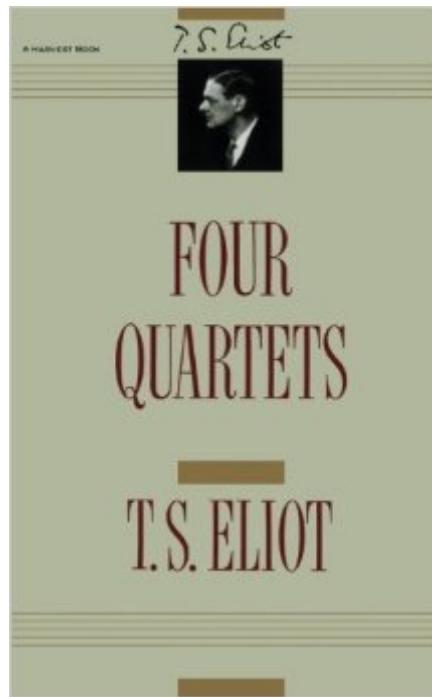


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Four Quartets



Synopsis

The last major verse written by Nobel laureate T. S. Eliot, considered by Eliot himself to be his finest work; *Four Quartets* is a rich composition that expands the spiritual vision introduced in *The Waste Land*. Here, in four linked poems (*Burnt Norton*, *East Coker*, *The Dry Salvages*, and *Little Gidding*), spiritual, philosophical, and personal themes emerge through symbolic allusions and literary and religious references from both Eastern and Western thought. It is the culminating achievement by a man considered the greatest poet of the twentieth century and one of the seminal figures in the evolution of modernism.

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Customer Reviews

FOUR QUARTETS marks T.S. Eliot's crowning achievement as a poet. It is the last substantial poetry he wrote before turning to drama and consists of four poems each with a five-part structure. The work as a whole is concerned with the perception of time, linked with the importance of poetic art and the place of Christianity in deciphering the meaning of one's lifetime. After two quotations from Heraclitus, "Burnt Norton" opens the collection. Here Eliot muses on the idea that all possible outcomes of any event are secretly around us, unseen and unperceived. An empty pool is, in some other reality, filled with water and a blooming lotus. Eliot's metaphysical insight here is reminiscent of quantum theory that was then beginning to become the rage in physics circles. These speculations are tricky and difficult to get one's head around, and even more difficult to plainly put

into words, but Eliot manages to succeed. "East Coker", named after the town in England from where Eliot's Puritan ancestor emigrated to America, deals with the cyclical nature of time. Here the poet surveys the tendency for all earthly things to rise and ultimately fall. Christianity with its emphasis on eternal life, asserts Eliot, promises a way to change one's end to one's beginning and escape the fall into oblivion that dooms everything. "The Dry Salvages", in reference to a place on the New England shore which Eliot visited as a youth, is the weak point of the collection. A rumination with a nautical theme, the poem suffers from meandering phrasing and peculiar wording. Its Marian devotion is inconsistent with the Puritan/Anglican tradition of the rest of FOUR QUARTETS.

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