

# The Theme of Decay and Destruction in Eliot's THE WASTE LAND

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A poem as profound, as meaningful and suggestive as *The Waste Land* is bound to have several levels and layers of meaning and implication. In the first place, it is generally observed that the waste land is a poem of despair and not of hope, because it presents to us the horrific and nightmarish state of the contemporary human civilization and culture. Secondly, it is tried to be pointed out that the theme of *The waste land* is one of quest or search for salvation. In this connection, it is further stated that since man has been groping in darkness in the modern times, what he seeks or aspires for is nothing but salvation. Thirdly, it is said that *The Waste Land* is merely a series of grim and nerve-shattering pictures, because what Eliot does through this poem is to report to us the real spiritual state or condition of the contemporary humanity. Fourthly, it is observed with due degree of emphasis that *The Waste Land* is not a poem of negation or rejection, that, in fact it is a Christian or religious poem, and that since it deals with man's final redemption, it is a poem of hope or optimism. And lastly, it is sought to be impressed upon us that the theme of *The waste land* is based principally on a contrast between two kinds of life and two kinds of death, and that as such it deals with what we may call death-in-life and life-in-death. It is only through a close and careful reading of this poem, sectionwise, that we may find ourselves in a position to get at the heart of the matter.