

# The Hollow Men

T. S. Eliot (1925)

I

We are the hollow men  
We are the stuffed men  
Leaning together  
Headpiece filled with straw. Alas!  
Our dried voices, when  
We whisper together  
Are quiet and meaningless  
As wind in dry grass  
Or rats' feet over broken glass  
In our dry cellar

Shape without form, shade without  
colour,  
Paralysed force, gesture without motion;

Those who have crossed  
With direct eyes, to death's other  
Kingdom  
Remember us -- if at all -- not as lost  
Violent souls, but only  
As the hollow men  
The stuffed men.

II

Eyes I dare not meet in dreams  
In death's dream kingdom  
These do not appear:  
There, the eyes are  
Sunlight on a broken column  
There, is a tree swinging  
And voices are  
In the wind's singing  
More distant and more solemn  
Than a fading star.

Let me be no nearer  
In death's dream kingdom  
Let me also wear

Such deliberate disguises  
Rat's coat, crowskin, crossed staves  
In a field  
Behaving as the wind behaves  
No nearer --

Not that final meeting  
In the twilight kingdom

III

This is the dead land  
This is cactus land  
Here the stone images  
Are raised, here they receive  
The supplication of a dead man's hand  
Under the twinkle of a fading star.

Is it like this  
In death's other kingdom  
Waking alone  
At the hour when we are  
Trembling with tenderness  
Lips that would kiss  
Form prayers to broken stone.

IV

The eyes are not here  
There are no eyes here  
In this valley of dying stars  
In this hollow valley  
This broken jaw of our lost kingdoms

In this last of meeting places  
We grope together  
And avoid speech  
Gathered on this beach of the tumid river

Sightless, unless  
The eyes reappear  
As the perpetual star  
Multifoliate rose  
Of death's twilight kingdom  
The hope only  
Of empty men.

## V

Here we go round the prickly pear  
Prickly pear prickly pear  
Here we go round the prickly pear  
At five o'clock in the morning.

Between the idea  
And the reality  
Between the motion  
And the act  
Falls the Shadow

For Thine is the Kingdom

Between the conception  
And the creation  
Between the emotion  
And the response  
Falls the Shadow

Life is very long

Between the desire  
And the spasm  
Between the potency  
And the existence  
Between the essence  
And the descent  
Falls the Shadow  
For Thine is the Kingdom

For Thine is  
Life is  
For Thine is the

This is the way the world ends  
This is the way the world ends  
This is the way the world ends  
Not with a bang but a whimper.

## AFTER FIRST READING

What do you notice?

What do you observe?

What does the poem make you think about?

What feelings does it bring up?

## AFTER SECOND READING WITH CLASSMATE

Underline and note phrases that are interesting, confusing, or important.

Try to underline and note as many connections as you can to *The Great Gatsby*. Look for connections to the novel's characters, setting, plot, conflicts, themes, imagery, symbols, and characters. Be ready to explain these.

## CLASS DISCUSSION

1. What overall effect or feeling do you get from the poem? How does it compare to what you felt reading *Gatsby*?
2. What lines struck you as particularly interesting or important? Explain why.
3. What ideas about American society are suggested by the poem? How do these ideas compare to those presented in *Gatsby*?
4. Which piece do you like better? Why?

