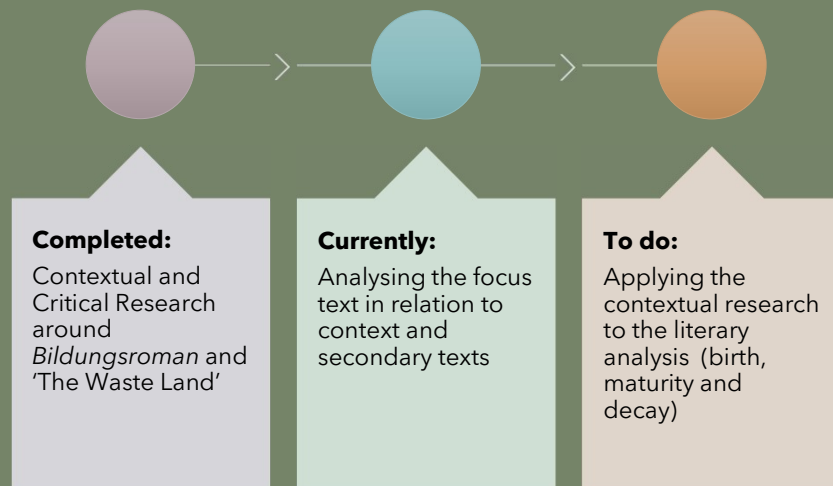
"he (the artist) must be aware that the mind of Europe [...] much more important than his own private mind"
(Eliot 1919)

"novel of formation as a continuous tradition is a critical hoax"
(Sammons 1991)

"a 'symbolic form' of modernity"
(Moretti 2003)



Next Steps...



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