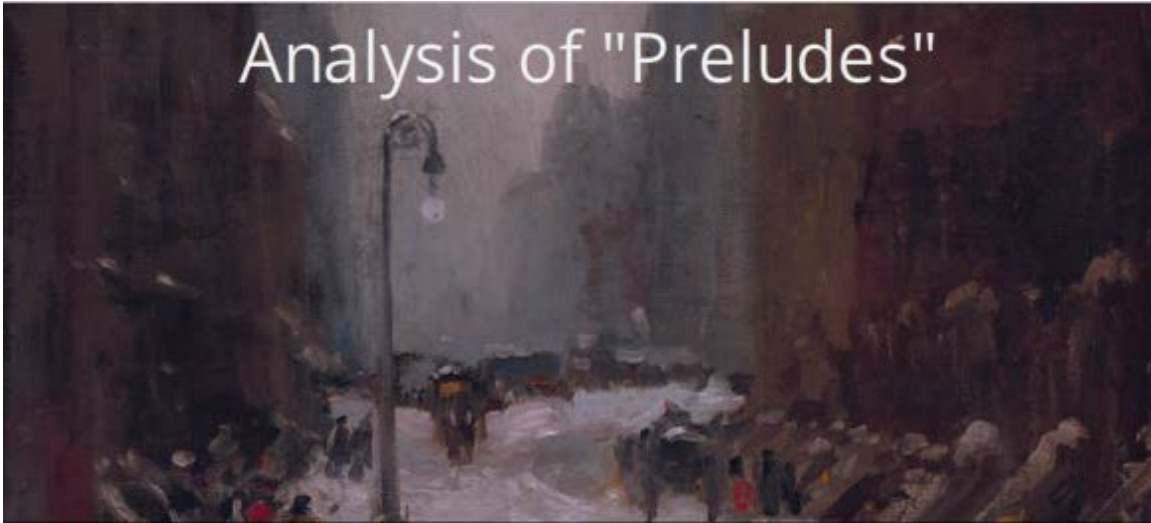


Module 8: Change and Its Impact

Topic 2 Content: Analysis of "Preludes"

Introduction



Analysis of "Preludes"

The poetry of T. S. Eliot was avant-garde, eschewing flowery language and strict meter in favor of free verse with no rules. Many of his poems offered readers a collage of disconnected images without an explanation of their meaning. Indeed, Eliot dropped the role of the authoritative poet who brought readers to pastoral forests while expounding on the meaning of life. Rather, he portrayed the gritty reality of urban life from the eyes of just another person suffering from loss and alienation in the Modern era. His poem "Preludes" captures this sentiment in a Modernist style. Click the **NEXT** button to explore this poem in further detail.

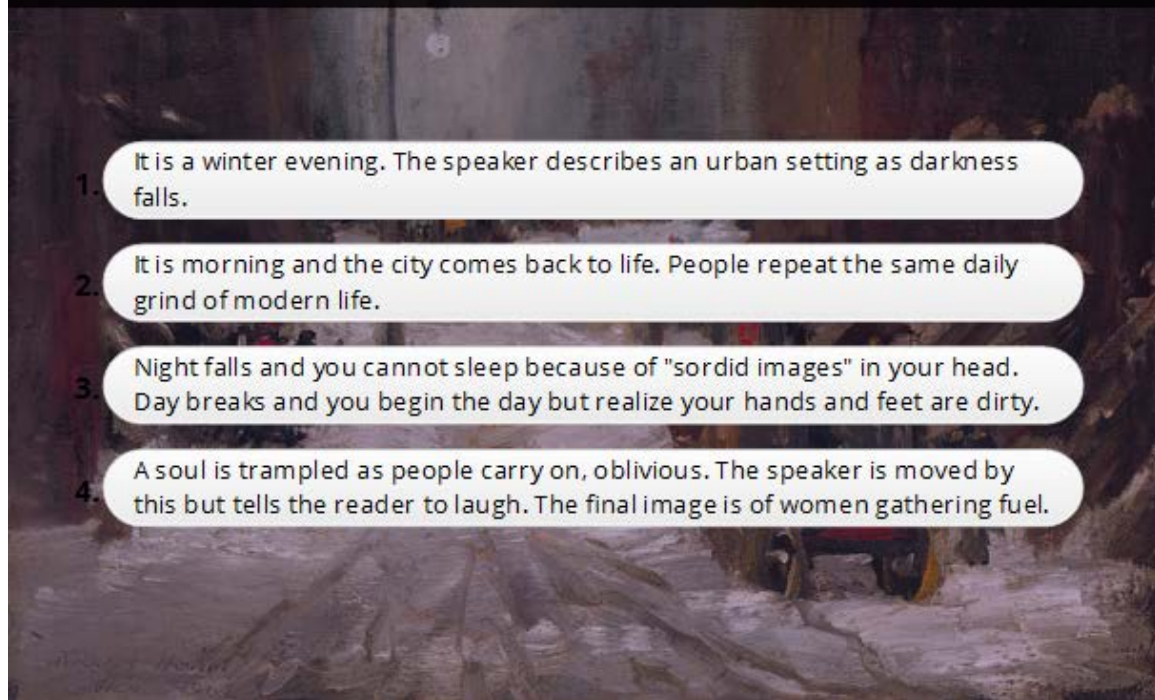
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Module 8: Change and Its Impact

Topic 2 Content: Analysis of "Preludes"

Poem Summary

Read the summaries below of the four parts of "Preludes." Then, drag and drop the summaries into the order in which they occur in the poem. When you have finished, click **SUBMIT** to check your response.



