



## TOP KEY ELEMENTS From 'Murder In The Cathedral'

### Vekariya Vidhi Manojbhai

Smt. K.S.N. Kansagra Mahila College

Thomas Stearns Eliot, also known as T.S. Eliot, was an American-English poet, playwright, literary critic, and editor who was a leader of the Modernist movement in poetry. He was born on September 26, 1888, in St. Louis, Missouri, and died on January 4, 1965, in London, England. Eliot was educated at Harvard and did graduate work in philosophy at the Sorbonne, Harvard, and Merton College, Oxford. He settled in England, where he was for a time a schoolmaster and a bank clerk, and eventually became literary editor for the publishing house Faber & Faber, of which he later became a director. Eliot has been one of the most daring innovators of twentieth-century poetry. His most notable works include "The Waste Land" (1922), "Four Quartets" (1943), and the play "Murder in the Cathedral" (1935). Eliot's poetry from "Prufrock and Other Observations" (1917) to "Four Quartets" (1943) reflects the development of a Christian writer. As a critic, he had an enormous impact on contemporary literary taste, propounding views that, after his conversion to orthodox Christianity in the late 1930s, were increasingly based in social and religious conservatism. Eliot was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1948.

#### **The struggle for individual and moral integrity:**

The central theme of the play revolves around Thomas Becket's unfaltering commitment to his faith and his refusal to compromise his principles. Through his character, the play raises important questions about the nature of individual integrity and the sacrifices one must make for their beliefs.



### **The complexity of martyrdom:**

Murder in the cathedral explores the concept of martyrdom and the dilemmas it poses. It presents Becket as a martyr figure who voluntarily accepts his fate, but also acknowledges the internal struggle and doubts he faces along the way. The play raises questions about the motivations behind martyrdom and the true nature of martyrdom itself.

### **The power of language and rhetoric:**

T.S. Eliot's play displays the art of persuasion and manipulation using language. The power of words is evident in the various speeches and dialogues throughout the play, with characters using oratory to sway others to their side. This highlights the importance of effective communication and the potential impact of language in shaping individuals and events.

### **The inevitability of fate:**

Murder in the Cathedral explores the concept of destiny and the sense of inevitability surrounding Becket's murder. The play suggests that certain events are prearranged and that individuals are bound by their fate. This theme underscores the play's exploration of free will, moral choices, and the acceptance of one's destiny.

### **The power struggle between church and State:**

Murder in the cathedral explores the conflict between religious and political powers, focusing on the relationship between Thomas Becket, the Archbishop of Canterbury and King Henry II. The play highlights the tension and complexities of this power struggle and the consequences it has on both individuals and society.

### **Exploration of Sacred Subject Matter:**

The play focuses on the martyrdom of Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury, during the Middle Ages, highlighting the clash between personal conviction and political power.



## **Modernist Approach:**

Written in the context of the early 20th century, the play personifies modernist literary techniques, emphasizing psychological complexity and the struggle between individuality and conformity.

## **Tragic Heroism:**

Becket's willingness to die for his beliefs exhibits the concept of heroism within the framework of tragedy, reflecting Eliot's interest in the classical tradition.

## **Divine Providence vs. Human Motivation:**

The play explores the tension between divine providence and human motivation, particularly regarding the question of whether someone can perform a noble act for selfish reasons.

## **Return to Traditional Values:**

Despite its modernist elements, the play advocates for a return to traditional values, suggesting that sacrifice for unity and healing. These themes resonate beyond the specific historical events depicted in the play, providing insight into broader questions related to faith, politics, and morality.

Ultimately, the conclusion of "Murder in the Cathedral" doesn't provide definitive answers but rather invites contemplation and discussion on themes like:

- The nature of martyrdom and sacrifice
- The clash between church and state
- The complexities of faith, power, and responsibility
- The search for meaning and forgiveness
- By leaving the conclusion open-ended, Eliot encourages audiences to grapple with these profound questions and find their own interpretations.