1. It is a winter evening. The speaker describes an urban setting as darkness falls.
2. It is morning and the city comes back to life. People repeat the same daily grind of modern life.
3. Night falls and you cannot sleep because of "sordid images" in your head. Day breaks and you begin the day but realize your hands and feet are dirty.
4. A soul is trampled as people carry on, oblivious. The speaker is moved by this but tells the reader to laugh. The final image is of women gathering fuel.

Read the summaries below of the four parts of "Preludes." Then, drag and drop the summaries into the order in which they occur in the poem. When you have finished, click **SUBMIT** to check your response.


Correct Order:

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2. It is morning and the city comes back to life. People repeat the same daily grind of modern life.
3. Night falls and you cannot sleep because of "sordid images" in your head. Day breaks and you begin the day but realize your hands and feet are dirty.
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Module 8: Change and Its Impact

Topic 2 Content: Analysis of "Preludes"

Why does the poem shift viewpoints?



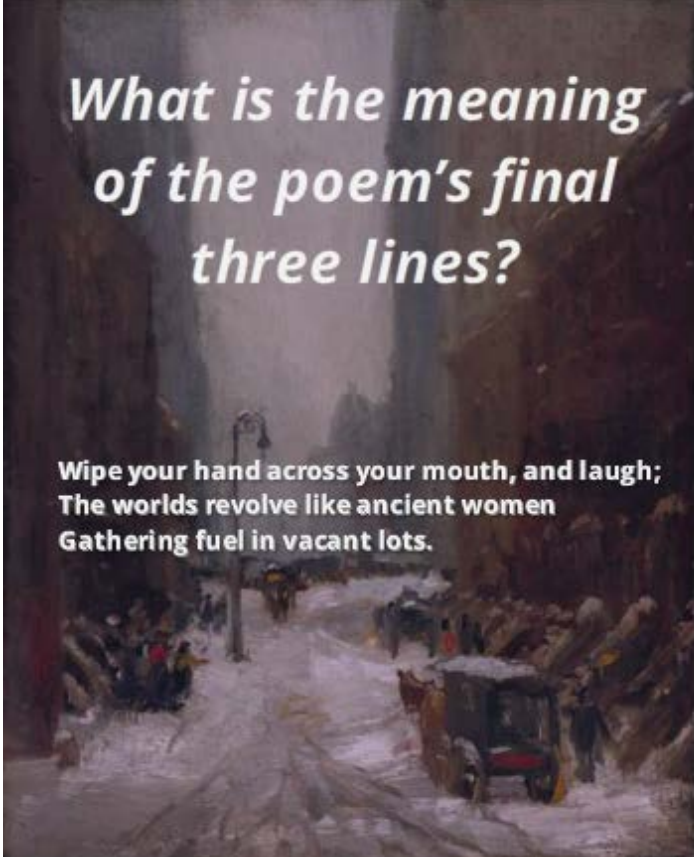
Why does the poem shift viewpoints?

You may have noticed the switch from third person in the beginning of the poem to second person in the middle of the poem. The third-person voice shows that the speaker is omniscient. He or she sees everything and even knows that the cab-horse is lonely. In the third part, the use of the second-person voice draws the reader into the poem as a character, specifically a woman with insomnia struggling to get by. The speaker emerges using the first-person voice in the final part, revealing his disapproval of the Modern world and how it seems to repeat the same struggles of earlier times.

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Module 8: Change and Its Impact
Topic 2 Content: Analysis of "Preludes"

What is the meaning of the poem's final three lines?



What is the meaning of the poem's final three lines?

**Wipe your hand across your mouth, and laugh;
The worlds revolve like ancient women
Gathering fuel in vacant lots.**

In the closing lines of the poem, the speaker tells you, the reader, to wipe your mouth and laugh. There is a final flashback to ancient women gathering fuel to survive.

It seems that not much has changed in the world, for women are still struggling to get by as time repeats itself. So the reader, a woman with hands soiled from the labor of daily life, must wipe her mouth, as if to get ready to carry on as all women have done. But she might as well do this with a laugh, not a laugh of joy but of bitter resignation to the monotony of meaningless time.

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The worlds revolve like ancient women
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